

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or 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 listed in 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 Amelita Galli-Curci Estate

other names/site number Sul Monte

2. Location

street & number 352 and 374 Galli Curci Road ☐ not for publication

city or town Fleischmanns ☒ vicinity

state New York code NY county Delaware & Ulster code 025 & 111 zip code 12441

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I 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.

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

State or 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 this 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:) _____

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate

Name of Property

Delaware & Ulster, New York

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

7 1 buildings

0 0 sites

2 0 structures

0 0 objects

9 1 Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single residence

DOMESTIC/secondary structure, agricultural outbuilding

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single residence

DOMESTIC/secondary structure, agricultural outbuilding

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th and early 20th century revivals

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls stone

roof wood shingle

other

Narrative Description

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

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate

Name of Property

Delaware & Ulster, New York

County and State

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.

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):

- ☐ 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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

architecture

performing arts

Period of Significance

1922-1947

Significant Dates

1922

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Amelita Galli-Curci

Cultural Affiliation

na

Architect/Builder

Harrie T. Lindeberg

Primary location of additional data

- | | |
|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> | State Historic Preservation Office |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other State agency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Federal agency |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Local government |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | University |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | Other |

Name of repository:

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate

Name of Property

Delaware & Ulster, New York

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property approximately 137 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.) SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

1
Zone Easting Northing
2

3
Zone Easting Northing
4

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kathleen LaFrank, Program Analyst

organization New York State Historic Preservation Office date May 2010

street & number Peebles Island State Park, Box 189 telephone 518-237-8643 x 3261

city or town Waterford state New York zip code 12188

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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

The Amelita Galli-Curci Estate is located southeast of the village of Fleischmanns and spans the boundary between the Delaware County town of Middletown and the Ulster County town of Shandaken. The 137-acre nominated site is on the south side of Belleayre Mountain, 2,450 feet above sea level, and commands a sweeping view southwest over the Catskill Mountains. The property is approached via a drive from Ulster County Route 49A, one-half mile south of the former Highmount Ski Center. The driveway ascends gently to a point marked by stone posts capped by stone eagles, then curves left and continues to rise to the broad plateau on which the house was constructed. The drive ends at a large circular courtyard in front of the house. The building is surrounded by a flat, open lawn, which drops off steeply in front of the building to a series of terraces delineated by stonework and staircases. The farm complex occupies a large parcel adjacent to the estate on the south. The nomination encompasses the largest intact portion of the original estate and includes an estate house, swimming pool, stone fence posts, farm buildings, and designed landscape elements.

The Galli-Curci residence, constructed in 1922, is a large, rambling two-story structure composed of multiple wings that wrap around the northeast, west and southwest sides of a central courtyard. The major components include the large rectangular center section, which faces northwest and contains the main living spaces for the family; the studio wing, which extends southeast from the main block; a porch and master bedroom suite, which extends northeast from the main block; a kitchen wing, which extends southeast, and a service complex, which is southeast of the kitchen wing.

The building sits on a concrete foundation and was constructed with a wood frame. It is clad in variegated stone (quarried on the property) and stucco and wood that were intended to create a half-timbered effect. Fenestration is regular. Most windows consist of groups of between two and five metal casements with small-pane leaded sash under wide stone lintels with rusticated stone sills. The building is unified by its series of massive, steeply pitched, hipped and gabled cedar-shingled roofs with overhanging eaves. In several sections,

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

the roof was constructed without distinctive valleys; instead, it takes a sweeping curved form over them. A total of four tall stone chimneys project from the various components of the building.

The central, and largest, component is a two-story, three-bay rectangular section with a broad hipped roof and two small projecting wings on the facade. Its main elevation faces southeast, toward the courtyard, while its rear elevation is oriented to the sweeping west view. The façade features a center entrance accessed from a rectangular stone terrace enclosed by the flanking wings. The entrance is a broad wood door within a wood surround; the door features vertical board and batten panels on the bottom and a square, multi-pane window above. The entrance is lit by a large iron and glass lantern hanging from a bracket above it and flanked by groups of three casements; second floor windows are identical. The rear elevation of the central component is almost identical to the façade, except that its center entrance consists of metal French doors with small-pane leaded-glass surmounted by a broad stone lintel and flanking windows consist of groups of five casements. Second-floor windows on the rear elevation are like those of the façade. The rear elevation also features a row of three wood-shingled dormers with flat roofs and casement windows and, on its south end, a one-story glass-enclosed sun porch with large stone piers surmounted by a steep shed roof. The glass enclosure consists of a metal frame with small, multi-pane leaded glass.

The studio is a rectangular wing that extends southeast from the main wing and terminates in an interior stone chimney on its gable end. Its gable roof sweeps low over the side elevations. The studio wing has its own entrance in the small projecting wing at the east end of the entrance terrace. This entrance is a recessed, round-arched, wood board and batten door with a square, multi-pane window. The door is surmounted by a round-arched lintel with a stone voussoir. A metal and glass lantern hangs beside the door, and there is a small window with diamond-paned sash and a large stone lintel in the wall above it. The south wall of the studio is slightly curved and each of its side elevations has one large grouping of windows within a large stone surround; two narrow casement windows flank the fireplace on the end wall.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

The porch/master bedroom wing extends northeast at a forty-five degree angle from the rear elevation of the main block. This wing is two-stories tall with a gable roof; it features stone on the lower story, while the upper story is faced with stucco and wood half-timbering. Each of the three exposed sides of the lower story is dominated by a large window within a massive wood post and beam frame. Openings are filled with either a single large plate glass or a door surrounded by panels of small-pane leaded glass. The porch was originally open but received its glass enclosure in the 1940s. Two sides of the upper story (the master bedroom) feature diamond-paned casement windows, while the gable end has a canted oriel with diamond-paned casements over a decorative panel. The gable end also features a wood vergeboard with decorative carving.

