

NOMINATION REPORT

**Dittig-Walther House & Presby Iris Gardens
474 Upper Mountain Avenue**

**BLOCK 0802
LOT 26**



**Prepared By:
Barton Ross, HPC Consultant
The Township of Montclair Planning Department
Mayor and Township Council
205 Claremont Avenue
Montclair, NJ 07042**

February 2013

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This report has been prepared in accordance with **Montclair Code Section 347-135B(1)**.

347-135B(1): Nomination Proposals. The party proposing for designation under this section shall prepare and submit to the Commission a nomination report for each proposed property, site or district. For individual landmark designations, the report shall include one or more photographs, the tax lot and block number of the property as designated on the Official Tax Map of the township and a physical description and statement of significance and proposed utilization of the site.

I. Executive Summary

The Township of Montclair Historic Preservation Commission was created by ordinance in June of 1994. The Historic Preservation Commission is charged with accomplishing the protection, enhancement and perpetuation of especially noteworthy examples or elements of the township's environment in order to:

- (1) Safeguard the heritage of Montclair by preserving resources which reflect elements of its cultural, social, and architectural history
- (2) Encourage the continued use of historic and/or noteworthy buildings or structures
- (3) Foster civic pride in the history and architecture of the Township
- (4) Promote the economic welfare of the township through the preservation of historic sites and landscapes
- (5) Enhance the visual and aesthetic character, diversity continuity and interest in the township and its neighborhoods
- (6) Discourage the unnecessary demolition or other destruction of historic resources
- (7) Encourage beautification and private investment in the township
- (8) Promote the economic welfare of the township through the preservation of its historic sites and landscapes

As per **Montclair Code Section 347-135A**, criteria for designation, "the Commission shall consider as worthy of designation those buildings, structures, objects, sites and districts that have integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling and association and that meet one or more of the following criteria:

- (1) Are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- (2) Are associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- (3) Embody distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction; that represent the work of a master; that possess high artistic values; or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction.
- (4) Have yielded or may be likely to yield information important to prehistory or history.
- (5) Are otherwise of particular historic significance to the Township of Montclair by reflecting or exemplifying the broad cultural, political, economic or social history of the nation, state, region or community."

II. History of the Site, Physical Description, Statement of Significance

The Essex County Presby Memorial Iris Gardens was established in 1927 to honor Frank H. Presby of Montclair, a leading horticulturalist and a founder of The American Iris Society. This living museum, listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Sites, offers a spectacular display of thousands of iris varieties to visitors from all over the world.

The history of the Presby Memorial Iris Gardens is one that is deeply entrenched in the history of its community, Montclair, New Jersey. The Gardens were started as a memorial to Frank H. Presby, one of the founders of the American Iris Society and a leading citizen of Montclair. Frank Presby was an iris hybridizer and owned a fine iris collection. It was his expressed wish to give a collection of his favorite flower, the iris, to Montclair's newly acquired Mountainside Park. Unfortunately, before he could carry out his plans, he passed away in 1924.

Three years later in 1927, Miss Katherine Inness, the first curator of the Montclair Art Museum, acted on behalf of the Montclair Museum Board and presented to the Montclair government the project of establishing an iris garden as a memorial to Mr. Presby. The proposed iris gardens would act not only as place of remembrance, but would also draw in visitors and encourage educational projects such as teaching the care, history, and hybridization of iris. The Presby Memorial Iris Gardens are the result of the collaborative efforts of the Town Council, Parks Commission, the Garden Club of Montclair, and the American Iris Society (A.I.S) under the supervision of the newly formed Citizens Committee led by its Chairperson, Barbara Walther.

Barbara Walther was a graduate from the University of Chicago with a Botany degree. In 1918 she and her husband Fred purchased the Upper Mountain property next to Mountainside Park. She was a charter member of the Montclair Women's Club and the Garden Club of Montclair where she gave lectures and wrote a variety of articles. Mr. and Mrs. Walther were also instrumental in preserving the land for Mountainside Park and establishing the Presby Memorial Iris Gardens. She remained a fixture amongst the iris well into her nineties and passed away at ninety-six in 1977, the fiftieth anniversary of The Gardens' inception.

The first irises were planted at a dedication meeting which included the Citizens Committee members and the Town Commissioners. Several hundred supporters arrived, bringing iris plants. Some of the first plants came from Mr. Presby's own garden as a gift from his children. Other iris plants were donated by the American Iris Society, the Kellogg Gardens, and from Great Britain, Germany, and Japan's countrymen who were international admirers of the work being done in Montclair. Local contributors included Joseph Van Vleck who donated his Siberica Iris to the Gardens, and A. I. S. President John Wister, who laid out the garden design and helped supervise the planting with Barbara Walther. The town supplied labor and materials for The Gardens and the Citizens Committee became responsible for the management of The Gardens. They were also greatly helped by members of the Garden Club of Montclair who from the beginning gave money to secure new irises each year. Jennie Bonsal was one of the earliest supporters. She used her considerable skills to organize the iris collection into card catalogues. These cards became the basis for the bed books and database that today contain information about each iris variety and its location.

The Citizens Committee was formally incorporated in March of 1963 and purchased the Walther property in 1977. The house then became the official headquarters for The Citizens Committee of Presby Memorial Iris Gardens of Montclair, Inc.

The Gardens are always being improved. A sprinkler system was installed, making easier the care of newly planted beds and lawns. A dry creek bed was restored along the spine of The Gardens, and two handsome bridges were built to cross it. Specimen trees were planted west of the creek bed as well as various grasses around the creek. Siberian, Louisiana and Japanese irises are planted in and on the side of the creek. In 2007, a patio with memorial benches was installed at the entrance to the gardens.

In 2009, Essex County purchased the Walther House and Grounds from the Citizens Committee, saving the gardens from an uncertain future. The Citizens Committee leases the house and grounds and continues to fund raise the cost of operating the gardens.

DITTIG-WALTHER HOUSE

This house & gardens, along with the Presby Memorial Iris Gardens, is adjacent to Mountainside Park and form an important horticultural complex which was added to the National Register of Historic Places in October, 1980.

The house with its distinctive Mansard roof now serves as the headquarters of the non-profit organization, the Citizens Committee of the Presby Memorial Iris Gardens. It was built circa 1858 by a farmer, George A. Dittig, who acquired the property in 1853. A sandstone house which previously stood on the property was demolished prior to World War I. For many years this had been the home of Mr. and Mrs. Fredrick P. Walther. Mrs. Walther was a leader in the effort to obtain the vote for women. She was instrumental in having the adjacent property to the north established as a Montclair municipal park, Mountainside Park. This preserved the last area in the community where one can still view the tree-covered slope of the Watchung Mountains, which form the western edge of the town. The iris gardens were established in Mountainside Park through the efforts of Mrs. Walther and her citizens committee.

In 1927, these gardens were named for Frank Presby, a prominent Montclair resident and a founding director of the American Iris Society. Mrs. Walther continued to serve the Iris Gardens as chairman of the citizens committee until her death in 1977. She was a well known horticulturist and with her supervision, the Presby Iris Gardens became known as the "finest collection of all kinds of iris in the U.S.". Mrs. Walther also developed her own projects with rare plant material.

Historic Narrative courtesy of the Presby Memorial Iris Gardens.

