

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

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC

THOMAS HOMESTEAD

*William Thomas House*

AND/OR COMMON

Wren's Nest

**2 LOCATION**

STREET &amp; NUMBER

North Thomas Street, #266

--NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Bellefonte

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Pennsylvania

VICINITY OF

CODE

42

COUNTY

Centre

CODE

027

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

## CATEGORY

 DISTRICT BUILDING(S) STRUCTURE SITE OBJECT

## OWNERSHIP

 PUBLIC PRIVATE BOTH

## PUBLIC ACQUISITION

 IN PROCESS BEING CONSIDERED

## STATUS

 OCCUPIED UNOCCUPIED WORK IN PROGRESS

## ACCESSIBLE

 YES: RESTRICTED YES: UNRESTRICTED NO

## PRESENT USE

 AGRICULTURE COMMERCIAL EDUCATIONAL ENTERTAINMENT GOVERNMENT INDUSTRIAL MILITARY MUSEUM PARK PRIVATE RESIDENCE RELIGIOUS SCIENTIFIC TRANSPORTATION OTHER: Vacant**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Ted H. Conklin

STREET &amp; NUMBER

Fox 35

CITY, TOWN

Hillsburg

VICINITY OF

STATE

Pennsylvania

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Centre County Courthouse, Deed Book 309, p. 107.

STREET &amp; NUMBER

High Street and Allegheny

CITY, TOWN

Bellefonte

STATE

Pennsylvania

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

Historical Reflections of Centre County

DATE

1970, 1972

 FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR  
SURVEY RECORDS

Centre County Planning Commission

CITY, TOWN

Bellefonte

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 Thomas Homestead consists of two basic sections: an L-shaped house dating to circa 1785 (indicated by areas 1 and 2 in accompanying ground plan) and a two story Georgian house built in 1834 (areas 4, 5, and 6 in plan). A third area (numbered 3 in plan) was added in 1834 to tie together the new house and the old. Remodeling above the first story of the old section occurred a this time as well.

The earlier section of the house is of stone construction, consisting of uncoursed masonry in combination of roughly squared and rubble. Foundation walls and exterior bearing walls (18 inch) are stone up through the second floor (excepting the southern end of the L, where masonry does not extend above the first story). A combination of stone and wood is present beyond the second floor.

The focus of this earlier section is a massive fireplace with a chimneybreast of over 11 feet in total width. This rests on a huge outcropping of bedrock below. The 7 foot hearth is spanned by a manteltree. This fireplace, however, has been blocked in with cinder block.

This section of the house is in bad disrepair. It has been damaged by fire and needs extensive reinforcing of structural members.

The 1834 section is in a considerably better state of preservation. A columned porch was removed from the front of the house in the early years of our century (a photo of this porch accompanies this form). The original doorway was removed by the present owner in recent years, as it had been seriously damaged from exposure.

This section has coursed and roughly squared masonry foundation and bearing walls (21 inch). A prominent feature of this section is a two story, three-sided bay protruding at the northern end of the house. A brick chimney stands at the back of the northern parlor. The chimney above, or northern, end thus is element to balance, aesthetically, a functional chimney at the southern end of this section. Chimneys are stone and brick combination, with the portions protruding from the roof being in brick. The original slate foreplace remains in the northern parlor.

Interior partitions in the 1834 section are beams with lattice and plaster.

The parlors flanking the center hall are approximately 18' square with 10' ceilings. The stairway is plain with flat balusters and string facings. Windows are double-hung, six over six lights, mortise and tenon frames. Interior window sills are 15" deep.

There is a basement under the original L-shaped house and under the principal 1834 house.

# 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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input checked="" 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 1834, William Ashbridge Thomas, distinguished iron master, erected a large two-story stone home of Georgian design. The site for Thomas's new home was not arbitrarily chosen, but was suggested by the presence of an earlier stone home which had been owned in succession by William Lamb, John Dunlop, and James Smith. All of these men had been involved in grist mill operations, and this early house had become known as the "lower Mill house" at least by the time of Thomas's acquisition. Thomas incorporated the essential structure of the older house in a wing behind his new home.

In 1776, William Lamb purchased several hundred acres of land surrounding and including the area of present-day Bellefonte. He sold the land; then bought it back. In 1785, Lamb began the construction of a stone house. In 1786, Lamb constructed a saw mill, grist mill and a mill race.

