

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only
received
date entered

**1. Name**

historic *Thornburg Historic District*

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number

\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town *Thornburg*

\_\_\_ vicinity of

congressional district

*18*

state *Pennsylvania*

code *42*

county *Allegheny*

code *003*

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	___ public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	___ agriculture
___ building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	___ unoccupied	___ commercial
___ structure	___ both	___ work in progress	___ educational
___ site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	___ entertainment
___ object	___ in process	___ yes: restricted	___ government
	___ being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	___ industrial
		___ no	___ military
			___ museum
			___ park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			___ religious
			___ scientific
			___ transportation
			___ other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name *Multiple*

street & number

city, town

\_\_\_ vicinity of

state

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. *Allegheny County Courthouse, Office Building*

street & number *Ross Street*

city, town *Pittsburgh*

state *Pennsylvania*

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title *Pennsylvania Inventory of Historic Places* has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_ yes \_\_\_ no

date *4-17-80*

\_\_\_ federal  state \_\_\_ county \_\_\_ local

depository for survey records *Pennsylvania Historical Museum Commission*

city, town *Harrisburg*

state *Pennsylvania*

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Thornburg, as an example of an early twentieth century planned suburban residential development, has remained remarkably intact considering its proximity (4 miles) to downtown Pittsburgh and the more recent residential and commercial development in the areas surrounding it. It is relatively isolated due to the surrounding topography which includes hillsides undermined by coal extraction, precluding large scale development.

The community is situated on a terraced bluff with a southeasterly orientation overlooking Chartiers Creek and its valley. Crafton Golf Course, formerly the Thornburg Country Club, rests in the valley plane on the west side of Chartiers Creek. The Pittsburgh, Chartiers and Youghiogeny Railroad line, formerly the Pennsylvania Railroad, rides the ridge one hundred feet above the valley floor and delineates the southern and eastern edges of Thornburg's residential area. The district is distinctly bound on all sides by undeveloped hillsides with coal pits and sink holes, but covered with vegetation. There is a rise of nearly one hundred feet from the highest home in the older district, the third Thornburg mansion at 1132 Lehigh Road, and the newer district bounded by Baldwin Road.

Of the 75 buildings in the district, all but one are residential, and 63 date to the 1900-1919 period, 5 were built between 1920 and 1939, 2 date to 1940 and 5 have been built since 1960. Individual survey forms have been prepared for 70 of the structures.

Thornburg's substantial early suburban homes were laid out in contiguous square or rectangular lots, varying between 50 and 150 feet in width, which appear to be regularly shaped on a map, but which visually are often irregular due to the hilly contours of the land. Homes along Princeton Road, Cornell Road, Dartmouth Place, and parts of Hamilton Road are set back 30 feet from the sidewalks and face each other along tree lined streets. Harvard, Lehigh, Stanford, and upper Hamilton Road have homes terraced along a ridge on one side of the street overlooking wooded hillsides. All Thornburg homes have modest yards.

The architecture of a majority of the homes in Thornburg can be classified as Bungalow or Shingle Style. Also represented in smaller quantities are the Mission Style, Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Tudor Revival modes. Some of the houses reflect Frank Thornburg's penchant for California domestic architecture, developed through his travels. The strictly residential nature of the area is greatly enhanced by the use of these informal, domestic designs. These styles, closely associated with the romantic revival ideal of the late nineteenth century, illustrate the nostalgic flavor of suburban development at this time and a characteristic yearning for a "country cottage" without the isolation of the farm.

With a few exceptions, the Thornburg homes are a mixture of one and one-half to two story, two to three bay bungalow adaptations. The primary building materials are fieldstone, emphasis on browns, greys, and beiges. Most homes have minimal decoration, relying instead on exposed rafters and half-timbering for detail. They were designed by unknown or local architects, with two basic restrictions placed upon them by the developers. The first restriction was that each home cost a minimum of \$2,500 to build, and the second was that each home have a first floor of masonry to prevent fires.

Additions to the neighborhood between 1920 and 1940 included seven brick or stone houses representing the Colonial and English Styles popular for suburban residences during that era. The five post-1960 houses in the district are scattered among the rest. They are undistinguished designs of the suburban tract variety which do not significantly detract from the ambience of the development.

