

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

ENTERED  
1/30/98

REFNUM 98000040

### National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

REC'D BY OHPO OCT 15 1997

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

#### 1. Name of Property

historic name Levy, Harry Milton, House

other names/site number N/A

#### 2. Location

street & number 2383 Observatory Avenue

not for publication

city or town Cincinnati

vicinity

state Ohio

code OH

county Hamilton

code 061

zip code 45208

#### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Barbara Pauer Dept. Head  
Planning, Inventory & Registration Date 12-19-97  
Signature of certifying official/Title  
Ohio Historic Preservation Office -- OH SHPO

State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

#### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain): \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Levy House  
Name of Property

Hamilton County, Ohio  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

| Contributing | Noncontributing |            |
|--------------|-----------------|------------|
| 2            |                 | buildings  |
|              |                 | sites      |
|              |                 | structures |
|              |                 | objects    |
| 2            | 0               | Total      |

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

NA

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic, single dwelling

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic, single dwelling

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and Early 20th Century

American Movements: Bungalow/Craftsman/

Tudor Revival

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls Stone

Half timber with brick

roof Terra Cotta tile

other

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1917

Significant Dates

1917

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

Levy House  
Name of Property

Hamilton County, Ohio  
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

Cincinnati East, Ohio Quadrangle

|      |         |          |         |
|------|---------|----------|---------|
| 1    | 16      | 720000   | 4334970 |
| Zone | Easting | Northing |         |

|      |         |          |  |
|------|---------|----------|--|
| 3    |         |          |  |
| Zone | Easting | Northing |  |

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

Includes city lot on which the building is located.

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Walter E. Langsam, Beth A. Sullebarger

organization Cincinnati Preservation Association date September 19, 1997

street & number 342 West Fourth Street telephone (513) 721-4506

city or town Cincinnati state Ohio zip code 45202

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Mr. & Mrs. Andrew M. Jamison, III

street & number 2383 Observatory Avenue telephone (513) 321-4753

city or town Cincinnati state Ohio zip code 45208

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Levy, Harry Milton, House  
Cincinnati, Ohio

The Harry Milton Levy House is an impressive single-family dwelling located at a prominent corner in the Hyde Park section of Cincinnati. The principal facade (north elevation) faces Observatory Avenue and sits on a rectangular property 109-feet wide and 300-feet deep. The Levy property abuts the Cincinnati Country Club grounds to the east and south, and a triangular lot along Madison Road to the west. The latter lot was originally a side-yard for the Levy House, but was sold by the widowed Mrs. Jeannette Feiss Levy in 1941, and low-rise modern apartment buildings were built on it. However, extensive plantings screen the Levy House from this lot as well as Observatory Avenue.

Irregular in plan, the main rooms are arranged along a lateral (east-west) hallway, and the kitchen wing extends to the rear at the southeast corner. Consisting of two-and-one-half stories and a basement, the house was constructed with a steel frame, a stone first story and brick and half-timbering above. The relatively low roof, of flat red tiles, consists of a series of hips over the various wings and is punctuated by dormers and wall dormers. Heavy but crisply shaped brackets support the very deep eaves.

The north facade is broken into two planes by a setback near the center (photo #1). The east portion, containing the living room on the first floor and library above, is dramatized by a single, wide, two-story window bay, the most notable feature of the facade. The slightly projecting bay at the first floor is capped by a shallow balcony with a wood railing and surmounted by the large library window. This vertical element, further emphasized by a shallow lift in the roof above, counteracts the horizontal layering of stone and brick and the low roof. The west wing, set back about ten feet, consists of three bays including the recessed formal entrance near the center (photo #2). The doorway features a solid oak door with two vertical panels, flanked by sidelights. The 3-bay west wing contains an enclosed porch on the first floor and a bedroom and narrow sleeping porch above.

The exterior of the Levy House is outstanding in the quality and subtlety of the surface treatment, which presents a warm yet geometrically precise appearance. The foundations and entire first floor are clad in irregularly laid and shaped pieces of gray and tan sandstone with deep mortar joints. The upper walls are clad in red brick, laid in various patterns and contained in half-timbering. Most of the brick panels are laid in regular alternation of headers and stretchers, although some panels have only headers laid vertically, and the rear wall-dormer features a herringbone pattern.

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Levy, Harry Milton, House  
Cincinnati, Ohio

The half-timbering at the second story consists of a heavy horizontal element at the bottom, and slightly lighter ones at window sill height and at the top. Between these, the vertical timbers vary somewhat in rhythm according to the placement and width of the window openings, which are sometimes single but usually grouped. This rhythmic variety contributes to the subtlety of the whole surface: clearly articulated, yet with a certain freedom. The frieze and soffit of the eaves are of darkly stained wood as are the shallow but strong, right-angled brackets. The half-timbering with its warm brick infill evokes a variation of the English Tudor style.

The windows, which are neatly framed by the half-timbering on the upper floors, are quite unusual, being leaded in small rectangular panes, whether casements on the front and sides or double-hung sash at the rear. There are several hipped-roof dormers, with horizontal strip windows lighting the original servants' quarters in the attic (photo #3). All windows are darkly stained to match the other exterior woodwork.

