INDIVIDUAL PROPERTY/DISTRICT
MARYLAND HISTORICAL TRUST
INTERNAL NR-ELIGIBILITY REVIEW FORM

Property/District Name: Wilson Estate Survey Number: ~~MO~~ M:35-9-3

Project: Clinical Center Complex expansion (Building 10) Agency: NIH

Site visit by MHT Staff: ___ no _X_ yes Name L. Bowlin Date 7/19/95

Eligibility recommended _X_ Eligibility **not** recommended ___

Criteria: X A ___B _X_C ___D Considerations: ___A ___B ___C ___D ___E ___F ___G ___None

Justification for decision: (Use continuation sheet if necessary and attach map)

Currently surrounded by the NIH Bethesda campus on the west side of Rockville Pike (Rt. 355), the Wilson Estate consists of two dwellings and five support buildings. The estate is significant as the county retreat of Luke and Helen Wilson and as a representative of wealthy estates which lined Rockville Pike in the early twentieth century. Known as the Tree Tops, the Wilsons developed their 95 acre estate in the 1920s. Beginning in 1935, the couple donated significant portions of their estate to the federal government for the development of the National Institutes of Health medical campus. Although all of the Wilson's property is currently owned by NIH, Tree Tops remains as a 10 acre oasis within the institution. Displaying features of the Arts and Crafts style, the design of the rustic retreat has been attributed to two Washington architects: Edward Clarence Dean and Arthur B. Heaton. The Trust concurred with NIH's determination that the complex is eligible for the National Register. However, as of 7/1995, issues regarding the boundary of the eligible property and the significance of two buildings (Building 15A and garage) is being analyzed further by NIH.

Documentation on the property/district is presented in: "Preliminary Historical Assessment of the Wilson Estate" 1991 see also compliance file "NIH Master Plan"

Prepared by: Robinson & Associates

L. Bowlin 7/1995
Reviewer, Office of Preservation Services Date

NR program concurrence: ✓ yes ___ no ___ not applicable

Orlando Ridout 9-28-95
Reviewer, NR program Date

JMG

Survey No. MO- 35-9-3

MARYLAND COMPREHENSIVE HISTORIC PRESERVATION PLAN DATA - HISTORIC CONTEXT

I. Geographic Region:

____	Eastern Shore	(all Eastern Shore counties, and Cecil)
____	Western Shore	(Anne Arundel, Calvert, Charles, Prince George's and St. Mary's)
X	Piedmont	(Baltimore City, Baltimore, Carroll, Frederick, Harford, Howard, Montgomery)
____	Western Maryland	(Allegany, Garrett and Washington)

II. Chronological/Developmental Periods:

____	Paleo-Indian	10000-7500 B.C.
____	Early Archaic	7500-6000 B.C.
____	Middle Archaic	6000-4000 B.C.
____	Late Archaic	4000-2000 B.C.
____	Early Woodland	2000-500 B.C.
____	Middle Woodland	500 B.C. - A.D. 900
____	Late Woodland/Archaic	A.D. 900-1600
____	Contact and Settlement	A.D. 1570-1750
____	Rural Agrarian Intensification	A.D. 1680-1815
____	Agricultural-Industrial Transition	A.D. 1815-1870
X	Industrial/Urban Dominance	A.D. 1870-1930
X	Modern Period	A.D. 1930-Present
____	Unknown Period (___ prehistoric	___ historic)

III. Prehistoric Period Themes:

____	Subsistence
____	Settlement
____	Political
____	Demographic
____	Religion
____	Technology
____	Environmental Adaptation

IV. Historic Period Themes:

____	Agriculture
X	Architecture, Landscape Architecture, and Community Planning
____	Economic (Commercial and Industrial)
X	Government/Law
____	Military
____	Religion
X	Social/Educational/Cultural
____	Transportation

V. Resource Type:

Category: Building complex

Historic Environment: suburban

Historic Function(s) and Use(s): Domestic/institutional

Known Design Source: Edward Clarence Dean & Arthur B. Heaton

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NIH Historic Resources Inventory Form

1. Name

"Tree Tops;" The Luke Ingals and Helen Woodward Wilson Estate
Historic Name

Wilson Estate; Buildings 15A & K
Common Name and Building Number

2. Location

9100 Rockville Pike
Street and Number

Bethesda — 8
City, Town — Congressional District

Maryland — Montgomery
State — County

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present use (Government)
X District	X Public	X Occupied	__ Laboratory
__ Building(s)	__ Private	__ Unoccupied	__ Animal Research
__ Structure	__ Both	__ work in Progress	__ Hospital
__ Site	Accessible		X Administrative
__ Object	X Yes: Restricted		__ Support
	__ Yes: Unrestricted		__ Other
	__ No		

4. Owner of Property

National Institutes of Health
Name

9000 Rockville Pike
Street & Number — Telephone No. :

Bethesda — Maryland 20205
City, Town — State and Zip Code

5. Location of Legal Description

Montgomery County Courthouse
Courthouse, Registry of Deeds, etc. — Liber# _____ Folio# _____

Street & Number

Rockville — Maryland 20850
City, Town — State and Zip Code

6. Representation in Existing Historic Surveys — X Yes ___ No

NIH Master Plan, Phase I; Task 5, Part II: Cultural Asset Inventory
Title

September 17, 1985
Date — __ Federal __ State __ County __ Local

Depository for Survey Records

City, Town — State

M:35-9-3

7. Description

Condition

__ Excellent	X_ Deteriorated	__Unaltered	X_Original Site
__ Good	__ Ruins	X_Altered	__ Moved
X_ Fair	__Unexposed		

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

Overview

The Wilson Estate is located southwest of the intersection of Rockville Pike and Cedar Lane in the Bethesda district of Montgomery County, Maryland. The estate includes a group of residential buildings that were associated with the Luke I. Wilson family's residence on the property between 1923 and 1989. These buildings are set within a rural landscape on an approximately eight-acre site, surrounded by the suburban campus of the National Institutes of Health (NIH).

The Luke Ingals and Helen Woodward Wilson Estate is at the core of the NIH campus, both physically and historically. The philanthropy of the Wilsons, who made a series of land donations to the federal government between 1935 and 1948, proved the catalyst for NIH's move to Bethesda and its subsequent development into a major research and medical center. The Wilson Estate, known as Tree Tops, was developed in the 1920s and was part of a corridor of large early twentieth-century country retreats built by wealthy Washingtonians along Rockville Pike. The main house sits atop a knoll above Cedar Lane, in the northern sector of the NIH campus. Six related structures, including guest and service facilities, are south and west of the main house and form a compound buffered by topography and a grove of large trees from the major medical buildings to the south. The design of the core of the estate is attributed to Edward Clarence Dean, known for his large residential commissions in the eclectic architectural tradition of the early twentieth century. There is some evidence, however, that the prominent Washington architect, Arthur B. Heaton, played a role in the design of the main house. These buildings, an interesting example of the English Arts & Crafts tradition adapted to suit a rustic American aesthetic, survive with their related landscape features as an illustration of the early twentieth century retreat, now surrounded by the modern medical campus of NIH.

Beginning in 1924, the Wilson Estate was developed by Luke I. and Helen W. Wilson as a country retreat outside of Washington. In the picturesque design of the landscape and the romantic architectural allusions, the estate suggests a rustic English country property of the nineteenth century. Tree Tops, as the Wilsons called their property, was one of many country estates built by wealthy Washingtonians along the Rockville Pike in the 1920s. The rapid growth of Washington after World War I, the Great Depression and New Deal of the 1930s, and the effects of World War II on the Capital forever changed the face of Bethesda. Due to the Wilsons' generous offers of land to the federal government, their estate was at the center of this evolution. Between 1935 and 1942, Luke (and later Helen) Wilson donated most of the estate to the National Institute of Health for its growing research facilities. Within the modern suburban NIH campus, the Wilson Estate survives as a reminder of an earlier era in Bethesda's history (Figure 1).