Appendix A: Tax Map

[New Search](#)

Block: 802 Prop Loc: 474 UP. MOUNTAIN AVENUE Owner: COUNTY OF ESSEX Square Ft: 4410
 Lot: 26 District: 0713 MONTCLAIR Street: HALL OF RECORDS Year Built: 1830
 Qual: Class: 15D City State: NEWARK, N.J. 07102 Style:

Additional Information

Prior Block: Acct Num: Addl Lots: EPL Code: 3 9 622
 Prior Lot: Mtg Acct: Land Desc: 62390SF Statute: 54:4-3.6
 Prior Qual: Bank Code: 0 Bldg Desc: 2.75S2GF Initial: 110177 Further: 110107
 Updated: 01/26/12 Tax Codes: Class4Cd: 0 Desc: PARK
 Zone: R1 Map Page: Acreage: 1.4323 Taxes: 0.00 / 0.00

Sale Information

Sale Date: 04/15/09 Book: 12190 Page: 9872 Price: 1100000 NU#: 17
 Sr1a Date Book Page Price NU# Ratio Grantee
[More Info](#) 04/15/09 12190 9872 1100000 17 0 COUNTY OF ESSEX
[More Info](#) 05/25/10 12264 2679 1 15 0 COUNTY OF ESSEX

TAX-LIST-HISTORY

Year	Owner Information	Land/Imp/Tot	Exemption	Assessed
2012	COUNTY OF ESSEX HALL OF RECORDS NEWARK, N.J. 07102	404800	0	975500
2011	COUNTY OF ESSEX HALL OF RECORDS NEWARK, N.J. 07102	771000	0	1406600
2010	COUNTY OF ESSEX HALL OF RECORDS NEWARK, N.J. 07102	771000	0	1406600
2009	CITIZEN'S COMM PRESBY MEM IRIS GAR 474 UPPER MOUNTAIN AVENUE MONTCLAIR, N.J. 07043	771000	0	1406600

Appendix B: Base Survey

NEW JERSEY OFFICE OF CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
HISTORIC PRESERVATION SECTION
INDIVIDUAL STRUCTURE SURVEY FORM

HISTORIC SITES INVENTORY NO. 0713 037

HISTORIC NAME:	Dittig/Walther House	COMMON NAME:	
LOCATION:	474 Upper Mountain Ave.	BLOCK/LOT	0802/26; 6-G/21
MUNICIPALITY:	Montclair	COUNTY:	Essex
USGS QUAD:	Orange	UTM REFERENCES:	Zone/Northing/Easting
OWNER/ADDRESS:	Citizens Committee for the Presby Memorial Iris Gardens		

DESCRIPTION

Construction Date: Circa 1858 Source of Date: National Register -- Nomination Form

Architect: Builder:

Style: Vernacular home w/ 2nd Empire elements. Form/Plan Type: Extended square

Number of Stories: 2½ + B

Foundation: Stone

Exterior Wall Fabric: Clapboard

Fenestration: 5 bays; 2/2 D.H. sash w/ shutters.

Roof/Chimneys: Mansard roof, imbricated slate finish. 2 chimneys, 1 interior & 1 exterior end. Flat roof over rear wing.

Additional Architectural Description:

A porch w/ sloping roof, square section columns & open balustrade extends across main elevation.

The center entrance w/ double doors is flanked by two 2/2 shuttered windows on either side.

Brackets extend below all the roofs & all of the windows have cornices above.

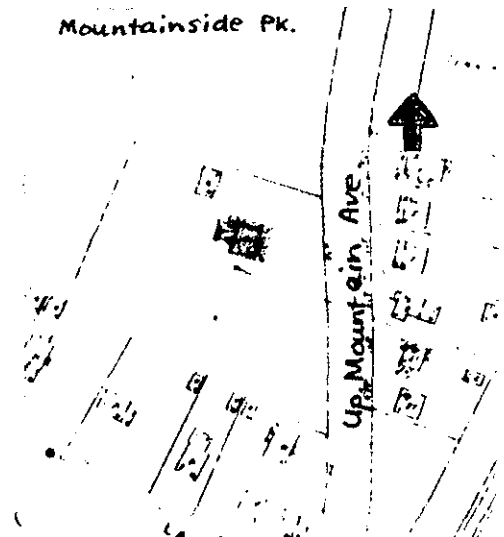
Alterations/modifications: The front porch is later & not part of the original structure.

A two story bay extends to the south.

PHOTO Negative File No. R2, 15



Map (Indicate North)



NEW JERSEY DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION, OFFICE OF CULTURAL AND ENVIRONMENTAL SERVICES
HISTORIC PRESERVATION SECTION, 109 WEST STATE STREET, TRENTON, NEW JERSEY 08625 (609) 292-2023

SITING, BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION, AND RELATED STRUCTURES:

House sited at center of 233' x 274' lot.

Small outbuilding exists on the north-west corner of the property.

SURROUNDING ENVIRONMENT: Urban Suburban Scattered Buildings
 Open Space Woodland Residential Agricultural Village
 Industrial Downtown Commercial Highway Commercial Other

SIGNIFICANCE:

This house & gardens, along with the Presby Memorial Iris Gardens, is adjacent to Mountainside Park and form an important horticultural complex which was designated to the National Register in October, 1980. The house with its distinctive Mansard roof now serves as the headquarters of the non-profit organization, the Citizens Committee of the Presby Memorial Iris Gardens. It was built circa 1858 by a farmer, George A. Dittig, who acquired the property in 1853. A sandstone house which previously stood on the property was demolished prior to World War I.

For many years this had been the home of Mr. and Mrs. Frederick P. Walther. Mrs. Walther was a leader in the effort to obtain the vote for women. She was instrumental in having the adjacent property to the north established as a Montclair municipal park, Mountainside Park. This preserved the last area in the community where one can still view the tree-covered slope of the Watchung Mountains, which form the western edge of the town. The Iris gardens were established in Mountainside Park through the efforts of Mrs. Walthers and her citizens committee. In 1927 these gardens were named for (continued under Comments)

ORIGINAL USE: Residential PRESENT USE: Horticultural Center
 PHYSICAL CONDITION: Excellent Good Fair Poor
 REGISTER ELIGIBILITY: Yes Possible No Part of District
 THREATS TO SITE: Roads Development Zoning Deterioration
 No Threat Other

COMMENTS:

Frank Presby, a prominent Montclair resident and a founding director of the American Iris Society. Mrs. Walther continued to serve the iris gardens as chairman of the citizens committee until her death in 1977. She was a well known horticulturist and with her supervision, the Presby Iris Gardens became known as the "finest collection of all kinds of iris in the U.S.". Mrs. Walther also developed her own projects with rare plant material.

REFERENCES:

Sidney, J. C. Map of Essex County, Newark: Hiram A. Belding, 1850.

"National Register of Historic Places Inventory--Nomination Form", Feb. 18, 1980.