The balance of horizontal and vertical, along with the masterful handling of materials, gives the design a good deal of its distinction. The openings of the main block are narrow, or grouped with vertical articulation. The half-timbering is vertical in effect, as are the tall chimneys piercing the roof. The patinated copper gutters, on the other hand, provide a narrow horizontal line between the walls and roof. Other decorative details include wall-mounted cast-iron light fixtures with globe shades and a charming wall-fountain facing the rear patio within a stone arch (photo #6). The fountain consists of a semicircular basin of smooth stone with a bas-relief plaque in the wall above featuring a child's head flanked by stylized fish.

A few minor alterations have been made to the exterior. The east entrance has been enlarged with an overdoor on heavy brackets and a new stoop with two stone posts topped with stone globes (photo #4). The porch at the southeast corner, with its battered stone walls, once open, has been tastefully enclosed (photo #3). On the rear of the west wing a new roofed pergola extends, terminating at the southwest corner into a low-domed octagonal pavilion (photo #5). Paired square wood pillars resting on stone pedestals support the pavilion's heavily timbered roof, which is compatible with the half-timbering of the house.

## Interior

The north entrance, which appears to have been intended as the main social entrance for the house, opens into a lateral east-west hallway

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Levy, Harry Milton, House  
Cincinnati, Ohio

(photo #9). The original brown Rookwood tile floor, damaged by hard wear and an earlier remodelling, has been replaced by French limestone and marble. From the hall, the solarium is to the west, and the living and dining rooms open off the corridor to the north and south respectively. At the east end of the hall, the main stairhall opens through a three-centered arch. The arch was closed when the house was divided into two units at the end of World War II, and has been reopened. Beside the first flight and below the main landing is the secondary entrance, which has become the main family entrance, directly off the driveway.

The original main living quarters seem to have been oriented away from the golf-course. Only two narrow windows at the east end of the living room, the tall windows on the stair-landing, and an upstairs bedroom originally faced east. Large windows open to the north and south, with generous arched openings in the west wing that originally faced the triangular side-yard.

The interiors of the formal rooms of the Levy House are perhaps more high-style than the exterior. North of the corridor is the large, well-proportioned, and elegant living room, lit by the shallow quadruple square bay on the north, two slender mullioned casement windows on the east flanking the understated fireplace, and a similar window on the west (photo #10). The walls have very shallow regular panelling, now painted white like the ceiling, and an angled plaster cove molding embossed with a floral pattern. The ceiling has thin plaster ribs arranged in a complex geometric pattern, with starbursts and Tudor rosettes as accents, derived from Jacobean examples of the early-17th century.

The dining room features long casement windows flanking a double door to the rear terrace, with a continuous transom (photo #11). Glass doors open into the original solarium to the west. The solarium features bold round arches filled with sturdy mullions, leaded windows, and French doors (photo #12). The front (north) of the solarium wing now contains a lavatory and wet bar, and may always have been separate from the solarium.

The original elaborate kitchen complex in the southeast service wing was probably altered when the house was split into two apartments, and has received the major changes in the recent renovation (photo #13). The originally open back porch has been enclosed, most of the partitions removed, the interior walls panelled, and a completely contemporary kitchen installed. This delightful space now serves as the family living room.

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The main staircase rises to a high landing with three tall leaded windows overlooking the golf course (photo #14). The rather solid unpainted wood railing consists of long panels filled with curvaceous, subtly layered carved Jacobean-style "strapwork." The square newel posts suggest linen-fold panelling, with square wooden urns on top. A much simpler but handsome back staircase is adjacent to the main stairs in the service wing. The main staircase leads to a modest rectangular central second-story hall, with low straight-headed openings except for a segmental arch leading to the southeast service wing.

The main feature of the floor, and perhaps the entire interior, is the great room over the living room. Described as a "library" in a *Cincinnati Times-Star* article dated June 26, 1941, it suggests an artist's studio, with its huge north-facing window, high ceiling, and a well-lit alcove in the northwest corner (photos #15 and 16). Nevertheless, when the most recent renovation began in 1994, the room with its white plaster walls and a few leaded-glass fronted cupboards seemed inadequate as a major room of the house. It was therefore redone as a library, with magnificent mahogany panelling incorporating recessed bookcases throughout, and a heavy beamed ceiling. The woodwork is relieved by delicate Adamesque swags and vertical reeding on the frieze and even the sides of the beams.

The west wing of the second floor consists of three bedrooms and associated bathrooms and closets. There is an original angled bay facing south over the dining room, and wide windows over the solarium wing. At the northwest corner is a recessed sleeping porch with the original concrete floor. The master bedroom suite is now in the south (former service) wing, with exposures on three sides. The third floor contains three bedrooms. Originally there were four, but one was combined with a central corridor to create a sitting room. Built-in wooden lockers remain from the original occupancy by servants.

### Setting

The stone first-story walls have always extended into the landscape through the use of steps, terraces and garden-walls. In this vein, the recent renovation added the terrace at the rear. An original six-foot-high stone wall runs straight south from the southwest corner of the kitchen wing to the south boundary line, enclosing a long rectangular lawn edged with flowerbeds and containing a swimming pool. The property retains mature trees at the periphery supplemented with denser planting to assure privacy from Observatory Avenue and the adjacent apartment buildings to the west. The country club grounds on the east and south are defined by metal fences rather than walls or heavy plantings.



