

**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 Thayer-Thompson House

and/or common N/A

**2. Location**

street & number 605 West Eighth Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Erie N/A vicinity of

state Pennsylvania code 42 county Erie code 049

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> N/A 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 Ms. Micheline Justman

street & number 605 West Eighth Street

city, town Erie N/A vicinity of state Pennsylvania 16502

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Register of Deeds Office, Erie County Courthouse

street & number 140 West Sixth Street

city, town Erie state Pennsylvania

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Erie County Survey Northwest Institute of Research has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date Summer 1982  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission

city, town Harrisburg state Pennsylvania

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

R/A

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

The Thayer-Thompson House is located at the southwest corner of West Eighth and Cherry Streets in the City of Erie, Pennsylvania. Its builder, Oscar Cornelius Thayer, created a composite of two Italian house styles: the Tuscan Villa and the Italianate. The Tuscan Villa attributes of the Thayer-Thompson House include: a heavily-bracketed and overhanging cornice, relatively flat roof, belvedere centered on the roof and smaller windows on the second floor than on the first floor. Its Italianate attributes include: an asymmetrical shape, smaller-scale, arcaded entryway and bracketed, centered roof gables. It is a two-story, common bond, brick building with a five-bay front facade, seven west side bays and five east side bays. The Thayer-Thompson House is a detached building of irregular shape and has retained its distinctive Italianate architectural features. There are two unintrusive additions to the rear of the building (see floorplan showing chronological development).

The Thayer-Thompson House has a hipped tin roof with a centered gable on all exterior walls. The roof has overhanging eaves and a cornice with modillions, dentils, and brackets at the corners. The square belvedere centered on the roof has cornice details like the rest of the house. Three round-headed windows are on each side of the belvedere, the middle window being larger and taller than the ones on either side. The first-story windows are double-hung, four-over-four with round-headed arches and are taller than the second-story windows. The second-story windows are double-hung, four-over-four with segmental arches. The entryway (vestibule) on the west side, tallest section of the building, was once open and arcaded with two Corinthian pillars and two Corinthian pilasters abutting the building. When enclosed in the 1930's, all the pillars became pilasters, and a frame double door was added with a multi-light arched transom. The features of the second set of doors in the vestibule will be discussed at the beginning of the paragraph outlining important interior features. The cornice of the front entryway also has brackets and modillions. The shorter east section of the house has a frame front porch with spool and spindle balustrade, decorative posts with elaborate scroll-shaped brackets and dentils at the cornice. The porch also has a lattice-work base. Another three round-headed window combination identical to the one on the belvedere is repeated on a larger scale over this porch. There is an oculus window at the gable peak of the east wall.

The second set of double doors in the vestibule of the Thayer-Thompson House has raised panels and a rounded-arch transom with a painted glass design of roses. This arched double door is outlined by a carved twisted rope configuration which is repeated on other ceiling mouldings throughout the house. This twisted rope outline comes together at a lion's head "keystone" over the transom. The front hallway features an open-well stairway with two flights and balusters. There are elaborate ceiling mouldings and a circular medallion surrounds the chandelier fixtures.

The formal double parlor can be entered to the right, just inside the front door. This room is the epitome of an elegant, Italian, formal parlor. The marble fireplaces have round-arched openings, decorative colonettes and paneled spandrels. The "keystone" on the fireplace is an acanthus leaf. The fireplaces have gilded mirrors for over-mantels. The formal parlor is divided roughly in half by an elliptical arch.

# 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** C. 1861 **Builder/Architect** Oscar Cornelius Thayer

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

The Thayer-Thompson House, located at 605 West Eighth Street in Erie, Pennsylvania, is a largely intact, fine example of an Italianate mansion. It is associated with two prominent Erie businessmen whose personal and professional lives converged many times between 1853 and 1887. The oil refinery which Oscar Cornelius Thayer and Victory Marion Thompson operated at different periods of their lives was, by the turn of the century, purchased by Atlantic Refinery Company (Standard Oil Company).

