

ONE MILL COPY

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE: Missouri	
COUNTY: Shelby	
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

1. NAME

COMMON:  
"Elim," Home of Dr. William Keil

AND/OR HISTORIC:  
"Elim"

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:  
Bethel

STATE Missouri	CODE 63434	COUNTY: Shelby	CODE 205
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3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input type="checkbox"/> Public <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> No
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/> Commercial <input type="checkbox"/> Educational <input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> Government <input type="checkbox"/> Industrial <input type="checkbox"/> Military <input type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Park <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/> Religious <input type="checkbox"/> Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____ _____ _____

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:  
Mrs. Gertrude Lair

STREET AND NUMBER:  
RFD #2

CITY OR TOWN:  
Shelbyville

STATE: Missouri	CODE 63469
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5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.:  
Office of Recorder of Deeds, Shelby County Courthouse

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Route 15

CITY OR TOWN:  
Shelbyville

STATE: Missouri	CODE 63469
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6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:  
Missouri Historic Sites Catalogue

DATE OF SURVEY: 1963     Federal     State     County     Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:  
The State Historical Society of Missouri

STREET AND NUMBER:  
Corner, Hitt and Lowry streets

CITY OR TOWN:  
Columbia

STATE: Missouri	CODE 65201
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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	<input type="checkbox"/> Excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Good	<input type="checkbox"/> Fair	<input type="checkbox"/> Deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> Ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> Unexposed
	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Altered	<input type="checkbox"/> Unaltered		<input type="checkbox"/> Moved	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Original Site	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (If known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

"Elim," located on the brow of a plateau overlooking the North River one-and-a-quarter miles east of Bethel, Missouri, is a central hall symmetrical plan, two-and-a-half story, brick and stone house built in the late 1840's by the members of the "Society of Bethel." The house served as the residence of the society's founder, Dr. William Keil, and as the recreation center for the society's members. Painted pink with dark green trim, it has a full basement, a simple ridge roof, and two porches.

EXTERIOR

The north, front facade of the structure is symmetrical in design. The first story is characterized by a central double doorway flanked by two small narrow windows, one to each side. To either side of this central unit are two evenly spaced larger windows. The second story has a central window over the entranceway with two windows to either side directly above those of the first story. This fenestration is repeated on the south, rear side.

Both the north and south facades support single story porches that were added at a later date. The north porch, constructed of stone and brick, covers the central doorway and extends around the north-west corner of the house spanning one-third of the west gable wall. The south porch, constructed of wood covered with clapboard, occupies only the central area between the two outermost windows of the south facade.

The east and west sides of the building are stepped gable wall, each ending in a double chimney included within and flush with the exterior wall. Both double chimneys are centrally located and flanked by a single window to each side on the first, second and attic floors. The "step" in the gables above the roof line indicates the previous existence of an upward extension of the attic. This attic half story was wood frame covered with clapboard and was used for drying herbs. Small two-paned windows arranged in line with the first and second story openings below, lined its north and south sides, while a single such window pierced the gable wall at each end. This half-story was destroyed by a tornado during the 1920's, and the roof was converted to a common ridge roof. A visible break in the roofing material also indicates this loss.

The exterior walls rest on a limestone foundation of ranged ashlar extending about two and a half feet above the ground. The walls themselves are constructed of locally made brick laid according to the American bond method. All the windows have wood frames with limestone sills and lintels, with the exception of those on the south facade which have brick lintels. All the first story windows have nine over six light sash, while those of the second and third stories have six over six light sash. The roofing material is now composition shingles but was originally wood shingles.

(cont.)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE  
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

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7.

"ELIM," HOME OF DR. WILLIAM KEIL

INTERIOR

The first floor is divided by a wide, central hall penetrating the entire depth of the building. An identical double door is located at each end of the hall and access can be gained from either direction. Four rooms of equal dimension flank the hall, two to each side. A straight stair at the west side of the hallway leads to the second level which was originally one large banquet room. This is now divided into four smaller bedrooms. The attic area is sealed off.

The woodwork, doors and handrails are solid walnut, while the floors are oak. All the wood is original.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

**8. SIGNIFICANCE**

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			_____

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

"Elim," located one-and-a-quarter miles east of Bethel, Shelby County, Missouri, is significant as the home of Dr. William Keil, the founder of the "Society of Bethel," the most successful communistic society established in Missouri and one of the most successful in the United States (previously nominated to the National Register of Historic Places under the title "Bethel Historic District").