A few houses are distinguished from the rest by their size or design. The Mathews/Fleck house at 1080 Stanford Road, built in 1906, is a copy of Morris/Jumel house in New York City. The two story, five bay Georgian mansion rests on the crest of a hill at the intersection of Stanford and Harvard Roads

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above Cornell Road, and features a grand central portico on Ionic columns

The second house whose scale belies the rule of modesty is the Thornburg/Haller house at 1132 Lehigh Road sited to overlook the rest of Thornburg from its corner site. It is a sprawling one and one-half story Shingle Style mansion of ashlar and black Italian mortar with a hip roof, shed and hip roof dormers with shingling and a polygonal porch which winds around one and one-half sides. The roofline is interesting for its numerous elongated chimneys at the ridge pole which balance the horizontal massing and the overhanging eaves which exposed rafters. The total effect in one of rustic grandeur.

The one story, multi-bay Thornburg school building, designed by local architect Press C. Dowler in 1910 has been a continuing focal point for the Thornburg district and remains its only non-residential structure. Due to its modest scale and subtle Mission Style architecture, however, it is not obtrusive. The grounds provide a park-like area with their tennis courts and picnic areas, while the Thornburg Community Club has made excellent use of the former school as a community center

In keeping with the size and scale of homes in Thornburg, the thirteen homes on upper Hamilton Road known as "Bungalow Row" illustrated the essence of the district. But for two post-war modern intrusions at 658 and 608 Hamilton Road, all of the homes are one and one-half story, three bay bungalows or cottages with a delightful variety of detail. Their high terraced siting overlooking the hillside vegetation and their native fieldstone foundations lend these homes an air of country charm

Most homes in Thornburg are in good or excellent condition with resident owners who actively maintain them. Few drastic alterations have been done other than the enclosing of formerly open porches.

In the advertisements of 1900 free spring water for "eternity" was promised potential lot-buyers, and residents recall several springs about the properties. Unfortunately, this water supply was spoiled by coal extraction at the end of Hamilton Road, beginning in 1912, by Benjamin S. Hammill, a Thornburg resident.

The bridge which connects Thornburg with the neighboring community of Crafton across Chartiers Creek is currently being rebuilt. At present, however, traffic is being rerouted through the district, detracting from its secluded ambience.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

## Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Thornburg Historic District is notable as a document of a nationwide movement in community planning and landscape design. As one of Pittsburgh's earliest planned dormitory imaginative domestic architecture which were the goals of such developments. In addition the district carries associations with Pittsburgh's business and industrial history through the activities of its residents and the location there of the first coal railroad in Pennsylvania.

The early history of the area may be briefly outlined. Chartiers Creek was named for Peter Chartiers, a French-Indian Shawnee who lived at the mouth of the creek in the 1740's and used it as a base for his theivery. The same valley was claimed by the French in 1749, and counter-claimed by the British in 1753. The British, finding the confluence of the Allegheny and Monongahela Rivers more strategic for their purposes, saved the Chartiers Valley from experiencing warfare, and it remained primarily farmland.

Thornburg in 1849 was the site of the first railroad built in Pennsylvania to take coal to market, the Chartiers Valley Railroad. The Chartier Coal Company of Allegheny was to be transported from the mine to Coal Harbor located in a cove behind Brunot's Island near the present site of Chartiers Country Club on Baldwin Road, Coal was to be transported from the mine to Coal Harbor, located in a cove behind Brunot's Island near Present-day McKees Rocks on the Ohio River. According to a letter from the engineer of the company, Edwood Morris, this train had the first soft coal powered locomotive west of the Alleghenies. The demise of the Chartiers Valley Railroad and the Chartiers Coal Company appears to have been sometime in 1855 but the cause of its collapse has not been determined appears to have been sometimes in 1855, but the cause of its collapse has not been determined.

Thomas Thornburg is first recorded as the owner of 1 1/2 acres in Moon Township. Allegheny County in 1797. During much of the eighteenth century, 1,000 acres of the Chartiers Valley was owned by the McKee brothers: Alexander and, after the Revolution, James. In the early nineteenth century the land on which Thornburg is located was shown to be part of a 402 acre tract deeded January 13, 1806 by James and Lydia Brisson to Thomas Thornburg. An additional 33 acres were acquired from James and Rebecca Ewing on June 7, 1831. This farm was divided and redivided among Thomas Thornburg's lineal descendants until July 12, 1900, when several purparts were combined and nearly 250 acres were sold to the Thornburg Land Company (Frank Thornburg, President and David C. Thornburg, Secretary). An additional purchase in 1908 brought Thornburg to its present size.

