

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 DR. JOSEPH PRIESTLEY HOUSE, CROSS KEYS INN

and/or common Priestley-Forsyth Memorial Library

## 2. Location

street & number 100 King Street \_\_\_\_\_ not for publication

city, town Northumberland \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district 17

state Pennsylvania code 42 county Northumberland code 097

## 3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: library

## 4. Owner of Property

name Priestley-Forsyth Memorial Library

street & number 100 King Street

city, town Northumberland \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state Pennsylvania 17857

## 5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Northumberland County Courthouse

street & number Market Street

city, town Sunbury \_\_\_\_\_ state Pennsylvania

## 6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_\_\_ yes \_\_\_\_\_ no

date 1977 \_\_\_\_\_ federal  state \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ local

depository for survey records Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission

city, town Harrisburg \_\_\_\_\_ state Pennsylvania

## 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

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

The building, basically Federal in design, consists of a main structure to which has been added two additions. The main structure, believed to be the middle portion of the building, was built around 1810-1820. The first addition, believed to be the rear portion of the building, was built probably between 1820-1858. The second addition, the front portion, was built before 1858 because the Cummings Map of Northumberland County, 1858 depicts the building in its present dimensions. The building was remodeled for use as a home after 1864 when Dr. Joseph Priestley bought the property.

The main structure is 21 feet by 26 feet, the first addition is 12 feet by 15 feet, and the second addition is 21 feet by 26 feet. The building is approximately 35 feet tall at its highest point.

All exterior walls are of 12 inch solid brick masonry construction. The foundation walls are stone. Interior walls are wood stud with wood lathe and plaster. The floor structure is wood frame and the floors are wood. The ceilings are of plaster construction.

Windows are wood, double-hung with wood shutters on the exterior of some windows. There is a Palladium window on the east wall of the front addition and a half circle, "lie on your stomach" window on the west wall of the front addition. Windows on the front addition feature lintels.

The gable roof is wood framed and the front addition is ornamented with Italianate brackets and dentil moldings.

Bronze bracket lanterns on each side of the front door and a brass lettered plaque on the front of the building were designed and manufactured by Tiffany Studios, New York. They were hung on the building between 1926 and 1933.

The main structure is 2½ stories tall. On the first floor there are two rooms and on the second floor there are three rooms and two storage areas. There is an attic in this portion of the building, unoccupied, and a crawl space under the first floor.

The rear addition consists of one room on the first floor and one unoccupied room on the second floor. There is a basement under the rear addition.

The front addition is 3½ stories tall. It consists of a large main room and hallway on the first floor, three rooms on the second floor and three rooms on the third floor. The third floor and attic area are unoccupied. The basement under this addition houses the boiler area.

Among the many unique interior features are eight fireplaces, two in the large first floor main room. There is a wooden arch across the ceiling of this main room and two ornate ceiling molds. The first floor foyer walls are decorated with five etched glass windows. The basement arch supports are unique for their combination of brick and stone construction.

Throughout the building there are many examples of moldings and trims, a number of original Victorian hinges and latches and some early doors. Photographs of some of these unique features have been included to clarify these descriptions.

Also of interest are the chimneys, two in the front and one in the rear, all featuring Victorian chimney pots.

# 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates c. 1820

Builder/Architect

## Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

This property can boast of a number significant owners. The first man, Captain John Lowden, owned a great deal of land in Buffalo Valley and the land which is now Northumberland was granted to his wife Sarah by the Proprietaries of Pennsylvania, Thomas and Richard Penn, in 1770. Captain Lowden led a group of approximately 100 men to fight at Bunker Hill and was later a member of the Supreme Executive Council of Northumberland County.

Bernard Hubley, owner from 1796 to 1807, was commissioned as First Lieutenant in the German Regiment in August, 1776 and was promoted to Captain in February, 1778. While his regiment was stationed in Northumberland County he was in command of Fort Rice and Fort Jenkins for a time. After the war, he settled in Northumberland and engaged in a brewing business. He was commissioned as County Lieutenant in 1789 and was also connected with the local militia.

