

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Byerly House

and/or common Best House

2. Location

street & number 115 Menk Road

not for publication

city, town New Kensington

vicinity of

state PA

code 42

county Westmoreland

code 129

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A 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 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 Mrs. H.T. Best Gary Best

street & number 115 Menk Road

city, town New Kensington

vicinity of

state PA 15063

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Westmoreland County Courthouse

street & number N. Main Street

city, town Greensburg

state PA

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title W. Westmoreland Co. Survey

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1978-81

federal state county local

depository for survey records Bureau for Historic Preservation

city, town Harrisburg

state Pa

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 Byerly House, its main section built in 1842 attached to a one-story rear ell that probably dates to the 1830s, has good architectural integrity and some exceptional details.

Sited on 2½ acres along Menk Road in a hilly section of Upper Burrell Township, the two-story, five-bay house is constructed of red brick laid in Flemish bond on the front elevation of the main section and common bond (five stretcher rows to one header row) on the other elevations, including the original rear section. The foundation is of narrow rectangular stones of closely matched size. Due to a sloping lot, the foundation is exposed on the front elevation. Three original chimneys (capped in the 1980s) pierce the gable roofs of the main and rear sections. The roof is sheathed in asphalt shingles. Before the 1960s, when the current owners purchased the house, the roof was tin; before that, it had been wood shingled. There is an aluminum gutter.

The brick and stone were washed with water in the 1960s and the brick was repointed with a light-colored mortar containing Portland cement. No other masonry treatment has been undertaken (see photo #5).

There are five original double-hung, six-over-six windows on the rear elevation of the main section of the house (photo #2) and six original, four-pane attic windows (two in each gable end). All other windows are wood six-over-six made to match the originals; they date to the 1960s. At that time, the current owner replaced the existing two-over-two sash which probably dated to the late 19th century. All the original window frames, lintels, and sills, however, are intact and in fair to good condition. The wood lintels feature square corner blocks with a bull's-eye motif and a fluted panel between them (photo #4). The sills are of soft stone and are somewhat weathered. All but four of the louvered wood shutters are original.

The front entrance, on the southwest elevation, retains the original surround which is in excellent condition. It consists of a recessed, panelled area trimmed with the same bull's-eye-and-fluting motif found on the windows. The six-pane transom has a decorative central cut-wood overlay, and the three-pane sidelights have a geometric wood overlay that gives the illusion of more panes of glass than there really are. The door itself is a six-panel replacement which matches the original. The single-bay wood front porch is original, except for the railing (1984) and the piers (1960s); the latter replaced large logs which had rotted.

A datestone in the gable end of the main section once read "1842", but the soft stone has now eroded and no date is legible.

The one-story, rear ell consists of two rooms with back-to-back fireplaces in the central walls. The roof structure of the shed-roofed porch on the southeast side is believed to be original, although the roof is sheathed with asphalt shingles and the porch has been screened in.

The house's interior retains excellent integrity. Throughout the house, original decorative door and window surrounds (similar to those on the exterior), floors, and interior doors are intact. In the main section, where two rooms on each floor flank the central hall, the original staircase, mantels, moldings, chair rail, and built-in cupboards are all in good condition.

The staircase is a simple, graceful flight that curves 180 degrees at a landing. It consists of a smooth round rail above thin, smooth balusters; its only ornamentation is a knob and a simple square base at the lower termination (see photos #9 and #10).

A large, well-detailed mantel in the living room is particularly noteworthy. Its detailing includes dentilling, inset panels, pilasters, and a crude variation of an egg-and-dart motif, as well as the characteristic bull-eye's-and-fluting pattern. Exhibiting early 19th century details, it was obviously the main fireplace of the house.

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Continuation sheet Byerly House

Item number 7

Page 2

In the dining room, there is a smaller fireplace flanked by the original chair rail and a built-in cupboard (photo #8).

Two upstairs bedrooms have simpler, but matching mantels and each room has a tall, two-panelled closet (an elongated version of the dining room cupboard door). A modern bathroom has been installed in a corner of one bedroom in such a way that it did not damage the original building fabric and could be entirely removed. Likewise, baseboard heating, installed throughout the house, has not damaged the original extant baseboard, which has a beaded upper edge.

