

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 S.R. Thompson House

and or common Thompson House

2. Location

street & number Market Street

not for publication

city, town New Wilmington

vicinity of

state PA

code 42

county Lawrence

code 073

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: college residence

4. Owner of Property

name Westminster College

street & number N/A

city, town New Wilmington

vicinity of

state PA 16142

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Lawrence County Courthouse

street & number

city, town New Castle

state PA

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title _____ has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date _____ federal state county local

depository for survey records _____

city, town _____ state _____

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 <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The appearance of the Thompson House today is remarkably similar to its original appearance, or at least to the very early view of it in an 1894 collection of photogravures published by S.R. Thompson, the house's original owner. Since that date, changes to the house's exterior have been few and generally superficial: a change of color (from several Victorian hues to white); the partial infill of what was originally a pierced bargeboard; the addition of exterior storm windows and a "storm door" enclosure beneath the front porch; the enclosure of small porches on the north and west elevations and the addition of a metal fire escape (these are not visible from the street); and a one-story rear addition executed in wood siding similar to that of the original house. The only original exterior features that are evidently missing are a pair of dormer windows on the east elevation (originally peaked, but now a single, square window) and a stone coping on the front steps. The house has served both residential and administrative uses since the College has owned it; currently, it is a residence for women.

Sited directly across from the Westminster College quadrangle on Market Street, the Thompson House is set back from the street on raised ground. It is in a row of buildings of various vintages ranging from c.1850 to the 20th century, but appears to be the only one dating to the 1880s. Three stories tall, it is constructed of lap-sided wood with irregular massing and Stick Style decorative detailing. A steep hip roof has projecting gables on all elevations. The original rectangular and round-shaped slate shingles, arranged in a pattern, are intact. There are three tall, corbelled brick chimneys. The exterior chimney on the south elevation is notable for its detailing of panels of brick laid in several patterns, and a blind arch with keystone at the ground level (see photo #3).

There are five types of siding alternating in bands from the top to the bottom of the house: sawtooth-edged shingles; vertically-laid boards; lap siding; scalloped-edged shingles; and beaded, horizontally-laid boards. Fenestration is narrow, one-over-one double-hung-sash; the windows are arranged singly and, in projecting gable ends, in tows and threes with wood surrounds with decorative corner blocks. A single arched window on the north elevation, near the front door, has round and crescent-shaped panes of colored glass.

Notable woodwork detailing on the exterior includes eaves with attached, curved brackets; prominent bargeboards with a sunburst and fan motif; projecting corners "supported" by a bracket and finial combination; and a recessed porch on the second story above the main, gabled porch (see photo #4). The second story porch roof features turned corner posts and a railing of lattice-work. The main porch, with a gable above the front door, has a frieze of turned posts, turned corner posts, sunburst brackets, ball finials, and a sawn railing perforated with a pattern of circular holes. A small side porch on the north elevation has similar decoration (see photo #5).

Because the house has served as a residence for nearly all of its lifetime and has had two owners only (S.R. Thompson and his niece) before Westminster College, its interior architectural integrity remains good. The original floorplan remains virtually intact, with most of the original rooms now each housing from 2-3 girls. Where original rooms have been made smaller to accommodate a single person, partitions were added rather than original fabric having been removed. The most notable interior details are the staircase (photo #6) and the crown moldings in what was originally the most public parts of the house--the entrance hall and the front room (photos #7 and #8). The

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architectural details of the rest of the house, however compromised by the present "dorm-room" context, are nevertheless intact and protected. Trim and mouldings, and occasional features such as built-in cabinets and French doors, remain in place, cheek-by-jowl with posters, metal bunk beds, and other collegiate accoutrements.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates c.1884

Builder Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The S.R. Thompson House is a fine and rare example of the Stick Style of architecture as it had evolved in western Pennsylvania by the 1880s in New Wilmington, the home of Westminster College (founded 1852). The house is believed to have been built by Mr. Thompson c.1884, when he returned to his alma mater to become Professor of Physics and the leader and developer of Westminster's science department.

Architecturally, the Thompson House is consistent with an 1880s date of construction--given a geographic-stylistic lag--with its asymmetrical massing and floor plan. The elaborate wooden decoration that derived from the Stick Style is intact and in good condition on the house. A c.1894 photogravure and a c.1905 postcard view demonstrate how little the house has changed since the Victorian period. It remains a representative of the rural cottage espoused by Alexander Jackson Downing in the mid-19th century and then copied, diluted, and embellished by architects and builders in the latter part of the century when eclecticism was the country's predominant architectural style. In New Wilmington, the Thompson House stands out among the many simpler, vernacular Greek Revival houses of an earlier era and modest representatives of the Gothic Revival and Italianate styles that lack the Thompson House's profusion of decorative woodwork.