RECORDED BY: Eleanor Price DATE: 2/18/81
 ORGANIZATION: Preservation Montclair

Property Name: DITTIG-WALTHER HOUSE "PRESBY MEMORIAL IRIS GARDENS"			
Street Address:	474 Upper Mountain Avenue	Nearest Cross Street:	Laurel Place
Apt/Unit #:		Local Place Name:	Upper Montclair
Municipality:	Montclair	Ward (District):	1 (9)
Zip Code:	07043	Block / Lots:	0802 / 26
County:	Essex	Map Reference:	6-G/21
USGS Quad:	Orange	Lot Size:	233' x 274'
Owner Name:	Presby Memorial Iris Gardens	Ownership Type:	Private - Nonprofit
Owner Address:	474 Upper Mountain Ave., Montclair	Ownership Updated:	

Property Description

This house with its distinctive mansard roof now serves as the headquarters of the non-profit organization, the Citizens Committee of the Presby Memorial Iris Gardens. It was built circa 1858 by a farmer, George A. Dittig, who acquired the property in 1853. A colonial sandstone house which previously stood on the property was demolished prior to World War I. For many years this had been the home of Mr. and Mrs. Fredrick P. Walther. Mrs. Walther was a leader in the effort to obtain the vote for women. She was instrumental in having the adjacent property to the north established as a Montclair municipal park, Mountainside Park. This preserved the last area in the community where one can still view the tree-covered slope of the Watchung Mountains, which form the western edge of the town. The iris gardens were established in Mountainside Park through the efforts of Mrs. Walthers and her citizens committee.

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Current Photograph

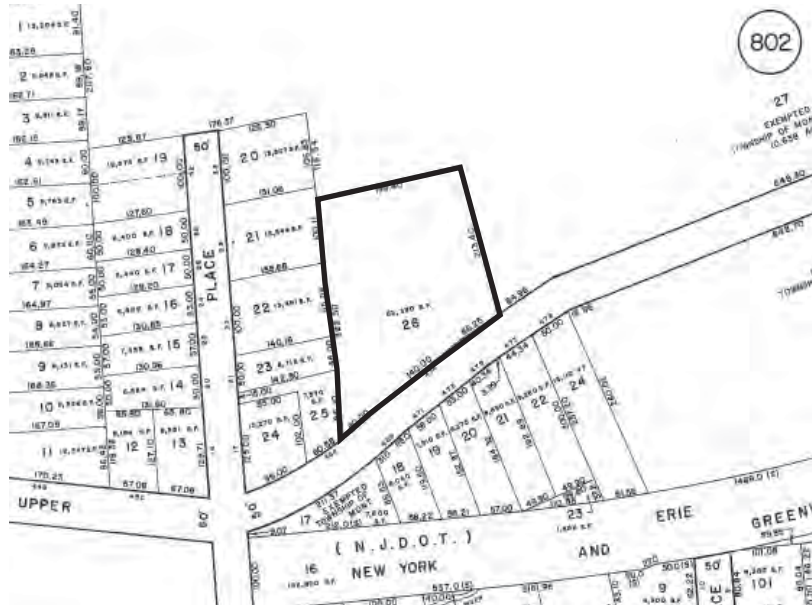


Elevation: East **Image File #:** 0713037-7.jpg **Ref:** 6/21/12

Registration and Status Dates: **NHL** 9/17/80 **NR** 6/25/80 **SR** # 80002493 **SHPO** # 1171 **DOE** **LOCAL / OTHER**

Registry Note:
Historic Theme: *Representative Style Architecture*
MPS Name:

Maps
(2.75" x 3")



Bibliography & Sources

Sidney, J.C. Map of Essex County. Newark: Hiram A. Belding, 1850.
Price, Eleanor M. Individual Structure Survey: Site #0713037," Preservation Montclair, 2/18/1981.
Historic Narrative courtesy of the Presby Memorial Iris Gardens.

Additional Information

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Continuation sheet attached? Update sheet attached? More research needed?

INTENSIVE LEVEL USE ONLY							
Within A Historic District?	None					Status:	Pending
Associated Archaeological Site/Deposit?	None						
Attachments Included:	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building	<input type="checkbox"/> Structure	Object	Landscape	Bridge	Industry	

Property Name: **DITTIG-WALTHER HOUSE "PRESBY MEMORIAL IRIS GARDENS"**

Property Description

BUILDING DESCRIPTION

The Dittig-Walther House is a large five-bay vernacular farmhouse constructed circa 1858, with a distinctive mansard roof added sometime in the late 1800s. There is a large front porch with a sloping metal roof and an open square section balustrade which was added in the early twentieth century and is not original to the structure. There is also a single story rear wing which is a later addition. The exterior walls are painted wood clapboards. The fenestration is 2/2 double hung wood windows, which probably date from the Second Empire style building alterations. The sash is shuttered and there are decorative scrolled window heads above each main window. There are three gabled dormers across the east facade, punctured into the imbricated slate finish of the mansard roof. The boxed roof cornice contains heavy scrolled brackets, which are also evident above the two-story bay window extension which extends from the southern facade and is a later improvement.

A small early twentieth century frame outbuilding, used for horticultural purposes, sits on the northwest corner of the property.

GARDENS HISTORY

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In 2009, Essex County purchased the Walther House and Grounds from the Citizens Committee, saving the gardens from an uncertain future. The Citizens Committee leases the house and grounds and continues to fund raise the cost of operating the gardens.

Appendix C: National Register Nomination Report

NEW JERSEY AND NATIONAL REGISTER FILE REORGANIZATION - 1980-1981
Summary Sheet

NAME Abolitionist Center Memorial Iris Gardens
MUNICIPALITY Montclair COUNTY Essex Co.

Nomination Form:

Final Nomination Form Signed Unsigned

U.S.G.S. Map Photocopy

Other Maps Survey Map

Plan(s): Site Floor 1st & 2nd Fls.

Photographs:

	<u>Identified</u>	<u>Unidentified</u>	<u>Inadequate Coverage</u>
Exterior	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Interior	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Streetscapes	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Outbuildings	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Historical	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>
Overviews	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>

Negatives:

Same as prints Less than prints Additional Negatives

Slides: interior & exterior shots & overviews - adequate

Boundaries:

No precise boundaries Defined in nomination
Defined by map Latitude & longitude
U.T.M.'s Boundary justification

National Register notification of listing to SHPO:

Copies of final approved nomination:

Other: _____

SHPO Notification Letters:

Intent to nominate National Register State Register
Owner list

Supplemental Information:

N.J.H.S.I. _____ Draft nomination _____
Newspaper/Magazine articles _____ Recent correspondence
Local ordinance data _____ Maps _____ HABS _____
Other Synopsis

Materials in Storage:

Public Meeting notification _____ Draft nomination
Newspaper articles _____ Correspondence _____
Historical information _____ Other Copies of Maps

SUMMARY OF NOMINATION INFORMATION IN ONJH FILES

NAME Horticultural Center - Memorial Iris Gardens
 COUNTY Essex
 MUNICIPALITY Montclair Town

TYPE:
 Individual X
 Historic District
 Multiple Property
 Documentation Form

NOMINATION FORM

ONJH FILES

- Nomination form (If there are continuation sheets, please indicate number) ✓ CS:
- First page (#1-6) ✓ CS: 1
- Description (#7) ✓ CS: 3
- Significance (#8) ✓ CS: 2
- Last page (#9-11) ✓
- SHPO Signatures ✓
- USGS Map ✓
- Site plan ✓
- Tax map
- Floorplan ✓
- Photo index map
- Other maps
- Photographs (Indicate number) ✓
- Exterior 9 (plus 3 photocopied photos)
- Interior 4 (plus 1 photocopied photo)
- Streetscapes 2 (plus 2 photocopied photos)
- Outbuildings
- Historical
- Negatives ✓
- Contact Sheet

