

NHL

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ON

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORMSEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

\*William Allen White House, "Red Rocks"

AND/OR COMMON

William Allen White House

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

927 Exchange Street

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

CITY, TOWN

Emporia

VICINITY OF

5

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Kansas

20

Lyon

111

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

## CATEGORY

DISTRICT

☒ BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

## OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC

☒ PRIVATE

BOTH

## PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

☒ OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

## ACCESSIBLE

☒ YES: RESTRICTED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

NO

## PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE

MUSEUM

COMMERCIAL

PARK

EDUCATIONAL

☒ PRIVATE RESIDENCE

ENTERTAINMENT

RELIGIOUS

GOVERNMENT

SCIENTIFIC

INDUSTRIAL

TRANSPORTATION

MILITARY

OTHER

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

The White Corporation

STREET &amp; NUMBER

517 Merchant Street

CITY, TOWN

Emporia

VICINITY OF

STATE

Kansas

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Register of Deeds, Lyon County Courthouse

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Commercial Street and Fourth Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Emporia

STATE

Kansas

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

National Register of Historic Places

DATE

1971

☒ FEDERAL ☒ STATE ☐ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

National Register of Historic Places

CITY, TOWN

Washington

STATE

D.C.

396

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
X 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
X 1900	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1899-1944

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Almerin Gillette

## STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

An internationally renowned journalist and author, William Allen White observed, interpreted, and significantly influenced American political events and societal changes during a lifetime that stretched from Reconstruction to World War II. He first gained nationwide prominence at age 28 with a Republican campaign editorial that was widely reprinted, and then, for the remaining 48 years of his life, he continued to influence American politics through his writing and other activities. Early in his career, he contributed to the muckraking McClure's Magazine and wrote numerous books, including The Old Order Changeth (1910), which historian Richard Hofstadter has called, "a statement of what was probably the dominant [progressive] philosophy of politics."<sup>1</sup> A confidant and advisor to Theodore Roosevelt, White became a pragmatic leader in the newly formed Progressive Party in 1912, and in the twenties he ran independently for Kansas Governor to call further attention to his fight against the Klu Klux Klan. During the 1930's, White supported most of President Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal programs, and in 1940-41, as chairman of the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies, the Kansan articulated a **growing opposition** to American isolationism and thereby made what one biographer, John DeWitt McKee considered his "greatest contribution to his country and the kind of democratic society he espoused."<sup>2</sup> A Pulitzer Prize winner for an editorial on free speech, White was indeed "The Sage of Emporia."

In 1899 White bought this 2½-story house, and he resided in it for 45 years, until his death. Its red sandstone first-floor exterior walls give the dwelling its nickname, "Red Rocks." Except for a summer vacation cabin in Estes Park, Colo., "Red Rocks" is White's

(continued)

<sup>1</sup> Richard Hofstadter, The Age of Reform: From Byran to F.D.R. (New York, 1955), 258.

<sup>2</sup> John DeWitt McKee, William Allen White: Maverick on Main Street (Westport, Conn., 1975), 182.

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CONTINUATION SHEET White House ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE one

only known extant home. In his autobiography he wrote of it, "Here [my wife and I] have seen the major pageant of our lives pass."<sup>3</sup> The house has changed little since his death.

Biography

William Allen White was born in Emporia, Kans., on February 10, 1868. The next year he was taken to El Dorado, Kans., where he enjoyed a middle-class boyhood. "Willie"'s father, Allen White, a physician, druggist, business man, and Democratic politician, had settled in Kansas in 1859. Willie's mother, Mary Hatten, met Allen when she went to Kansas to instruct ex-slaves. Mary was a Radical Republican, and in later years, "Willie" credited his parents' differing politics for his open-mindedness.