Completed in 1861, the Thayer-Thompson House is the epitomy of the romantic new style of picturesque architecture, the virtues of which A.J. Downing extolled in his book The Architecture of Country Houses. O.C. Thayer built this brick house on "a country lot", then on the fringes of the Borough of Erie. The design included all the details appropriate for an elaborate Italianate Mansion: an arcaded entrance, round-headed windows and doors, an overhanging cornice with brackets and modillions, and a square belvedere on the roof. As West Eighth Street developed as a primary commercial and residential thoroughfare from the 1860's to the 1880's, the style of the Thayer-Thompson House was copied by other families involved in Erie's shift from a shipping economy to an industrial one. The house on the northwest corner of Eighth and Cherry Streets, directly across from the Thayer-Thompson House, was built later and provides an example of an Italianate residence whose distinctive architectural details have been altered and therefore lost through the years.

Oscar Cornelius Thayer was born in Bennington, Vermont, on September 3, 1827, and was raised and educated there until his departure at age 21 in 1848. He sought his fortune in the lumber regions of Michigan before coming to Erie in the spring of 1853. On settling in Erie he engaged in the manufacture of what was known as stoneware, having a factory on the old canal (Erie Extension Canal, 1844 to 1871) at Third Street. During his first thirty years in Erie, O.C. Thayer also engaged in the building business. It may have been to demonstrate his building skill that O.C. Thayer built this asymmetrical-shaped Italianate residence on the very visible corner of Eighth and Cherry Streets. This was the same property which his wife, Anna Hughes, had purchased from her parents, James and Emily Hughes, for one hundred dollars in 1860. O.C. Thayer would later build a symmetrically-shaped, Tuscan Villa residence of his own on the northeast corner of Eighth and Walnut Streets. He resided at 462 West Eighth Street until his death in 1905. That home was soon after demolished.

Victory Marion Thompson was born in Madison County, New York, August 7, 1829. Victory came to Erie County with his parents, Joseph S. and Rachel Thompson in 1832, settling in a log house at the northwest corner of Liberty and Eighteenth Streets, then in Millcreek Township. Joseph Thompson died in 1837, when Victory was eight years old.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 25

Quadrangle name ERIE SOUTH, PA.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A 

1	7	5	7	4	6	0	0	4	6	6	3	5	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

### Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

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

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Shirley R. French, Director

organization Preservation Project of Erie Inc.

date May 21, 1985

street & number 417 State Street

telephone (814) 454-1813  
(814) 665-3183

city or town Erie

state Pennsylvania 16501

# 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 Dr. Larry E. Tise, State Historic Preservation Officer

date

For NPS 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

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

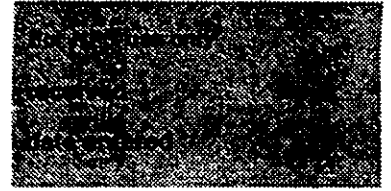
**National Register of Historic Places  
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Thayer-Thompson House

Continuation sheet

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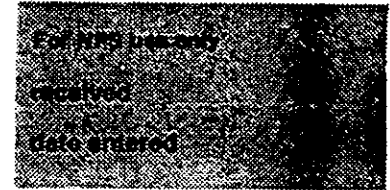


This arch has a moulded "keystone" shaped like the head of a lady. The cornice, ceiling and divided arch of the parlor feature very elaborate mouldings of sunken panels and Renaissance motifs. These motifs include: flowers, acanthus leaves and the heads of ladies. The twisted rope design mentioned earlier is again repeated in the cornice moulding as well as a bead-and-reel design. This ceiling also has elaborately decorated medallions around the chandelier fixtures. Two very clear, eight by ten inch photographs exist of the formal parlor taken in the early thirties.

The master bedroom was located directly above the parlor when V.M. Thompson resided here. It now houses one apartment but the fireplace and ceiling mouldings remain intact and in very good condition. There are two staircases to the rear of the building. The first is a one-run, single-flight stairway which is accessible from the southeast corner entryway. The other staircase has been boarded up, and is a dog-leg stair with winder. This latter stair provided access from the kitchen to the second-floor, servant's quarters.

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Thayer-Thompson House, Erie County  
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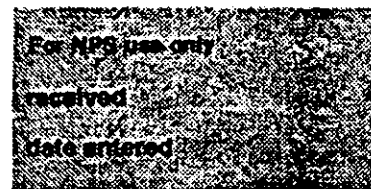
These circumstances demanded that Victory work at an early age to help support the family. He began peddling Yankee notions and later manufactured washboards while attending the old Erie Academy. In 1848, when nineteen years of age, Victory sold his washboard business and bought a canal boat which he sailed along the Erie Extension Canal for three years. He then attended Meadville College for one year, working his way by buying and selling coal in Meadville. He also started the "Thompson Line", which by 1855 consisted of sixteen canal boats. During this period he was also operating a coal yard on West Eighth Street.