John Cowden, owner from 1807 to 1814, was commissioned as the first Postmaster of the Northumberland Post Office in 1795. At that time Northumberland had one of the most important Post Offices in the state. Mr. Cowden also was engaged in merchandising and owned and operated a store in Northumberland.

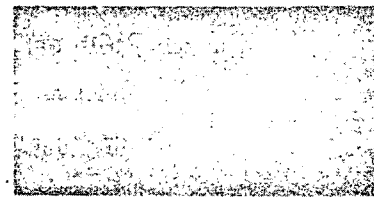
The most significant owner of the property was Dr. Joseph Priestley. Dr. Priestley was born September 22, 1819 in Point Township, Northumberland County, where his family had been established since 1794 when his great-grandfather, Dr. Joseph Priestley, settled here from England. Dr. Priestley, the owner of this property, attended a local private school, read medicine in nearby Milton, and was graduated from the University of Pennsylvania in 1844. He practiced medicine in Northumberland for forty years and was considered to be one of the foremost physicians in the region. He was a member of the county, state, and national medical associations and served as president of the county organization.

Dr. Priestley was very much involved in politics and civic affairs. He was an unswerving supporter of the Republican party from the time of the party's inception. He has been referred to as a leading 19th century activist. He was instrumental in generating the idea to secure the State Capital of Pennsylvania in Northumberland and was one of the first "corporators" of the Centre Turnpike, which by the end of its construction was the longest and most expensive road to be chartered and completed in Pennsylvania.

Dr. Priestley was an extensive owner of real estate in this area. He purchased this property in 1864, remodeled it and used it as his private home and the site of his medical practice until his death in 1883. After his death the home remained in the family until 1926 when it was presented to the people of Northumberland to be used as a library in memory of the Priestley family.

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The conditions of the period, the methods of travel, and the needs of travelers all combined to make the establishment of inns or taverns a major requirement along the line of travel. When this property was used as a tavern, c1810-1864, it contributed significantly to the social, cultural, and economic climate of the community.

This tavern was situated in a very favorable location along the Danville highway, which was convenient to stage coaches, and only a few blocks from the river and the railroad lines. The means of transportation during the period were public stage coach, private carriage, horse back or post travel for people, the Conestoga wagon for freight. Later, the packet boat appeared as a competitor to the stage coach and canal boats made Northumberland important because of its location. Railroads superseded canals and the first Philadelphia and Erie railroad opened to Northumberland in 1855. This tavern was situated close enough to the road, the river, and the railroad to make it very accessible to all travelers.

Early taverns served as stations for gathering passengers to embark or to be deposited, as a place of collection of goods for carriage, as well as filling stations for food, rest and drink for travelers, drivers, and horses. Taverns were also meeting houses for members of the community. Early taverns were places where people could exchange news and ideas, buy liquor, and read what may well have been the only available newspaper. Taverns were often the site of public sales and a collecting point for traveling merchants selling their wares.

The first name of the tavern, "Cross Keys Inn," is significant because at the time there were no house numbers and few people could read. Taverns were often known by the signs they bore and, of course, crossed keys would be easily remembered and distinguished.

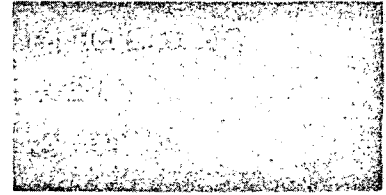
During the period in which this tavern operated there are recorded eight other taverns that operated, at least for part of this period, in and around Northumberland. This tavern was noted for its good food and fine lodgings and it has been reported that many notable people would travel out of their way to spend a night under its roof.

In terms of utility, structure, and art, this building helps to play an important part in the historical architecture of the area. The building is well preserved and the large Palladium window, the Italianate brackets, and the lintels and dentils added to the structure provide the building with fine detailing.