DATE OF LISTING

State Register 6/25/80
 National Register 9/17/80

SUPPLEMENTAL INFORMATION

N.J.H.S.I. # Draft Nomination
 Newspaper/Magazine Articles Correspondence
 HABS Contextual Data
 Other (Please specify)

STAFF MEMBER Beth Goldstein DATE 6/27/91
 UPDATES: STAFF DATE
 STAFF DATE



STATE OF NEW JERSEY
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL PROTECTION
OFFICE OF THE COMMISSIONER
P. O. BOX 1390
TRENTON, N. J. 08625
609-292-2885

June 25, 1980

Ms. Carol D. Shull
Acting Keeper of the National Register
Heritage Conservation and Recreation
Service
Department of the Interior
18th and C Streets, N.W.
Washington, D.C. 20243


Dear Ms. Shull:

I am pleased to nominate the Presby Memorial Iris Gardens, Montclair, Essex County to the National Register.

This nomination has received the majority approval of the State Review Committee for Historic Sites and is being submitted under the new regulations.

Should you want any further information concerning this application, please feel free to contact the staff of the Office of Historic Preservation, Department of Environmental Protection, 109 West State Street, Trenton, New Jersey 08625, telephone (609) 292-2023.

Sincerely,


Betty Wilson
Deputy State Historic
Preservation Officer

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

**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
Presby Memorial Iris Gardens Horticultural Center
AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
474 Upper Mountain Avenue (see maps attached) NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CITY, TOWN
Montclair VICINITY OF 11th CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT
STATE New Jersey CODE 34 COUNTY Essex CODE 013

3 CLASSIFICATION

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

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Citizens Committee of the Presby Memorial Gardens of Montclair, Inc.
and the Town of Montclair
STREET & NUMBER
474 Upper Mountain Avenue
CITY, TOWN
Montclair VICINITY OF STATE
New Jersey

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Essex County Court House
STREET & NUMBER
High Street at Market Street
CITY, TOWN
Newark STATE
New Jersey

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
N.J. Historic Sites Inventory
DATE
 FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Office of Historic Preservation
CITY, TOWN
Trenton STATE
New Jersey

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

The mid-nineteenth century residence at 474 Upper Mountain Avenue, Upper Montclair, New Jersey, owned by the Citizens' Committee of the Presby Memorial Iris Gardens of Montclair, Inc. is a three story, almost square Victorian structure showing both Second Empire and Italianate influences. It has a mansard roof covered with fishscale shingles above the third floor level. The flat upper roof probably has sheet metal base. It now covered with tar and felt. The main cornice is supported by curved wooden brackets spaced about two feet on centers. The exterior frames of windows and doors are free adaptations of classic moldings, with whimsical Victorian touches. Windows in general are two panes over two, but the rear wing has several six over six windows, which appeared to be earlier than the others.

The Walthers made alterations to the building from time to time including: (1) removal of a partition, two fireplaces, a chimney, which originally separated the two southside parlors; (2) built a new chimney and fireplace on the south wall of the above converted living room; (3) removed a back stair and installed an elevator; (4) installed a new first floor bathroom; (5) modernized the kitchen; (6) rebuilt the long east porch with plain posts and cornice.

None of the above changes affected severely the overall mid-nineteenth century character of the house.

The interior trim, built up of heavy classic moldings about 9" wide, is typical of a style which became fashionable about that time in northern New Jersey. The main entrance with its double doors and transom is a good example of this trend.

The rooms and halls, upstairs and down, are distinguished by complex run plaster cornices and most of the ceilings have fancy molded plaster medallions centered in the rooms for the hanging of lighting fixtures. The garage shown on the plot plan is an open fronted lean-to type structure built circa 1940 which is used to store equipment and supplies used in connection with the Citizens' Committee's property and the Iris Gardens.

The foundation for a former brownstone home formerly located on the property is indicated with a dotted line on the plot plan.

Attached is a map specifically delineating the boundaries of the nominated property which includes the House and the Iris Gardens.

NR 1000
1000

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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7. DESCRIPTION (Continued)

The overall setting is as follows: Mountainside Park is a Montclair municipal park located in the northwest end of the Town of approximately 33 acres in size. The park is intersected by Highland Avenue and Upper Mountain Avenue, two main north/south Montclair streets. The approximately 3.5 acres east of Upper Mountain is flat and is actively used for tennis (8 municipal clay courts), swimming (a small municipal pool open in the summer only), basketball (a small paved court) and softball or touch football depending on the season. The southern half of the sloping field between Upper Mountain and Highland is used for the iris gardens and the northern half, separated by a hedge of brush and trees, is used for sledding in the winter. West of Highland is a steep tree covered slope through which rambles a nature trail maintained by the Montclair Parks Department and the Montclair Nature Center who conduct educational tours on the fauna and geology of the area for school children and other groups. On the top of the hill to the west but not visible from Montclair is the 115 acre Mills reservation maintained by Essex County.

The Victorian property (Lot 26, Block 802) owned by the Citizens' Committee of the Presby Memorial Iris Gardens of Montclair, Inc. is approximately 1.43 acres in size, fronts the west side of Upper Mountain Avenue at the south end of Mountainside Park.

Sought for historical site designation is the 1 1/2 acre and Victorian house and that portion of Mountainside Park covered by the iris gardens as laid out on the enclosed maps.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) Horticultural	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1922-27

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Landscaper - John Wister

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Presby Memorial Iris Gardens is an internationally recognized horticultural site which has specialized in the cultivation, development, and study of irises since its creation in 1927.

The building associated with the gardens was built around 1860 and is a good local expression of Second Empire pattern book architecture with Italianate features.

The gardens themselves were planned by landscape architect John Wister, a noted botanist of the early to mid 20th century. Wister wrote several botany books in his lifetime, one of which, The Iris (1927) is considered a classic in its genre.

This application covers both an architecturally significant Victorian home owned for many years by the Walthers and an adjacent complex of internationally renowned iris gardens maintained under the supervision of the Presby Memorial Iris Gardens of Montclair, Inc., and approximately three acres of park land owned by the Town of Montclair.

A sandstone house formerly standing on the property (see dotted outline on the enclosed map) was used by a number of different farmers who worked this land. George A. Dittig, a farmer who acquired the property in 1853, lived in this sandstone house. Some time prior to 1860, he decided to build for himself and his family a mansion which is the house for which historic site designation is being sought. The house was finished sometime prior to 1860. It is believed that the sandstone house was demolished sometime just prior to the First World War.

In 1919, the property was purchased by Mr. and Mrs. Frederick P. Walther. Mr. Walther was an engineer employed in the insurance industry to rate towns and buildings on their fire ratings. Mr. Walther was transferred to New York from Chicago around 1914.

Mrs. Walther was a leader in the effort to obtain the vote for women. When the 19th Amendment was passed, Mrs. Walther was one of those suffragette leaders whom Colonel House phoned from the White House to relay President Wilson's congratulations.