The July 30, 1863, issue of the Erie Weekly Gazette reports a new enterprise for V.M. Thompson. "Our City and County is liberally represented in the busy throng seeking for wealth in the Titusville portion of the oil region...Prominent among the lucky ones at the wells is V.M. Thompson, who has already acquired a handsome fortune." At this time V.M. Thompson and wife Rebecca set out to find a home befitting a now wealthy oil dealer and purchased from Oscar Cornelius Thayer the Italianate residence at the southwest corner of Eighth and Cherry Streets on September 9, 1863. In 1864 V.M. Thompson formed the Thompson Oil Company and by this time was able to contract the services of Stewarts of New York City to design and decorate their formal front parlor. V.M. Thompson later owned and operated the Erie City Oil Works, one of the early refineries in the United States. He resided in the house until 1886 and died in Cleveland, Ohio, October 22, 1887. O.C. Thayer then purchased the refinery, which he in turn sold to the Atlantic Refinery Company (Standard Oil Company).

The Thayer-Thompson House was called "one of the best-preserved early Victorian buildings in the city" in the recently published Historic Erie Design Guide (Weber, 1983). The overhanging cornice, brackets, modillions, belvedere and arcaded entrance remain intact and in very good condition. A frame, one-story, one-car, garage was added at the southwest corner of the house circa 1925. The free-standing, arcaded entrance was enclosed about 1935, creating Corinthian pilasters where free-standing columns once stood. Ownership of the house left the Thompson family in 1940 and new owners, John and Rose Banka had converted the one-family residence into five apartments by 1945. To facilitate this conversion a first-story master bedroom was added abutting the north wall of the garage and west wall of the house. Three chimneys were also removed. Because these additions were made to the rear of the house, the Thayer-Thompson House still creates a Victorian oasis on the southwest corner of Eighth and Cherry Streets. Since 1972 Micheline Justman has owned the Thayer-Thompson House and has worked to retain its original beauty.

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Major Bibliographical References

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Conley, Katharine. "Italian Style Decoration." The Old House Journal, vol. IX. no. 2, February 1981, pp. 33-36.

Downing, A.J. The Architecture of Country Houses. (New York: Dover Publications Inc., 1969)

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Erie County Recorder of Deeds Office. Deed Book no. 54, p. 151.

Erie Weekly Gazette, p.2, col. 5. July 30, 1863.

History of Erie County, Pennsylvania. 1884, p. 962.

Justman, Micheline. "Thayer-Thompson House." (A narrative history available at the Preservation Project of Erie Inc. office)

Lewis, Harry W. "Early History of Erie County and Vicinity." Erie Daily Times, September 9, 1911.

Miller, John. Twentieth Century History of Erie County, Pennsylvania. 1909. vol. II, pp. 129 & 219-221.

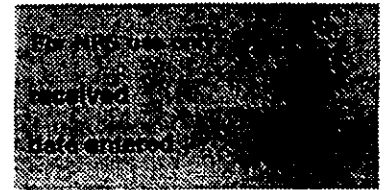
Reed, John Elmer. History of Erie County, Pennsylvania. 1925. vol.I, pp. 512 & 513.

Weber, Tom. Historic Erie Design Guide. (Erie: Preservation Project of Erie Inc., 1983) p.8.

Wright, Alice Thompson. Former resident of the Thayer-Thompson House - Interviewed April 24, 1985.

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Verbal Boundary Description

From Erie County Deed Book No. 1368, Pg. 28:

Beginning at a point at the intersection of the south line of 8th Street and the westerly line of Cherry Street; thence south  $64^{\circ} 02'$  West along the southerly line of 8th Street, 100 feet to a point; thence south  $26^{\circ}$  east on a line parallel to the westerly line of Cherry Street, 108.82 feet to a point; thence north  $64^{\circ} 02'$  East, 33 feet to a point; thence north  $33^{\circ} 02'$  east, 21 feet to a point; thence north  $64^{\circ} 02'$  east, 49 feet to a point on the westerly line of Cherry Street; thence north  $26^{\circ}$  west along the westerly line of Cherry Street, 98 feet to the place of beginning.



UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

DEPART  
TO  
DUNKIR  
ORCHAR

80°07'30"  
42°07'30"

O = Thayer-Thompson House  
Erie County  
Zone 17