William Keil was born March 6, 1811, in Bleicherode, Prussia, where he was reared and trained as a tailor. At the age of twenty-four he immigrated to the United States, assumed the title of "Doctor" and established himself as a "magical healer" in Pittsburg, Pennsylvania. While in Pennsylvania, Keil converted to Methodism and became a preacher first in the Methodist Episcopal Church and later in the Methodist Protestant Church. Influenced by the communistic principles of George Rapp's Economy Colony, Keil eventually severed his connections with Methodism to form his own sect. (William G. Bek, "From Bethel, Missouri, To Aurora, Oregon, Letters of William Keil, 1855-1870," Missouri Historical Review, 48:25, October, 1953, and Henry Taylor, General History of Shelby County, Missouri, Chicago: Henry Taylor Co., 1911, p. 172.) In 1844, he led a band of followers, mainly Rappists who believed as he did in the advantages of communistic living, to found a communal colony in Shelby County, Missouri. (William G. Bek, "A German Communistic Society in Missouri," Missouri Historical Review, 3:69, October, 1908.) The colony, named Bethel, existed from 1844 to 1879 without semblance of a constitutional agreement. It had no peculiar dress, nor singular customs. The sole bond of union was the magnetic power and iron will of Keil who served as its founder, administrator, preacher and physician.

The brethren felt Keil to be the wisest of men and erected "Elim" as his residence. The house not only served as Keil's dwelling, but also as the seat of his administrative powers and the herbarium where his medicinal herbs were cured and stored for use in his role as colony physician. The house was also the scene of several annual festivals including Keil's birthday, Easter, Pentecost and the autumn Harvest-feast. On all these occasions, a procession formed in Bethel and, led by the colony band, marched to "Elim" where feasts followed by dances were held in the large, second-story banquet hall. (Charles

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Nordhoff, The Communistic Societies of the United States, 1875, reprint 1960, pp. 309-329.)

By 1854, Keil decided to create another communal colony in the less crowded Pacific Northwest. In 1855 he migrated to Washington Territory, but finally settled in Oregon's Willamette River Valley where he died in 1877. Bereft of the direct guidance of their leader, the Bethel Colony dwindled and disbanded, dividing the community holdings among them. (Ralph Albertson, "A Survey of Mutualistic Communities in America," The Iowa Journal of History and Politics, 34:387, October, 1936.) Following disbandment, "Elim" was purchased by George Lair, a former colony member, and is still occupied by his descendants today.

The survey of Missouri's sites of historical and architectural significance is based on the selection of sites as they relate to theme studies in Missouri history as outlined in "Missouri's Comprehensive Statewide Historic Preservation Plan." "Elim" is, therefore, being nominated to the National Register of Historic Places because, as the home of the founder and leader of a successful utopian society, it relates to the theme of "Social Improvement" in Missouri's Northeast Prairie Region.

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

1. Albertson, Ralph. "A Survey of Mutualistic Communities in America," The Iowa Journal of History and Politics, Vol. 34, October, 1936.
2. Bek, William Godfrey. "A German Communistic Society in Missouri," Missouri Historical Review, Vol. III, October, 1908.
3. \_\_\_\_\_. "From Bethel, Missouri, to Aurora, Oregon, Letters of William Keil, 1855-1870," Missouri Historical Review, Vol. 48, October, 1953.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		39° 52' 10"	92° 00' 10"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: Less than ten

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Sheila M. Hannah, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION: Missouri State Park Board DATE: July 16, 1970  
State Historical Survey and Planning Office

STREET AND NUMBER: P.O. Box 176, 1204 Jefferson Building

CITY OR TOWN: Jefferson City STATE: Missouri CODE: 29

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION

NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:

National  State  Local

Name: Joseph Jaeger, Jr.