Building Descriptions

Tree Tops (Building 15K)

The focus of the Wilson property is Tree Tops (Building 15K), the primary Wilson residence from 1926 to 1942. Tree Tops is an imposing two-and-one-half-story house built on a L-plan with intersecting gables. It is constructed of stuccoed masonry walls with decorative use of stone and

timbering. The long, steep gabled roofs, the timbering, and the multi-paned casement windows allude to English vernacular sources. The house faces south on a prominent knoll, but it is generally accessed from the north side where a curving driveway approaches the house, and a stone vestibule is tucked between the facade and a projecting gabled wing.

Although it is not commonly seen, the south elevation was clearly designed as the main facade and has the most formal approach (Figure 2). The house is built at the height of a long, gentle slope, set off from the landscape by two sets of stone terraces. The low terrace walls are built of random, uncut stone with a blind mortar treatment that imitates the dry-stone walls of the English countryside. An axial walk and stairs approach the entry and an informal curving path steps up the hillside from the secondary estate buildings to the west.

The asymmetrical facade is dominated by an end gable on the right side. Historic photos show a two-story porch beneath this gable. Currently, the lower level is enclosed with large multi-paned casement windows creating a sun porch. At the peak of the gable the wall is finished with lapped, dark wood siding, beneath which is decorative half-timbering. The entry is set in the middle of the facade, via an inset vestibule with crafted timber details. The original door has been replaced with a modern one. To the left of the entry is a one-story bay with a Regency-style canopy and a pressed-metal decorative frieze.

Throughout the house, the window apertures are accentuated by dark timber lintels and the windows are multi-paned metal casements. Some of the windows have been removed. Each elevation is asymmetrical, repeating the pattern of an end gable on the right and a side gable extending left. The first and second stories are divided by a quarter-round heavy timber above which the wall plane steps out slightly. The peaks of all the gable ends are filled with lapped wood siding down to the lintels of the third floor windows. The roof is clad with cedar shingles. Several red brick chimneys pierce the planes of the roof and rise above the roof peak.

The north elevation has a one-and-one-half-story gabled wing that extends on the far right side (Figures 3 & 4). The upper level of this wing is now accessed by a modern steel railing staircase, which detracts from the visual approach to the building. Tucked in the angle of this wing and the facade is a one-story masonry block built of random stone coursing that is used as a large vestibule and principle entrance. It is topped by an ashlar stone parapet with a carved shield above the door which has an oak tree design and the roman-numerical date "1926" inscribed in it (Figure 5). Stonework similar to that of the vestibule is used for the ground floor of the northeast corner of the house and in the low walls of the terrace.

The east facade has a central bay window on the first level that is detailed like that on the main facade. An elongated shed-roofed dormer pierces the roof. The west side is distinctive for the way the gabled projections step down the hill to the north. The northernmost wing contains a glazed vestibule with entrances to the basement and main floor off of a small, low-walled patio.

The exterior of the house still maintains its original character, despite some alterations. The half-timbering on the main facade does not appear in an early photograph and is probably a fanciful alteration. Some doors and windows have been changed, and the porch on the south facade is missing

as noted. There are also additions such as the staircase on the north facade and a chain link fence encircling the entrance on the south facade.

The floor plan of the house is unusual and greatly confused by the current partitioning of the interior. The front and back entrances are on a central axis, linked by a wide central hall that steps down toward the current (north) entrance. Interestingly, the stair hall with a half elliptical stairway is set at the back of the house, creating an informal circulation core off of the current entrance. A living room and library are on the east side of the house, with the dining room, kitchen and service rooms on the west. The original interior finishes are a mix of quite fine wood paneling, such as around the mantel in the living room, and more rustic or common finishes, such as the tongue-and-groove paneling in the library or the stock paneled doors used throughout the upstairs. Built-in shelves and cabinets are used extensively, as notable in the library and the upstairs hall, which is lined with linen cupboards.

Several walls and doors have been added to adapt the original spaces to current use. Acoustical tile covers most of the ceiling, partially hiding but apparently not destroying the crown moldings. In order to install window-unit air conditioners, many of the casement windows have been removed. While the original floor plan and functions are distorted by its current use and many original finishes are covered, the significant interior components appear to remain.

The Lodge

The Lodge is a two-and-one-half-story cross-gabled house, of eccentric Tudor-influenced design, that is sited west of Tree Tops in a hollow of the landscape. Constructed contemporaneously with the main house, it originally served as a garage with staff quarters on the second floor. During the 1930s it was converted into a house, which, following the donation of Tree Tops to NIH in 1942, became Helen Woodward Wilson's residence until her death in 1960. In addition to the renovations performed in the 1930s, significant changes were made by the Wilson's son, Luke W. Wilson, when his family moved into the Lodge in the early 1960s; these included the addition of a frame wing on the south side containing a sun room on the ground floor and two narrow sleeping porches upstairs, and a one-story extension on the west side with brick walls and a shallow-gabled timber framed roof containing a large family room/kitchen. This extension wraps around to the north side, where it culminates in a brick vestibule in front of the north entry door. The building has a modified rectangular plan and is built of brick, stucco, and timber. It reveals at least two and probably three distinct periods of construction. Although substantial changes were made in the 1960s, the design and workmanship that distinguished the 1920s building survive. The house is not currently occupied and is deteriorating; elements of the architecture are missing or broken; the landscaping around the building is very overgrown.

The brick walls of the first floor appear to predate the rest of the house. The window and door openings of the first floor have segmental arches with heavy keystones, suggesting that they may be remnants of an Italianate or Georgian Revival design, though they may have just been an anachronistic touch to give the appearance of age. The stucco and half-timbered second floor that gives the house its English character is believed to be the design of Edward C. Dean; this layering of materials and reuse of fragments of buildings were techniques that Dean employed in his designs.

The primary facade faces north, although its distinctive details are not easily visible due to the vestibule addition at the first level (Figure 6). The upper facade has a symmetrical pair of end gables, each set with a small pair of casement windows. Between the gables, highlighting the original entrance, is a large pair of multi-paned casements with a single-pane transom above. This window grouping is framed by timbers and has an unusual carved detail of a vertical cable appearing to support the horizontal timbers. A quarter-round timber divides the brick first floor from the stuccoed second floor, above which is some simple half-timbering. The shed-roofed brick vestibule obscures the entryway and the right half of the lower facade. A simple door to the left of the vestibule accesses a small furnace room.

The east elevation of the Lodge is the most visible and faces the main house (Figure 7). It is dominated by an asymmetrical end gable and half-timbering is used, as on the main facade. Likewise, the gable is emphasized by bargeboards that flare slightly at their ends and are marked by a square peg (a detail that is repeated throughout the house). The casement windows in the second floor are tall and narrow, divided horizontally into four stacked panes. The brick ground story is set with a hexagonal bay that has multi-paned casement windows and a copper hood with a scalloped frieze. The window and door openings that flank the bay have segmental arched heads, as described above. The door on the left has a small metal canopy with a scalloped frieze, as on the bay.

To the south, the sun room and sleeping porches are visible (Figure 8). They are built on a brick foundation but are of frame construction set with jalousie (louvered glass) windows. Overhead the transom windows are divided into a pattern of small diamond panes. The wall finish beneath the second story windows of the sleeping porches echoes the half-timbering pattern of the original facade but uses wood infill instead of stucco. The sun room opens onto a flagstone patio via modern plate-glass sliding doors. A low serpentine stone retaining wall wraps around the south and west sides of the house, delineating the patios from the sloping lawn. A series of small stone pools is incorporated in the landscape just outside the sun room.

The addition on the west side also opens to the outside; a wall of casement windows is used at the southwest corner and French doors access a covered patio. A broad chimney rises on the south wall of this wing, serving a large fireplace inside. While the additions generally respect the original materials and feeling of the house, they obscure a large portion of the original exterior walls.