At the west end of the entrance terrace, a two-story rectangular wing, perpendicular to the main block, is sided with stone on the first story and stucco and wood half-timbering on the upper story. The gable end features a decorative carved vergeboard. Both stories feature groups of casement windows and those on the upper story feature elaborately carved window frames. The kitchen wing is southeast of the main block. The kitchen is also two stories tall but smaller in scale than the main block (or built at a lower elevation), so that it appears diminutive in comparison. It is rectangular in form with a center chimney, hipped roof, stone on the lower story and stucco and wood half-timbering above. Both stories have regular fenestration, consisting of single and grouped casements. The service complex is southeast of the kitchen and separated from it by a broad, stone porte-cochere with an "eyebrow-shaped" wood-shingled roof, which provides access to a large service yard at the rear of the carriage house. The carriage house is rectangular in shape and has a gable roof. It is built into the hillside so that the elevation facing the entrance drive is low to the ground and constructed of stone. Passing under the decorative roof to the courtyard, the land slopes steeply, so that a lower level of the carriage house is completely exposed from the courtyard. The courtyard elevation has stone on the lower story and features two sets of multiple folding wooden garage doors on the lower elevation and wood shingles above. The upper

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

elevation is broken by four sets of windows. The courtyard itself is framed by steep stone embankment walls on two sides.

The interior plan is very simple and functionally expressive, while also designed to meet the specific personal needs of Galli-Curci and her family. The first floor of the main block is divided into two large spaces, a living room and a dining room, which occupy most of the large rectangular form. A small pantry in the southwest corner provides a transition to the kitchen wing, which contains a kitchen and laundry. The studio and porch occupy their own wings. The studio has a separate entrance from the courtyard as well as an interior entrance from the living room; access to the porch is from the living room and from the studio. On the second floor, the main block contains bedrooms; the master bedroom is over the porch wing and is connected to a suite that includes a bathroom and wardrobe room. A stair in the master suite provides internal access to the studio, which is a double-height space that fills its wing. There are additional bedrooms over the kitchen, probably for staff, and a four small bedrooms over the carriage house, also for staff.

The main entrance leads directly into the large living room, which occupies the northern two-thirds of the rectangular main block. The main entrance is on axis with the French doors leading to an exterior stone terrace, and the room is lit by rows of casement windows on both the north and south walls. The room is simply finished with a wide board hardwood floor, plaster walls, and a low ceiling. The east wall incorporates vertical timbers set into the plaster to suggest half-timbering and a large fireplace, which is almost flush with the wall. The fireplace is built of narrow Roman bricks and features a broad wood fireplace lintel with decorative carving that includes Galli-Curci's initials flanked by stylized foxes with foliate tails. A wood door with a small square multi-pane window adjacent to the fireplace provides access to the porch. The west wall of the living room is composed of a large built-in bookcase flanked by openings that provide passage to the adjacent dining room and to a closet. Each opening is surmounted by an elaborately carved lintel. Behind the bookcase (between the living and dining rooms) is an enclosed center stair leading to the second floor. The dining room, which

☐ See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5

occupies the western third of the main block, is similar to living room and features a low ceiling with exposed beams and a simple fireplace with brick surround.

The other significant first floor space is the studio, which can be entered either from the living room or directly from the exterior. Both entrances lead to a entrance small lobby with a bathroom. The studio itself is a double-height space featuring a narrow board ceiling with exposed rafters, collar ties, and trusses. The large king-post truss in the center is supported by brackets and rests on two exposed molded wood posts. The end wall has a fireplace with a wood fireplace lintel flanked by narrow leaded-glass windows. The end wall above the fireplace features a half-timbered effect similar to the east wall of the living room. Groups of large leaded-glass windows within stone surrounds on the side walls provide additional light, as do two large original chandeliers. At the other end of the studio, a three-quarter height wood paneled wall conceals a stairway to the second floor bedroom suite. The wall is topped with moldings that suggest crenellation and there is a small landing above the stairs that overlooks the studio. The wall above the stairs features also features half-timbering. There are two entrances to the studio from the paneled end wall. One features wood stairs that lead to the lobby and another provides access to the porch.

The primary second floor space is the master bedroom suite. The large bedroom itself is over the porch and features windows on three sides and a barrel-vaulted ceiling. Two low, round-arched wood doors lead to a large bathroom and to a narrow hall leading to the balcony and stair to the studio. This hall also provides access to a dressing or wardrobe room. The latter features an entire wall lined with mirrored doors that conceal built-in closets. The dressing room also features a small fireplace with a narrow wood mantel shelf supported by delicately curved supports.

The second floor space in the center section of the building contains a narrow hall with round-arched ceiling running the length of the south elevation and lit by the second floor windows on the south side. On the opposite

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 6

side of the hall is a wood paneled wall with doors to four bedrooms, each with its own bathroom and built-in closet. At the west end of the hall, a paneled partition surmounted by turned balusters conceals stairs to the attic story. The latter contains one large room lit by the dormers on the north elevation and a small storage room. The hall also provides access to the master bedroom, at the east end, and the kitchen wing, at the west end. Second floor rooms in the kitchen wing, probably for staff, feature large casement windows.

The carriage house is not accessible from the main house. Its first -floor is a single open space, while the second floor features four small bedrooms above the service floor. These are also accessed off a long side corridor, as in the main house, and feature windows overlooking the service courtyard.

Finishes throughout the main house were exquisitely and carefully detailed to create the appearance of something more primitive and hand made. All of the plaster is irregular and appears to be hand done. Wood was cut with circular saws designed to leave marks and unplanned; other marks were left by hand-held saws or adzes to further distress the wood. All of the wood members are joined with large wooden dowels with round heads. Several of the fireplace and door lintels were elaborately carved.

Alterations

A 1927 article in the *New York Times* reported that an electrical fire had threatened to destroy the Galli-Curci estate but had been contained after damaging only two large first floor rooms, presumably the living and dining rooms. Damage was reported from smoke, and the article noted that two interior walls were wrecked.¹

Although there is no more specific documentation of the fire damage, it is likely that repair work returned these rooms to their original design or to one that closely resembled the original design. The plan as shown on the architect's original drawings remains intact. There was one major alteration after Galli-Curci's period. During the 1940s, the original wood windows were replaced by metal casements within the original openings and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 7

lintels and sills were retained; at the same time, open porches were enclosed. The wood shingled roof was recently replaced in kind.

Estate Dependencies

Swimming Pool: in-ground pool northeast of the house surrounded by original stone patio and terraced stone walls.

Stone Gateposts: two large, square stone posts surmounted by large stone eagles on the entrance drive. Each is guarded by a stylized Asian stone dog.

