

**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

OK
For HCRS use only

received

date entered

10

1. Name

historic Wilhelm Mansion and Carriage House

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 730 Centre Avenue

___ not for publication

city, town Reading

___ vicinity of

congressional district

6

state Pennsylvania

code 42

county Berks

code 011

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name James K. and Dollie D. Wilson

street & number 1280 Brookes Terrace

city, town San Diego

___ vicinity of

state California 92103

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Berks County Courthouse

street & number Sixth and Court Streets

city, town Reading

state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic Sites Survey of Reading

has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes ___ no

date November 1979

___ federal state ___ county local

depository for survey records PHMC

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

The property known as the Wilhelm mansion consists of two buildings, the mansion (1) and the carriage house (2) on .63 acres of landscaped setting on one of Reading's most attractive and prestigious boulevards.

The mansion is a three-story Gothic Revival building approximately 60 feet in height, 40 feet in width, and 50 feet in length, built primarily of granite. Research shows that the mansion was built in 1877. Two rooms were added at the rear which bear the inscription 1888. This early addition to the building is in keeping with the style and design of the original, being constructed primarily of granite.

The roof is multigabled (1), the gabled area being made of red slate shingles (3) and the upper or flat portion of the roof being standing-seam copper (4). There are four mid-roof molded and corbelled brick chimneys (4) to serve the eight fireplaces (2).

Windows are arched throughout the building with the exception of those of the 1888 addition mentioned above (1,5). Third-story windows are dormered (1,3). There is extensive use of bargeboard trim on the mansion (1,3,5).

The mansion has an enclosed stoop (1,6) flanked by an open porch on either side (1,7). The outer door of the stoop is oak beadboard with massive wrought-iron hinges and latch (1,6). The vestibule door has glass panels (originally beveled but destroyed by vandels) above oak panels with ornamental wrought-iron grilles over the glass. The fanlight above the door is art glass (8).

Among the distinctive features of the first floor are a reception room with an extremely ornate molded plaster ceiling in high relief (9, 10), a solarium with oriel window and art glass panels (11), and a ballroom with two bay windows, fireplace, ornate molded plaster arch (12), and an exit through a wrought-iron door to a spacious side porch (13). The dining room is paneled in oak with hardwood and terra cotta tile floor (14), terra cotta fireplace, brass wall sconces, and an arched ceiling ornamented with bands of molded plaster (14).

The second floor includes three spacious bedrooms, three bathrooms, a library with Teutonic fireplace bearing the date 1884 (15, 16), oak paneling and carved pilasters (17), lead-paned bookcases (18). Again, there are several instances of the use of art glass, most notably in an archway between two areas of a bedroom suite (19, 20). There are three fireplaces on the second floor, two with handsome mirrors over the mantle (21). One of the bedrooms has a bay window (22).

The two-story carriage house (2) sits on the rear of the lot and bears an 1890 datestone which serves as a lintel over one of the doorways (2). This building is also constructed of granite and features art glass windows (2), dormers on the second floor (2), a handsome chimney to serve the single fireplace in the building (23, 24), and a cupola with an arch and pilaster motif (2).

There is an ornate wrought iron fence (25) across the rear of the property as well as fine wrought iron balconies at the second story windows of the mansion (26, 1, 7). A terra cotta relief of a horse's head hangs above what were originally the doors through which the carriage passed to the street (27).

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input 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 checked="" 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 1877 Builder/Architect unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Wilhelm Mansion is one of the outstanding landmarks in Reading. It is one of the few single dwellings of the Gothic Revival style of architecture in Reading, is a unique example of a level of craftsmanship seldom seen in contemporary times, and has been determined to be one of the outstanding buildings in the city by the Pennsylvania State Comprehensive Historical Site Survey.

The first occupant of the house was the Right Reverend Mark Anthony DeWolfe Howe, Bishop of the Episcopal Diocese when the diocese was headquartered in Reading (1877-1880). Bishop Howe was the older of both law and divinity degrees, a scholar of some note, and was later active in the administration of Lehigh University.

The next owner of the property, from which the mansion takes its present-day name, was Charles Wilhelm. Mr. Wilhelm was president of the Wilhelm Paint Company which was later purchased by the present Glidden Paint Company, and lived in the house for approximately 50 years until his death in 1936. He was one of the prominent industrialists of Reading when the city was in the heyday of its industrial past.