Cottage #1

Just north of the Lodge is a one-and-one-half-story stucco and wood-shingled cottage that was built around 1940 as a garage and staff quarters for the Lodge (Figure 9). Based upon a standard dwelling form common in the 1920s and 1930s, Cottage #1 was adapted in design to reflect the details of the Lodge next door.

The end gable that is the main facade looks east toward the main house. On the north and south sides of the house, long shed-roofed dormers protrude from the roof. Whereas the lower walls of the house are stuccoed, the roof and walls of the dormers are clad with wood shingles. Dark wood timbers have been applied to the main facade to suggest a load-bearing frame. In the gable ends the bargeboards are flared at their ends with the square peg detail seen in the Lodge. A bay window, added to the left

side of the east facade, has a Regency-style canopy, echoing that on the Lodge. The simple door to the right of the bay has narrow sidelights with diamond-pane mullions and a shallow scalloped canopy. With the exception of the bay, the windows are all double-hung with six-over-six wooden sash. On the south face of the house a metal and glass greenhouse has been added.

Garage and Shed[1]

While these two modest outbuildings, which sit west of Cottage #1 along a driveway and parking area, do not exhibit design elements shared by the rest of the estate buildings, they appear to have been built during the period of significance in a simple, rustic style to complement the estate's primary structures.

The garage is a long, gabled one-story frame building (Figure 10). It is clad in a pressed-metal siding that effectively imitates clapboard. There are five bays; the one nearest the house has a paneled personnel door with a divided light, while the other four have garage doors. The farthest bay retains what appears to be the original style garage doors: a pair of hinged "Dutch" doors (top and bottom halves operating independently) with six-over-six panes. One of these doors has collapsed. The other three bays have wooden paneled overhead sliding doors set with four panes at the top. A six-pane window is in the east gable end of the garage, and a Dutch door is in the west end. Rectangular ventilation portals are set below the peak of the gable on both ends. A number of these doors are open or broken, leaving the building exposed to the elements. The building is covered with a ribbed metal roof.

A small utility shed faces the garage diagonally northwest of it across the driveway. The materials common to both buildings suggest that they were built at the same time. The shed has two bays of doors and is as deep as it is wide, with a shallow shed roof. Like the garage, it has metal faux-clapboard siding. The two pairs of plain hinged doors are clad with metal. A six-pane window, like that in the garage, is set in the back wall of the shed.

Farm Cottage

In the western section of the Wilson property is a small gabled cottage, which appears to date from the nineteenth century (Figure 11). The house may have been associated originally with the Britton family who farmed the land prior to the turn of the century. It was used by the Wilson family as a guest house.

The original two-room house follows the vernacular hall-and-parlor form, with a rectangular plan and a side-gable roof. It is clad with a simple dropped siding and has plain boxed corners and window surrounds. There are two tall two-over-two double-hung sash windows in the main (south) facade and a half-lit door on the right side. Three narrow two-over-two windows are grouped in the east gable end. The bargeboards in the gables have a decorative flare at the eaves that may have been the inspiration for a similar detail on the Lodge and bungalows of the estate.

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[1]The Shed may be demolished; need to confirm on site.

The Farm Cottage has undergone a number of additions in the early twentieth century, creating what is now a modified L-plan house that steps down the slope of the site. A wing has been added to the north side of the cottage that is as wide as the original structure and has a shallow gabled roof. Primary access to the house is now through an inset porch in this wing. In addition, there are two or three small shed-roofed extensions on the west side of the house, including a screened porch on the west end of the original cottage. These appear to date from the early twentieth century and use materials and details that imitate the original house. One of the windows of the cottage is flanked by decorative shutters with the jigsawn tree design, a motif that was once carried throughout several of the estate buildings.

Cottage #2 (Building 15A)

This house is a one-and-one-half-story end-gabled dwelling set on a sloping site somewhat north and west of the rest of the Wilson Estate (Figure 12). It follows a typical modest house form common in the 1920s and '30s. It is built of substantial materials--stucco over masonry walls on a stone foundation and with a slate roof. The house appears to have been built to echo the style of the estate; it repeats simple details visible on the Lodge, but neither the design nor the craftsmanship is of a comparable quality. The house is on a tract of land donated to NIH by Helen Woodward Wilson in 1938. It is currently used as offices and has undergone significant alterations.

Cottage #2 is built on a rectangular plan with the ridge of the gable on an east-west axis. The main entry faces north and is accessed from West Drive via a footpath. The small shed-roofed entry porch is set off-center of the main elevation and has been enclosed. An asymmetrical shed-roofed dormer with two shuttered windows dominates the second level. A window is set in the main floor to the left of the porch. The opposite (south) facade is more balanced, with two shuttered windows in the ground floor and two small shed-roofed dormers in the roof. All of the original wood sash windows have been replaced with metal frame windows that are slightly wider than the originals. As a result, new decorative wood shutters have been installed that replace the originals with the jigsawn tree motif used throughout the estate.

On the east end of the house is a gable extension housing a room with large casement windows on three sides. The opposite gable end, facing the street, has a one-story flat-roofed porch that has been enclosed to create a sun room. The house appears to have been recently re-sided and stuccoed, losing the window surrounds and depth of reveal in the process. A simple gabled garage that appears to be contemporaneous with the house sits at the back corner of the property.

Landscape

The main house, Tree Tops, occupies the most prominent position on the original Wilson estate, a knoll that commands a view to the north and east, with a gentle slope down on the south. To the west of Tree Tops, the secondary buildings of the estate (with the exception of Cottage #2) are all sheltered in a hollow of the land. Although these buildings are isolated by a wood stave fence, the topography and a grove of large trees give them a natural sense of seclusion from the surrounding NIH campus. Little of the activity and noise of the medical buildings nearby is noticeable from this enclave (see

Figure 1).

The estate has a minimum of constructed landscape features. Two half-height stone piers built in the early 1960s flank the driveway at the entrance to the estate, near Cottage #1. These emulate the piers that originally flanked the driveway to Tree Tops as its mouth on Rockville Pike. A small stone bridge that carries the driveway over a gully beside Rockville Pike still survives, though not within the boundaries of the property as defined herein. The stone retaining walls on the south side of the main house create the sense of a formal parterre. The curvilinear stone retaining walls on the north and east sides were built more recently by NIH, emulating the use of stone in the original landscape design of the property. Several informal stone stepping paths link the buildings of the estate.

Patios were incorporated in the design of the Lodge and the main house to merge the indoor and outdoor spaces. A small brick patio with low walls is on the west side of the main house, accessed from a small vestibule. A low stone wall behind the Lodge sets off the paved patios around the house from the surrounding landscape. Some of the largest trees in the area are strategically placed around buildings, suggesting that they were preserved by conscious design. A screen of trees, allowed to grow up in the last 50 years, rims the remaining Wilson property and provides a sense of privacy from the NIH campus. The buildings of the estate were sited to take advantage of the picturesque topography, as well as to express a hierarchy of functions. The rustic stonework, the informal arrangement of the buildings on the site, and the utilization of existing topography and plantings achieve a naturalistic landscape favored in the early twentieth century.

8. Significance

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Period	Areas of Significance			
__Prehistoric	__Archeology-Prehistoric	__Community Planning	__Landscape Architecture	__Religion
__1400-1499	__Archeology-Historic	__ Conservation	__Law	__Science
__1500-1599	__Agriculture	__Economics	__Literature	X Social/Humanitarian
__1600-1699	X Architecture	__Education	__Military	__Theater
__1700-1799	__Art	__Engineering	__Music	__Transportation
__1800-1899	__Commerce	__Exploration/Settlement	__Philosophy	__Other
X 1900-	__Communications	__Industry	X Politics/Government	
		__Invention		

Specific Dates	Architect	Builder	Area

Applicable Criteria:	X A	X B	X C	__D			
Applicable Exception	__A	__B	__C	__D	__E	__F	__G
Level of Significance	X National		__State		__Local		

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

Overview

The proposed historic district, which encompasses Tree Tops and the surrounding buildings of the Wilson Estate, derives significance from its association with the Wilson family's role in attracting NIH to Bethesda. Through their initial donation of land, the Wilson family provided a catalyst for the growth of NIH into one of the world's leading biomedical research institutes. This bequest of land also augured the transformation of Bethesda. The cluster of buildings in the surrounding landscape which constitutes the former Wilson Estate is also significant as one of the great Rockville Pike estates of the early twentieth century. As such, it represents an important phase in the development of Montgomery County, a vestige of the era.