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Anchoring the southeast corner of the lot stands the stone garage with an apartment above. Although according to the 1941 *Times Star* article, the garage was intended to house "five machines" (automobiles), there are only three wide segmental-arched double garage doors, the center one slightly wider. Square in plan, the garage has three or four arched bays on each side. The unifying hipped roof, of the same flat red terra-cotta tiles as the house, is also slightly flared over the deep eaves. On all four sides there are distinctive dormers. Their roofs are jerkin-headed; their windows are cut back into the slopes of the roof, forming a quaint T-shaped elevation. The utilitarian interior of the garage retains the original orange glazed-tile surfaces, wall radiators, concrete floor, and a rotating car-wash device on the ceiling.

## Alterations

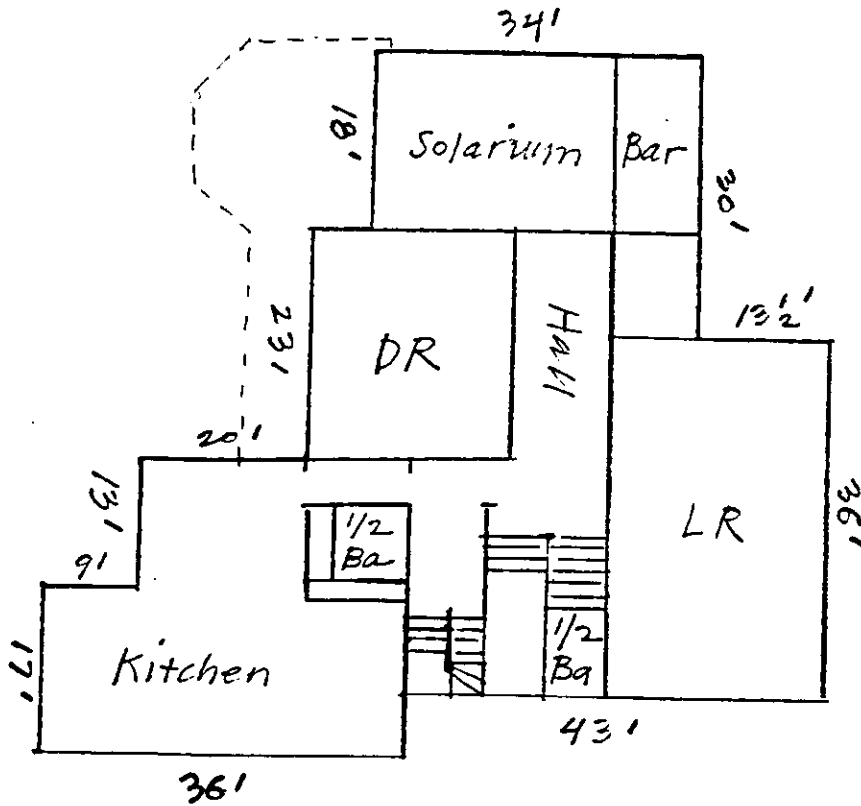
Between 1935 and the end of World War II, the Levy House was converted into two separate horizontally-divided apartments. This involved blocking off the main stairway and installing a kitchen on the second floor of the service wing. In 1992, the property was acquired by the present owners who converted the house back to a single-family dwelling. After several years of rehabilitation, they took residence in 1995. Cincinnati architects Donald Beck & Associates designed the reconversion, which involved a few appropriate alterations, such as enlarging the original kitchen by removing pantries, enclosing the porch and adding the timber-framed pergola on the rear, enhancing the entrance on the east elevation, redesigning the library, and relocating the front walk farther away from the house.

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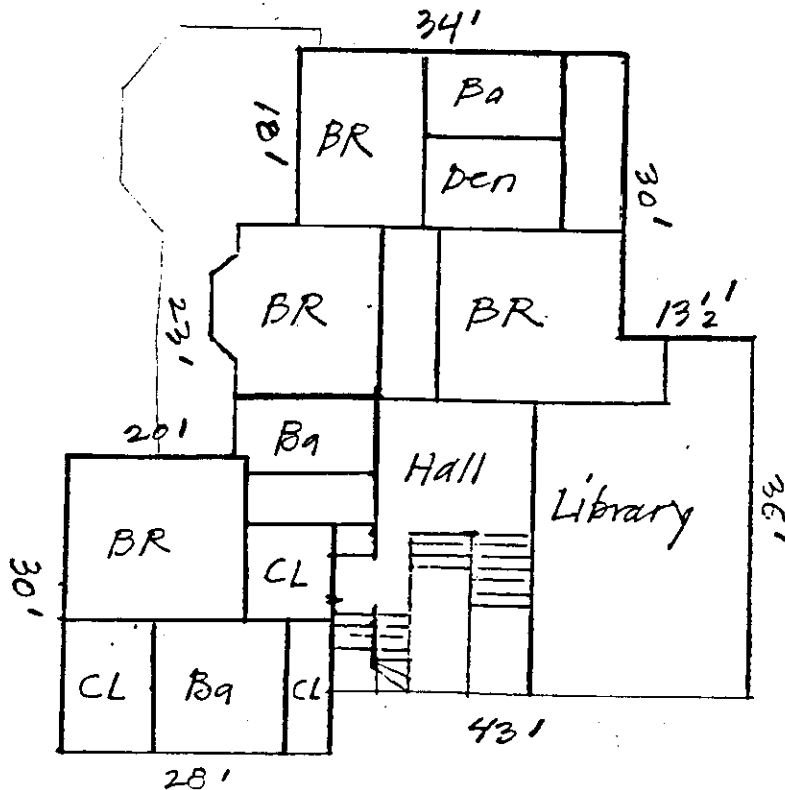
Levy, Harry Milton, House  
Cincinnati, Ohio