Advertised as "Pittsburg's Most Attractive Suburb," the plan was begun in 1900 when Frank Thornburg had five homes built along Princeton Rpad. The distirct developed rapidly thereafter, and Thornburg was incorporated as a Borough in 1909. Sixty-three homes were built from 1900-1919, the majority being completed before 1910. Subsequent developments within this original plan, including seven 1920-1940 era homes and five post-1960 homes, have not significantly altered either the size of the ambience of the district.

The Thornburg Historic District's greatest significance lies in its role as a document of the phenomenon of suburban development in the early twentieth century. Thornburg was by no means the first planned suburban community in Pittsburgh. Precedents and paralled developments may be cited, from an early attempt in the 1870's at Wildwood Park, an unrealized plan on the site of the present LongVuecountry Club to Rossler Farms, the suburb adjacent of Thornburg, in 1903 and Schenley Farms, a suburb within

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the City of Pittsburgh, in 1905. Unlike many of its counterparts, however, Thornburg has suffered few intrusions and remains intact as an isolated suburban community. Conceived along the lines of Bruce Price's Tuxedo Park in New York State, the ideal was a park-like preserve in which to build comfortable, sprawling homes, while maintaining accessibility to the commercial and social services of a large city. Tuxedo Park succeeded by incorporating everyday services into its village area, and tying itself to New York City via railway. Thornburg dispensed with the internal services, and concentrated on maintaining swift and relatively simple transportation into the city. Residents has access to the Boroughs of Crafton and Ingram, as well as the cities of Pittsburgh and Allegheny, aboard a train and later a streetcar line which stopped at the base of Hamilton Road.

Architecturally, the Craftsman Style as the American outgrowth of the English Arts and Crafts Movements which found its expression in a variety of stylistic vocabularies, is reflected in the concept and design on the Thornburg development. Protesting against machine-age artificiality the movement sought functional plans, organic harmony, and complete integration with natural surroundings. The houses in the Thornburg Historic District embody those ideals, as well as the fine interior woodwork for which the movement is noted. Some of the designs were featured in architectural periodicals of the 1900-1919 era.

The development attracted upper middle class professionals who sought a pastoral setting accessible to the city. Inhabitants of the Thornburg Historic District have not been nationally famous, but through the energy and initiative of its citizens in managing local businesses and civic activities, Thornburg has had a substantial influence upon local history. The first woman to graduate from Carnegie Institute of Technology's School of Architecture was a Thornburg resident from Childhood, as was the first American woman to attend Oxford University in England. In addition, many Thornburgers have been prominent in Pittsburgh business and industry as executives and small business owners. Indeed, the 1908 Blue Book listed a number of Thornburg addresses.

# 9. Major Bibliographical Reference

Harold Kirker, *California Architectural Frontier: Style and Tradition in the Nineteenth Century*, San Marino: The Huntington Library, 1960.  
See individual data forms for articles dealing with specific houses which appeared in architectural periodicals.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 48

Quadrangle name Pittsburgh West, PA

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UMT References

A 

1	7	5	7	7	7	9	0	4	4	7	6	4	2	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

1	7	5	7	7	9	6	0	4	4	7	6	1	9	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

1	7	5	7	7	9	4	0	4	4	7	5	9	6	6
Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

1	7	5	7	7	3	8	0	4	4	7	5	4	6	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

1	7	5	7	7	9	4	0	4	4	7	5	7	2	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

1	7	5	7	7	5	1	0	4	4	7	6	0	2	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