In landscape and architecture, the Wilson Estate also illustrates the evolution of a wealthy country retreat of the early twentieth century. The maintenance of a naturalistic landscape punctuated by rustic stone walls, and the informal arrangement of buildings on the topography, reflect the rustic and picturesque aesthetic often employed at the time. A fine example of the use of English vernacular sources in the Arts and Crafts tradition, the buildings of the estate were the work of two noted architects, Edward Clarence Dean and Arthur B. Heaton.

Luke I. and Helen W. Wilson

Luke I. Wilson was born in 1872, the son of a wealthy Chicago retail and manufacturing family. When his father died in 1890, he left his studies at the University of Minnesota to join the operations of the Wilson Brothers clothing firm.[1] As manager of the importing arm of the men's furnishings company, he traveled a great deal and is reported to have crossed the ocean 88 times.[2] In 1910, Wilson married Helen Woodward, daughter of Samuel Walter Woodward, cofounder of the Washington, D.C., retailing concern, Woodward & Lothrop.

Helen (known to her family as Nellie Clifton) was born in 1877, the eldest of six children.[3] She grew up in northwest Washington and was educated at Smith College; she later said that it was there that she developed an interest in medical research.[4] It was also there that she met Wilson, the cousin of her college roommate. Although they became engaged when Helen was 21, they did not marry for a dozen years because Helen was reluctant to leave her family home in Washington while her mother

[1]Obituary of Luke I. Wilson, *Washington Evening Star*, July 20, 1937, p. B-5.

[2]"Luke Ingals Wilson," *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, p. 366.

[3]Martha C. Guildford, ed., *From Founders to Grandsons: The Story of Woodward & Lothrop*, p. 130.

[4]Obituary of Helen W. Wilson, *Washington Post*, April 9, 1960.

was in poor health.[5] (Mrs. Woodward recuperated, but ultimately died of cancer in 1917.) Following their marriage in 1910, the Wilsons lived in Evanston, Illinois, but apparently maintained strong ties to Washington, where most of Helen's family remained.

While ostensibly Luke and Helen Wilson came to Bethesda to retire, they were just 52 and 47, respectively, with a young son.[6] They established an active business and social life in Washington. Luke was a trustee of Woodward & Lothrop and remained involved in his Chicago firm, Wilson Brothers, as a Director. Locally, he served on the Bethesda Chamber of Commerce[7] and was awarded (posthumously) the first Oliver Owen Kuhn Cup in 1938 for his contributions to the development of Bethesda/Chevy Chase.[8] He was a member of the Metropolitan Club of Washington and the Chevy Chase Club, two of the city's most prestigious organizations.[9] The estate was also a significant indicator of the Wilsons' stature, and the socializing and entertaining that went on there was important in advancing their political and philanthropic interests. Luke and Helen Wilson traveled a good deal, but the Bethesda property served as a home base, and much of their energy went into developing it.

The Rockville Pike Estates

By the 1920s Bethesda was developing as a wealthy suburb of Washington. The Rockville Pike had long been the major transportation route through Montgomery County, but the road remained rugged and the area largely agricultural until after World War I. With the increasing use of automobiles and improvements to the roadways, the Bethesda district was brought into relatively easy reach of Washington. While streetcar routes serviced developing suburbs to the east and west, the corridor along the Rockville Pike retained its rural character, but large country estates built by wealthy Washingtonians increasingly replaced farmsteads on the rolling hills between Chevy Chase and Rockville.[10] Several country clubs for Washington society enhanced the prestige of the area, where land was readily available for golf courses and hunting amidst the countryside. In 1930, the prominent neighbors of Tree Tops included the Town & Country Golf Club and the country house of George Freeland Peter (NIH Building 16), to the south. Across the Pike were George Hamilton's 1904 mansion, "Stone Ridge," and the farming estate owned by the Perry family, "Lake Forest." North of the Wilson Estate was the Parker's "Cedarcroft," Merle Thorpe's "Pook's Hill" estate, and "Wild

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[5]Interview with Catherine Woodward Tyssowski, sister of Helen Woodward Wilson, conducted by Tory L. Taylor of Robinson & Associates, Inc., July 26, 1991.

[6]Obituaries of Luke I. Wilson and Helen W. Wilson.

[7]Obituary of Luke I. Wilson.

[8]"Oliver Owen Kuhn Cup Awarded," *Washington Evening Star*, January 6, 1962, p. B-1.

[9]"Luke Ingals Wilson," *National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*.

[10]Richard K. MacMaster and Ray Eldon Heibert, A Grateful Remembrance: The Story of Montgomery County, Maryland.

Acres," owned by Dr. and Mrs. Gilbert Grosvenor.[11]

The Wilson Property

In 1923, Helen purchased 95 acres of land,[12] known as the old Britton farm,[13] on the southwest corner of the Rockville Pike and Cedar Lane in Montgomery County. The tract was just south of a 40-acre farm that had been recently purchased by Helen's sister, Irene Woodward Parker, upon which Irene and her husband, Brainard W. Parker, built their Georgian Revival-style country house, Cedarcroft, around 1923.[14] Helen and Irene's brother, Donald Woodward, then president of Woodward & Lothrop, also maintained a summer house not far away.[15] In 1924, Luke retired, and the Wilsons, with their son, Luke W., returned to Washington.

Development of the Estate

The Wilson's property had been part of the Britton family farm in the late nineteenth century.[16] It had changed hands at least twice before the Wilsons bought it in 1923 for $37,500.[17] An 1879 property atlas shows a main farmhouse near the site of the current Tree Tops, accessed by a drive from Rockville Pike.[18] It is not certain whether this was the house that was rebuilt to become Top Cottage, or whether it was demolished to make way for the new construction. In any case, a design was prepared for the reconstruction of an existing house which became Top Cottage and the Wilsons temporary residence while the main house was built.[19] Catherine Woodward Tyssowski (sister of Helen W. Wilson), in a recent interview, said that her sister was quite intrigued with the process of rebuilding a dilapidated old house, and she suspected that Helen preferred the challenge of it to building anew.

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[11]Eileen McGuckian, "Pub, School and Mansion Highlight a Nostalgic Tour," *Rockville Gazette*, December 16, 1987, p. 23.

[12]Land Records of Montgomery County.

[13]Dorothy Pugh, *The National Institutes of Health: A Bethesda Landmark Celebrates its Centennial*, p. 12.

[14]Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission, Historic Sites File on Cedarcroft.

[15]Guildford, *From Founders to Grandsons*, p. 147.

[16]G.M. Hopkins, *Atlas of Montgomery County*, 1879.

[17]Baist, *Atlas of Montgomery County*, 1917, and Land Records of Montgomery County.

[18]Hopkins, *Atlas of Montgomery County*, 1879.

[19]Interview with Michael Wilson, conducted by Tory L. Taylor of Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 1991.

Life at Tree Tops

The design of the Wilson Estate speaks for the social life that the family maintained, with ample room and guest cottages for extended visits in the English and American country house tradition. The main house had a formality in its large rooms and sophisticated finishes appropriate for entertaining, while the smaller houses had a more rustic flavor. In Bethesda, the Wilsons were close to family and friends who maintained part-time homes nearby, and they were prominent members of Washington society. While the scale of the estate certainly befitted their social standing, its design was consciously rustic, and at home the Wilsons appear to have enjoyed a fairly informal lifestyle.