First floor



→ North

Second floor



Scale: 1 inch = 20 ft.

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The Levy House is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C as a distinguished design combining the Craftsman and Tudor Revival styles, which is rare in the Cincinnati area.

The design blends elements that were modern for the time, reflecting the approach of the Arts & Crafts Movement, with evocations of the historic past, primarily English architecture of the Tudor and Jacobean periods of the 16th and early-17th century, to form a unique amalgam. The quality of craftsmanship, particularly the exterior brickwork, is outstanding, and has been maintained in the recent renovation to return the house to a single-family dwelling, after 50 years of two-family use.

The characteristics of the Craftsman style reflected in the Levy House include the rustic stone work; the horizontal division created by the use of different materials at the first and second floors; the low roof with broad, overhanging eaves and brackets; wide dormers; and a porch with battered piers. Other strong characteristics are the gridlike articulation of the second-story surfaces, emphasizing the apparently structural half-timbering, and the use of stone walls and terraces that integrate the building with the landscape. However, the house also exemplifies the Tudor Revival style in some aspects: the combination of materials, half-timbering, and grouped casement and double-hung windows.

In the use of exposed brick nogging, the Levy house is unlike other examples of Tudor Revival in Cincinnati. A *Field Guide to American Houses* explains (p. 356) that half-timbering, "mimicking medieval infilled timber framing is a common feature of the Tudor Revival style. Many different designs and patterns are found; most have stucco infilling between the timbers, but brick, often arranged in decorative patterns, is also used." While this style first appeared in Cincinnati in the early 1900s, examples in Cincinnati tended to be brick or stone; and half-timbering was typically filled with stucco, which provides more contrast than the brick and dark-stained timbers of the Levy House.

Based on English building technique of the early 17th century, timber construction consisted of a "box frame" in which pairs of posts supported cross beams. "The building would start as an open box of timber which was then subdivided...to make a frame of squares which could then be infilled with a suitable material." In the book, *English Cottages*, there are only two examples with exposed brick nogging--a 17th-century cottage in Coughton, Alcester, Warwickshire--and the other at Ampthill, Bedford, Bedfordshire, dating from 1812-1816. Both also share the flat red tile roof and small-paned windows seen in 20th-century American Tudor Revival. Additional vernacular examples have been observed in Kent, outside London.

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Levy, Harry Milton, House  
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## The Architect

A definitive attribution of the design of the Levy House to an architect was not possible. A few very skilled Cincinnati-based architectural firms who worked in that period--such as Burroughs & Deeken, Tietig & Lee, or Elzner & Anderson--could possibly have authored the design. A search among Cincinnati's early-20th-century homes yielded many examples of Tudor Revival, mostly dating from the 1920s and 1930s. Cincinnati has a handful of Craftsman or Arts & Crafts dwellings, but these tended to be stucco or concrete or used flatter stone, for a less textured effect. None display the unique combination of Tudor Revival and Craftsman styles, the massing, or combination of materials seen in the Levy House.

## Grosvenor Atterbury

Stylistic and geographical evidence points to Grosvenor Atterbury (1859-1956). The published work of this New York-based architect includes prominent examples of the unusual half-timbering with brick nogging seen in the Levy House, specifically in his own house (1900-1925) in Southampton, NY; a house in Ridgefield, Connecticut (1908); the James Byrne Residence (1909) in Oyster Bay; the Charles A. Peabody, Jr. Residence, Cold Spring Harbor, (1910-1912); and very extensively at Forest Hills Gardens in Queens, New York (begun 1908). Atterbury did at least four projects in Cincinnati--the Jean Maxwell Schmidlapp House in Hyde Park; "Cobble Court," the Marjorie Maxwell Graydon house in Indian Hill; the Harry Linch House in Avondale; and a group of ten houses on Sheldon Close in Mariemont. The Mariemont project was built in the early 1920s, while the other three homes were all built in the late 1920s.

Grosvenor Atterbury graduated from Yale in 1891, and studied at Columbia and the Ecole des Beaux Arts. A 1920 profile of Atterbury in *Country Life* (Vol. 38, no. 51) placed him among five other "Distinguished Architects," and described him as having "created many civic works and designed several splendid country houses on Long Island...." He is best known for his design of Forest Hills Gardens, a planned garden city in Queens, New York.

