

JUL 1 1987

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

HISTORIC PRESERVATION

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Edmund B. Seymour House

and or common N/A

USE THIS COPY  
FOR DUPLICATING

2. Location

street & number 260 West Johnson Street N/A not for publication

city, town Philadelphia N/A vicinity of

state Pennsylvania code 042 county Philadelphia code 101

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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input checked="" 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 Classic Management

street & number 259 West Johnson Street

city, town Philadelphia N/A vicinity of state Pennsylvania

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Philadelphia City Hall, Dept. of Records

street & number Broad and Market Streets

city, town Philadelphia state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date 1983  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Bureau for Historic Preservation

city, town Harrisburg state Pennsylvania

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input 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 Edmund B. Seymour house is a gray stone suburban residence, designed by Philadelphia architects Hazelhurst and Huckel and constructed in 1891 at a highly visible site at Green and Johnson streets, in the Mount Airy section of Philadelphia. Its towered, asymmetrical composition and varied textures of stone and shingle link the design to the Queen Anne that became popular at the end of the nineteenth century while other motifs are derived from the Loire Valley chateaux. The Seymour House is part of a late 19th century neighborhood of Queen Anne and late Victorian houses, generally of stone and wood construction. Many of these houses have been replaced by mid-20th century apartment houses and of those which survive, the Seymour House is conspicuous in its size and degree of preservation. Although converted into apartments two generations ago, the facade, the original plan and all of the individual rooms have survived with a high degree of integrity, largely due to the character of the plan which surrounded large rooms with adjacent service spaces which have become kitchens and bathrooms without affecting the major spaces. An adjacent stone garage, by Mantle Fielding, and tree shaded lawns complete the property. The nominated property contains two contributing buildings.

The exterior is constructed of local quarry-faced Wissahickon schist laid in relatively regularly sized blocks. Window openings are framed with radially laid voussoirs in either round or pointed profiles. Smooth dressed sills and lintels add a note of textural contrast. Slightly raised pointing accents the joints of each block. Stucco on the spandrel of the front bay, and shingle and clapboard on various rear extensions to the main volume as well as on the front wall gable further enliven the exterior while recalling McKim, Mead and White's early work. Red slate adds a strong note of color to the roof. These same materials were used later on the garage unifying it with the house.

The main facade facing Johnson Street is divided into three unequal portions with the center screened by a step gabled stone arch marking the entrance. It is flanked by a two story bay on the left and by a round tower on the right. (Fig. 1, 2, 3) The composition is repeated in the roof where a hipped roof volume rises in the center, and is flanked on the left, above the two story bay, by a shingled gable and on the right, above the tower, by a conical roof. In keeping with Victorian theory, the exterior composition reflects the various interior spaces, with a central hall behind the entrance flanked by a dining room on the left and by the main parlor with its tower opening off on the right.

The fenestration is similarly picturesque, if not so specifically descriptive, varying from tiny pointed gothic sash and large pointed sash to the typical Queen Anne double hung sash with twenty lights in the upper sash over a single pane in the lower sash. Large pointed sash light both the tower extension of the parlor and a second floor bedroom, while twenty over one rectangular sash light the parlor, the dining room and the library, suggesting that composition rather than description determined their placement and type.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Edmund Seymour House

Section number 7 Page 2

The side elevations continue, although in less animated fashion, the picturesque variety of forms of the main facade. The northeast elevation is dominated by its largely unrelieved schist walls, fenestrated with 20/1 sash windows and relieved by a ground story projecting bay, constructed of wood and containing a second entrance. This bay is distinguished by its beaded wood siding and by its Gothic detailing which parallels the Gothic detailing of the interior. The southwest elevation continues the broad sweep of the stone-walled porch which fronts the main facade. Above this a second story porch is recessed into the body of the building. The rear elevation is distinguished by its profusion of projecting bays (Fig. 3): to the left is the small one story wooden bay of the library, fenestrated both with 9/1 sliding sash as well as diamond paned windows. To the right is the stuccoed bay marking the kitchen; from out of the shed roof of this bay rises the smaller polygonal bay of the second story. This shingled bay retains its 28/1 and 16/1 windows. The roofline is broken by three shingled dormers lighting the attic.