Shed: small wood-frame building, concrete foundation; wood shingle siding, gable roof with overhanging eaves, wide wood barn doors and loft door

Tool shed: small wood frame building on concrete foundation; wood clapboard siding, gable roof with wood shingles, center entrance is wide wood door, board and batten on bottom, small painted glass window on top; entrance flanked by casement windows

Horse Barn: contemporary wood-frame horse barn; non-contributing

Farm Complex

Caretaker's Cottage: tall, rectangular two-story wood frame building with wood-shingle siding and steep gable roof; two massive brick interior end chimneys; house built into the hillside so that the basement is partially exposed on the rear elevation; windows have six-over-six double-hung wood sash; façade has two planes: one half (two bays) projects from the main mass under a steep extension of the main gable roof broken by one small dormer; thus one side elevation is two bays deep and the other is four bays deep. Building has a long,

¹ "Fire Damages Galli-Curci Summer Home; Volunteers Climb Catskill Peak to Fight It," *New York Times*, 28 September 1927.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 8

rectangular one-story wing, possibly built in two stages, perpendicular to the rear elevation of the building and a second one-story wing with flat roof off the side elevation

Dairy Barn: large rectangular wood-frame barn with wood-shingle siding; building has two components: main section is three bays long by two bays wide, steep gable roof extends low over side elevations; windows have double-hung three-over-three wood-frame sash; roof features two wood-shingled vents; a second gable-roofed component, similar in form, extends perpendicular from the side elevation. A third component, possibly a chicken house, has collapsed and is no longer attached to the barn.

Small wood frame building across the road from the farm complex: wood shingle siding, broad gable roof, single wood board door; use unknown

Second Small building across the road from farm complex: small concrete building with gable roof; vertical wood board siding in gable; use unknown

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1

Summary

The Amelita Galli-Curci Estate is significant as an outstanding and highly intact example of an early twentieth century estate in the Catskill Mountains designed by renowned country house architect Harrie T. Lindeberg. It is also significant in performing arts for its association with Italian-American soprano Amelita Galli-Curci, one of the most acclaimed coloratura sopranos of the early twentieth century. Amelita Galli-Curci (1882-1963) was born in Milan and studied piano at the Milan Conservatory before turning to opera in her early twenties. Largely self-taught, Galli-Curci impressed Italian audiences from her debut in 1906 and toured widely, singing throughout Italy and in Spain, Egypt, Russia, and South and Central America in the years before World War I. In 1916, while on her first visit to the United States, she made her American debut at the Chicago Opera to wide acclaim. She subsequently signed with that company for eight years. She later joined the Metropolitan Opera, for the first years singing with both the Chicago and New York companies, and remained with the Met until her retirement from opera in 1930. Shortly after her arrival in America, she signed a recording contract with RCA. Her records became immensely popular and have been praised as among the best of their kind. She was especially lauded for her ability to adapt her voice both to the concert hall and to the intimacy of a recording studio. Galli-Curci was also one of the first major classical artists to perform on radio, singing on New York station WJZ in 1928. She was acclaimed as a concert artist and continued to tour until vocal problems forced her to give up singing in 1937. Galli-Curci has been called one of the best sopranos of the twentieth century. As her popularity soared with American audiences and critics in the late 1910s, Galli-Curci developed a deep love and affection for America, becoming a citizen in 1920. In the same year, she also hired noted architect Harrie T. Lindeberg to design a large country house for her and her husband in the Catskill Mountains near Fleischmanns. The estate, known as Sul Monte, was her home until she gave up performing in 1937.

Architect Harrie T. Lindeberg (1879-1959) was a prolific designer of country houses. He received his architectural education in the office of McKim, Mead and White, where he assisted Stanford White in the design of at least one of the firm's signature estates, absorbing the firm's practice of combining historical

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 2

elements into imaginative and elegant houses suited for modern country living.¹ After Stanford White's death in 1906, Lindeberg formed a partnership with Lewis Colt Albro, another McKim, Mead and White employee, and the two worked together until 1914. Both in partnership and alone, Lindeberg established a reputation for country house designs that combined abstracted vernacular forms and materials into spare yet expressive designs. He was praised by critics for developing an American country house type defined by a "simple serene aesthetic grounded in the pleasures of everyday life."² Lindeberg designed more than one hundred country houses throughout the United States and served numerous wealthy and well-known clients.

Sul Monte, the estate house he designed for Galli-Curci, commands a mountainside site, 2,450 feet above sea level, taking in sweeping views to the west and southwest. Like many of Lindeberg's estate houses, the building is planted firmly into its site, while taking particular advantage of the natural setting. The building is characteristic of Lindeberg's signature country houses in its long, rambling form with a tall central mass flanked by asymmetrical but proportionally arranged wings. Its stone, stucco and wood half-timbered exterior, sweeping shingled roof and bands of small-paned casements reflect the English country aesthetic that many of Lindeberg's country houses share. As was characteristic of the architect's work, the building is at once both abstracted and personal, laid out to meet the personal lifestyle of the well-known diva. Among its special features is a double-height studio wing and music library where the singer could practice and give performances for friends. The studio has both a separate entrance, so that guests could be admitted to recitals without going through the family rooms, and a private stair to the master bedroom suite on the second floor. The estate also includes a swimming pool, picturesque farm complex, and landscape elements. A fine expression of Lindeberg's mature aesthetic, the Galli-Curci Estate retains almost pristine integrity to Galli-Curci's period of residence (1922-1937). The period of significance extends through the late 1940s, when the house received its

¹ Mark Alan Hewitt, introduction to *Domestic Architecture of H.T. Lindeberg* (NY: Acanthus Press, 1996), 3.

² Hewitt, introduction, 15.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 3

only significant alteration, replacement of the original wood casements with metal and enclosure of the first floor porches.

Catskill Mountains³

The Catskill Mountains were one of America's earliest resort areas. The scenic beauty of the mountains has been celebrated in art and literature for centuries. The Hudson River School began near the Kaaterskill Clove and the Kaaterskill Falls. Sanford Gifford, Thomas Cole, Asher Durand, and Frederic Church immortalized the region with such powerful works of art as *Kindred Spirits*, and *Kaaterskill Falls*. Washington Irving, James Fenimore Cooper, and William Cullen Bryant wrote about its unique features and breathtaking scenery and introduced specific locations in and around Haines Falls. Engravers and lithographers, including Currier and Ives, printed image after image of the dramatic and scenic views from the mountains. With the advances in transportation that created new mobility for society, Americans wanted to experience all of it firsthand. Artist colonies at Woodstock and Peekamoose formed, and John Burroughs lectured and wrote about the wonders of the natural landscape in the Catskills from Slabsides, his Ulster County home.