Allen White died in 1882, and Mary took roomers so that Willie could attend the College of Emporia (1884-86). In 1855 the teenager obtained summer employment as a printer's devil. Thereafter he held various journalistic jobs in El Dorado and Emporia and Lawrence, where he attended the University of Kansas (1886-90). In 1890 Willie left school to become associate editor on the El Dorado Republican; in 1891-92 he worked for the Kansas City Journal; and in 1892-95 he wrote for the Kansas City Star. In 1893 he married Sallie Lindsay, who became his lifelong aide and editor. Two years later, determined to make a name, White purchased his own newspaper, the Emporia Gazette. As editor of the Gazette, he planned to present conservative Republican views.

A year later, at the outset of the 1896 Presidential campaign, White penned a fiercely anti-Populist editorial, "What's the Matter With Kansas?" He blamed that party for all the State's problems. The Republican Congressional Committee noted White's editorial and distributed more than a million reprints of it, making White nationally known. After the election, White published a collection of short stories and, ironically, started on the road to progressivism. He began a 10-year association with the muckraking McClure's Magazine and on his first trip East, he met Theodore Roosevelt.

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<sup>3</sup> William Allen White, The Autobiography of William Allen White (New York, 1946), 324.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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CONTINUATION SHEET    White House    ITEM NUMBER    8    PAGE    TWO

Later he recalled that Roosevelt "sounded in my heart the first trumpet call of the new time that was to be."<sup>4</sup> Influenced both by the McClure's writers and by Roosevelt, who became his friend, White evolved into a progressive.

By the turn of the century, White had established his three lifelong careers. He operated the Gazette, devoted much time to Republican political activity, and wrote fiction and nonfiction for magazine and book publication. After Roosevelt became President in 1901, their association, and numerous articles that White penned on Roosevelt and his ideas, kept the Kansan in the public eye. In addition, White served as the Chief Executive's unofficial midwestern political affairs advisor. By 1905 White ranked as a full-fledged progressive, and in 1909 he published a "progressive" novel, A Certain Rich Man, which eventually sold a quarter of a million copies. In 1910 he collected some of his essays into a book, The Old Order Changeth, which historian Richard Hofstadter regards as "a statement of what was probably the dominant [progressive] philosophy of politics."<sup>5</sup>

In 1908 White backed William Howard Taft for the Republican Presidential nomination but soon became disenchanted with him. White and Senators Robert M. LaFollette, Jonathan Bourne, and Joseph L. Bristow formed the National Progressive Republican League in 1911. The following year White attended the Republican National Convention as a member of the Kansas delegation, but he bolted when Roosevelt launched the Progressive Party. For 4 years, White controlled Progressive politics in Kansas, and with some justification, political enemies dubbed him "Boss White." One of White's biographers, John DeWitt McKee, concludes that White was "an amateur only in the sense that he had not run for elective office."<sup>6</sup> White stayed with the Progressive Party until 1916, when Roosevelt, who decided not to run, endorsed the regular Republican candidate.

(continued)

4 Ibid., 297.

5 Hofstadter, The Age of Reform, 258.

6 McKee, William Allen White: Maverick on Main Street, 97.



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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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CONTINUATION SHEET White House ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE three

White returned to the Republican camp, also, and resumed his leading role in that party. He even served as a delegate to several subsequent Republican National Conventions.

In 1917, during the First World War, White went to Europe to serve as a Red Cross observer, and in 1919 he returned to cover the Paris Peace Conference as a syndicated columnist. White supported President Wilson's League of Nations plan and wrote and spoke extensively in favor of it. In fact, the ex-Progressive backed most of Wilson's domestic program and foreign policy, but he did not consider joining the Democratic Party and tried instead to liberalize the Republicans. Although White ran independently against the national parties' Klu Klux Klan-endorsed candidates for Kansas Governor in 1924, he neither alienated the Republican Party nor ran to win. Because of his **countrywide** fame, however, White achieved his campaign goal of drawing the Nation's attention to the vast and pernicious influence of the Klan.