Donation of Land to NIH

In politics, Luke Wilson was described as a progressive Democrat and he showed himself to be sympathetic to Roosevelt's aims.[20] The New Deal of the 1930s brought a wave of government expansion and corresponding construction to the Washington area. During the Depression, in the mid-1930s, the Wilsons expressed an interest in donating a portion of their estate to the federal government, if a worthy use could be found. According to the traditional rendition of the story, Luke Wilson first offered the property in a letter addressed to the Secretary of the Interior. Having received no response to the bequest, Wilson sent off a subsequent letter directly to Franklin D. Roosevelt, which achieved the intended result; the letter was directed to the Public Health Service, which was then searching for a farm site on which to raise animals for the National Institute of Health.[21] Family sources confirm that Luke and Helen Wilson had strong philanthropic convictions, and that Helen, in particular, was strongly drawn to the mission of NIH. As previously mentioned, she had an academic interest in science and, as a result of her mother's battle with cancer, a personal interest in medical research.[22]

The Wilsons considered the proposed use in light of the impact it would have both on their remaining property and on the region. The Bethesda community was almost unanimous in its opposition, long having fought encroachments that would compromise the prestige of the area. Objections were lodged by the Bethesda Chamber of Commerce (on which Wilson had served), the Montgomery County Commissioners, and the Maryland-National Capital Park and Planning Commission.[23] Nonetheless, the Wilsons stood by their conviction and in August 1935 donated 45 acres of land, consisting of the

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[20]"Wilson," *The National Cyclopaedia.*

[21]Pugh, *The National Institutes of Health*, p. 3.

[22]Interview with Catherine Woodward Tyssowski, conducted by Tory L. Taylor of Robinson & Associates, Inc., July 26, 1991.

[23]Thompson, "Development of the National Institute of Health from 1930 to 1938," narrative written for cornerstone ceremony, 1938.

southern portion of their estate, to the United States of America.[24] By coincidence, a few days later the Social Security Act was signed into effect providing, among other things, $2 million per year for the "investigation of disease and problems of sanitation." Since the Wilsons' original offer, senior officials at the Public Health Service had weighed the idea of moving the entire operation of the National Institute of Health out to Bethesda from its limited facilities in Washington. With the newly expanded emphasis on research supported by the Social Security Act and the enthusiasm of the new Surgeon General, Dr. Thomas Parran, approval was gained for a major building program on the new Bethesda campus. Construction began in 1938 on the three original NIH buildings.[25]

Early in 1937, Luke I. Wilson was diagnosed with cancer, and he died in July of that year. That same summer a bill was passed creating the National Cancer Institute.[26] Helen Wilson had lost both her mother and husband to cancer, and in two bequests, in June and September of 1938, she gave NIH an additional 25 acres of land, intended as a site for the Cancer Institute. This left Mrs. Wilson and her son, Luke Woodward Wilson, with just a 20-acre tract containing most of the buildings of the estate, but landlocked by NIH property. In 1940, she split off nine acres of open land for NIH and, in 1942, donated the main house, Tree Tops, and its associated land.[27] At that time she had the Lodge renovated to create her new residence, and kept only a small amount of land containing the secondary buildings of the complex. Helen Woodward Wilson died in 1960.[28] Her son and his family had been living on Cape Cod but returned to Washington before Mrs. Wilson's death. In the early 1960s, they moved onto the Wilson property, expanding the Lodge to accommodate their family. Luke W. and Ruth Ferguson Wilson lived there until their deaths in 1985 and 1989, respectively. This final two-acre parcel of land, encompassing the Lodge, the Farm Cottage, Cottage #1, and the garage and shed, were transferred to the government in August 1993.[29]

While Luke and Helen Wilson obviously gave careful thought to their donation of land to the U.S. government in 1935, they could not have realized the scope of the enterprise that they were assisting, nor the development that it precipitated. By the 1950s, NIH was one of the preeminent medical research facilities in the world. Its work covered the entire spectrum of research on human disease and had contributed to most of the major medical advances of this century. As the scope of research and the number of institutes continued to grow, so did the need for facilities. In 1949, the government absorbed the adjacent lands owned by the Peter family, the Town and Country Golf Club, and the

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[24]Land Records of Montgomery County.

[25]Dorothy Pugh, *National Institutes of Health*, p. 3.

[26]Pugh, *The National Institutes of Health*, p. 3.

[27]Land Records of Montgomery County.

[28]Obituary of Helen W. Woodward.

[29]The deed for this and all land transfers is located with the NIH Division of Space and Facility Management.

farmlands owned by the Roman Catholic order of the Sisters of the Visitation.[30] These acquisitions allowed the continued development of NIH facilities within the open campus setting originally envisioned. Now occupying 317 acres with over 16,000 employees, NIH is the most dominant institutional presence in Bethesda and Montgomery County, and it continues to influence their physical and economic development.

Design of the Estate

Luke W. Wilson (the son of Luke I. and Helen W.), in an interview conducted in 1985, attributed the design of the estate to architect Edward Clarence Dean, and reported the construction date of the main house as 1926.[31] The design of the original buildings, Top Cottage, Tree Tops and the Lodge, certainly is consistent with Dean's career. A carved stone tablet over the north entrance to the house (possibly a later addition) is inscribed with the date 1926. A brief reference to a 1926 commission for the Luke I. Wilson residence has also been found in the papers of Washington architect, Arthur B. Heaton, suggesting that both of these prominent architects may have been involved,[32] though no plans or project information has been found to conclusively establish Heaton's role. Based on the physical evidence, Dean is assumed to be responsible for the original design of the buildings and the landscape, while Heaton may have been involved in the later construction phases of Tree Tops, perhaps incorporating alterations to the initial design such as the northern entrance vestibule.

The Architects

Edward Clarence Dean was born in 1879 and raised in Washington, D.C. He received degrees from Yale and Columbia and studied at the Ecole des Beaux-Arts in Paris.[33] He trained in offices in New York and worked for two years under John Russell Pope.[34] In 1910 he established an office in Washington. The buildings of the Wilson Estate can be seen to merge many of the influences seen in the architect's diverse other works.

In 1910, on returning to Washington, Dean designed a country house for David Fairchild called "In

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[30]Pugh, *The National Institutes of Health*, p. 18.

[31]Interview with Luke W. Wilson, conducted by Judith H. Robinson of Robinson & Associates, Inc., (dba Traceries), 1985.

[32]Library of Congress, Prints and Photographs Division, Arthur B. Heaton Papers.

[33]"Edward Clarence Dean," *The National Cyclopaedia of American Biography*, p. 482.

[34]AIA membership file on Edward C. Dean.

the Woods," in a forested area of Bethesda near Rock Creek, not far from the later Wilson Estate.[35] The design of "In the Woods" is clearly influenced by the contemporaneous work of California architects working in the Arts and Crafts tradition, most notably the Greene brothers. Its use of Spanish colonial materials and motifs, the integration of internal and external spaces within the landscape, and the highly crafted interior details were all quite unusual for the East Coast at that time. The Fairchild Estate is evidence that Dean was capable of handling sophisticated and eclectic design influences.

By 1915 Dean was again focusing his practice in New York, although he maintained his office in Washington. He received considerable acclaim for his design of the Cosmopolitan Club of New York in 1917. This design ingeniously linked old but undistinguished houses with a courtyard, cloister, and sitting rooms built of salvaged materials.[36] The romantic effect suggested an Italian villa that had grown slowly over time. Dean followed this with a larger project, in 1919, called "Turtle Bay Gardens." The design connected a block of New York houses through their rear yards, where a picturesque common garden was created through the use of pavings, fountains, loggias, and walls. The rear facades of the houses were redesigned to open up the residences to this romantic outlook.[37] Both of these projects, which won Dean considerable notice in the architectural press, focus on the interplay of interior and exterior spaces and show a talent for landscape design. They also reveal a romantic fascination with the layering of the ages often visible in European architecture that has evolved through the centuries.