1	7	5	7	7	6	1	0	4	4	7	6	2	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

1	7	5	7	7	7	1	0	4	4	7	6	4	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

### Verbal boundary description and justification

### 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 Eliza Smith, Survey Cordinator, Lu Donnelly, Survey Assistant

organization Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Fdn

date February, 1980

street & number One Landmarks Square

telephone 412/322/1204

city or town Pittsburgh

state Pennsylvania

# 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Ed Weintraub

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 8-28-80

For HCRS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

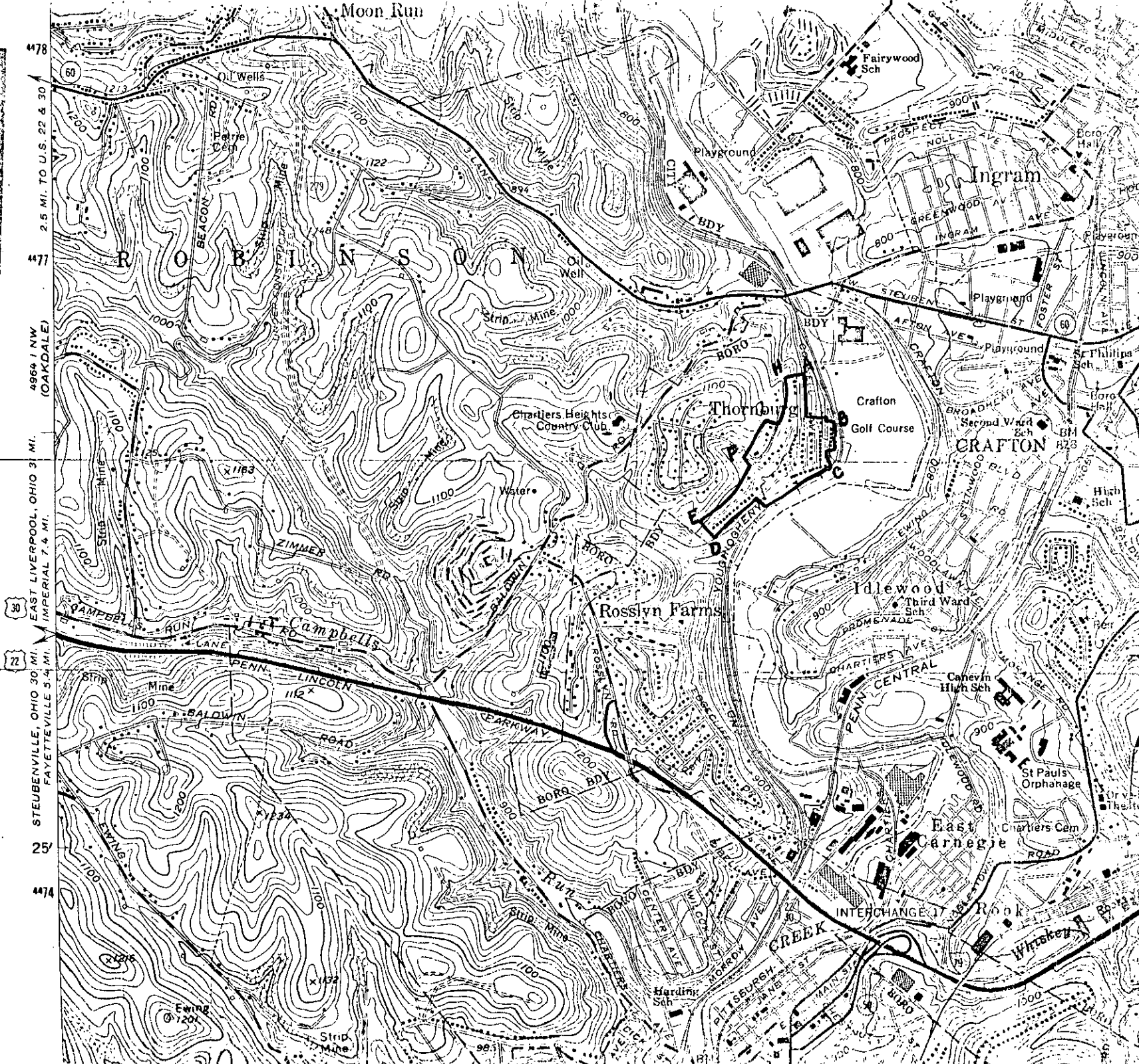
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

Thurg Historic District  
 Allegheny County  
 Zone 17  
 A E577790 N4476420  
 B E577960 N4476190  
 C E577940 N4475960  
 D E577380 N4475640  
 E E577300 N4475720  
 F E577510 N4476020  
 G E577620 N4476200  
 H E577170 N4476400

Pittsburgh West  
 Quad



4964' NW  
 (CAKDALE)  
 2.5 MI. TO U.S. 22 & 30  
 4977  
 4964' N  
 25' W  
 EAST LIVERPOOL, OHIO 3 MI.  
 38  
 IMPERIAL 7 & 4 MI.  
 27  
 STEUBENVILLE, OHIO 30 MI.  
 FAYETTEVILLE 5.4 MI.  
 25'  
 4974