The facade was altered during the course of the early twentieth century alterations, although the changes were sensitive to the original character and have done little to compromise the building's historical integrity.

The most significant change, the insertion of a second story window into the corner tower, is virtually undetectable without reference to a historical photograph, so exactly did the new pointed-arched opening match that beneath it. Other changes were equally scrupulous with respect to the building's original character. An additional second story window was inserted into the facade immediately to the right of the triplet of windows. Its 12/1 sash was milled to match that of the neighboring windows. A further alteration consisted of the enclosure of the southwest porch of the house with the insertion of multi-paned sliding sash between the existing columns of the original porch.

The plan develops off a central entrance hall that opened on all sides into major rooms, a parlor on the right, a library to the rear and a dining room on the left, as well as providing access to the second floor via the stairs at the front of the house. The same configuration of spaces is repeated on the upper levels, marking the continuity of load-bearing structure. The entrance hall, which now serves as a vestibule for the largest first floor apartment, (fig.5) established the central decorative themes of the house. Diagonally to the left of the entrance is a limestone mantle with a projecting shelf above the fireplace supported on a cartouche which in turn carries shallow pilasters on which rests a fragment of a cornice. It in turn is the base for a linenfold plaque with the date of the house inscribed in Roman Numerals: MDCCCXCI. A fleur de lis border and a projecting cornice caps the fireplace. The cast iron fireback continued the theme with

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Edmund Seymour House

Section number 7 Page 3

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fleur de lis cast into its surface. Original iron sconces indicate that the house was designed for electric lighting. A built in bench, and low, paneled wainscot, slender gothic doorframes and a plaster cornice complete the finishes.

Separated from the hall by glazed, double doors is a library whose walls are lined with built in bookcases. They are framed with wood trim ornamented with lozenges of raised moldings, a motif which also appears on doors and other original millwork. The principal accent to the room is another large mantle, with glazed tile around the fireplace, and a wood surround. (Figure 6) It serves as a living room in the present plan. The parlor completed the public suite of rooms, but now serves as a bed chamber. It is given spatial interest by an extension through an archway into the tower. A wood mantle, again ornamented in the late French medieval fashion is the decorative highlight of the room.

The principal feature of the dining room is the projecting bay at the front of the house. It is framed by slender pilasters which set it off from the wall. Curved sash at the corners of the bay in conjunction with other curvilinear elements, notably the concave cornices, the three dimensional curves of the entrance, and the tower suggest an awareness of continental art-nouveau. A fireplace in the corner of the room breaks the normal pattern of large mantels set in the middle of walls, further enlivening the plan.

As on the exterior, the changes involved in converting the building to an apartment have been minimal and conducted with respect for the building's character. As originally constructed, the stair was a part of the hall as well. It has been carefully partitioned off to provide access to the upstairs apartments, but the dog-leg stair is essentially intact, and on the upper level opens out into a handsome landing which remains a part of the public space of the house.(Fig. 6) Wood wainscotting, and paneled pilasters and piers continue the vocabulary of the hall. The walls are covered with a heavy painted canvas over plaster. Leaded glass with small circular panes recalls the centers of hand blown glass.

Bed chambers occupied the second story, with principal rooms occupying spaces similar to those below. A large bedroom above the living room opens through an archway into the tower. A rectangular bedroom is above the library while a more elaborate room with wood mantel and a broad expanse of glass across the rear of the house probably served as the upstairs sitting room. Rooms at this level are typically accented with fireplaces with glazed tile surrounds, while the wood door and window trim continues the slender proportions of the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Edmund Seymour House  
Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page 4

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downstairs. Like the first floor, these rooms have been converted into two apartments, with one unit occupying the north end of the house, and a larger unit over the library and parlor.

A narrow stair opens through a door off the main stair hall to provide access to the third story; its understated character suggests that this was not intended as a public zone. Its low ceilings take the form of the roof shapes and give this floor considerable charm. Presumably it housed the house staff on the north side of the house. The south side, with the tower, was more elaborately treated, with a beamed ceiling, and a low archway into the round tower room. By its low height, it may have been intended as a children's playroom.