The coming of the railroad permitted businessmen to commute daily to New York City. This caused a conversion of land use from farms to residential. The west edge of Montclair is bounded by the Watchung Mountains. Those visiting and living in the town while it was a farming community looked across open fields to a wooded hillside topped in some areas by a hundred foot cliff, obviously a beautiful vista. Because of World War I, the only area in Montclair where this vista was still seen was looking west over the open field just to the north of the Walther property. Mrs.

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8. SIGNIFICANCE (Continued).

Walther was ahead of her time in appreciating the value of preserving land in a park for passive use and for this vista. It was her belief that such an area put into a park could be as valuable to the spirit as was a recreation area in a park for the body.

Mrs. Walther approached the governing body to attempt to persuade them to acquire the open fields to the north of her property for this purpose. The elected officials expressed some reservation and said that they would not be willing to acquire the property for that purpose unless she was able to bring in a petition seeking this with 5,000 signatures. Mobilizing many sectors of the town including the Boy Scouts and the Girl Scouts, the 5,000 signatures were acquired. The governing body advised her that not all of the 5,000 signatures were those of registered voters. However, they did agree to put the matter on the ballot. Again a massive educational effort was organized by Mrs. Walther and in the election of November 8, 1921, the people of Montclair did vote in a nonbinding referendum to have the Town acquire this area as a park. The Commission then moved to implement the citizens' decision, passing an ordinance appropriating the necessary funds on February 14, 1922.

Montclair's mayor at that time, Mayor Lardner, expressed some reservation about the ability of the Town to supervise the type of project Mrs. Walther had in mind for the preservation of this open space, and he requested Mrs. Walther to chair a citizens' committee whose task it would be to be responsible for implementing the people's wishes.

Mrs. Walther accepted this challenge. The citizens' committee was formed and a decision was made by the citizens' committee with the concurrence of the governing body to establish an iris garden. Mr. John Wister, an internationally known horticulturist and hybridizer, agreed to lay out the beds. Mr. Wister was founding director of the American Iris Society. Mrs. Walther was chairman of the citizens' committee which was responsible for these iris gardens until her death in 1977. She lived in the Victorian home for which historical site status is being sought adjacent to these iris gardens during that entire time.

Mrs. Walther was a well-known and highly regarded horticulturist in her own right. She developed her own property with rare plant material, much of which remains and is cared for by the present owners of the home.

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8. SIGNIFICANCE (Continued)

The iris gardens on the Town property were named the Presby Memorial Iris Gardens in 1927 in honor of Mr. Frank Presby, a prominent Montclair resident, a director of the Montclair Art Museum and a leader in other community endeavors. Mr. Presby was also a founding director of the American Iris Society. Under Mrs. Walther's constant care and supervision, these iris gardens became the finest collection of all kinds of iris in the United States if not the world. Iris gardens in Dallas, Texas, and in Florence, Italy, display plaques describing their debt to these Montclair gardens for many of their specimen plantings.

Mrs. Walther was honored with a number of awards for her contribution in bringing Montclair and New Jersey the distinction of having perhaps the finest iris gardens in the world. In 1962, she was awarded the Joint Service Clubs Annual Award by the service clubs of Montclair. She was awarded the "Golden Plants" Award by the Men's Garden Club of America, an award given to outstanding women gardeners.

The gardens reached two pinnacles of international recognition when the American Iris Society held its 41st and 46th Annual Conventions there in 1961 and 1966. The garden is internationally renowned and the Historical Bed alone contains over 900 varieties of iris which predate 1922, including the "Florentina" which dates back to 1500. Some specimens here are no longer found in their native habitat.

Of historical importance to Montclair and indeed to New Jersey is the open sweep of fields from the gardens to the wooded hillside and cliffs a thousand feet to the west. As mentioned earlier, this is the only example of this left in Montclair which looks like what this former farming community looked like in the 18th and 19th centuries.

Iris are one of the few plants that reproduce both vegetatively and sexually. In effect, an iris can live forever, which means that you can have, side by side, many generations of a family. Dr. W. McGarvey of S.U.N.Y (Oswego) has predicted that one day the Presby Gardens will be designated a genetic laboratory because nowhere else in the world except in New Jersey is there so complete a catalogued array of successive generations for the study of genetics.

A non-profit organization, the Citizens Committee for the Presby Memorial Iris Gardens of Montclair, Inc., was formed in 1965 to insure the perpetuity of the iris gardens. This non-profit corporation bought the Walther property in 1977 with the intention of providing a headquarters near the gardens where records could be kept, educational activities carried on, volunteer workers would meet, and garden tools

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8. SIGNIFICANCE (Continued)

could be stored. Thus the house and its yard are really an integral part of the garden complex. This Citizens Committee has also permitted the house to be used by other horticulturally related groups, and this practice is expected to be continued with the Committee retaining the ongoing right to decide if such requested usage conflicts with the goals of the Committee.

The park, gardens, and house form a unique contribution that Monclair and New Jersey should preserve.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See Continuation Sheet

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 4.5

QUADRANGLE NAME Orange, NJ QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A	1,8	5,6,6	9,7,0	4,5	2,2	4,4,0	B	1,8	5,6,6	9,5,0	4,5	2,2	1,7,0
	ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING			ZONE	EASTING		NORTHING			
C	1,8	5,6,6	7,6,0	4,5	2,2	3,7,0	D	1,8	5,6,6	8,8,0	4,5	2,2	4,8,0
E							F						
G							H						

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The horticultural center is located on Lot 26, Block 802 and that portion of Mountain-side Park containing the iris gardens is delineated on attached map prepared by R. P. Vicari dated February 13, 1980.

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

FORM PREPARED BY

Revised by the Office of Historic Preservation

NAME / TITLE

William B. Grant, Vice Chairman

ORGANIZATION Citizens Committee of the Presby Memorial
Iris Gardens of Montclair, Inc.

DATE

2/18/1980

STREET & NUMBER

474 Upper Mountain Avenue

TELEPHONE (201) 783-5000

(201) 783-5974

CITY OR TOWN

Upper Montclair

STATE

New Jersey 07042

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.

Deputy

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

TITLE

Deputy Commissioner, Dept. of Environmental Protection

DATE

6-25-80

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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date entered

Continuation sheet

Bibliography

Item number 9

Page 1

Deed to Geo. Dettig - Book G 11, page 332

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The Gardeners Chronicle of America, 2/1946.