Dean moved to Greenwich, Connecticut, in the 1920s and became known for his large country houses outside of New York. With these commissions Dean demonstrated his eclectic fluency, drawing from a wide variety of sources but always with an emphasis on materials and craftsmanship. The designs generally look to European vernacular roots, easily adaptable to the picturesque requirements of a country house while meeting a standard of formality expected by wealthy American clients. A commission executed for Dr. Walton Martin--recognized in the 1923 exhibition of the Architecture League of New York--had a strongly French medieval flavor, utilizing rough masonry construction and a walled courtyard to romantic effect. Consistent with the eclecticism in architecture of the time, Dean appears to have worked with a variety of forms, including the popular Colonial and Tudor Revival styles.

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[35]Fairchild was a renowned horticulturist and director of the U.S. Department of Agriculture from 1906 to 1928. His wife, Marianne, was a sculptor, a daughter of Alexander Graham Bell, and a friend of Dean's from their days as fellow art students in Washington. The Deans and the Fairchilds maintained a lifelong friendship and Dean designed three different houses for them over the course of 20 years. "In the Woods," National Register of Historic Places Inventory-Nomination Form; interview with Bert Zuckerman, June 4, 1991.

[36]Leon V. Solon, "The Cosmopolitan Club, New York," *The Architectural Record*, vol. 46, July 1919, pp. 19-28.

[37]Arthur Willis Colton, "Turtle Bay Gardens," *The Architectural Record*, vol. 48, December 1920, pp. 467-93.

The work on the Wilson Estate represents the culmination of Dean's aesthetic interest in the tradition of the English Craft architects of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The English vernacular forms, the emphasis on the crafted details, and the quirky combination of building materials, suggesting the slow evolution of the structure, echo some of the work of Sir Edwin Lutyens and Richard Norman Shaw around the turn of the century. Shaw and his contemporaries, championing the rediscovery of England's historic vernacular architecture in all its picturesque beauty, were a primary influence on the American Arts and Crafts movement. Many of the forms and motifs used in the Wilson Estate appear in the designs promoted by Gustav Stickley for American Craftsman bungalows.

Tree Tops in many ways harkens back to the design that Dean executed years earlier for David Fairchild just a few miles away. The careful consideration of the topography and the rich interplay between interior and exterior spaces are shared by both "In the Woods" and "Tree Tops." In the early 1930s, Dean designed another house for the Fairchilds, this one in Miami where Fairchild was working for the Department of Agriculture. Named "The Campong," the house was an exotic design employing oriental motifs. Planning to move himself to Miami, Dean pursued this interest in "tropical" architecture in "Panther Walk," a house that he designed for himself and his wife nearby. Dean retired from architecture there in 1938, spending the rest of his years as a painter.[38]

Arthur Berthrong Heaton was born in 1875, also a Washington native. He apprenticed in Washington architectural offices and studied for a short period at the Sorbonne. He established his own office in 1900 and spent his entire professional career in Washington, where he executed hundreds of designs from small residential projects to large commercial buildings. From 1908 to approximately 1922, he served as Supervising Architect of the Washington Cathedral during the early years of its construction.[39] He was widely known for his large commercial designs, most of which employed classically-derived forms.[40] The National Geographic Society Building of 1930 is among his noted commissions. Heaton was considered a traditionalist and was a scholar of American colonial architecture. In addition to his commercial work, he was heavily involved in residential design. During the 1920s, he produced over 500 designs for Shannon & Luchs subdivisions, and executed a number of commissions for large suburban houses. It was Heaton who designed the Grosvenor estate, "Wild Acres," built in the Tudor Revival style north of the Wilson Estate along Rockville Pike in 1928.[41]

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[38]"Dean," *The National Cyclopaedia.*

[39]Bushong, Robinson and Mueller, *A Centennial History of the Washington Chapter: American Institute of Architects*, p. 130.

[40]"The 38th Annual Exhibition of the Architectural League of New York," *American Architect*, February 14, 1923, pp. 139-52.

[41]Heaton Papers at the Library of Congress.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The recommended boundary of the district follows the historical property lines of the Wilson estate and topographical contour lines. The Wilson Estate is bounded on the west by West Drive, and on the south by Center Drive. The north boundary is formed by USGS 320' contour line, which is connected by a straight line to USGS 330' contour line, as shown on the accompanying map. The eastern boundary, which follows 330' contour as it encircles Tree Tops (Building 15K), runs directly west at the southernmost end of the site, and in the vicinity of the Lodge heads south to Center Drive.

11. Determination of Eligibility to be Included into the National Register

X Eligible __Not Eligible

SEE CONTINUATION SHEETS

12. Form Prepared by

Heather Ewing, Tory L. Taylor, Judith H. Robinson, Architectural Historians

Name/Title

Robinson & Associates, Inc. November 17, 1995

Organization Date

1909 Q Street, N.W., 3rd floor (202) 234-2333

Street & Number Telephone

Washington DC 20009

City or Town State

Approved by the NIH Federal Preservation Officer

Concurrence of State Preservation Officer

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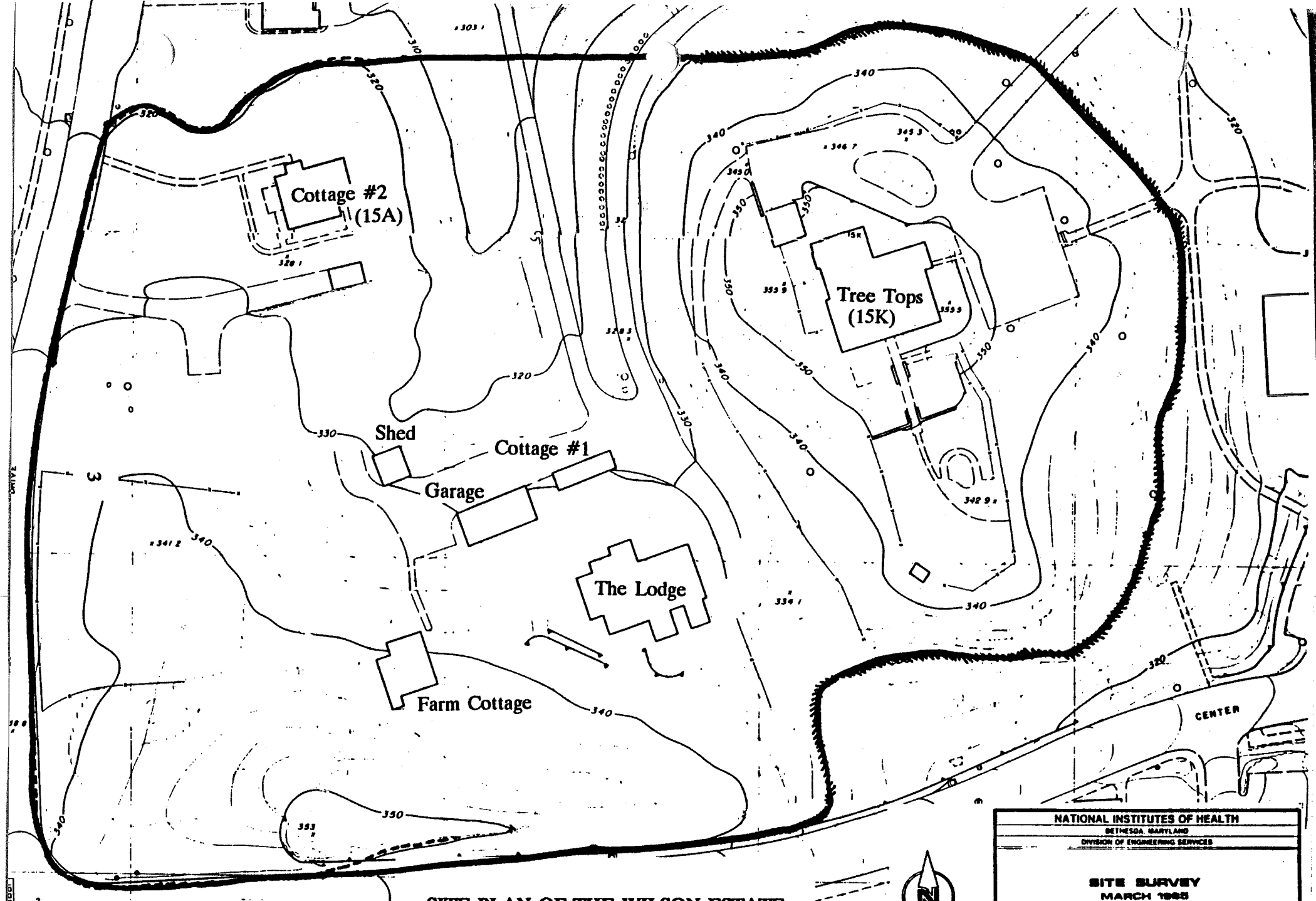
Interview with Luke W. Wilson, conducted by Judith H. Robinson, Robinson & Associates, Inc., 1985.

