

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Grubb Mansion
other names/site number 1304 High Street

2. Location

street & number 1304 High Street
city, town Pottstown N/A not for publication
state Pennsylvania code PA county Montgomery code 091 vicinity N/A
zip code 19464

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	_____	_____ sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	_____	_____ structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	_____	_____ objects
		<u>1</u>	<u>1</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register N/A

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Brent D. Glass
Signature of certifying official Brent D. Glass Date _____
Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Domestic - Single Dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
Commerce/Trade - Business

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Queen Anne

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation sandstone

walls sandstone

roof asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Grubb Mansion is located along High Street, the 100' wide, main east-west thoroughfare of Pottstown on the southeast corner of the Mt. Vernon Street intersection. The mansion is at the eastern end of town and helps to anchor an eight-block long area of large homes built around the turn of the century. With its asymmetric plan and complex of roof forms, jutting wings, porches, and fanciful chimneys the architectural composition is held together by its massing of forms, color and texture of the brownstone walls and strong cornice lines. The 3 story building is based upon the Eastlake Queen Anne style with touches of Eastlake detailing. Built in 1906, the mansion was converted to office use in 1954 and a union hall was added to the rear of the site in 1956. Overall, the mansion still retains its original neighborhood setting, character, craftsmanship and materials.

The mansion is surrounded by other large homes and a cemetery from the same period. Although a number of the homes have been converted to offices or apartments the ambiance of the architecture and wide, tree-lined street remain. The mansion is set back from the streets to the east side of the 90' x 140' corner lot and the yard is raised about 3' above the sidewalk, all of which emphasizes the size and importance of the building and site.

The enclosed portion of the house is 38' wide and 48' deep. A front porch adds another 9' to the depth. The porch, soaring walls and steep roof make the mansion appear to be larger than it actually is. The rooms and four projecting wings of the mansion are arranged in an asymmetric pinwheel plan. On the northwest corner, an entry and stairway are emphasized by their enclosing octagonal tower. The verticality of the entry tower is balanced by the strong horizontal lines of a ground floor porch that wraps part way around the right (west) side and by a rounded projection at the northeast corner of the porch that forms a one-story, open turret.

The walls are of rubble coursed, rough cut, brownstone. The joints are relatively tight and are emphasized by both the contrasting color with the brownstone and by the raised, 1/2" square, beaded mortar joints. The wall openings are supported by slightly rounded or flat stone arches. The brownstone sills have sloping, evenly cut wash surfaces but the vertical surfaces are rusticated to match the walls. Other than the regularity of the arch stones and sills, the walls have a consistent, overall texture and color that allows the building forms to be expressed.

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Grubb Mansion

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The 2-1/2 story high walls are capped by the strong lines of a cornice that completely encircles the house. The main body of the house is roofed by a steep sloped (15" on 12" pitch) hip roof. The main roof is interrupted by gable roofs that project above the front and side wings. The gable end walls are of stucco and are separated from the lower stone walls by a pent roof which allows continuity of the cornice. Two decorative chimneys project above the roof line.

A main feature of the exterior is the front-side porch. The porch foundation and railings are of brownstone masonry that matches the body of the house. The porch wall (about 5' to 6' above the ground) forms a solid base for the mansion. The porch roof has a much lower pitch (8" on 12") than the main roof. The porch roof is interrupted by a pedimented gable over the entry and by the porch turret. The roof is supported by half columns and elliptical arched lintel beams. Overall, the half height stone wall, half height columns, strong continuous cornice line and low pitched roof give a strong horizontal expression to the first floor level of the house which plays in contrast to the vertical entry tower and third floor gable.

The porch is richly detailed. The wooden pediment above the entry steps is decorated with an applique of scrolled acanthus leaves surrounding a torch in half relief. The pediment and its crown molding are of Greek proportioning. The cornice of the porch roof matches that of the main roof. A double row of dentils support a crown mold. At each column a heavy wooden bracket, carved with an acanthus leaf pattern, supports the cornice. The roof is supported by hollow, wooden, fluted half-columns. The column base is a simple double torus. The caps are simple squares with rounded edges. The flat, elliptically curved, wooden lintels have applique pieces that resemble the keystone shapes of a stone arch. Below, the solid stone railing is capped by a soldier course of stones with half-round tops.

Another unique feature of the mansion is the matching masonry detailing of the porch and the chimneys. The projected belt coursing of the chimneys, a vertical circle of stones that cap the west side chimney and a horizontal drum of stones that cap the central chimney have the same half-round profile as the course of cap stones on the porch railing.

The front (northside) of the mansion is 2 bays wide. There are 1/1, double-hung windows at the first and second floors. The third floor gable end has a central 1/1, double-hung window flanked by two half windows. The half windows are of art glass. The whole assembly is within a half-round surround. Applique fan-shaped, carvings fill in the areas between the curved lines of the surround and the rectangular windows. To the left of the front wing is the entry-stair tower. The front doorway has a large oak door with deeply recessed panels. A small stained glass light contains the house number. At the second floor level, above the entrance, is a single, double-hung window of art glass.