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10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

IRIS MEMORIAL GARDENS

MOUNTAINSIDE PARK

Beginning at a point in the westerly line of Upper Mountain Avenue at the north-east corner of lands now or formerly of Frederick P. Walther, said point being distant 422.83 feet northerly as measured along the said line of Upper Mountain Avenue from its intersection with the northerly line of Laurel Place, and running:

Thence (1) N. 0°-37'-30" E. along the westerly line of Upper Mountain Avenue a distance of 84.96 feet to an angle point in said line;

Thence (2) N. 12°-17'-40"E. and still along the westerly line of Upper Mountain Avenue a distance of 510.00 feet to a point;

Thence (3) N. 78°-16'-30" W. a distance of 341.83 feet to a point in the easterly line of Highland Avenue;

Thence (4) Southerly along the easterly line of Highland Avenue on a curve to the right with a radius of 1029.61 feet, an arc distance of 301.20 feet to a point of tangency in said line;

Thence (5) S. 30°-15'-20" W. and still along the easterly line of Highland Avenue a distance of 411.53 feet to a point;

Thence (6) S. 63°-02'-20" E. a distance of 308.92 feet to a point said point being the southwest corner of lands now or formerly of Frederick P. Walther;

Thence (7) N. 19°-26' E. along the westerly line of said lands of Walther a distance of 199.40 to the northwest corner of lands of Walther;

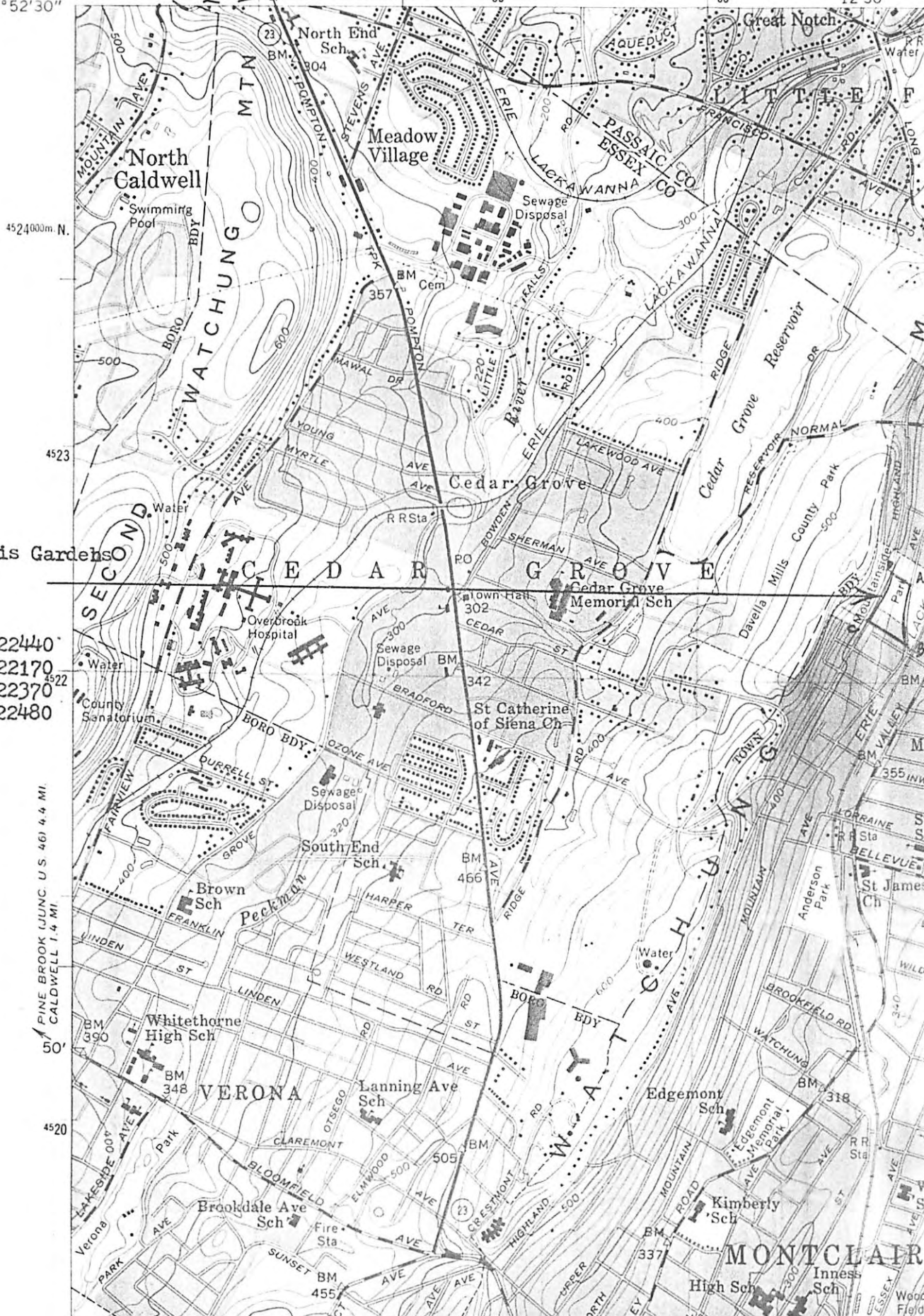
Thence (8) S. 71°-50'-20" W. along the northerly line of lands of Walther a distance of 213.40 feet to the westerly line of Upper Mountain Avenue the point or place of Beginning.

6165 IV NE
(POMPTON PLAINS)

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

FRANKLIN 29 MI.
MOUNTAIN VIEW 2.9 MI.

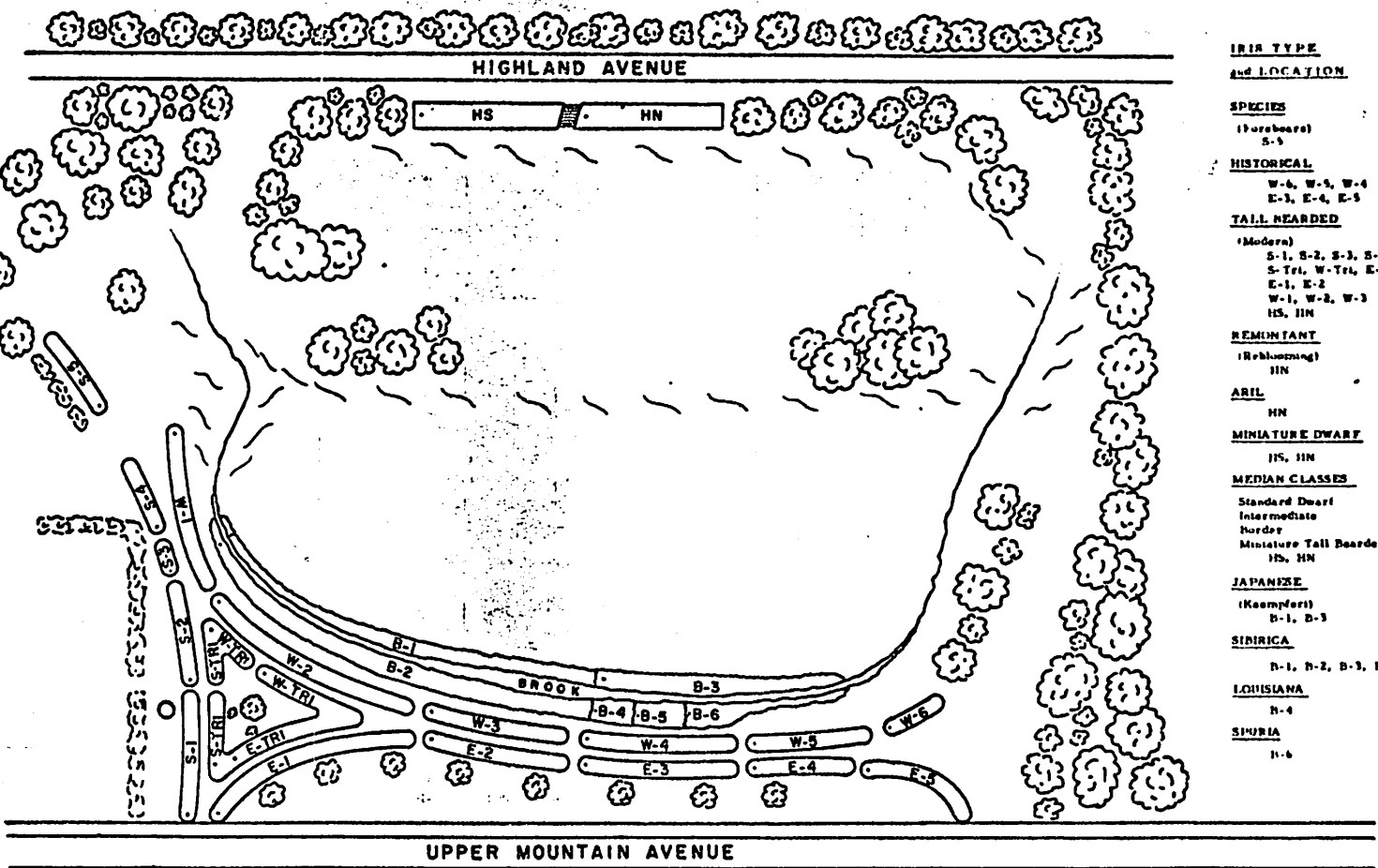
74°15' 564000m E. 565 566 12'30" 19 N
40°52'30"