Interview with Michael Wilson, grandson of Helen and Luke Wilson, conducted by Tory L. Taylor, Robinson & Associates, Inc., August 7, 1991.

Interview with Bert Zuckerman, historian researching "the Campong," the David Fairchild residence in Miami designed by Edward Clarence Dean (now the Fairchild Research Center), conducted by Tory L. Taylor, Robinson & Associates, Inc., June 4, 1991.



SITE PLAN OF THE WILSON ESTATE

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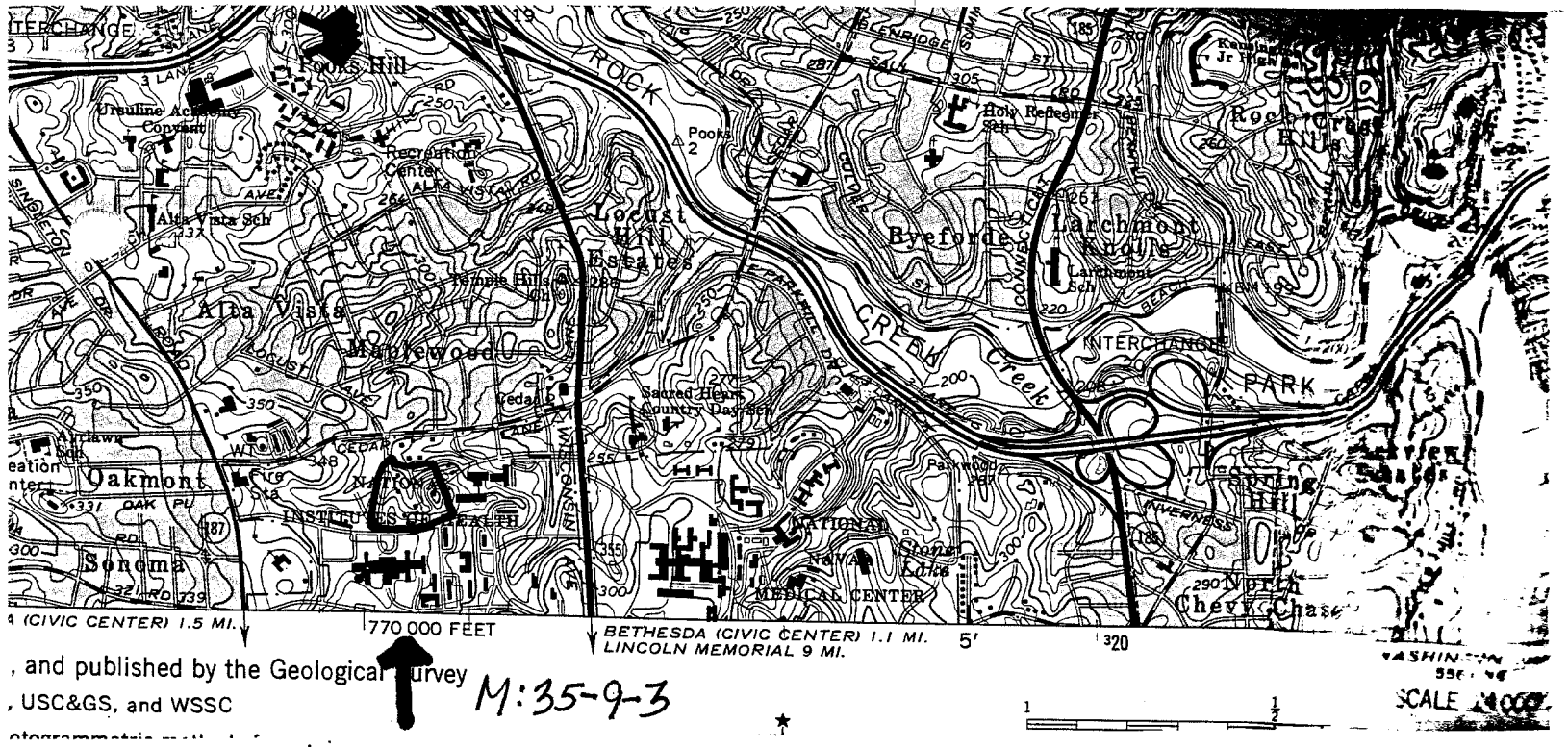

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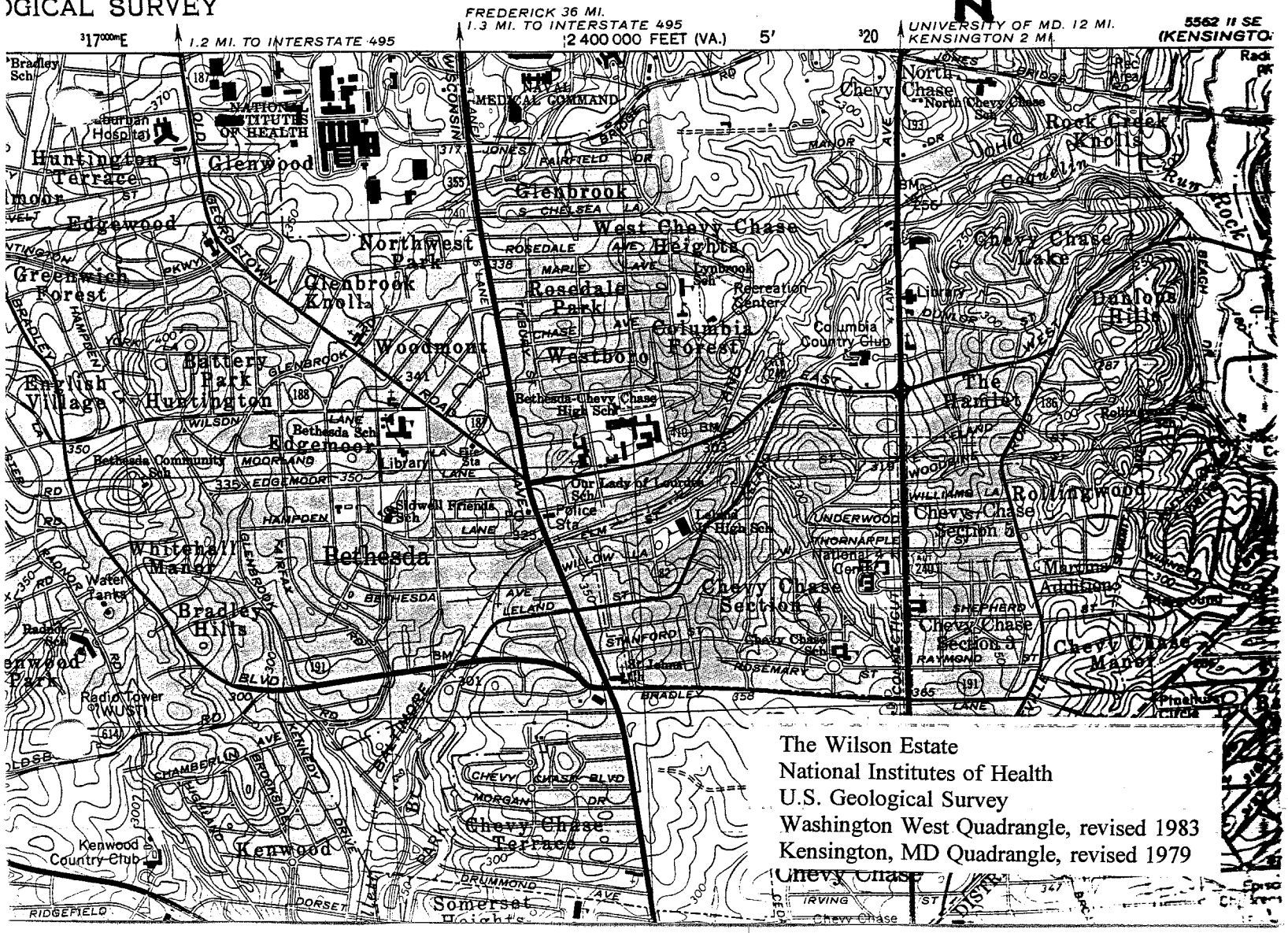