Though its use has changed since the 19th century, from a private to a collegiate residence, the house retains a great degree of interior, as well as exterior, architectural integrity. Most of the original rooms with their decorative trim and mouldings remain intact. Where rooms have been altered, it has been without the removal of architectural features. The entry-stair hall and front living room, in particular, are notable for their integrity.

Samuel R. Thompson (1833-1896) was an accomplished and respected figure in New Wilmington and in the annals of Westminster College. Westminster, founded as Westminster Collegiate Institute in 1852 as a Presbyterian institute seeking the "promotion of the pure principles of Protestant Christianity"¹, offering arts and sciences instruction was one of the first coeducational institutions in the nation and in Lawrence County. Thompson, a Westminster freshman in 1856, explored the field of education as a profession even before his graduation. He tutored at the college in mathematics from 1855-57, and accepted a position as school superintendent of Crawford County (his birthplace), which delayed his graduation from Westminster until 1863. His tutoring and superintendent positions were the first of many jobs in education which would earn him respect in the field.

After graduating from Westminster, Thompson helped organize a high school in Pottsville, PA and reorganized Marshall College in West Virginia, in addition to serving as a professor of natural sciences at the Edinboro State Normal School. In 1871, he moved to Nebraska for health reasons, and over the next thirteen years served successively as principal of the State University of Nebraska's agricultural college, principal of the state normal school, and the state superintendent of public instruction. He became a member of the National Educational Association in 1866 and was a charter member of the related National Council of Education.

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Thompson's tenure as physics professor at Westminster College, where he was called back in 1884 and where he remained until his death in 1896, was his longest and probably his most influential position. There he funded the erection in 1893 of the Mary Thompson Science Hall, a major college building to house the Physics and Botany Departments, named in memory of his daughter. As chairman of the College Building Committee, he secured funding for the Clark Chemical Laboratory, a wing added to Thompson Hall in 1896. Eulogizing Thompson, then college president Robert G. Ferguson credited "the advanced condition of the college in the department of the physical sciences...to his untiring effort."² Thompson's contribution lay not only in his fundraising but in his progressive academic approach which stressed direct observation and experimentation. Thompson's academic legacy to Westminster was, according to Ferguson, that "Henceforth the study of things and not of books will be employed, and secondary sources of information will only prepare the way for the examination of the original or record the results of the same."³

Thompson's own observations included photographic images. An amateur photographer of considerable ability, he documented the buildings of Westminster College and New Wilmington in a collection of photographs which he published as a college souvenir in 1894. He developed his own photographs in a darkroom installed in the science building.

Upon Thompson's death in 1896, his house was inherited by his wife, Lucy, who, continuing the involvement with the college, provided room and board there for Westminster students and professors. Ina Hanna, Thompson's niece and Physics Assistant at the college, inherited the house in 1920 and maintained it as a college boarding house until 1931, when it became a sorority house. Westminster College became the building's owner in 1945. In 1957-1970, the house served as an administration building, but since then, it has once again been a women's residence.

1. Gamble, Paul, History of Westminster College 1852-1977. Westminster College. 1977. p. 6.
2. Ferguson, Robert G., "S.R. Thompson," The United Presbyterian, November 19, 1896, p. 742.
3. *Ibid.* p. 742.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1/3 acre

Quadrangle name New Castle North

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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D	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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E	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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F	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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G	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
---	----------------------	----------------------	----------------------

H	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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Verbal boundary description and justification

See attached

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 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 _____ date _____

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

date _____

Keeper of the National Register

date _____

Attest:

Chief of Registration

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1. Ferguson, Robert G., "S.R. Thompson," The United Presbyterian, November 19, 1896, p.742.
2. Gamble, Paul, History of Westminster College 1852-1977. Westminster College, 1977.
3. Scully, Vincent J., Jr. The Shingle Style and The Stick Style, Revised Edition, Yale University Press, New Haven, 1971.
4. Thompson, S.R., Souvenir of Westminster College, New Wilmington, PA, Photogravures. New Wilmington, 1894.
5. Atlas of the County of Lawrence and the State of Pennsylvania. G.M. Hopkins & Company, Philadelphia, 1872, pp. 19, 143-145.

INTERVIEWS:

Mr. Paul Gamble, College Archivist

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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#10 Verbal Boundary Description

The lot is an area 125 feet square. Beginning at the southwest corner of the intersection of Market Street and Thompson Way (a private college drive), proceed south on Market Street 125 feet, then west at a 90 degree angle 125 feet to a point, then north at a 90 degree angle 125 feet to a point along Thompson Way, then east along Thompson Way 125 feet to the point of origin.