Esby Memorial Iris Gardens
Stclair
Essex County, NJ
UTM References:
A-18/566970/4522440
B-18/566950/4522170
C-18/566760/4522370
D-18/566880/4522480

PINE BROOK (JUNC. U.S. 46) 4.4 MI.
CALDWELL 1.4 MI.

0



**IRIS TYPE
and LOCATION**

SPECIES

(Porebeard)
S-5

HISTORICAL

W-6, W-5, W-4
E-3, E-4, E-5

TAIL BEARDED

(Modern)
S-1, S-2, S-3, B-4
S-TRI, W-TRI, E-TRI
E-1, E-2
W-1, W-2, W-3
HS, HN

REMNANT

(Reblooming)
HN

ARIL

HN

MINIATURE DWARF

HS, HN

MEDIAN CLASSES

Standard Dwarf
Intermediate
Border
Miniature Tall Bearded
HS, HN

JAPANESE

(Koopferi)
B-1, D-3

SINIRICA

D-1, D-2, B-3, D-5

LOUISIANA

H-4

SIURIA

H-6

IRIS MEMORIAL GARDENS

DEDICATED 1927 TO

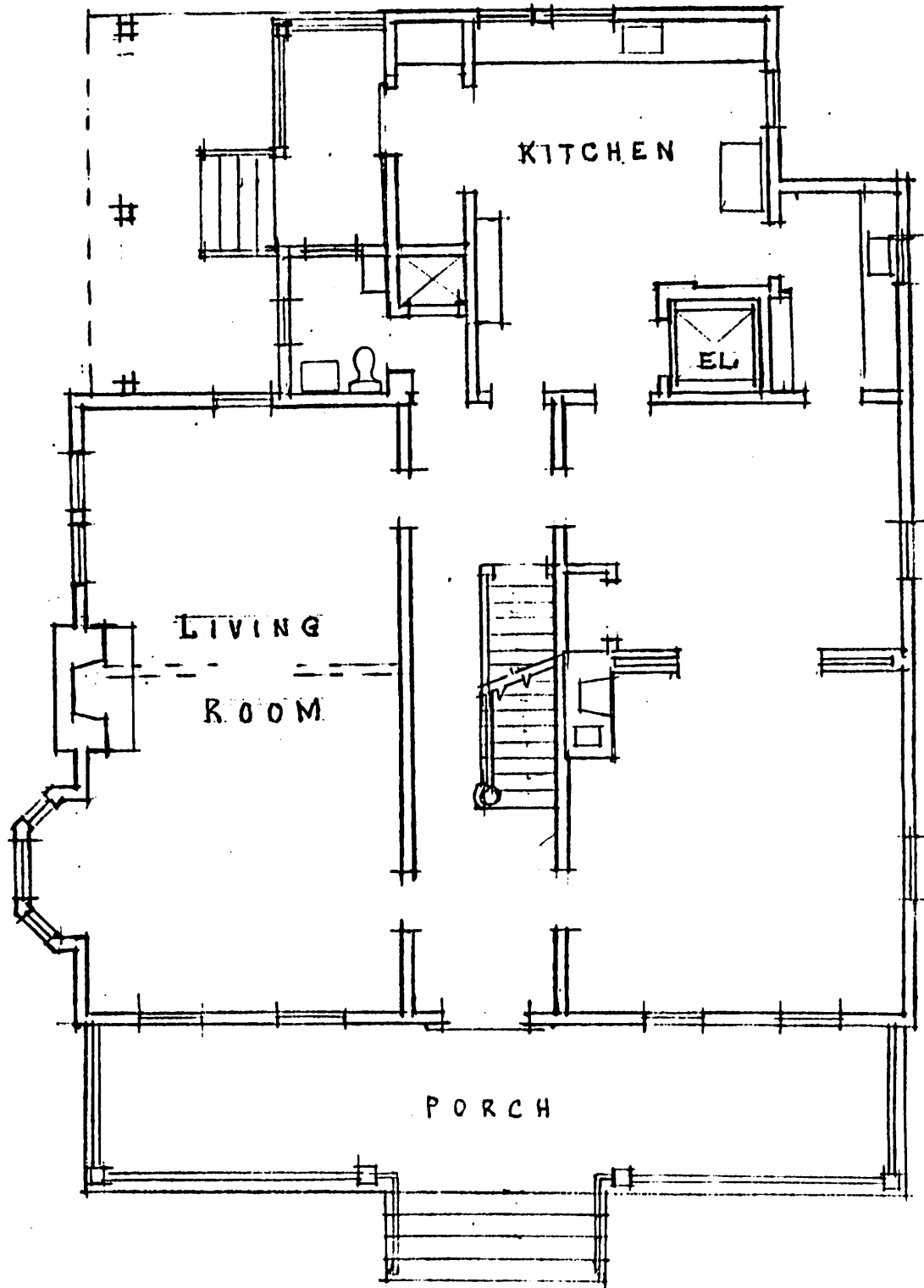
FRANK H. PRESBY

MOUNTAINSIDE PARK MONTCLAIR, NEW JERSEY

THE WALTHER HOUSE

FIRST FLOOR PLAN

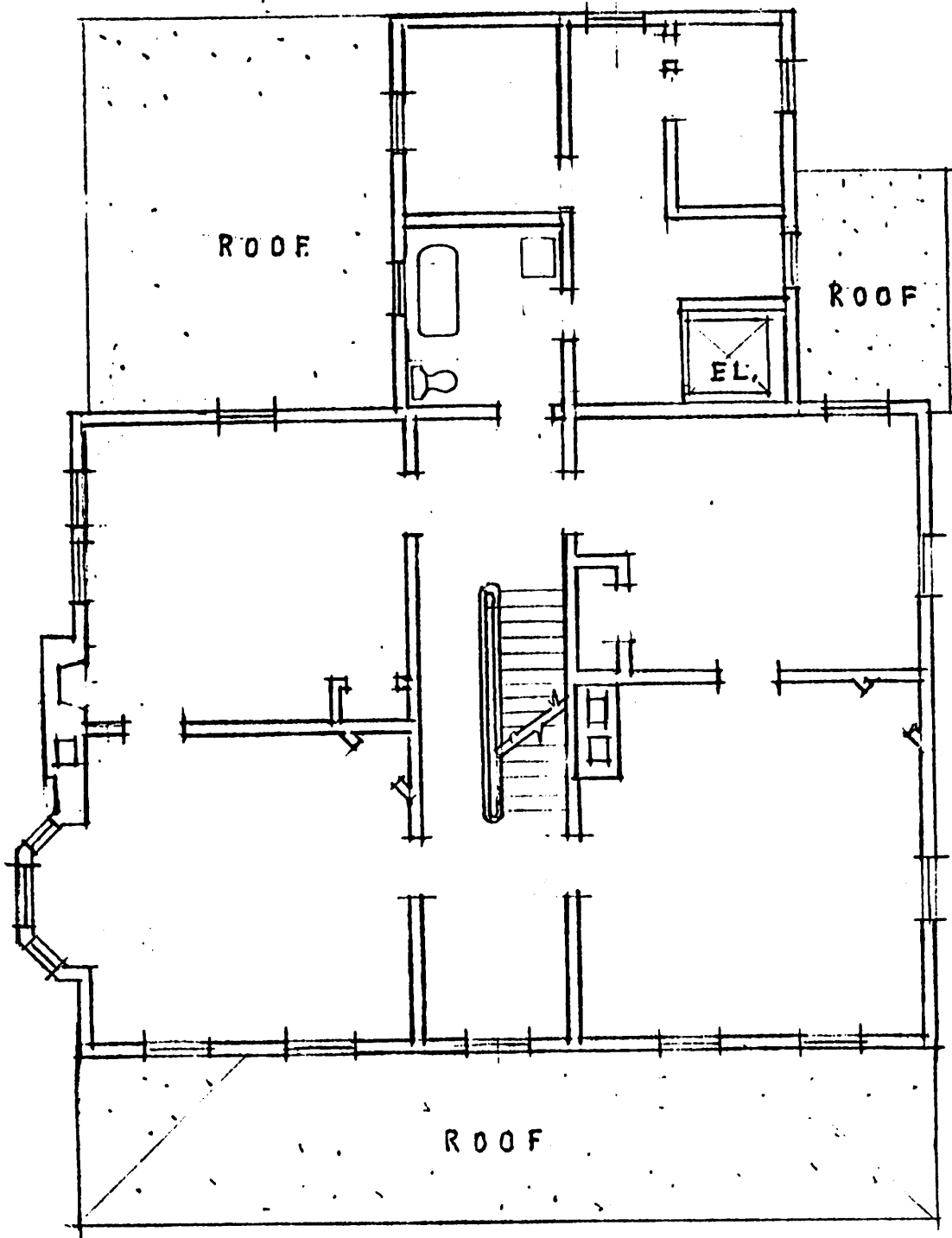
SCALE $\frac{1}{8}'' = 1'-0''$



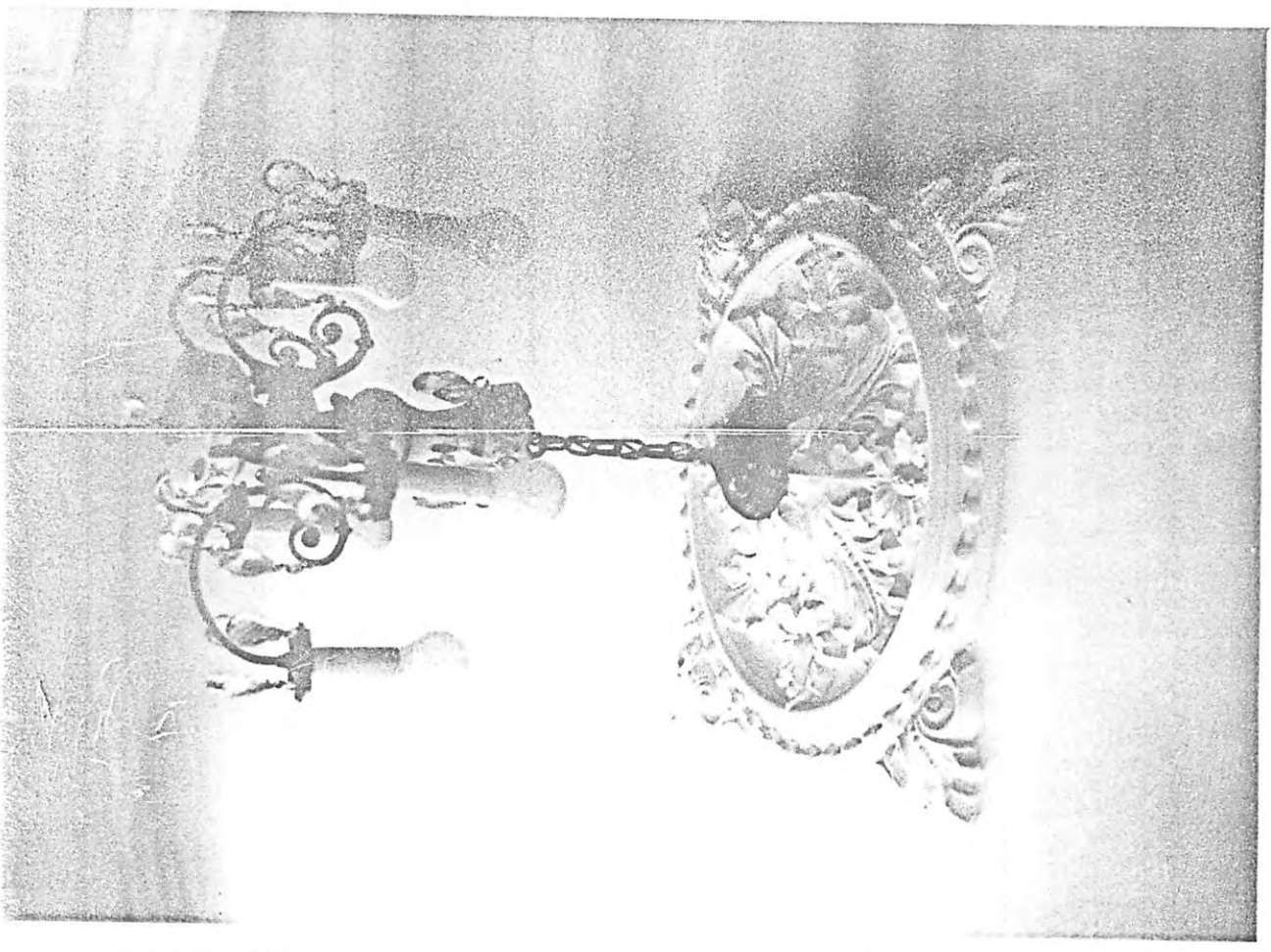
THE WALTHER HOUSE

SECOND FLOOR PLAN

SCALE $\frac{1}{8}'' = 1'-0''$











"Looking northwest"

Bill Grant
c/o 47 Park Street
Montclair, NJ
07042

Horticultural Center - Memorial Iris Gardens
Montclair, Essex Co.



"Looking northeast"

Bill Grant
c/o 47 Park Street
Montclair, NJ
07042

Horticultural Center - Memorial Iris Gardens
Montclair, Essex Co.