The great Catskill Mountain House (Greene County), known as the premier resort and playground of the wealthy, began as a stage stop developed in 1823 by entrepreneurial coachman, Erastus Beach. The twelve-room Pine Orchard Inn that he built became the Catskill Mountain House, which, in its prime, catered to 1,000 guests each season. James Fenimore Cooper described it as "the greatest wonder of all creation."⁴ The enormous structure, located near Palenville, a few miles from Haines Falls, reportedly could be seen from the Green Mountains of Vermont. Beach, and later his son Charles, knew access to the area was critical to sustain the 300-room hotel and by 1882, Charles Beach had built the Catskill Mountain Railroad, a narrow gauge short

³ Catskill Mountains section derived in part from Elise Barry, "Twilight Park Historic District National Register Nomination," 2007.

⁴ Tim Mulligan, *The Traveler's Guide to the Hudson River Valley from Saratoga Springs to New York City* (n.p., n.d.), 74.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 4

line running from Catskill Landing to Palenville. A decade later, Beach invested in the Otis Elevating Railway, a funicular railroad that climbed straight up the Wall of Manitou to the Catskill Mountain House (1892-1918). As the most famous hotel of its time, the Catskill Mountain House was a symbol of the nation's new wealth and cultural interests that emerged near the end of the nineteenth century, and its fame drew many travelers to the region. The night boats and the day liners from New York City and Albany brought passengers to Kingston or Catskill, and from there stages or railways transported visitors up the mountains into Greene, Delaware, and Ulster Counties. Trains made the Catskills profitable, as they offered quick and regular service to New York City. The combination of efficient and affordable train travel and the proliferation of smaller boarding houses also made leisure or vacation traveling affordable for other Americans and popularized the Catskills as a destination. Tourists traveling to summer guesthouses became a viable industry by the late 1880s, and lodging houses were prevalent near rail depots and stage stops. By the early twentieth century, the Catskills had become a popular destination for urban New Yorkers of all classes - from the very rich, who developed their own estates, to the middle-class, who frequented boarding houses and hotels, and immigrants, who moved between the tenements of the lower east side and the bungalow colonies of the Borscht Belt.

Towns of Middletown and Shandaken

The Galli-Curci estate spans the Delaware and Ulster County border and is located between the hamlets of Fleischmanns, in the town of Middletown, and Highmount, in the town of Shandaken. The two towns are located in a mountainous area of the western Catskills. Middletown is characterized by steep rocky hillsides traversed by numerous narrow river and stream valleys of the Delaware River and its tributaries. Originally part of Ulster County, Middletown was incorporated in 1789. It is one of the oldest towns in Delaware County and once encompassed most of the southern half of the county. The adjacent town of Shandaken is located in the northwest corner of Ulster County, just south of Middletown. Shandaken was formally established in 1804, when it was separated from Woodstock. Located along the Route 28 corridor within the Catskill Park, Shandaken includes Slide Mountain, the highest peak in the Catskills (4,220 feet), and much of the town is in

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

the New York State owned Catskill Forest Preserve. In both towns, permanent settlement began in the late eighteenth century.

Fleischmanns is located on the Bush Kill, one of Middletown's major streams. Early settlement revolved around industry, and the village was known as Griffins Corners throughout the nineteenth century after the Griffin family, among the village's early and important citizens. Transportation played an important role in the village's development. A turnpike had been built connecting Fleischmanns to Pine Hill in 1834, and the Delaware and Arkville Turnpike, chartered in 1840, was completed in 1849. However, it was the arrival of the Ulster and Delaware Railroad in the 1870s that had the largest effect on the village's future. The U&D originated in Kingston and traveled northwest through the Catskills to Oneonta. One of its largest stations was at Phoenicia, from whence the line ran to Pine Hill, Fleischmanns and Arkville, where it turned north towards Kelly's Corners, Halcottville and Grand Gorge. The railroad was in part intended to provide a route for coal from Pennsylvania to the Hudson; however, it proved more important in transporting fresh milk and other local products to urban markets. Most significant, the railroad was perhaps the single most important factor in opening the Catskills to tourists and effecting the region's transition into one of the country's major resort regions. After the Fleischmanns station was completed in 1871, the area became a popular tourist destination. As more vacationers arrived, different types of accommodations were developed to serve tourists from different classes and income levels: homes were enlarged to take in borders; bungalow colonies were developed and hotels were built. The influx of summer visitors also sparked development in the village; farmers and merchants were busy meeting the summer demand and new businesses included restaurants, casinos, bowling alleys and other entertainment related facilities. Fleischmanns also attracted a number of very wealthy people who built larger, more elaborate summer homes in the hills above the village. By the early 1920s, the village was one of the fastest growing resort communities in the Catskills, and, in its heyday, Fleischmanns boasted more than one hundred hotels.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

The hamlet of Highmount, originally named Summit, began as a stop on the Ulster and Delaware Railroad. Prior to that time, the hamlet was a sparsely settled area with a few farmhouses on the boundary between Ulster and Delaware Counties. However, as with Fleischmanns, the railroad made the region accessible to vacationers, and Highmount's fortunes changed in 1881 with the building of the Grand Hotel, which straddled the line between Shandaken and Middletown. The Grand Hotel was an enormous structure designed by noted Kingston architect J.A. Wood. The hotel was located at 2,500 feet, the highest elevation of any of the grand hotels. It had its own railroad station and advertised that parlor cars stopped on its front lawn.⁵ Outdoor recreation took hold in the Highmount area during the 1940s with the opening of Belleayre and Highmount ski centers, and skiing is Highmount's main attraction today.

Among the vacationers who were attracted to the Fleischmanns/Highmount area were Charles F. Fleischmann, a Hungarian immigrant who founded the Fleischmann Company. Fleischmann purchased property west of the village near the Fleischmanns Railroad Station in c1883 and developed a lavish estate, including a deer park, riding stable, heated pool, and trout pond. The Fleischmanns began to take an active interest in village life shortly after their arrival, and the village name was later changed (1913) to honor Julius F. Fleischmann, son of Charles and the village's greatest benefactor. The Fleischmanns were joined by other well-known and/or wealthy vacationers to the mountainous region around Fleischmanns and Highmount. These included New York Governor Herbert Lehman, the Liebman family (owners of Liebman Brewery), Anton Seidel, a conductor at the Metropolitan Opera, and Shakespearean actress Julia Marlowe (Wildacres). Other important summer visitors included Dr. Alexander Johnston Chalmers Skene (1837-1900) and his wife, Annette Wilhelmine Lillian Van der Wegen, a native of Brussels, Belgium. Dr. Skene was a Scottish immigrant who became a surgeon and contributed to the theory, practice, and teaching of gynecology. Skene also founded the American Gynecological Society and opened his own sanatorium in Brooklyn. His county home in Highmount (Bonnie Em) was designed to recall a Scottish castle. Nearby estate owners also included Henry Morton, former

⁵ David Straddling, *Making Mountains: New York City and the Catskills* (Seattle: University of Washington press, 2007), 91.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

president of the Stevens Institute of Technology in Hoboken, the Gould Family (Furlough Lodge), Thomas Coykendall, of the Ulster & Delaware Railroad (Coykendall Mansion, and opera singer Amelita Galli-Curci.