During a controversy in 1922 concerning the right of railroad workers to strike, White penned "To an Anxious Friend," a defense of free speech, that earned him a Pulitzer Prize. The year before, however, he wrote what remains his best known and loved editorial, "Mary White," a paean to life inspired by the accidental death of his 17-year-old daughter. White did not publish any fiction after the First World War, but he wrote biography, including Woodrow Wilson (1924), Masks in a Pageant (1928), and A Puritan in Babylon: The Story of Calvin Coolidge (1938). When the Great Depression began, White implored Republican President Hoover to take decisive steps and after 1932, White approved most of Franklin D. Roosevelt's New Deal. Characteristically, though, the Kansas Republican withdrew his praise at election time. In 1936, following White's endorsement of fellow Kansan Alf Landon, son of an old Progressive friend, Roosevelt commented wryly: "Bill White is for me three and a half out of every four years."<sup>7</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> Quoted in Walter Johnson, William Allen White's America (New York, 1947), 461.

400

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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CONTINUATION SHEET White House ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE four

After the outbreak of the Second World War in Europe, White supported Roosevelt's foreign policy in particular. In 1939 he became chairman of the Non-Partisan Committee for Peace through the Revision of the Neutrality Law, and the next year he joined Clark Eichelberger in forming the Committee to Defend America by Aiding the Allies. White served as the organization's chairman and imparted to it its popular name, the "White Committee." The organization helped Roosevelt win public support for the transfer of overage American destroyers to Great Britain and the Lend-Lease Act. After about a year, however, poor health forced White's resignation, and the committee's influence declined, one measure of the septuagenarian's personal prestige. White devoted his last years to State politics and to writing his autobiography. He died, without completing the book, on January 29, 1944.

Continuation Sheet White House Item Number 9 Page one

Hofstadter, Richard, The Age of Reform; From Bryan to F.D.R. (New York: Vintage Books, 1955).

Johnson, Walter, ed., Selected Letters of William Allen White, 1899-1943 (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1947).

Johnson, Walter, William Allen White's America (New York: Henry Holt and Company, Inc., 1947).

Langer, William L. and S. Everett Gleason, The Challenge to Isolation, 1937-1940 (New York: Harper & Brothers Publishers, 1952).

La Forte, Robert Sherman, Leaders of Reform: Progressive Republicans in Kansas, 1900-1916 (Lawrence: The University Press of Kansas, 1974).

McKee, John DeWitt, William Allen White: Maverick on Main Street (Westport, Conn.: Greenwood Press, 1975).

White, William Allen, The Autobiography of William Allen White (New York: The Macmillan Company, 1946).

Wilson, Harold S., McClure's Magazine and the Muckrakers (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1970).

401

# 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

This Emporia residence represents William Allen White better than any other structure because he resided here for 45 years, during which time he was nationally known and respected. The only other known extant dwelling associated with him is a summer cabin in Estes Park, Colo., where he vacationed annually from about 1912 until his last illness. Commemorated on the National Register of Historic Places, the cabin lies within the boundaries of Rocky Mountain National Park.

Judge Almerin Gillette started White's Emporia house about 1887 but because of financial reverses failed to complete it. In 1899, about 4 years after buying the Emporia Gazette, White purchased the house from the mortgage company and made it habitable with wiring and plumbing. It derives its name "Red Rocks" from its red sandstone first-floor exterior walls. Following a fire in 1920, White had the house remodeled. Frank Lloyd Wright drew some of the plans, but for most of the work White selected a architect from Kansas City. This unknown architect made interior changes primarily, but since the remodeling "Red Rocks" has faced Tenth Street rather than Exchange. The dwelling has been altered only slightly since 1921 and it is still a White family residence today.

The original architect of the 2½-story dwelling is unknown also. The house stands atop a low rock-faced limestone foundation, and rough-hewn red sandstone ashlar from the Garden of the Gods in Colorado makes up its first-floor walls. Matching red brick stretchers cover most of the second-story exterior, and stucco crisscrossed with wood strips to resemble half timbers covers the western section of the second floor and the attic level. Two interior red brick chimneys with corbeled caps pierce the gray slate roof, and four gable dormers--one on the north (front) side and three on the south (rear)--top it. The roof mimics a cross-gable design but slopes lopsidedly below the second story to the west of the north gable end. It has projecting verges with wide board trim, and each dormer roof has similar trim.