In the rear, older, section of the house, the two fireplaces and mantels are also intact. The one in the north end room is considerably larger, and contains the hardware for maneuvering hanging cooking pots over and away from a fire. Its surround and small mantel show no evidence of the Greek Revival style and feature only the simplest type of detailing (photo #11). The board ceiling in this room is believed to be original.

The mantel in the south end of this section, now the kitchen, is identical to that in the dining room, and flanking door and cupboard surrounds share the bull's-eye-and-fluting motif. It is possible that the woodwork in this room predates that in the later, 1842, section, or that it was installed to match the woodwork of that section after it was built. Either way, it is only the original kitchen that stands out as basically free from stylistic influence, vernacular in origin.

The attic above this section has unhewn rafters with bark still on them. Similarly, in the crawl space beneath, the floor joists are of unhewn, bark-covered wood. (The 1842 section of the house has a one-room basement with a small opening into the crawl space of the older section.)

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/
<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 1830s; 1842

Builder/Architect

N/A

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Byerly House is Upper Burrell Township's only intact brick house from the first half of the 19th century. Due, perhaps, to the small number of owners it has had in its lifetime, the house has retained an unusual degree of exterior and interior architectural integrity. Its particular vernacular style, with both Post-Colonial and Greek Revival elements, is found in Westmoreland County, but it is unique in this western Township. (In adjacent Allegheny County to the west, the same type of exterior woodwork is virtually non-existent, the similar but less elaborate woodwork of the Isaac Lightner House being a notable exception.)

The house's rear ell, the first section to be built, probably in the 1830s, exhibits elements that may be considered Post-Colonial. The central chimney between two rooms, with a large cooking fireplace in one room and a small fireplace in the other, is typical for that period. as is the shed porch roof, which is structurally integral to the house. There is also the relatively unrefined treatment of the rafters and the first floor joists, which are unhewn. These characteristics are more often seen in log or stone structures of the early part of the century, and therefore are somewhat unusual in a brick house.

The main section of the house exhibits Greek Revival elements, albeit in the vernacular form most often found in the western part of the state. While it lacks a cornice and portico, its transomed and sidelighted front door and central hall plan fit comfortably in the Greek Revival category. The fluted detailing of the woodwork is another characteristic found in the Greek Revival period, but rarely in this area. The house is unusual in retaining nearly all of its original interior architectural details in both the original and 1842 sections. These features are not high-style, but are well-crafted and give the house a distinct feeling of time and place.

The land on which the house sits was owned by a family of relative means and distinction in the area. Joseph Byerly (also spelled Bierly) was the son of Andrew Byerly (1715-1775), one of Burrell Township's first settlers in the 1750s, a veteran of Braddock's expedition, and known locally as a hero of the Battle of Bush Run, in 1763. Joseph (1768-1801) was issued a patent for a 221-acre tract known as "Warsaw" on April 9, 1788 by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, witnessed by Peter Muhlenberg, Vice President of the Supreme Executive Council under Benjamin Franklin (The current owners have this patent on display in the house.) Byerly sold the tract only five years later in 1793. The land returned to the Byerly family in 1827 when it was bought by Jacob Byerly, apparently Joseph's nephew (1783-1849). Three years later, in 1830, Jacob sold approximately half the property to his brother, also named Joseph (dates unknown). It appears that this is the tract on which the house now stands. In 1867, the property was sold to John Euwer, a farmer who owned the land until c.1900. The Menks, after whom the nearby road is named, purchased the house from the Euwers, and it remained in the Menk family until 1966, when it was purchased by the Bests.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Boucher, John D. History of Westmoreland County, Pennsylvania, 1906. p.24,28.
Biographical and Historical Encyclopedia of Westmoreland County. Philadelphia: Gresham & Company, 1890. p.19

Continued.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .4 acres

Quadrangle name New Kensington East Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A	<u>17</u>	<u>6111460</u>	<u>4489860</u>	B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

The extent of the nominated property is an area 125' square with the house at its center and Menk Road forming the western side of the square.