In 1797, iron master John Dunlop from Cumberland County purchased 749 acres from Lamb including the house and mill properties. His father, Col. James Dunlop, and his brother-in-law, James Harris, laid out the town of Bellefonte in 1795. In 1800, John Dunlop and another brother-in-law, James Smith, rebuilt the old Lamb mill and in 1803, Dunlop sold the mill, "mill house," and properties to Smith. Smith then owned all the property on the western side of Spring Creek opposite Bellefonte, including the Big Spring from which the new town took its name. The settlement on Smith's side of the Creek was known as "Smithfield" until its incorporation into the Borough of Bellefonte in 1814.

In the same year, 1814, John Dunlop was killed in a mine slide near Bellefonte. In 1815 Samuel, Jacob and George Valentine, and George (1817, William) Thomas leased the firm. The venture in central Pennsylvania proved to be a rewarding one. In 1827, the firm was producing as much iron as all other firms in Centre County combined. Through careful management, Valentines and Thomas weathered economic panics which ruined other local firms, and remained in continuous operation until late in the 19th century.

In spring of 1834, William Thomas purchased the lower Mill house, the mill, and extensive properties from the heirs of James Smith. At once, Thomas began to enlarge the house. Thomas squared off the L-shaped floor plan of the existing structure by adding a small room on the south-eastern side and changed the roof line above the old structure, making the second story a full

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

story and creating a loft above; under a shed roof. Thomas added large parlors, erecting the two-story Georgian style house as his principal residence. The interiors were handled in an austere fashion.

In 1850, the Valentine brothers retired from the running of the iron business, leaving Thomas the sole manager. Thomas's business interests had expanded as the industry grew. He was, at the same time overseeing operations at his grist mill and had become involved in the development of roads, canals, and railroads in this region. The Thomas Homestead became the site of numerous meetings aimed at furthering this region's industrial development. Wistar Morris, President of the Pennsylvania Railroad, was a frequent visitor and his discussions with Thomas were fundamental to the formation of the Snow Shoe Land Association in the 1850's. This group sought to capitalize on the rich resources of coal, virgin timber, and iron ore in the northern part of the County. Morris was also part of the social ambience around the Thomas Homestead and in 1863, married Thomas's niece.

The history of the Thomas Homestead site can be divided into two chapters. First, one considers the stone mill house built by William Lamb, the predominant home in a frontier settlement and home of successive millers. The second chapter is formed about the life and career of William A. Thomas, iron master. Retaining its distinction as the mill house, the site gains even greater distinction from Thomas's ownership. It was the fitting home of a very important man, an oasis of refinement in a comparatively rough countryside, and a place of meeting for men planning the economic growth of this part of the State. William Thomas died in 1866. The Thomas Homestead stands today as a monument to this man and to the formative period of our County.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 1

Mitchell, J. Thomas. A Glimpse of Local History. Bellefonte, Pa. Keystone Gazette, 1958.

---Iron Industries of Centre County, Pennsylvania, from 1791 to 1936. Bellefonte, Pa. No publisher or date listed. Available, Centre County Library, Bellefonte.

---The Life of William Ashbridge Thomas, Iron Master, Bellefonte, Pa., author, 1941.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Kocher, Alfred Lawrence. The Character and Development of Colonial Architecture in Center County, Pennsylvania. Master's thesis, Pennsylvania State College, 1916.

Linn, John Blair. History of Centre and Clinton Counties, Pennsylvania. Philadelphia, Louis H. Everts, 1883.

# 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .85 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A 118 2653910 4532850  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B           
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C         

D         

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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 Madeline L. Cohen, Curator

Gregory Ramsey, Co-ordinator of Historic Registration Project

ORGANIZATION OHP/PHMC

DATE

Centre County Library

July 6, 1976

STREET & NUMBER Box 1026

TELEPHONE

203 North Allegheny Street

717-787-4363

CITY OR TOWN Harrisburg

STATE

Bellefonte

Pennsylvania

# 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

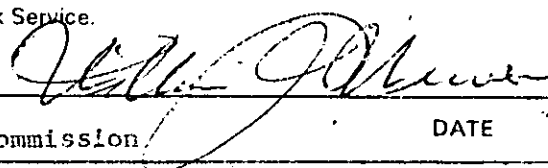
NATIONAL   

STATE   

LOCAL X

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 National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE



TITLE Executive Director

Pa. Historical and Museum Commission

DATE

7/21/76

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

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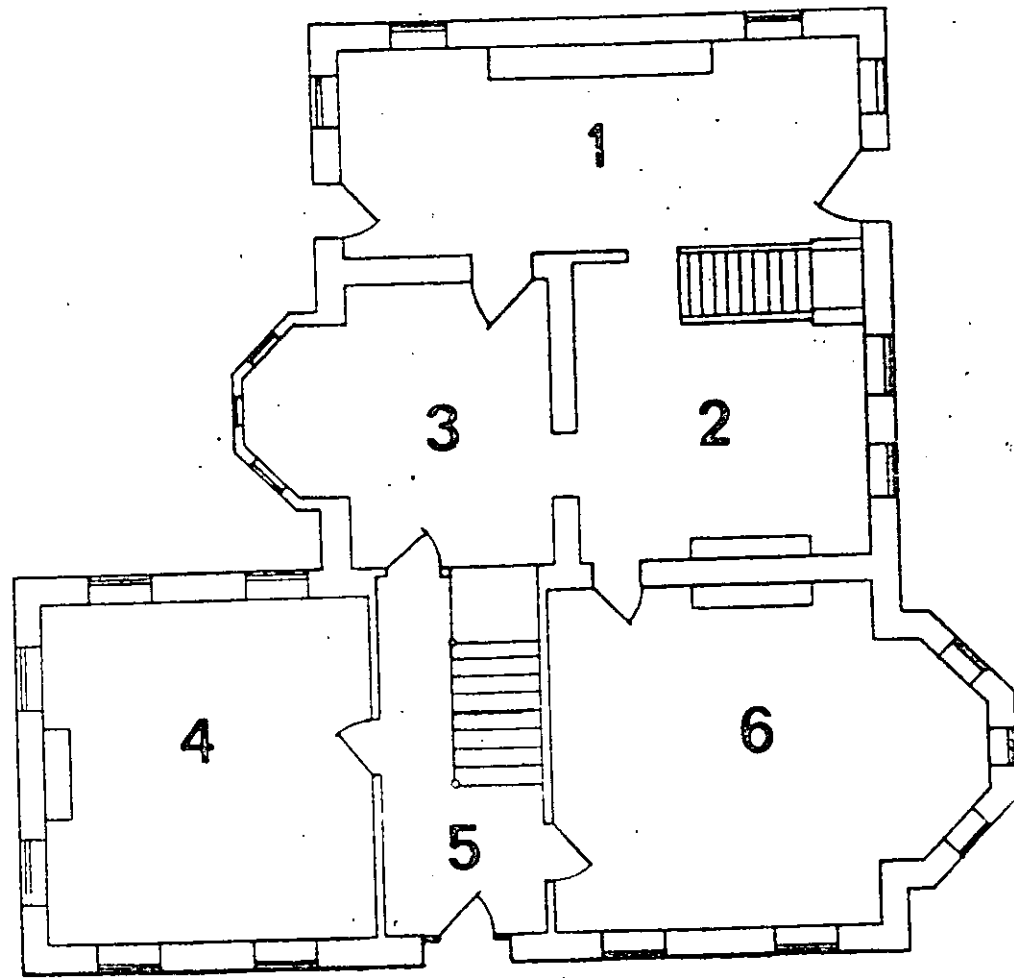
THE THOMAS HOMESTEAD - Centre County

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

PAGE 1

Architecturally, the Thomas Homestead illustrates two periods of residential building. The older section, built in 1785, is a functional 2 story stone house with little "style". Laid up in random fieldstone, it illustrates the building techniques of the first settlers. By 1834, Bellefonte had developed into a prosperous iron producing town, and the new main section reflects a more pretentious side to the developing city. The main section shows this effort toward style in its general size and proportions and the Georgian formula, especially in the rigid symmetrical plan. The Thomas Homestead clearly reflects two distinct architectural periods and points out the changes 50 years can make in residential living in Centre County.







Bald Eagle High Sch

Township Sch

Wingate

BM 730

Reservoir

Airway Beacon

Radio Tower

Shale Pit

Coleville

Bush Addition

BELLEFONTE

Spring

SPRING

Pleasant View

Tracyluny Mtn 1664

Park-View Heights

East End

220

550

26

25

X 994

X 1128

CREEK

EAGLE

MOUNTAIN

CREEK

CENTRAL

PENN CENTRAL

PENN CENTRAL

LAND