4968 III NW
(SHARON EAST)

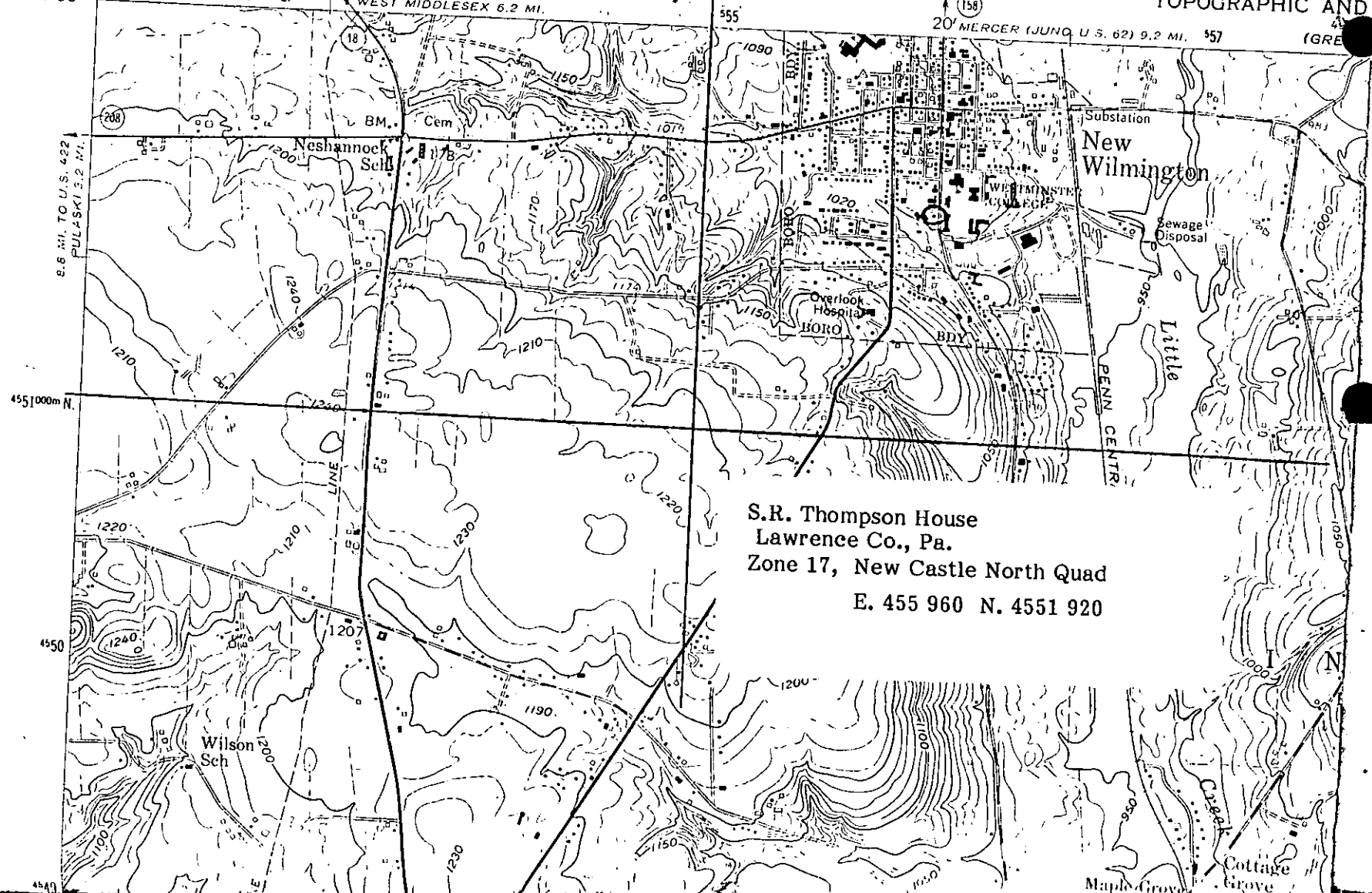
UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

COMMONWEALTH OF
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL AND
TOPOGRAPHIC AND LAND

80°22'30"
41°07'30"

553000m E. 10 MI TO U.S. 62
WEST MIDDLESEX 6.2 MI.

20' MERCER (JUNO U.S. 62) 9.2 MI. 557



S.R. Thompson House
Lawrence Co., Pa.
Zone 17, New Castle North Quad
E. 455 960 N. 4551 920