Bathrooms with white glazed wall and floor tile line up one above the other. Like the remainder of the house, they are in remarkably good condition, and the house survives with a high degree of integrity, although one alteration should be noted - the removal of a stone date plaque on the second floor of the tower, and its replacement with a pointed window similar to the others of the tower. Although there are building permits for the site after 1906, no mention is made of this work, suggesting that it occurred at an early date, presumably to admit light into the tower.

At the rear of the property is a rectangular garage, constructed in 1909, for the second owner, by Philadelphia architect, Mantle Fielding. He continued the same vocabulary of rectangular, quarry faced blocks of local stone, for the walls, and capped the building with a hipped roof interrupted by large dormers at the peak which recall the character of the main house. Even its broad double leafed doors conform to the Queen Anne character of the complex, with small panels in the lower portion of the door and small paned glazing in the top third. With its lawns and trees, the Seymour house preserves its original character with a high degree of integrity.

# 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** 1891; 1908      **Builder/Architect** Hazelhurst and Huckel; automobile stable, Mantle Fielding

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

The Edmund B. Seymour house is a grey stone suburban residence that was erected in 1891 in a neighborhood made newly accessible by the arrival of the Chestnut Hill Branch of the Pennsylvania Railroad in the mid 1880s. Seymour (c. 1835-1906) was a Philadelphia attorney and a prominent real estate speculator in Germantown.<sup>1</sup> His house is the largest of three which he commissioned in Upsal (now Mount Airy) in 1891. The other two appear to have been built speculatively.<sup>2</sup> Constructed at a time when the suburban house was again becoming an important architectural theme, the building marks the beginning of the transition from individualistic Victorian design towards the period revival architecture that would be characteristic of Philadelphia at the turn of the century. Its architects, Hazelhurst and Huckel, were important in that transition, and hold a significant place in local architectural history, both as designers, and as authors, having published their own book, Architecture Through a Camera, in which they prominently featured the Seymour house, depicting it in several views.<sup>3</sup>

As transitional figures, Hazelhurst and Huckel are of interest because they were early adherents of the new period revival styles particularly in suburban projects in contrast with their urban projects which tended to remain more Victorian. Such a mixture of approaches could have been anticipated for Hazelhurst had worked in the offices of both the highly individualistic Frank Furness and the more academic Theophilus P. Chandler.<sup>4</sup> Huckel, however, had worked for a Victorian church architect, Benjamin D. Price, whose work was stylistically much more conservative.<sup>5</sup> Huckel's father was himself a Methodist minister which partially explains the curious mixed character of Hazelhurst and Huckel's firm. On the one hand, they served Methodist and other low church denominations, signaling a lower middle class affiliation, but on the other hand, they frequently worked for nouveau riche clients who had risen up from the ranks of those same lower middle class groups. By the mid 1880s it was clear that their stylistic allegiance was with Chandler even if their clientele was more nouveau riche.<sup>6</sup>

Hazelhurst and Huckel's major projects reflect their continental interests. The Bachelor's Boat house on East River Drive looked to the Italian renaissance; Joseph Sinnott's great mansion of 1889 at Rosemont (now the administrative offices of Rosemont College), explored the towered style of the Loire valley chateau, with great towers at each corner around a high roof. That motif reappeared in the Seymour house, with its corner tower, but grafted onto a design that otherwise recalls the English Queen Anne. It is a point of some interest that other buildings in the immediate neighborhood including the nearby Nugent Home for Aged Baptists by David Gendell had already essayed the towered, high roofed French style, suggesting that the Mount Airy portion of

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetEdmund Seymour House  
Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page 2

the suburban extension of Philadelphia was less attracted to English themes.

The architects merged motifs from a wide range of sources. The house built for Virginia-born Seymour, new to Philadelphia society, is a striking example of this. Alongside the corner tower, a French element, is the stepped gable over the porch, a north German feature. At the same time, the paired attic dormers are a very literal quotation of American Colonial architecture. In few of Hazelhurst and Huckel's other works and in none of the buildings represented in Architecture Through a Camera is the eclectic mix as rich and varied in one building.