Title: Director, Missouri State Park Board, and Missouri State Liaison Officer

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

ATTEST:

\_\_\_\_\_  
 Keeper of The National Register

Date: \_\_\_\_\_

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(Continuation Sheet)

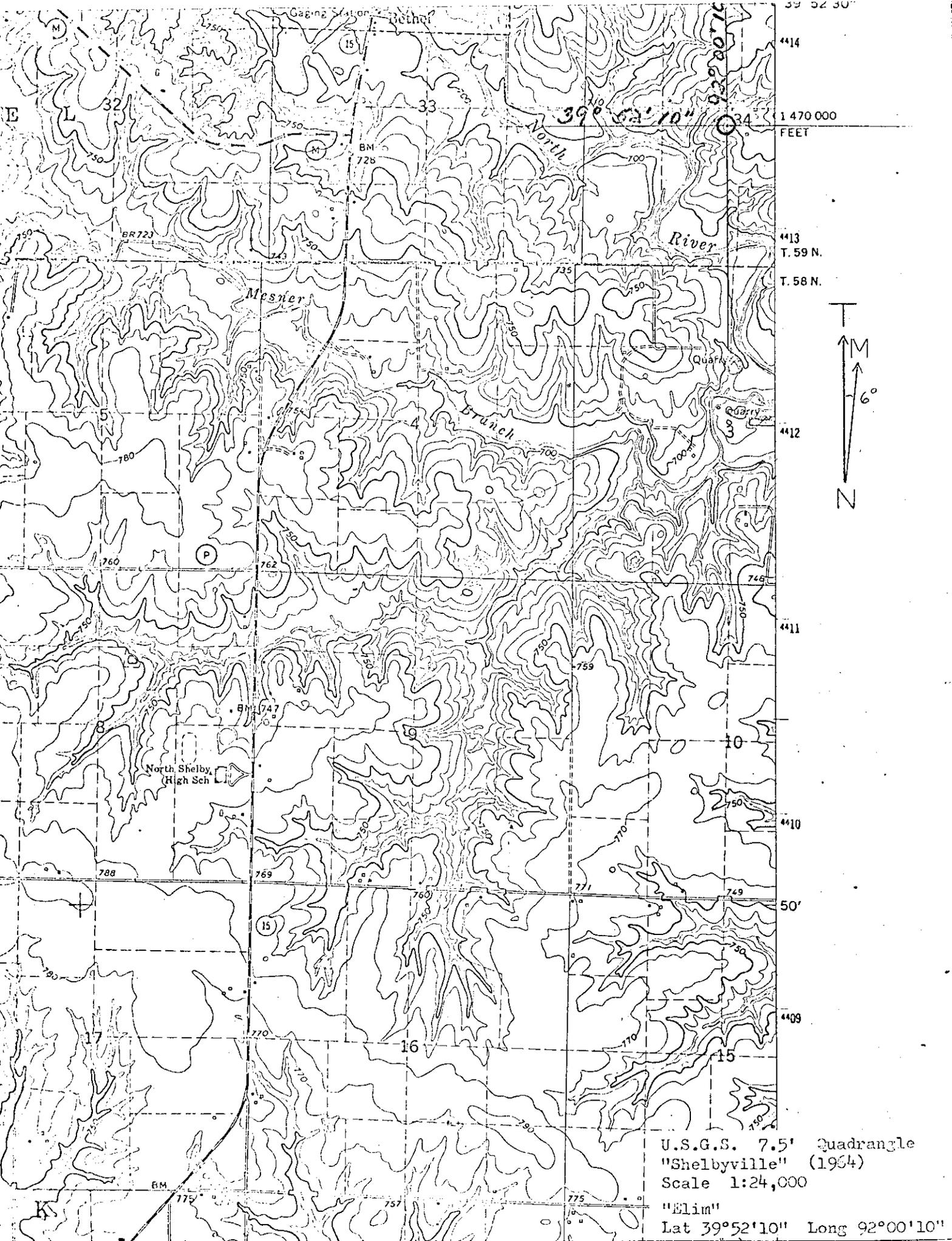
STATE	
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9.

"ELIM," HOME OF DR. WILLIAM KEIL

4. Nordhoff, Charles. The Communistic Societies of the United States. New York: Hillary House Publishers, New York, 1961. First published in 1875.
5. Taylor, Henry. General History of Shelby County, Missouri, Chicago: Henry Taylor Co., 1911.



39 52 30"  
4414  
1 470 000  
FEET

4413  
T. 59 N.  
T. 58 N.

4412

4411

4410

4409



U.S.G.S. 7.5' Quadrangle  
"Shelbyville" (1964)  
Scale 1:24,000

"Elim"  
Lat 39°52'10" Long 92°00'10"