Amelita Galli-Curci

During the first decades of the twentieth century, Italian-American singer Amelita Galli-Curci was hailed as “the world’s best coloratura soprano” and praised by critics for the extraordinary beauty and grace of her singing.⁶ Amelita Galli-Curci (1882-1963) was born in Milan to Enrico Galli, a successful businessman, and Enrichetta Bellisoni, daughter of a conductor and an opera singer. The young Amelita began studying piano with her mother at the age of five and continued her musical education at the Royal Conservatory in Milan, where she became proficient at the piano and fluent in five languages. In 1903, at the age of twenty-three, Galli-Curci won a gold medal at the conservatory and was offered a professorship. However, only a short time later, Italian composer Pietro Mascagni, a friend of the Galli family, was present during a family recital in which Galli-Curci sang the soprano roles in *I Puritani*. Impressed with her performance, Mascagni advised the young pianist that her true talent was her voice, praising her “unique timbre.”⁷ After years of formal training in piano, Galli-Curci began her voice training first with her maternal grandmother, Signora Galli-Rota, an opera singer, who is said to have been her inspiration. It was her grandmother who steered her toward the light soprano roles that made her famous; however, after her grandmother’s death a year later, Galli-Curci continued on her own and described herself as largely self taught. She practiced the exercises of Manuel Garcia, the teacher of Jenny Lind and Lilli Lehmann, and listened to the sopranos who sang in Milan. She later remarked that when she took up singing she “decided to rely upon myself. If I was to have any defects, they would at least be my own and not those given to me by a teacher.”⁸ Galli-Curci made her debut at Trani in 1906, singing the role of Gilda in *Rigoletto*. Two years later, she was cast as Bettina in the premiere of Bizet’s *Don Procopio*,

⁶ Richard W. Amero, “Amelita Galli-Curci: A San Diego Nightingale” <http://www.balboaparkhistory.net/glimpses/curci.htm>

⁷ Amero.

⁸ quoted in Amero.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

which launched her successful career. During the next eight years, she became highly regarded as a coloratura soprano, singing throughout Italy, as well as in Spain, Egypt, Russia, and South and Central America. Audiences were said to have been captivated by her “sensitivity to nuances of character.”⁹ Her biographer noted that the performer put audience approval ahead of other most considerations, wanting everyone to enjoy her singing, and noted that “if but one thing is preserved of her song career, it will be that her voice caressed the ears.”¹⁰ Her fame in Europe soared when, after an attack of typhus in Spain that almost killed her, she sang the role of Rosina in *The Barber of Seville* from a wheelchair. Critics of that performance noted that “she sang with such perfection and masterful delineation of the difficult passages that the applause continued for five minutes, interrupting the opera.”¹¹ She made three trips to Argentina, in 1910, 1912 and 1915, and during the latter she sang her only role with Enrico Caruso, playing opposite the famed tenor in two performances of *Lucia di Lammermoor* in Buenos Aires.

In September 1916 Galli-Curci visited America for the first time, making her American debut in the role of Gilda in a special performance with the Chicago Opera. Although she was virtually unknown in America, critics raved about her opening night, and decades later, Edward C. Moore of the *Chicago Daily Journal*, was still in awe. In *Forty Years in Opera in Chicago*,¹² Moore recalled that “she had that delicately lovely, the cream velvet, that entrancing quality of her voice, and public and critics alike fell down and worshipped.”¹² One critic noted that “when she started into the great aria of the second act she was still an unknown, but when she had finished she was the idol of the house.”¹³ Although her initial visit to America was intended to be only a stopover before returning to Italy, Galli-Curci signed with the Chicago company and sang with them for the next eight years.

⁹ Amero

¹⁰ C.E. Massena, quoted in Amero.

¹¹ Amero.

¹² Edward C. Moore, *Forty Years of Opera in Chicago*, New York: Horace Liveright, 1930.

¹³ *Chicago Daily Journal* [1916], quoted in “New Opera Rivalry Finds A Rising Star, Amelita Galli-Curci at Last to Sing in New York—Her Two Years of Triumph in Chicago,” *New York Times*, 27 January 1918.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

Galli-Curci also toured with the Chicago company and performed widely in concerts. Between engagements she wrote articles and gave many interviews.¹⁴ Her New York debut took place at the Lexington Opera House under the auspices of the Chicago Opera in 1918. Following her performance of Dinorah in Meyerbeer's opera of that name, there were sixty curtain calls. She was described as "a rising star who reverses all precedent by dawning on our benighted darkness from the West."¹⁵ The soprano herself said that after that night "I knew that...New York...had taken me to its heart."¹⁶ Her success prompted her to take an apartment on West 67th Street in New York, and she proclaimed the city "magnificent." She continued, "it is glorious....it is the one great city of the world that is mine....never until I came here did I feel that I was at home. New York is home to me."¹⁷ In the summer of that same year [1918], she and her husband, Marchese Luigi Curci, an Italian painter, visited the Catskills for the first time. Galli-Curci fell in love with the region and the country; however, Curci refused to apply for American citizenship.¹⁸ For these and apparently other reasons, the singer divorced him, and in 1921 she married Homer Samuels, her accompanist. Almost immediately after her marriage to Samuels (an American), Galli-Curci became an American citizen, and in 1922, she established a permanent home near Highmount in the Catskills. Although she is known to have maintained a series of apartments in Manhattan (W. 67th Street, Central Park South, Fifth Ave and E. 83rd Street), her Highmount estate remained her permanent home until after her retirement and was noted in many contemporary articles about her life and career. In an article in *Better Homes and Gardens*, the singer observed that nothing was more reflective of one's personality than one's home.¹⁹

¹⁴ Amero.

¹⁵ "New Opera Rivalry Finds A Rising Star, Amelita Galli-Curci at Last to Sing in New York--Her Two Years of Triumph in Chicago," *New York Times*, 27 January 1918.

¹⁶ "A visit to Mme. Galli-Curci of New York," *New York Times*, 17 February 1918.