The building also documents Hazelhurst and Huckel's career at an important juncture as they moved away from the Queen Anne design that characterized their early work (showing the Victorian individualism which one would expect from an alumnus of Furness' office). The Seymour House is still saturated with some Victorian traits: the additive planning, the picturesque roof line, and the contrasting materials and textures. At the same time, the color contrasts are muted while the masses are reduced in number and simply treated. Hazelhurst and Huckel, who had previously pursued architectural invention as an end in itself, now turned to period revival forms (the corner tower, the stepped gable) and concentrated on their sober proportioning and detailing. The period revival styles of which the Seymour House is an early example, became a hallmark of Philadelphia's residential architecture in the 1890s. (Oddly enough, while the exterior of the Seymour House demonstrates new impulses in the architects' work, the plan shows an older transitional form -- moving towards an open plan type with a living hall but still not completely emancipated from the center hall plan of late Federal design).<sup>7</sup>

The Seymour House has remained nearly intact, a remarkable feat in view of the transformation of the immediate neighborhood through the vicissitudes of time. The house was unusually fortunate in the choice of the designers who succeeded Hazelhurst and Huckel, men who were likewise among Philadelphia's leading suburban architects. Mantle Fielding, the prominent Germantown architect, built the 1908 garage addition and adhered so scrupulously to the style and materials of the house that they appear of one mold.<sup>8</sup> When it came time to remodel the garage in 1919 into a second residence, the architect selected was Lawrence Boyd, who had worked extensively in Germantown and Chestnut Hill designing tasteful suburban houses, which perhaps accounts for the deference of the alterations for the existing historical fabric.<sup>9</sup>

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetEdmund Seymour House  
8

3

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

At some point the house was converted into apartments. The changes then made were of a very sophisticated nature, such as the insertion of a second pointed arched window in the tower's upper story, and are virtually undetectable. The sophistication of these alterations suggests an early date and argues for an architect of quality and sensitivity to local building. While the permits for these alterations have vanished, it is conceivable that either Fielding or Boyd remodeled the house in connection with their work on the garage. The house was already converted to apartments by the start of World War II when the stone porch was repaired.<sup>10</sup>

Nonetheless, while the house has remained relatively unchanged, its surrounding neighborhood has changed dramatically. Located at a major intersection in Mt. Airy, the vicinity of the house was once dominated by large-scale, late Victorian houses and institutions, such as the Baptist Nugent Home (1895) at 221 West Johnson Street and the Presser Home for Retired Music Teachers (1913) at 121 West Johnson Street. Since the 1920s the house has shared its surroundings with an increasing number of apartment buildings, such as the Greene Manor Apartments (1929) across the street. These apartment houses dramatize the change in local living patterns during the post-World War I era when wealthy Philadelphians began to shun the city in favor of more distant country residences. The intersection of Greene and Johnson streets was particularly affected, doubtless due to the proximity of nearby Upsal station.

Paralleling the construction of the larger apartment houses around Upsal Station was the conversion of many one-family homes into apartments. Perhaps because it was done earlier, the conversion of the Seymour House was exemplary. Unlike most of the other altered buildings, it still testifies to the original exclusive character of the area before the sweeping changes that began in the late 1920s.

Preserving all of its major spaces and features as well as its exterior, the Seymour house still embodies the distinctive characteristics of its era and neighborhood and also to reflect the talents of Hazelhurst and Huckel, Mantle Fielding, and Lawrence Boyd, three generations of important architects. As such it warrants being placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Notes

1. Seymour, born in Virginia, later attended Dickinson College. Since the mid-1870s he practiced law in Philadelphia with partner, William Potter. Intensely involved in public affairs he was a member of the Germantown Cricket Club and several Democratic Party organizations. Seymour took his life in his house in 1906. Public Ledger (June 18, 1906) p. 2.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Edmund Seymour House