The house has casement and sash windows in rectangular openings. Stone voussoirs and sills frame them at first-floor level, and the wooden wall trim doubles as lintels for the second-story openings and frames for the gable-end and dormer lights. In its **northeast** corner, the house has a two-story hexagonal bay, and east of the bay, where the front entrance stood until 1920, a one-story, railed porch stands. In the rear (south side) is a terrace and a now-

(continued)

402

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CONTINUATION SHEET White House ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE one

dense garden containing a colonade and a dry, sunken pool. The altered former carriage house stands on what is now a neighbor's property to the south, while a recent carport adjoins the western end of the William Allen White House. On Tenth Street, a slab sidewalk leads to the one-bay, one-story, gable-hooded, present-day entrance porch, which prior to 1921, was apparently a long porte cochere. Now shortened and supported by red sandstone columns, it shelters the multipaned-glass and paneled front door. Side lights flank, and stone voussoirs top, the doorway.

The tile-floored vestibule contains a two-flight front stairway and leads, through a four-centered arch, into a living room that encompasses the entire eastern end of the first floor. The open archway, and another like it, between the living and dining rooms, may derive from the discarded Frank Lloyd Wright plan. Prior to 1921, the present living room consisted of four rooms. Today's living room has a walnut floor, wainscot, built-in bookcases, and beamed ceiling. On the west wall is a fireplace with walnut mantel and granite surround. The dining room lies southwest of the living room and has a high wainscot, beamed ceiling, and tile floor. The house's west end, which was expanded in 1920-21, is a service wing consisting of two pantries and a kitchen.

The second-story hallway, which has a hard oak floor, leads to the bedrooms, including White's bedroom, opposite the stairs on the south side of the house. About 1960 the doorway of his room was altered. White's library takes in the east side of the second floor above the living room, and it has a beamed ceiling, walnut floor, built-in bookcases, and a fireplace. A second-story porch completed the east end until 1921, when the porch became part of the expanded study.

Only the enclosed, dogleg rear stairway continues to the top-most floor. Servants' quarters, a guest room on the east side, and Mary White's bedroom with its own gable ceiling beneath the south gable end complete the attic floor. Original household furnishings predominate, and many of White's books remain. Central air conditioning constitutes a minor, modern alteration, and settling has produced some cracks in the plaster interior walls.

403



## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Cole, Wayne S., An Interpretive History of American Foreign Relations  
(Homewood, Ill.: The Dorsey Press, 1968).

Hinshaw, David, A Man From Kansas; The Story of William Allen White  
(New York: G. T. Putnam's Sons, 1945).

(continued)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than 1 acre

UTM REFERENCES

A	14	7	4	6	6	60	4	2	5	4	8	3	0	B									
	ZONE		EASTING					NORTHING							ZONE		EASTING						NORTHING
C														D									

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Cathy A. Alexander, Assistant Editor

ORGANIZATION

American Association for State and Local History

DATE

November 1975

STREET & NUMBER

1400 Eighth Avenue, South

TELEPHONE

(615) 242-5583

CITY OR TOWN

Nashville

STATE

Tennessee 37203

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL \_\_\_\_

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.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

405

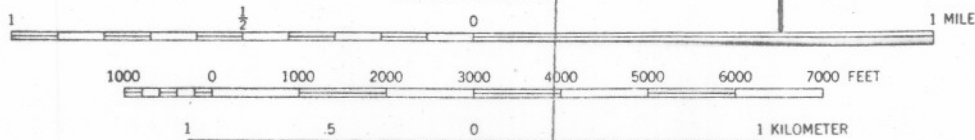


William Allen White House, "Red Rocks"  
927 Exchange Street  
Emporia, Kansas

U.S.G.S. 7.5' Series  
Kansas; Emporia Quad.  
Zone 14  
Easting 746,660  
Northing 4,254,830

(EMPORIA 1:125 000)