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The first and second floors of the west side wing have compound windows consisting of three, double-hung, 1/1, windows surmounted by a single cycloid-shaped transom window of art glass. The third floor gable has a pair of double-hung, 1/1, windows surmounted by a carved wooden fan and other applique work at the peak. The west side of the front wing has a window to each side of a projecting decorative chimney. These windows match those of the front. The west side of the rear wing has 2 bays with window openings that match the front but the sash are 2/2. On the first floor, rear, the left hand bay is a door. Next to the door is a small casement window. There is evidence that there once was a side porch at the first floor level.

The rear (south side) wing is partially obscured at the first floor level by the labor hall building and by a chimney from that building. The rear wall, the east side wall of the rear wing and the rear wall of the east wing are of brick instead of brownstone. A simple brick chimney at the southeast corner projects above the cornice line. The window pattern is irregular although the windows are the same size as others. A rear, third floor, dormer has a pair of small double-hung windows and a hip roof.

The labor hall is a rectangular one-story, flat roofed building, 80' wide and 45' deep. Its floor level is approximately 7' below the first floor of the house. Its roof extends to a level about 6' above the first floor. Except for an entry and one window on the north side of the hall near Mt. Vernon Street, there are no exterior wall openings. The north and west walls are of a tan brick. The south and east walls are painted concrete block. Overall, the hall has a low profile, and its simple shape and its neutral color allow it to fade into the background.

The hall was connected to the mansion by an enclosed passageway and stair that occupied the space where the rear, west side porch was. The original porch at this location was a simple one-story, shed roof structure. The west side porch area is being reconstructed as a new side entrance to the mansion. There will be no interconnection with the labor hall. The new side entrance will have a massing similar to that of the original side porch. Forms, details and materials will be compatible with the architecture of the mansion.

When the hall was added, two first floor windows of the mansion's rear wall were blocked in. These will remain blocked.

The gable end of the left (east) side wing is identical to the west side wing. To the right is the entry stair tower. The projecting tower has single, double-hung, 1/1 windows of art glass on the first and second floors. Another similar window is located at the second floor stair landing and is about 3' lower than all the other windows. There is evidence that another roofed, first floor rear porch existed at the southeast corner. A pair of french doors leads from that porch to the former dining room.

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The art glass patterns are slightly different for each window. The four double-hung windows in the entry and stairway are floral patterns of colored glass within geometric matrix of patterned glass and color glass lenses. The art glass in the front gable windows is geometric. The four transom windows in the east and west wings are of floral patterns. The art glass is likely that of the Kase Glass Studio of Reading, PA.

The interior of the mansion is also impressive. The entry-stair hall is the most elaborate followed by the front parlor and rear parlor. The stair hall has an oak parquet floor, a wainscot of paneled oak, and oak stairway. The stair well is framed by molded plaster brackets. The second floor ceiling of the stair hall has a deep (20") molded plaster cove.

The front and rear parlors have 12" wide oak base boards and a plaster ceiling mold with a 12" wide cove. Window openings throughout the house are deeply recessed and have oak paneled jambs. Other rooms in the mansion are more modest. They have narrower oak baseboards and do not have plaster ceiling moldings.

The mansion was built with gas lamps and gas heaters. The heaters were placed in small fireplaces or attached to the wall. The gas lamps were soon replaced with electric lighting. About 1915 the gas heating was replaced with steam heat and the fireplaces were sealed and plastered over. In 1954 the mansion was converted to offices and a union hall was built on the rear in 1956. The slate roof has been replaced with asphalt shingles. Other than these changes, the mansion and the ambiance of the turn of the century remains intact.

The main change that has occurred to the Grubb Mansion was the addition of the labor hall to the rear of the original structure and removal of the small, west-side porch. The labor hall is a low, one-story structure that partially obscures the rear first floor elevation of the mansion. The mansion itself has sustained little substantial change, other than replacement of the original slate roof with dark gray asphalt shingles and changes to the west side porch.

Conversion of the residence to office use did not incur any special changes to the interior other than the installation of asphalt and rubber tile on the first floor. During the 1970's, dropped, acoustical panel ceilings were installed in some second floor office rooms.

There is a need for some minor repointing of the stonework, a portion of the porch ceiling should be replaced and the interior woodwork needs refinishing. This and the cleaning and repair of the art glass is currently underway. A new west side entry, compatible with the mansion, is to be built. The asphalt and rubber tile is being removed from the first floor and the original wood flooring restored. The changes that have occurred and planned restoration work do not significantly affect the buildings integrity.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1906

Significant Dates

1906

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Grubb Mansion was constructed in 1906 as principal residence for prominent Pottstown inventor/industrialist William I. Grubb. The mansion is an outstanding example of Late Victorian architecture of the Queen Anne style. It is one of several mansions built during the period when Pottstown was enjoying the peak of its industrial and community expansion age. The mansion established the character and quality of development for the East End of Pottstown.