The building served the social needs for which it was built. There are twelve fireplaces that were a definite point of interest in the early taverns. They helped to provide comfort to the travelers and the stage coach drivers could huddle in a semi-circle around them to sleep for a fraction of the cost of a room. There were probably at least four or five large rooms upstairs that would have provided fine accommodations for travelers and the large front room downstairs probably served as a bar and meeting room for travelers as well as community members.

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The materials used in the construction of the building are firm and durable. There is a stone foundation and 12 inch solid brick masonry walls. The interior walls are wood stud with wood lathe and plaster. The building is generally very well preserved.

The building is very nice architecturally and fits beautifully into its surroundings. In Northumberland County several styles typify the historical architecture, including the Federal style of this building. It is situated on the corner of the town park and is surrounded by very well preserved old buildings of various architectural styles. Across the street from this property is another large brick Federal style building that was also once used as a tavern. On the other corner of the street is a large brick building of Queen Anne and Victorian styles that was once a tea room and restaurant.

Alteration of the building for use as a home in 1864 and then it's alteration in 1926 for use as a library has only added to its historical value. The building is filled with doors, latches, and wood moldings that were popular at various times in our history. The walls on the main floor are lined with solid oak book cases that were quite expensive and rare when they were installed around 1930 and it was the intention of the founders to make it one of the most beautiful libraries in the country.

Throughout the building's long history great care has been taken to enhance and preserve it and it stands now as one of the most interesting public buildings in our area.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Bell, Herbert C. History of Northumberland Co., Pa. Chicago, Il.: Brown, Runk & Co, Publishers, 1891.

The Northumberland County Historical Society. Proceedings and Addresses, v. XIX, p. 14. Also consulted were the Site Surveys listed under Item #6 and all deeds pertaining to ~~the property housed in the Northumberland County Courthouse.~~

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .1

Quadrangle name Northumberland, Pa.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

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Zone Easting Northing

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Zone Easting Northing

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D 

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**Verbal boundary description and justification** The property now runs 140' to the next property, along that land to a post corner, then in a southwestwardly direction in a line parallel with Front Street a distance of 40' to a post corner, then southeastwardly 30' to a post corner, then southwestwardly 60' along King Street.