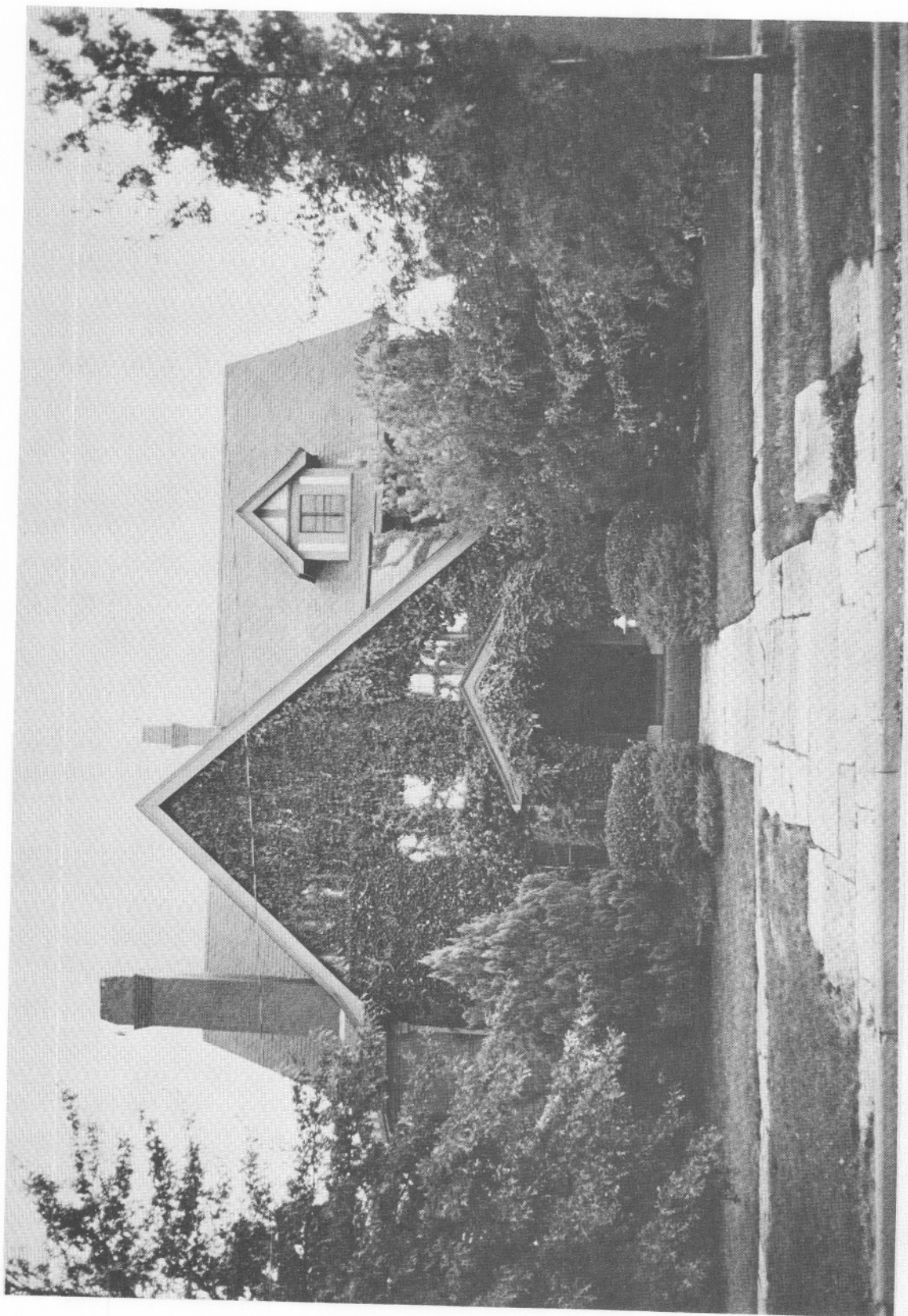
SCALE 1:24000



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET  
DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL

404

KANSAS



William Allen White House, Emporia, Kansas

Photo: AASLH, 1975