For Forest Hills, "Frederick Law Olmsted, Jr. developed the flowing street plan and the lavish plantings, while Atterbury was in charge of all architecture, establishing a picturesque unity of solidly built, beautifully textured Germano-Tudor structures." Here Atterbury employed concrete frame with brick nogging in both commercial and residential designs. Like the Levy House, the buildings in Forest Hills displayed the flat red tile roofs and crisply shaped dormers, and the use of stone walls at the ground floor to anchor the houses to the landscape.

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Atterbury gradually altered his Southampton residence, known as "The Lodge," over time (1900-1925) from a house given him by his father. It is featured in *Long Island Country Houses and their Architects, 1860-1940*, in which the author comments, "The vigorous and highly textured handling of the surfaces was another Atterbury trademark. This was evident on the exterior of his house with its half-timbered walls and multi-patterned brickwork resting on rough stone masonry. Similarly the roof line, always an important point for Atterbury, was formed of a number of different shapes with an amazing variety of dormers projecting, at times, from the most startling positions." (p. 50).

The James Byrne Residence (1906) in Oyster Bay, was a large and rambling structure with diverse shapes of the roofs, dormers, chimneys and exterior staircase all contributing to the picturesque quality of the whole. "Unusual for the time was the construction of the exterior walls with real half-timber, not just veneer." Here Atterbury again showed his concern with texture, using rough wood, brick and multicolored slates in what he considered one of his best efforts.

A house by Atterbury in Ridgefield, Connecticut, is shown in *The Craftsman* in 1908 and again in 1909 article entitled, "The Theory of Grosvenor Atterbury," who was recognized for "the charm and originality of his dwellings." This country house of half-timber construction with brick is an excellent example of Mr. Atterbury's versatility. The foundation and first story of the house are of field rubble set in cement, and the second story is built of over-burned brick with half-timber construction, giving a delightful color effect." The house and garden are harmoniously tied together through the use made of the local stone. (*The Craftsman*, April 1908, p. 105.)

The house is definitely English in type and in the way it settles into its surroundings. The rambling roofs show interesting differences in height, and the varying colors of the brick contrast well with the dark woodwork and add an accenting note to the well-kept English type of country that forms the environment. Windows of all shapes and sizes are most effectively set in unexpected places and help to give the suggestion that the house has been put together at different periods and is a growth of time. (p. 309.)

The house shares the sophistication of the Levy house in its varied massing, dramatic lines of the tile roof, brick nogging in various patterns, and windows with small vertical panes.

While Mr. Atterbury was clearly a master of English country architecture, he was also praised in *The Craftsman* for his original

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Levy, Harry Milton, House  
Cincinnati, Ohio

treatment of rustic log structures on Long Island at Water Mill and Shinnecock. As it happens the Levys also had a camp at Tupper Lake in the Adirondack Mountains, indicating a connection to New York, where Atterbury's office was located. Theoretically, the camp could also have been designed by Atterbury.

Published in *Country Life* in April 1928, Atterbury's house for Jean Schmidlapp is a Spanish Eclectic villa with buff stone walls, low-pitched tile roof, and stair tower at the corner. The house is integrated with the sloping site through the use of terraces and garden walls, which frame the view of the river to the south. The house for Harry Linch, which appeared in *The Architect* in June 1928, is a French country house with textured stone walls, tall windows and French doors at the ground floor, a hipped tile roof, also with a circular stair tower at the end.

In Mariemont (NROHP 7/24/1979), Atterbury designed the grouping of houses of Sheldon Close, a U-shaped drive with a central landscaped green lined with duplex cottages. The 1925 brochure for *Mariemont: The New Town*, describes the design. "Elizabethan in style of architecture, these ten houses of timbered field stone and stucco are designed for families..." The end houses of the grouping each have studio windows, and each house has a steam-heated garage, like the Levy House.

The Levy house exhibits a sophistication of massing and especially surface texture that was probably the work of an out-of-town architect. A handful of high-quality New York firms in addition to Grosvenor Atterbury did work in Cincinnati--Dwight James Baum, John Gamble Rogers, and Delano & Aldrich. Rogers began his career in Chicago but had important early commissions in Cincinnati, but had already left town before the Levy House was built. Delano & Aldrich were engaged by John J. Emery in the late 1920's to assist with Carew Tower and design his house, Peterloon, in Indian Hill. In 1929, they designed a Georgian Revival mansion for Lawrence Jones, also in Indian Hill. Baum, who had just opened his office in New York one year before the Levy House was built, designed the Powel Crosley, Jr. House in College Hill in 1926-28 and a "Dutch Colonial" house in Lockland for Philip Carey, ca. 1930. None of these architects' work share the overwhelming stylistic parallels with the Levy House that Atterbury's work does, as shown above.

## Development in Hyde Park

At the turn of the century, this area of Hyde Park was divided into large estates. Both sides of Observatory Avenue east of Madison Road

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were part of the early development of Hyde Park. The land east of the Levy House site, a large wedge between Grandin Road and Madison Road, had already been developed into generous residential properties--for Andrew Erkenbrecher, W. B. Kahn, John Stettinius, and the Longworth family. The properties along Observatory had had large-scale development since the late-19th century, and were further subdivided for residences in the early-20th century.