¹⁷ "A visit to Mme. Galli-Curci."

¹⁸ Little is known of Curci, but most articles on Galli-Curci portray him in a negative light.

¹⁹ Hazel Gertrude Kinscella, "When Galli-Curci Sings of Home," *Better Homes and Gardens* (August 1929), 22.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

Galli-Curci also became widely known throughout the local community in the Catskills, and in 1922, Margaretville entrepreneur Clark Sanford named his new theater after her.²⁰ Construction of a new theater on Main Street coincided with a boom period in the area, with the dairy, cauliflower, and lumber industries thriving alongside a highly profitable tourist industry. The new building was a multipurpose space designed to house Sanford's three businesses: a car dealership, the offices and printing presses of his newspaper, *The Catskill Mountain News*, and a silent movie house. Sanford apparently offered to name the theater after Galli-Curci if she would sing on opening night; she closed the event with "Home Sweet Home."²¹ She remained a lifelong fan of the region and her adopted country and was later critical of European culture.²² After she attained citizenship, she learned to sing the national anthem and gave benefits for the Verdi House of Aged Musicians, the Caruso Memorial Foundation Scholarship for Talented American Musicians, the New York Osteopathic Hospital Fund, and the Illinois [her husband's home state] Children's Home and Aid Society.²³

In 1917, after establishing herself in America, Galli-Curci was signed by RCA Victor Records. Her recordings were an enormous success and did much to establish her fame in the United States. She is said to have had the special talent of being able to adapt her voice either to an orchestra in a concert hall or to an intimate recording studio with piano or flute. She was one of the first female recording stars and many of her records were best sellers. Her first two reached \$440,000 worth of sales in the first two months after they were issued, and her 1919 recording of "Caro Nome" alone sold 10,000 copies in its Chicago release. Harold Schonberg held that her "Caro Nome" was "probably the best performance ever put on a disc."²⁴ Another critic called her recordings "among the best of their kind ever made."²⁵ Today, many of her works have been thoroughly re-mastered and

²⁰ Margaretville is several miles west of Fleischmanns.

²¹ The Galli-Curci Theatre has been listed on the National Register.

²² "Galli-Curci Dies in California; Was a Leading Met Coloratura," *New York Times*, 27 November 1963.

²³ Amero.

²⁴ Harold C. Schonberg, "Galli-Curci the Stylist, Not a Flamboyant Singer, Coloratura Was blessed with a Clear, Responsive Voice," *New York Times*, 27 November 1963.

²⁵ Amelita Galli-Curci Biography. <http://arts.jfrank.org/pages/8013/Amelita-Galli-Burci-Amelita-n%C3%A9-Galli.html>

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 11

are available on compact discs. Galli-Curci was much in demand by the public and her largest performance, at the Hollywood Bowl on 6 June 1924, was for 27,000 people, a sell out that earned her \$15,000. According to the *New York Times*, that was the largest amount paid to a singer for a performance to date.²⁶ Galli-Curci was also one of the first classical artists to agree to perform on the radio, giving her first performance on WJZ in NYC in 1928. The other soloist on the program was Pablo Casals. The soprano chose songs designed to show off the beauty of her voice.²⁷

Galli-Curci did not make her debut with the Metropolitan Opera Company until 1921, when she forty years old. Listening to her sing the role of Violetta in *La Traviata*, some critics, such as Richard Aldrich of the *New York Times*, found her coloratura “lacking in brilliancy.” Likewise, W.J. Henderson of the *New York Sun* criticized her inability to bring the audience to tears. Others were laudatory. Henry Finck of the *New York Evening Post* was “thrilled by her stunning acrobatics.”²⁸ She went on to play many leading roles at the Met, singing the most well-known coloratura roles, including Rosina, Juliette, Gilda, Mimi, Dinorah, Violetta, and Lakme. Between 1921 and 1924 she was a permanent member of both the Chicago and Metropolitan operas and remained with the Met until her retirement in 1930.

Although she continued to give recitals, she was plagued by vocal troubles, and in 1935 she had surgery for a goiter that had affected her voice. Following the surgery, she attempted a comeback at the Chicago Civic Opera; however, despite raves from the audience, critics reported that her clarity and range were gone.²⁹ She continued to give recitals until 1936-7; however, she was now in her mid-50s, and her voice had begun to fade.

²⁶ quoted in Amero

²⁷ “Galli-Curci on the Radio for First Time on Friday,” *New York Times*, 22 January 1928.

²⁸ quoted in Amero.

²⁹ “Galli-Curci Dies in California.”

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 12

Galli-Curci decided to cancel the next season but retired with grace, observing that “We don’t play with the same toys all of our lives!”³⁰

In 1937 she sold her estate and moved to southern California, living in several different places before settling in La Jolla. In retirement she turned to painting, piano, and reading. Even in her later years, she continued to attract considerable attention from the regional and national press until her death from emphysema in 1963, just before her eighty-first birthday. At her death, *New York Times* critic Harold C. Schonberg wrote that “her records show her to have been one of the most polished coloraturas ever to appear before the public” and observed that she had been “blessed with the clearest, most responsive and most beautiful of voices.”³¹ In 1972, critic Simon Trezise chose her as “best soprano of the twentieth century,” and in 1985, she was included in a compilation entitled “One Hundred Years of Great Artists at the Met.”³² Galli-Curci has been described as a “an Italian girl with the face of Lucretia Borgia and the heart of Dante’s Beatrice, whose voice was like juggling with golden apples.”³³ She was celebrated for having

a limpid timbre of exceptional beauty and an ease in florid singing that sounded natural rather than acquired; her highest register...remained pure and free from shrillness. Her style, though devoid of dramatic intensity, had a languorous grace and charm of line capable of conveying both gaiety and pathos.³⁴

Galli-Curci’s widespread popularity was based on her captivating voice and willingness to please, her extensive touring, her many recordings, and her radio performances. Simply stated, “she sang amazingly well things that people like to hear.”³⁵

³⁰ Amelita Galli-Curci Biography. <http://www.craton.chez.com/musique/galli-curci/agcbui.htm>

³¹ Schonberg, “Galli-Curci the Stylist.”

³² Amero.

³³ “Galli-Curci Dies in California....”