The mansion has been occupied as a single-family residence throughout its existence until approximately 1973 when the first floor was converted to doctors' offices and the remaining floors and carriage house were left vacant. Present plans include restoration of considerable damage which resulted from this conversion as well as from vandalism and neglect. One owner, during the 1960s, proceeded rather far with plans to demolish the buildings and build a high-rise on the site when the costs of maintaining such a property as a single-family dwelling became prohibitive. Apparently local sentiment had much to do with the failure of his plans, and the buildings, fortunately, still stand today as stately reminders of times past.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Material from Michel LeFevre, Bureau of Planning, Reading, Pa. Interview with former owner, Mr. Elwood Reppert. Articles in The Reading Eagle: February 11, 1968, November 14, 1972, April 26, 1978.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .63

Quadrangle name Reading, Pa.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	8	4	2	0	9	2	0	4	4	6	6	4	2	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
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state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mrs. James K. Wilson

organization --

date September 20, 1980

street & number 1280 Brookes Terrace

telephone (714) 295-8875 (year round phone in California)
(215) 987-3710 (summer phone in Reading)

city or town San Diego

state California, 92103

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

For HCRS use only

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

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

READING QUADRANGLE
PENNSYLVANIA—BERKS CO.
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

5864 IV NE
(FLEETWOOD)

5.9 MI.
12.1 MI.
NW
E

421 MOSELEM SPRINGS 10 MI.
222 TEMPLE 2.3 MI.

55'

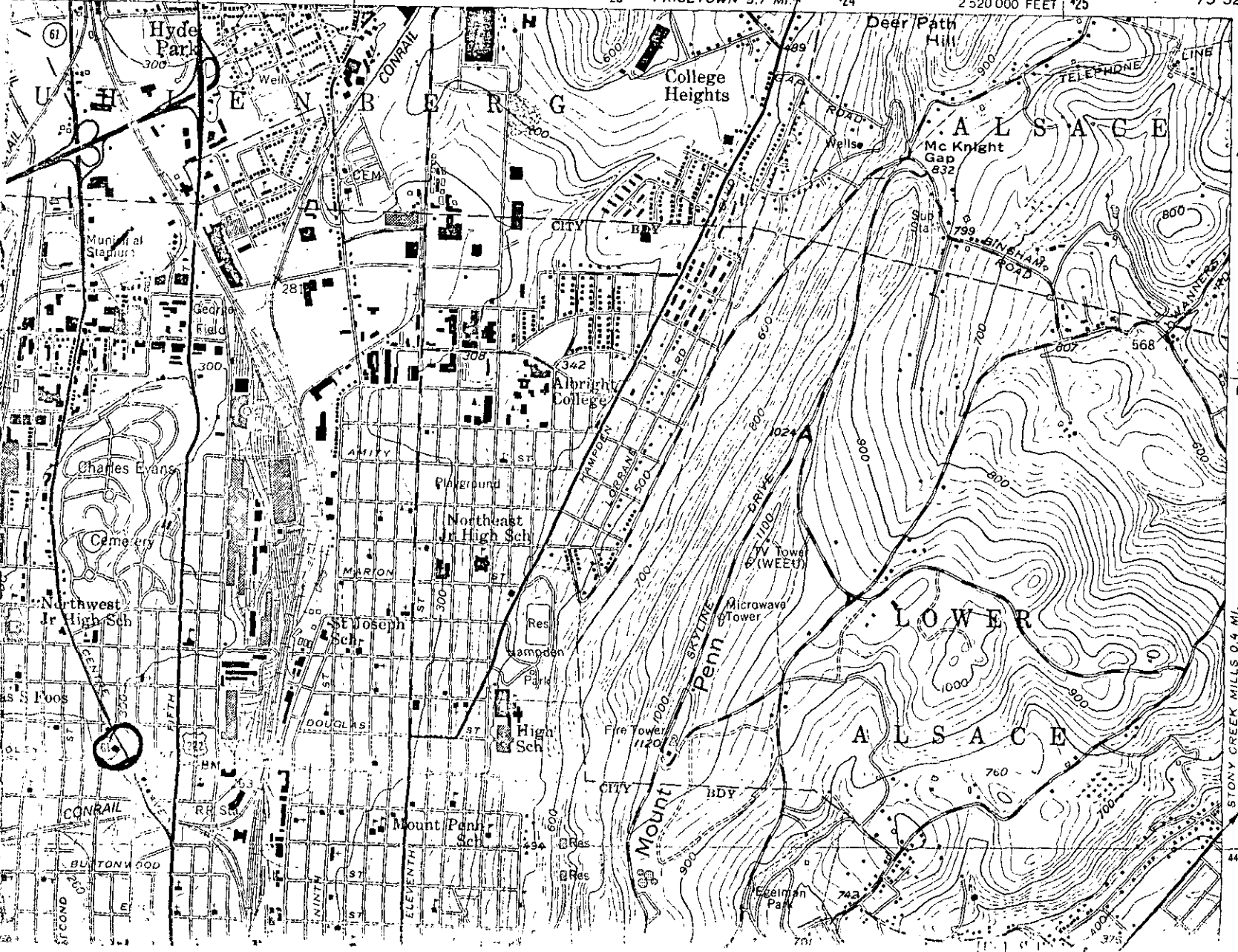
423 PRICETOWN 5.7 MI.

424

2520 000 FEET 425

75°52'30"

40°22'30"



380 000
FEET

STONY CREEK MILLS 0.4 MI.
FRIEDENSBURG 5.7 MI.

4466