In the winter of 1897 when the land on Observatory Avenue was platted for the Erkenbrecher and Fischer subdivision, the Cincinnati Golf Club leased it to expand their golf course, which grew out of several informal small courses on private property nearby on Grandin Road, including that of Nicholas Longworth III. (Founded in 1903, the Cincinnati Country Club merged in 1924 with the Cincinnati Golf Club.) The first president of the Golf Club was William Howard Taft, then judge for the Circuit Court of Appeals for the Sixth District (later, of course, president of the United States and Chief Justice of the U. S. Supreme Court). The founders leased land for the original course in 1895 from the J.V.B. Scarborough Estate, which extended north from Grandin Road.

However, not all of the subdivision was taken for the golf course. Six lots at the northwest corner were purchased by J. B. Keys. In 1903, Keys sold these lots (now occupied by the Levy house) to Henry Stettinius, who resided with his wife Barbara, in a wood-frame house on a large triangular property at 2379 Madison Road. In 1916, these combined lots were sold to Jeannette Levy, and the Levys completed construction of a new house by the next year.

The house was described in the 1941 *Times-Star* article as being built of "stone, brick and steel." The hidden steel structure no doubt contributed to the stability of the large house, and to the reputed cost of \$200,000, a small fortune in 1917. A 1922 atlas shows that the Stettinius house had been demolished by that time, apparently to create what must have been very generous grounds for the Levy house. Harry M. Hoffheimer (b. 1912), a nephew of the Levys who spent quite a bit of time there as a child remembers that there were once ponds in the yard.

The Levys

From city directories and his obituary, it is known that Harry Milton Levy's fortune derived from a wholesale whiskey business, distributing high-quality Kentucky whiskey. He retired early and devoted his later years as a "capitalist and philanthropist" to extensive donations which have not been identified except for his loyalty to his law-school alma

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mater, Harvard University. According to his 1940 obituary, Harry M. Levy was born in Cincinnati about 1862. He was educated in Cincinnati schools and graduated from the Harvard Law School in 1882, although there is no evidence of his having practiced law.

Among his earliest philanthropies was his personally financing the attendance of a group of Cincinnati students at Harvard in 1892, the first year that local scholarships to the university were made available. According to Stern, "Before and after World War I, the [Harvard] Club [of Cincinnati] used to sponsor a scholastic field meet for local high school contestants at the old Cincinnati gym grounds on the Ohio River near Coney Island." Levy was an "inspector" of these events in 1912, along with such illustrious Cincinnatians as attorney Elliott Pendleton, department-store magnate Stewart Shillito, Cincinnati Art Museum director J.H. Gest and historian Charles T. Greve.

It appears that Harry Milton Levy was a son of Albert Levy because he was listed as a salesman for the firm of James Levy & Bro., Albert presumably being the brother. The 1888 *Centennial Review of Cincinnati* provides an interesting description of the firm (as does the 1891 promotional publication, *City of Cincinnati and Its Resources*):

James Levy & Brother, 33 Sycamore Street. The name of James Levy & Bro. is closely identified with the development of the fine whisky [sic] interest of the United States, and Cincinnati may well be proud of this firm, which has long been recognized by the straight whisky trade as the exclusively whisky house in the country.

Twenty years ago Louisville would have considered as impossible the recognition by the jobbing trade of any city outside itself as a jobbing market for fine Kentucky whisky; yet the firm of James Levy & Bro. has not only made Cincinnati recognized as such, but has plucked the laurels from Louisville, the firm being now able to boast of selling annually to the jobbing trade more fine Kentucky whisky than another house in the country.

The concern for quality on which this business depended is also reflected in the residence which Harry M. Levy commissioned shortly after 1914, when the Cuvier Press Club's Newspaper Reference Book described him as "one of Cincinnati's foremost capitalists, and certainly is entitled to the fullest recognition as a philanthropist, for his benefactions for years have been of the most generous nature possible."



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The 1940 *Enquirer* obituary indicates that Levy had "retired from active participation in distillery interests approximately 30 years ago," that is, about 1910, shortly before the Hyde Park house was conceived. Before moving to Hyde Park, Harry M. Levy lived in East Walnut Hills, at 2933 Fairfield Avenue, from at least 1904 until 1916 in an impressive and elaborate pressed-brick Chateausque residence.

His wife Jeannette Feiss Levy was a member of a prominent Jewish family associated with the tobacco and clothing industries, and thus connected with some of the leading Jewish families of the area and a tradition of philanthropy. The Levys played a role in the most "exclusive" aspects of Cincinnati "society" somewhat unusual for Jews, particularly between World Wars I and II. Hyde Park, where the house is located, was developed at the turn of the century as a modern residential community, but was not in general one of the northern neighborhoods, such as Avondale, to which many Jewish families moved during the early 20th century.

Before World War I, Cincinnati's social directories were published under various names, most outside Cincinnati. These were remarkably inclusive for the period, listing many prominent German-Americans and/or Jews, and without regard to their mercantile and manufacturing occupations. It is not surprising, therefore to find the Albert Levys listed in 1879, Albert and James Levy in 1886, and Mr. and Mrs. Harry Milton Levy in the 1908 Blue Book.