³⁴ Amelita Galli-Curci Biography. <http://www.craton.chez.com/musique/galli-curci/agcbui.htm>

³⁵ “Galli-Curci’s Voice Near Perfect, Say Music Experts--A Success that Recalls Others Triumphs Since Jenny Lind’s Choice Seats Sold for \$650,” *New York Times*, 10 February 1918.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 13

Harrie T. Lindeberg

Harrie Thomas Lindeberg (1879-1959) was born in Bergen Point, New Jersey. He was the son of Theodore Lindeberg and Eleanor Osterlon (also given as Augusta Osterlund), both apparently Swedish immigrants. Not much is known about his family or his early life. While one source lists Theodore Lindeberg as a shipbuilder, another cites census records saying that he was a “dealer in neckties.”³⁶ Lindeberg was educated at both public and private schools, but there is no evidence that he attended college before studying architecture for five years (1901-1906) in the office of McKim, Mead and White. As one of many draftsmen and staff at the large firm, Lindeberg may not have had extensive contact with the partners; however, he served as assistant to Stanford White on at least one large country estate, the James L. Breese Estate, Southampton (NR listed), constructed between 1898 and 1901.³⁷ The latter, an enormous Colonial Revival estate house, demonstrated McKim, Mead and White’s signature blend of “creative and academic eclecticism,” the selective borrowing and adaptation of historical styles and details to create a building to serve modern needs.³⁸

After White’s death in 1906, Lindeberg and fellow firm draftsman Lewis Colt Albro (1876-1924) formed a partnership that lasted until 1914. Lindeberg was the primary designer, while Albro apparently directed business matters.³⁹ One of their first commissions, the James A. Stillman Estate in Pocantico Hills (1907), established the firm’s reputation for country house designs in its own right.⁴⁰ Called “A Thatched Place” by *Architectural Record*, the Stillman house actually featured a sculptural roof created from curved timbers, shingles and tiles. Although based on English models, the building established one of the most important tenets of Lindeberg’s work, the abstraction and simplification of vernacular forms to create contemporary American

³⁶ Albert Bush Brown with Thomas R. Hauck, “Albro and Lindeberg, 1906-1914,” *Long Island Country Houses and Their Architects, 1860-1940*, ed. Robert B. Mackay, Anthony K. Baker and Carol A. Traynor (NY: Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities and W.W. Norton Co., 1997), 39; Mark Alan Hewitt, introduction to *Domestic Architecture of H.T. Lindeberg* (NY: Acanthus Press, 1996), 2.

³⁷ Hewitt, introduction, 1.

³⁸ Hewitt, introduction, 3.

³⁹ Bush Brown and Hauck, 40.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 14

residences.⁴¹ This use of vernacular forms combined with modern materials was evident in many of Lindeberg's later works, such as when he used antique-looking asphalt shingles or clay tiles adapted from English prototypes and when he developed new ways of framing complex gables and hipped configurations.⁴² Another of Albro and Lindeberg's important early works was the design of Foxhollow Farm (1909) in Rhinebeck, Dutchess County, for Tracy Dow and his wife, Alice Olin Dow. The main house was modeled on Mount Vernon and the property included a farm complex and landscape. In this estate, Lindeberg again found a way to employ traditional forms in a property designed for modern country life.⁴³ Among the firm's other notable works were a number of English-influenced houses and cottages on Long Island and in some of the New York and New Jersey suburbs. As early as 1910, *Architectural Record* credited Lindeberg with the design of "a new, distinctly American form of country house," and in 1912 the firm issued its own monograph, *Domestic Architecture*.⁴⁴ The latter was profusely illustrated with residences characterized by "strong planning, simple massing and well-crafted details."⁴⁵ In it, Lindeberg laid out his philosophy succinctly: "Build simply, whether a cottage or a castle."⁴⁶ In 1914 the partnership was dissolved and both architects continued to practice independently until their deaths in 1924 (Albro) and 1959 (Lindeberg).

Lindeberg struggled in the later years of the 1910s before finding his footings after World War I, when he more fully developed his country house type as a modern building that combined historical associations with an "austerity of mass, materiality and proportion."⁴⁷ County house historian Mark Alan Hewitt has asserted that Lindeberg's best works were built between 1919 and 1930, an era in which the architect's more precise establishment of his design principles coincided with an age in which rapid increases in wealth greatly

⁴⁰ Hewitt, introduction, 4.

⁴¹ Hewitt, introduction, 5.

⁴² Hewitt, introduction, 6.

⁴³ Hewitt, introduction, 6.

⁴⁴ Hewitt, introduction, 7.

⁴⁵ Hewitt, introduction, 8.

⁴⁶ Introduction to *Domestic Architecture* (New York: Lewis Colt Albro and Harrie T. Lindeberg, 1912).

⁴⁷ Hewitt, introduction, 8.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 15

enhanced the demand for country estates.⁴⁸ This is also the period in which he established a reputation for inventing or adapting more house motifs “which have become a general part of our architectural vocabulary than any other country house architect.”⁴⁹

As his fame grew, Lindeberg’s office received commissions from clients throughout the United States, including the Midwest, South, and Gulf Coast regions, and the states of Illinois, Massachusetts, Missouri, Ohio, Rhode Island, Tennessee, and Texas. The office’s work ranged from large country estates to suburban villas and included houses, stables, farm complexes, service groups, and townhouses. Although the majority employed English and Tudor forms, there were also examples of Arts and Crafts, Georgian, Colonial Revival and Art Deco styles. No matter what the style, Lindeberg’s works continued to be grounded in the principles of respecting tradition while embracing change. During his long career, he designed more than one hundred country houses, many suburban dwellings, and several public buildings.

Lindeberg’s County Houses

Lindeberg’s country house designs are characterized by both a remarkable consistency and a pronounced individuality. Almost all were constructed on large tracks of land, many on sites with rolling hills and long views, and most were designed with long winding approaches. He was noted for his ability to site buildings into the precise natural landscape in which they were built, and his houses were said to be anchored to the land, as if “rooted.” Having a great appreciation for natural materials and the specific qualities of place, Lindeberg often incorporated local materials related to the site into his designs. Lindeberg’s estates were conceived as an organic whole, and he preferred to take complete control of each project, including the siting, design and

⁴⁸ Hewitt, introduction, 8.