Section number 8 Page 4

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2. Philadelphia Inquirer. (August 28, 1891) p. 7.
3. Hazelhurst and Huckel, Architecture Through a Camera, Philadelphia, 1894 (copy at Princeton University).
4. Roger Moss and Sandra Tatman, Biographical Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects, Boston, 1985, pp. 350 - 356. Not coincidentally it was Chandler who introduced Francophile design to the area in houses such as the Scott-Wanamaker House on Walnut Street; his country houses also often showed the French character which was until then unusual in the Philadelphia region.
5. Ibid. pp. 397-398.
6. A French design is published in George E. Thomas, et al., 'Theophilus Parsons Chandler, Jr.: Design for a Country House"Drawing Towards Building: Philadelphia Architectural Graphics 1732 - 1986, Philadelphia, 1986, pp. 166 - 168.
7. Hazelhurst and Huckel's evolving exterior design had outstripped their planning. The planning of the Seymour House is not unlike that of Edward Hazelhursts design for the Campbell family on Schoolhouse Lane of 1886, showing a similar compacted center hall type. These derive in turn from the 1870s houses by Hazelhurst's mentor, Frank Furness, such as the Rhawn house in Philadelphia or the Physick House in Cape May, New Jersey. The Rhawn House was published in James F. O'Gorman, George E. Thomas, Hyman Myers, The Architecture of Frank Furness, Philadelphia, 1973, pp. 124-127. The Campbell house drawings remained in the hands of the Campbell family into the 1970s when they were shown to me by the late William Campbell. See Moss and Tatman, p. 350.
8. Philadelphia Building Permit 996 (February 25, 1909).
9. These alterations were for owner Isaac S. Smythe, Jr. See Philadelphia Building Permit 9482 (December 12, 1919).
10. Philadelphia Building Permit, 1504 (April 14, 1942).

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 0.45

Quadrangle name Germantown

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UTM References

A	1 8	4 8 3 9 7 0	4 4 3 2 1 2 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing

B			
	Zone	Easting	Northing

C			
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D			
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E			
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F			
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G			
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H			
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### Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet.

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

state	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>	county	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>
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state	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>	county	<u>N/A</u>	code	<u>N/A</u>
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# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title George E. Thomas, Ph.D./Michael Lewis

organization Clio Group, Inc. date Revised June 26, 1987

street & number 3961 Baltimore Avenue telephone (215) 386-6276

city or town Philadelphia state Pennsylvania

# 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 Brent D. Glass

title Brent D. Glass, State Historic Preservation Officer date 9/16/87

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  
Continuation Sheet

Edmund Seymour House

Section number 9 Page 1

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Number 19, 13 May 1891.

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Cutler, eds., Philadelphia, 1980.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Edmund Seymour House

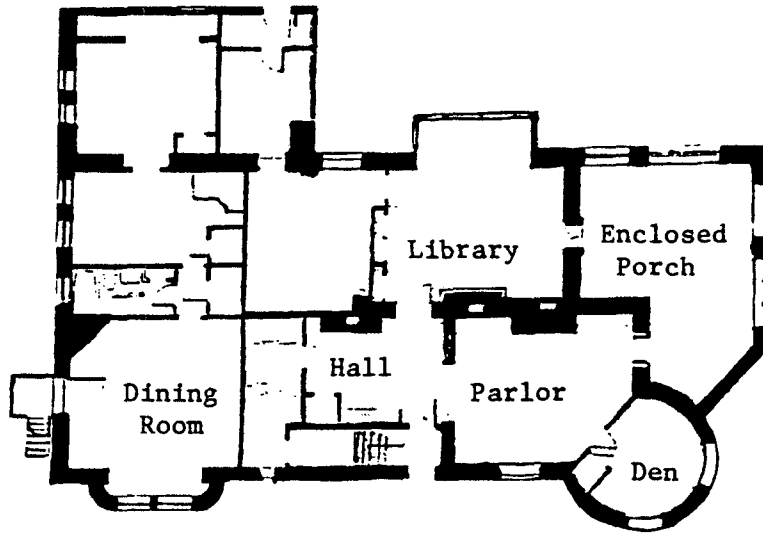
Section number 10 Page 1

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### Boundary Description and Justification

Beginning at the northeast corner of Johnson and Greene streets, extending in a northerly direction 120' to a point, then easterly 155' 7" to a point, then in a southerly direction 123' 3" to Greene Street, then returning in a westerly direction along Greene Street 155' 8" to the starting point.

This conforms to the site and yard of the Seymour House.



Sketch Plan of 260 W. Johnson St.,  
(E. B. Seymour House), Philadelphia  
1987 Condition