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 Elizabeth A. G. Renn

organization Priestley-Forsyth Memorial Library

date 11-5-80

street & number 100 King Street

telephone 717-473-8201

city or town Northumberland

state Pennsylvania 17857

## 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

title Ed Weintraub, Director

Bureau for Historic Preservation

date

For HCERS 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

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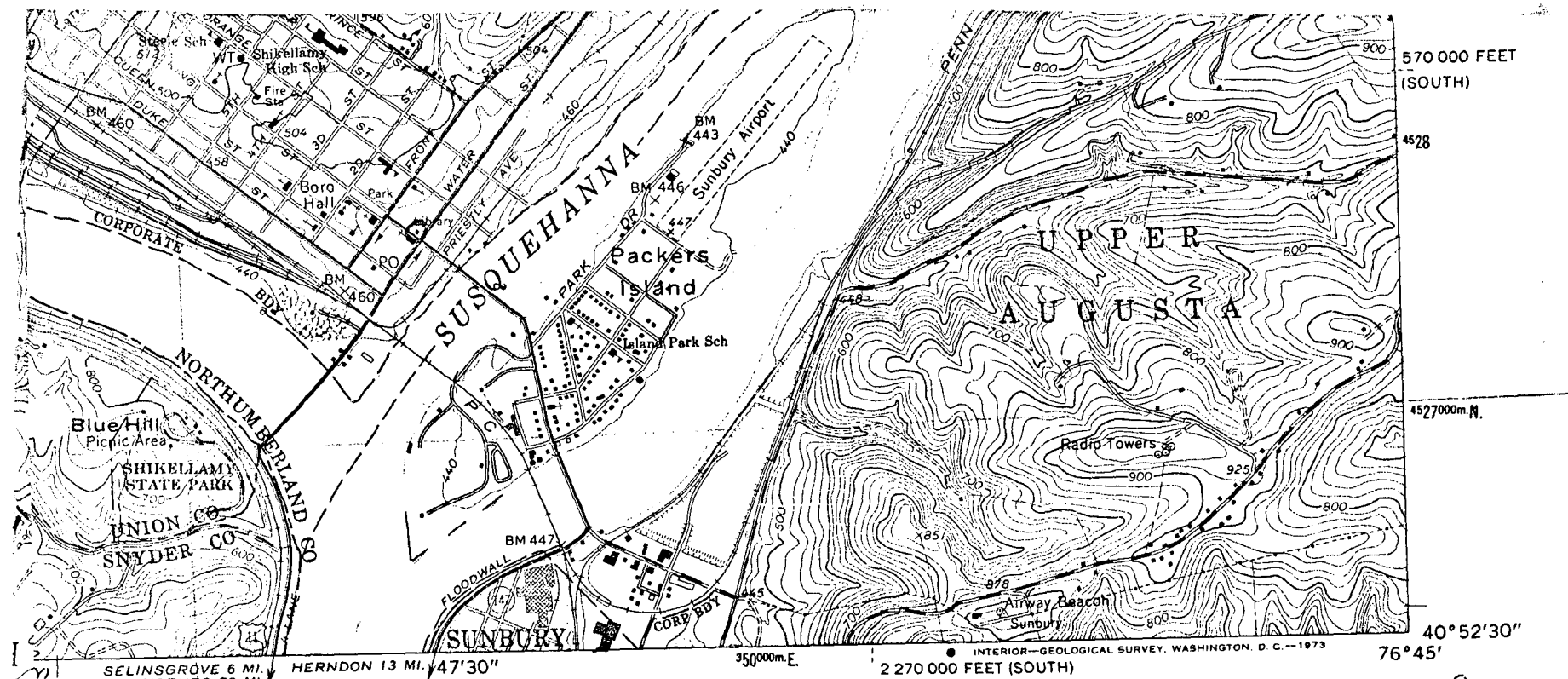
Continuation sheet

Item number 10

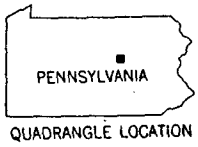
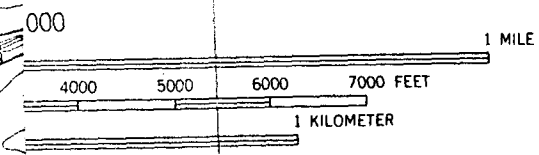
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The nominated property was originally Lot No.41, part of the tract of land called "Sarah's Delight," in the general plan of the town of Northumberland. It was bounded northwesterly by Lot No.42, northeastwardly by a 20 foot alley. It contained in breadth 60 feet on King Street and in depth 200 feet on Front Street.

Over the years there were changes made. When it was deeded to the Priestley-Forsyth Memorial Library in 1926 the nominated property became parts of Lots Nos. 41 and 42 as marked on the general plan of the Borough of Northumberland. The property now runs 140 feet to the next property, along that land to a post corner, then in a southwestwardly direction in a line parallel with Front Street a distance of 40 feet to a post corner, then southeastwardly 30 feet to a post corner, then southwestwardly 60 feet along King Street.



Dr. Joseph Priestley House  
 (Priestley-Forsyth Library)  
 Northumberland County  
 Zone 18 E348900 N4527770



- ROAD CLASSIFICATION
- Heavy-duty \_\_\_\_\_ Light-duty \_\_\_\_\_
  - Medium-duty \_\_\_\_\_ Unimproved dirt - - - - -
  - Interstate Route    ○ U. S. Route    ○ State Route

**NORTHUMBERLAND, PA.**  
 NE/4 SUNBURY 15' QUADRANGLE  
 N4052.5—W7645/7.5

1965  
 PHOTOREVISED 1973  
 AMS 5665 IV NE—SERIES V831

Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with State of Pennsylvania agencies from aerial photographs taken 1973. This information not field checked

MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
 VEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242  
 SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

(TREVORTON)  
 5665 1 SW