After World War II, however, *Mrs. Devereux's Blue Book of Cincinnati Society*, published every other year by Cincinnati's social doyenne Marion Devereux, became extremely "exclusive," emphasizing "WASPs," although a sampling of the area's most prominent German-Americans and Jews were still included. The 1919-20 Blue Book informs us that Mrs. Levy was born Jeanette Feiss, and that the couple had a summer residence called "Hemlock Lodge" at Tupper Lake in the Adirondack Mountains, a retreat for the wealthy.

Jeanette Feiss Levy was the daughter of Leopold Feiss (1832-1901) and Sarah Wyler, who married in 1869. Feiss was "a very prominent business citizen of Cincinnati and a leader in Jewish circles." According to Greve writing in 1904, shortly after Leopold Feiss' death, he was associated with both "the extensive shoe manufacturing firm of Krohn, Fechheimer & Company...[and] with the wholesale tobacco business, which was conducted under the firm of Krohn, Feiss & Company...Mr. Feiss found time to encourage public improvements in his city and to give especial attention to those institutions of charity and philanthropy that have done so much to lessen suffering and encourage higher education in

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Hebrew circles"--perhaps providing a model for Harry M. Levy's philanthropies.

It seems likely that Harry Milton Levy retired from his family's high-quality whiskey business about 1910 when he was less than 40 years old. Levy acquired a unique and admirably situated lot in the newly fashionable Hyde Park neighborhood, adjacent to the grounds of the elite Cincinnati Country Club and Golf Club, and not far from East Walnut Hills. He then proceeded to build one of Cincinnati's finest residences on the brink of American entry into World War I.

About 1935, during the Great Depression, the Levys moved from the house to the Hotel Alms, a then-fashionable residential hotel in nearby Walnut Hills, reputedly owing to a financial crisis. During this time the house may have been rented for income. After Harry Milton Levy's death in 1940, Mrs. Levy sold the property, including the triangular lot facing Madison Road west of the house site to developer George J. Hare & Son. The 1941 *Times-Star* article announced that the "palatial residence built by Late Harry Levy" would be razed for apartment buildings. Fortunately, only the vacant triangular lot on Observatory was developed. The Levy residence survived intact and was purchased in 1942 by John J. Morton.

It was probably subdivided before the end of World War II into two separate horizontally-divided apartments. According to annual listings in the Cincinnati city directories, the house was occupied in 1943-44 by W. Frank Cornell, a sales manager for the International Printing Ink Co. By 1945, one was occupied by West Shell, Sr., a well-respected insurance agent whose son West Shell, Jr., established one of the area's most successful real-estate firms. The senior Shells are said to have moved here from the Cincinnati suburb of Wyoming after their sons left for war.

Mrs. Elizabeth (Brown Weatherhead) Morton, widow of Charles Morton and herself vice-president of the Morton [shoe] Last Company, shared the duplex with West Shell, and after 1949 with John J. Morton, president of the family firm, until about 1951. A series of socially and commercially prominent families occupied the two units throughout the 1950s, '60s, '70s, and '80s. In the early 1970s one unit was occupied by Robert J. Cousy, then a University of Cincinnati basketball coach and later a renowned coach for the Boston Celtics.

The property was acquired in 1992 by the present owners. After several years of rehabilitation, they occupied the residence as a single-family home in 1995. Their architect was Donald Beck (born 1949), a talented graduate of the University of Cincinnati School of Architecture and

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Interior Design. Donald Beck & Associates are known for their historically appropriate enlargements and renovations of older buildings for a distinguished clientele.

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Levy, Harry Milton, House  
Cincinnati, Ohio

## Verbal Boundary Description

Lying and being in Section Thirty Two (32), Town four (4) Fractional Range (2) in the City of Cincinnati, County of Hamilton, State of Ohio, and being more particularly described as follows, to wit:

Beginning at a point in the south line of Observatory Avenue, South eighty nine (89 ) degrees, Forty two (42') minutes east, one hundred and sixty two and 73/100 (162.73) feet from the intersection of the south line of Observatory Avenue and the east line of Madison Road produced to an intersection (the above mentioned one hundred and sixty two and 73/100 (162.73) feet being measured along the south line of Observatory Avenue produced westwardly): thence north eighty-nine (89 ) degrees, forty two (42') minutes west along the south line of Observatory Avenue for a distance of one hundred and nine and 97/100 (109.97) feet: thence westwardly on a curved line, tangent to the last described course and deflecting towards the south, having a radius of one hundred and forty and 12/100 (140.12) feet for a distance of twelve and 04/100 (12.04) feet (chord of said curve bearing south eighty seven (87 ) degrees, fifty (50') minutes fifteen seconds west, twelve and 04/100 (12.04) feet; thence south one (1 ) degree, thirteen (13') minutes west for a distance of two hundred and ninety-nine and 48/100 (299.48) feet; thence south eighty-nine (89 ) degrees, forty two (42') minutes east for a distance of one hundred and twenty two (122) feet; thence north one (1 ) degree, thirteen (13') minutes east for a distance of three hundred (300) feet to the place of beginning.

Being the same premises conveyed to the grantor herein by deed recorded in Deed Book 3668, page 842, Hamilton County, Ohio Recorder's Office.