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

state	code	county	code
<u>N/A</u>			
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Christina Schmidlapp

organization U.S. City Corporation date September 1984

street & number 400 The Landmarks Building telephone 412/391-7640

city or town Pittsburgh state PA 15219

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Larry E. Tise, State Historic Preservation Officer date 5/24/85

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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Continuation sheet Byerly House

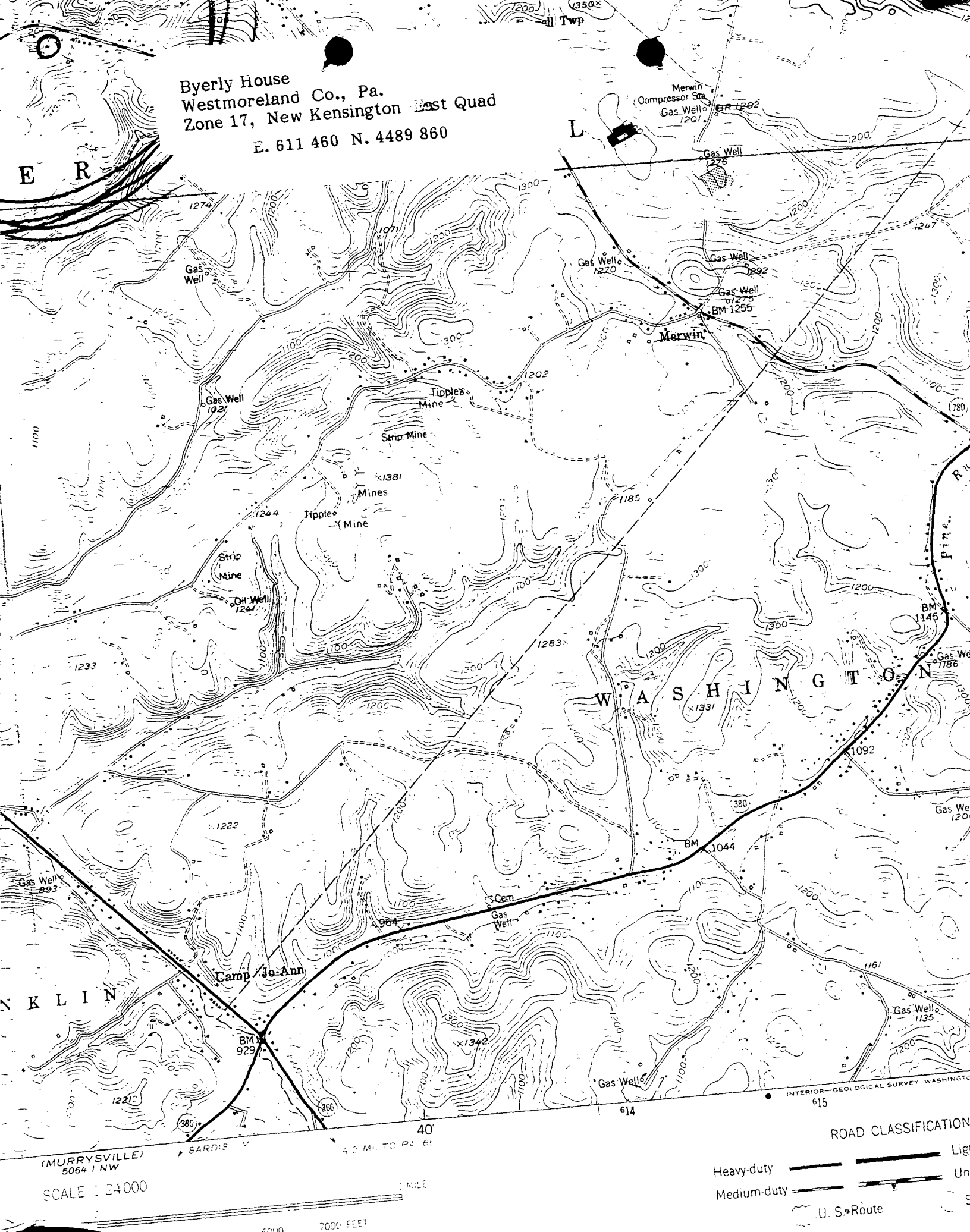
Item number 9

Page 2

Documents (in possession of owners):

- Abstract Title of John Euwer
- Byerly Family Chart
- Joseph Byerly patent

Byerly House
 Westmoreland Co., Pa.
 Zone 17, New Kensington East Quad
 E. 611 460 N. 4489 860



(MURRYSVILLE)
 5064 1 NW
 SCALE : 24000

4.2 MI. TO P4 61

1/4 MILE

ROAD CLASSIFICATION
 Heavy-duty Light
 Medium-duty Un
 U.S. Route

5000 2000 FEET