⁴⁹ 1924.... in Hewitt, introduction, 8.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 16

materials, interior furnishings and decoration, and well as outbuildings and landscapes. He also favored working on site with the craftsmen who executed his imaginative designs in iron, glass, brick, stone and tile.⁵⁰

In form, his best houses show a similar attention to massing and volume. Almost all were designed around a long, indirect, horizontal axis. He created large central masses, often with steep hipped roofs, flanked by asymmetrical groupings of clearly delineated wings. Functions were clearly defined and reflected a hierarchy in their size, form, materials, and placement, from central halls to public and private living spaces, to service functions such as kitchens and carriage houses, and farm complexes and other dependencies. Overall, Lindeberg took the English cottage for his primary design motif, and he was influenced by contemporary English county house architects such as Richard Norman Shaw and Sir Edwin Lutyens. Like them, his designs were abstractions of historic models, spare, modern interpretations of an ancient medieval vernacular. Many of his buildings have especially distinctive, long sweeping rooflines broken by massive chimneys or dormers that help to anchor the buildings and minimize their substantial size. He favored textural materials, such stone, brick and stucco cladding, long expanses of unbroken walls, small-paned windows and medieval-inspired hardware. Although his houses feature intricate detail work, details are subordinate to the overall sense of volume and massing, and each part was conceived in relationship to the whole.

Critics have noted Lindeberg's domestic work as an art balancing beauty and utility. He is said to have cultivated a simple, serene design aesthetic grounded in the pleasures of everyday life, and his work has been praised for demonstrating to early twentieth century Americans that comfort, convenience, and elegance in a domestic environment balanced by a distinctive and personal aesthetic were elements of a new national art.⁵¹

Sul Monte

⁵⁰ Bush Brown and Hauck, 40.

⁵¹ Hewitt, introduction, 15

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 17

In November 1920 Amelita Galli-Curci purchased a 181.5 acre lot from Ida Ramp of Fleischmanns and subsequently engaged Harrie T. Lindeberg to design an estate for her and her husband. How Galli-Curci came to chose Lindeberg is not known; however, the architect was very widely known in that period for his country estates. Lindeberg's design for Amelita Galli-Curci reflects the architect's fully developed aesthetic. Built in 1922, as the architect was well into his mature period, the estate house's relationship to its mountainside side is emphasized by the stone gathered from the site that was used in its construction. Like many of Lindeberg's best works, the building's character is derived from its distinctive combination of form and volume, with its substantial central section under a tall hipped roof flanked by a series of smaller wings that are both asymmetrical and balanced. While the overall design is created around a horizontal axis, the wings are also sited independently relative to the entrance courtyard, their various functions, and the character of the site, in particular, the sweeping views. By placing elements such as the studio and the porch and the bedroom wing slightly off axis, the architect was able to give each windows on three sides and independent views, something that would not have been possible had they been aligned. The four massive interior end chimneys are evenly dispersed, helping to balance the components while also grounding each component to its specific site. The overall composition is deceptively simple, while specific components, such as the stonework and hardware, are finely crafted and detailed. The design's English influence is evident in the combination of stone with wood and stucco that were used to create a half-timbered effect and in distinctive touches such as the carved vergeboards and massive timbers incorporated into the half-timbered sections. This aesthetic is enhanced by the sweeping cedar-shingled roof and banks of casements. The roof on the main section extends low over the upper story windows and was constructed without highly differentiated valleys so that it flows into the roof of the wings. This is especially pronounced in the intersection between the main house and the studio wing, creating a seamless effect.

Some of these features are carried through to the interiors, such as the half-timbered walls in the living room and studio and the carved fireplace lintels. Like many of Lindeberg's houses, the interiors are spare and relatively

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 18

unembellished. At the same time, the finishes themselves were carefully and extensively detailed. There are virtually no untreated finishes. Interior plaster appears to have been applied by hand and is slightly uneven. Large circular saw marks appear on beams, especially in the studio, which features exposed rafters and trusses. Other wood shows hatchet or adz marks that were intentionally added to suggest a primitive aesthetic. Fireplace and door lintels are exquisitely carved. All wooden members are joined with large dowels with decorative round heads. Although the architect was in most cases using modern technology, he employed it to create something that looked hand made. As was his preference, the architect picked out the original overscaled English medieval reproduction furniture, some of which remains in the house.

While Sul Monte has much in common with Lindeberg's other county houses, the building is also uniquely designed to meet Galli-Curci's lifestyle. The building features large but simple rooms with spectacular views for family use, numerous bedrooms for family and guests, and separate sections for service functions. One of the most important components is the studio wing, a double-height space that features a fireplace and balcony. A newspaper article describing a fire in 1927 described the estate's "music room," with a library of scores and music memorabilia. The architect created a separate exterior entrance to the studio from the entrance court, allowing guests who may have been invited to recitals or rehearsals to enter without going through the family spaces. In addition, the studio had a carved wooden stairway to the master bedroom suite above, which included not only the bedroom and bath but a separate wardrobe room.

In addition to the house, the estate also features remnants of a designed landscape, with stone terraces, walks and gardens, an in-ground swimming pool, several small sheds, and a farm complex and caretaker's cottage. The latter are picturesque buildings that employ similar forms as the main complex (bold massing, steep roofs that extend low over the building, sweeping rooflines) but were constructed using wood shingle cladding. Galli-Curci used the barn to house her cows, who she named after characters in the operas she performed; the names were painted on their stalls.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 19

When Galli-Curci and Samuels moved to California in 1937, the entire property was sold to Jane Santos (later Jane Fisher), who retained it until 1948, when she sold it to Francis Leach. At that time, the property was described as including the “dwelling house, guest house, superintendent’s house, recreation building, barn, garage and other outbuildings and improvements.” No documentation has been found that describes the guest house and recreation building; these two buildings could have been part of the Lindeberg design or they could have been added during the Santos/Fisher period. They are not extant today. The Leach family sold the entire estate to HF & MDL Associates in 1984. Beginning in 1989, the estate was subdivided and parcels changed hands several times. The nomination encompasses three parcels totaling 137 acres of the original 181-acre estate and includes all extant estate buildings. A deed search has not yet revealed the exact location of the remaining 44-acre parcel. The nominated estate restrains a high degree of integrity to Amelita Galli-Curci’s period of residence.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1

Amelita Galli-Curci Biography.

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 2

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
Fleischmanns Vicinity
Delaware and Ulster Counties, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1

UTM Coordinates - all zone 18

1. 539008/4666259
2. 539507/4666002
3. 539349/4665689
4. 539079/4665194
5. 538664/4665428
6. 538430/4665804
7. 538636/4666228

Boundary Description

The nomination boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

Boundary Justification

The boundary was drawn to include the largest intact portion of the original Galli-Curci Estate and includes the main house, surviving dependencies, and landscape features.

United States Department of the Interior Amelita Galli-Curci Estate
National Park Service Fleischmanns Vicinity, Delaware County, New York

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 11 Page 1

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☐ See continuation sheet