## Verbal Boundary Justification

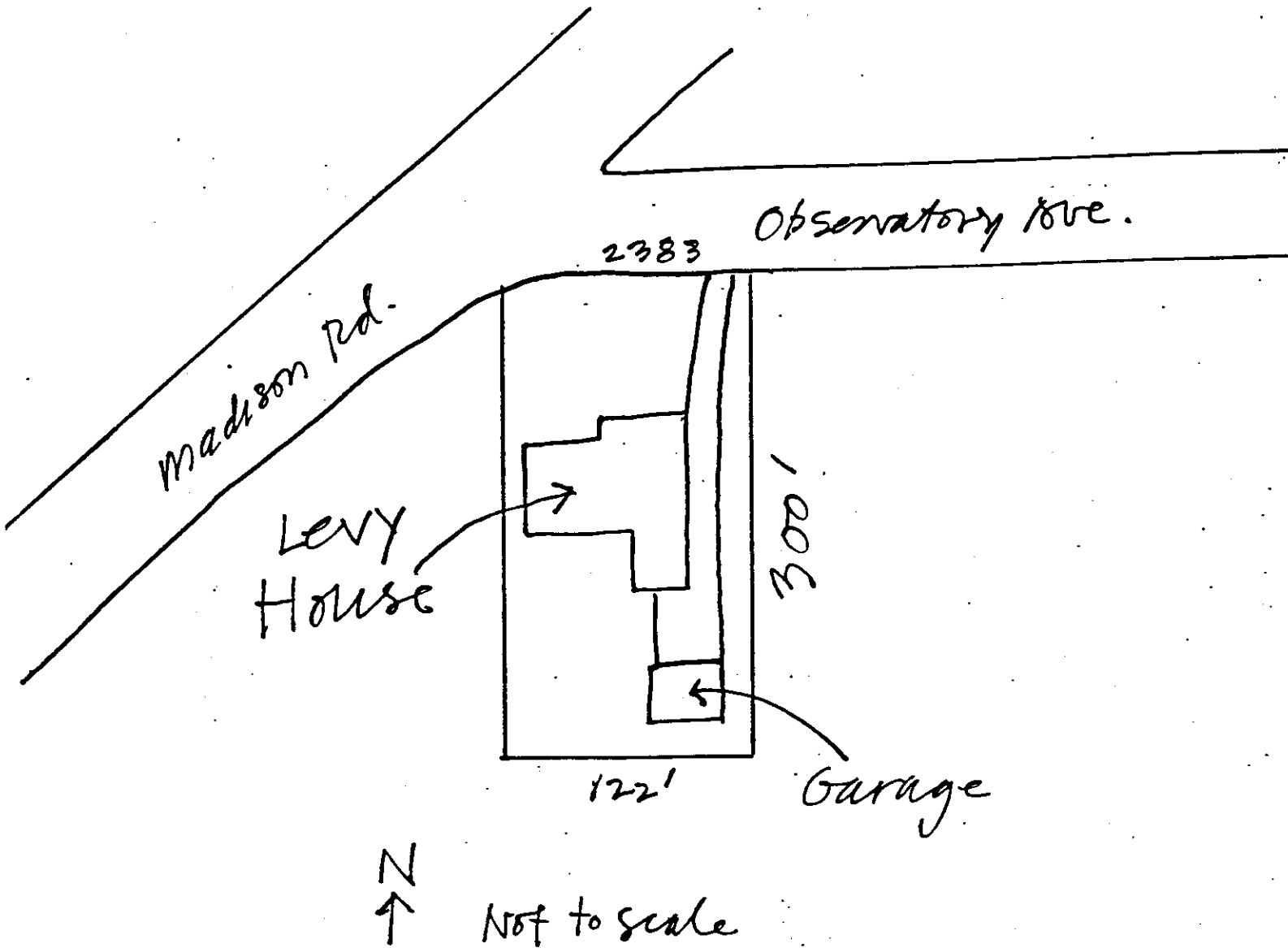
The boundary for this nomination coincides with the legal boundary of the property, as described above, which is essential to the property's historic significance and integrity.

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Levy, Harry Milton, House  
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## List of Photographs

The following information pertains to all photographs:

|                        |                                                                            |
|------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| Building:              | Levy, Harry Milton, House                                                  |
| Address:               | 2383 Observatory Avenue, Cincinnati                                        |
| County/State:          | Hamilton County, Ohio                                                      |
| Photographer:          | Beth Sullebarger                                                           |
| Date:                  | September 11, 1997                                                         |
| Location of negatives: | Cincinnati Preservation Assn.<br>342 West Fourth St., Cincinnati, OH 45202 |

1. Front elevation, looking southwest
2. Front elevation, looking south
3. South & east elevations, looking northwest
4. Entrance, east elevation, looking west
5. South elevation, looking north
6. Detail of wall fountain, looking east
7. West elevation, looking southeast
8. Garage, looking southeast
9. Hallway, 1st floor, looking east
10. Living room, looking east
11. Dining room, looking south
12. Solarium, looking south
13. Kitchen, looking south
14. Main Stair, looking east
15. Library, looking east
16. Library, looking west

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16. Library, looking west