Figure 1.

The Luke Ingals and Helen Woodward Wilson Estate
National Institutes of Health
Montgomery County, Maryland
Regina L. Arlotto, November 1995
Negative at MD SHPO
View of the Wilson Estate looking east, with the Lodge in the foreground, Cottage #1 at the left, and the main house "Tree Tops" in the rear center.

M:35-9-3

Figure 2.

The Luke Ingals and Helen Woodward Wilson Estate
National Institutes of Health
Montgomery County, Maryland
Regina L. Arlotto, November 1995
Negative at MD SHPO
"Tree Tops," Building 15K (south and east facades), looking northwest.

M:35-9-3

Figure 3.

The Luke Ingals and Helen Woodward Wilson Estate
National Institutes of Health
Montgomery County, Maryland
Regina L. Arlotto, November 1995
Negative at MD SHPO
"Tree Tops," Building 15K (north facade), looking south.

M: 35-9-3

Figure 4.

The Luke Ingals and Helen Woodward Wilson Estate
National Institutes of Health
Montgomery County, Maryland
Regina L. Arlotto, November 1995
Negative at MD SHPO
"Tree Tops," Building 15K (north and east facades), looking west.

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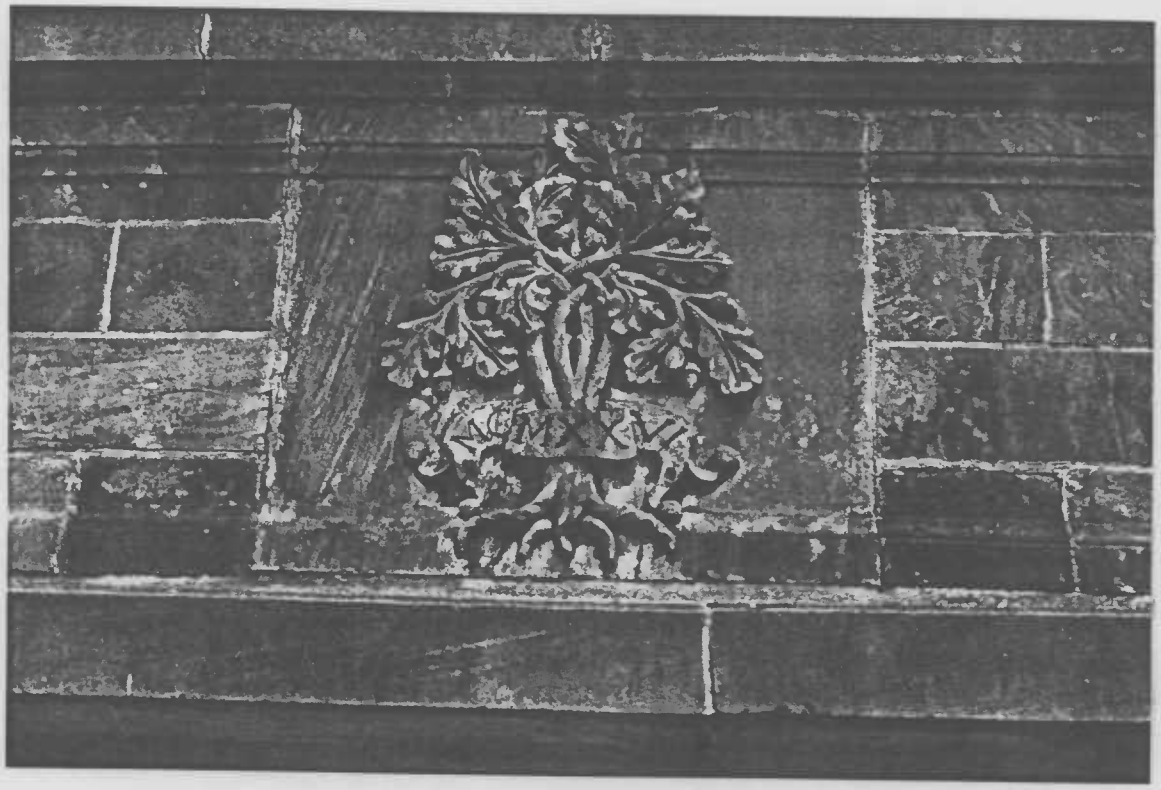

Figure 5.

The Luke Ingals and Helen Woodward Wilson Estate
National Institutes of Health
Montgomery County, Maryland
Regina L. Arlotto, November 1995
Negative at MD SHPO
"Tree Tops," Building 15K, detail of stone carving over the north vestibule.

M: 35-9-3

Figure 6.

The Luke Ingals and Helen Woodward Wilson Estate
National Institutes of Health
Montgomery County, Maryland
Regina L. Arlotto, November 1995
Negative at MD SHPO
The Lodge (north facade), looking south.
6/12

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Figure 7.

The Luke Ingals and Helen Woodward Wilson Estate
National Institutes of Health
Montgomery County, Maryland
Regina L. Arlotto, November 1995
Negative at MD SHPO
The Lodge (east facade), looking west.

M:35-9-3

Figure 8.

The Luke Ingals and Helen Woodward Wilson Estate
National Institutes of Health
Montgomery County, Maryland
Regina L. Arlotto, November 1995
Negative at MD SHPO
The Lodge (south facade), looking northeast. The west facade of "Tree Tops" (Building 15K) is visible in the background.

M:35-9-3

Figure 9.

The Luke Ingals and Helen Woodward Wilson Estate
National Institutes of Health
Montgomery County, Maryland
Regina L. Arlotto, November 1995
Negative at MD SHPO
Cottage #1 (north and east facades), looking southwest.

M: 35-9-3

Figure 10.

The Luke Ingals and Helen Woodward Wilson Estate
National Institutes of Health
Montgomery County, Maryland
Regina L. Arlotto, November 1995
Negative at MD SHPO
The Garage (north and west facades), looking east.

M:35-9-3

Figure 11.

The Luke Ingals and Helen Woodward Wilson Estate
National Institutes of Health
Montgomery County, Maryland
Regina L. Arlotto, November 1995
Negative at MD SHPO
The Farm Cottage (east facade), looking west.

M:35-9-3

Figure 12.

The Luke Ingals and Helen Woodward Wilson Estate
National Institutes of Health
Montgomery County, Maryland
Regina L. Arlotto, November 1995
Negative at MD SHPO
Cottage #2 (north and east facades), looking southwest.