The mansion is located on High Street, formerly known as the Perkiomen and Reading Turnpike. Approximately one and a half miles to the west and 145 years before the mansion was built, John Potts laid out the Village of Pottstown along the Manatawny Creek near the Schuylkill River. From its humble beginnings as a settlement that supported Pott's iron foundry the town grew slowly. At the time of its incorporation in 1848, Pottstown had a population of about 1,600.

The original incorporated town extended only seven blocks east from Manatawny Creek east to Adams Street. Most all development was contained within the town. There was not any significant development east of the town boundaries until 1851, when a Presbyterian minister, Mathew Miegs, came to Pottstown and founded a boys school on a nearby hill known as "The Hill School." It wasn't until the mid-1800's that Pott's iron foundry and other industrial enterprises began to really take hold.

By 1880 the population had reached 5,305 and many homes were being built beyond the original boundaries of the town. Growth outside the town was occurring northward along Charlotte Street and Hanover Street and eastward along a few blocks of High Street. There was no significant development on High Street beyond The Hill School except for a tavern and a few homes at Keim Street. In 1885, the boundaries of the Borough were changed to incorporate nearly five square miles and which extended east to include the land where the Grubb Mansion was to be built. In 1893 the Pottstown Passenger Railway Company opened a trolley line that ran on High Street from Sanatoga Park in the east, through the Borough to Stowe in the west.

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William Grubb's success as an inventor /industrialist had allowed him to build a home of considerable size and quality. As an industrialist, he insisted on first rate craftsmanship and quality materials throughout the mansion. Grubb also chose to locate along the trolley line on a lot away from the other mansions of Pottstown at the undeveloped east end of High Street. The isolated location and surrounding acres of vacant land would obviously enhance and focus attention on the mansion.

Following the lead of Grubb, other wealthy citizens began building mansions along the east end of High Street. Within ten years, the nearby blocks were filled with large and fanciful homes. The overall environment was further enhanced by the planting of many trees along the wide street. The tradition of locating quality homes in the East End of Pottstown continues to this day. Other large homes that followed the construction of the Grubb Mansion include:

1296 High street - A large 2-1/2 story, brownstone residence with detailing similar to the Grubb mansion with touches of Queen Anne styling, built in 1908;

1319 High Street - A large, 2-1/2 story rambling, brick and shingle residence with a wrap-around porch, of a late Queen Anne style, built about 1910;

1236 High Street - A large, 2-1/2 story, stone residence with one story wings and a columned entrance, built around 1910 with classical revival details;

1122 High Street - Built in the early 1910's, this 2-1/2 story, brick and stucco residence emulated Late Queen Anne styling;

1124, 1128 and 1132 High Street - These large, 2-1/2 story, brick residences of the 4 Square style with touches of Queen Anne style details, built in the early 1910's;

1152 High Street - Built in the early 1910's this large, 2-1/2 story, stucco residence is irregular in plan. The large overhang of its hipped roof expresses the Prairie, 4 Square style. Art glass and window details are of the Late Queen Anne style;

1314 High Street - A large, 2-1/2 story, brick residence with a large front porch, of the Late Queen Anne style, built about 1915;

1290 High Street - A large, 2-1/2 story, stucco residence of the 4 Square style with some details from the Queen Anne style, built about 1915; and,

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1240-1242 High Street - A very large, 2-1/2 story, yellow brick, double residence, built about 1915. The basic 4 Square style building is enhanced by bay windows and a large porch. Eclectic detailing is borrowed from the Classical Revival and Queen Anne styles.

The development of these homes was followed by other large homes of the 4 Square style, built between 1915 and 1925. Other of the Colonial Revival style were added after that. The East End area north of High Street continues to develop as a quality of residential neighborhood. Many large, fine residences were added during the 1950's, 60's and 70's.

There are perhaps, 15 mansions in Pottstown. Most were built between 1875 and 1915. They vary in style from Italianate to Classical Revival. There are four mansions of the Queen Anne high style including:

The Feyley Mansion at 61 High Street - A 2-1/2 - 3 story brick residence with elaborate art glass windows and fanciful Eastlake porch, built in 1885;

The Van Buskirk Mansion at 174 North Hanover Street - A 2-1/2 story ashlar coursed, rusticated limestone residence with matching stone balustrade and columns on the front porch, built about 1890;

The Gudebrod Mansion at 438 High Street - A 2-1/2 story brick residence featuring elaborate Eastlake porch detailing, built in 1897; and,

the Grubb Mansion.

Although they all have asymmetric plans and complex massings of rectangular, cylindrical and octagonal forms, each has its own character and each is worthy of preservation. The Grubb Mansion is the earliest mansion and the only Queen Anne high style home to be built in the East End.

9. Major Bibliographical References

A History of Pottstown, Pennsylvania, Paul Chancellor, ed., Historical Society of Pottstown, 1953.

Pottstown Mercury Newspaper, December 1, 1931, Obituary of William I. Grubb.

The Credit Experience Guide, The Merchants and Mercantile Agency, Pittsburgh, PA 19110.

Interview with Edward Grubb, Grandson of William I. Grubb, April, 1990.

Insurance Maps of Pottstown, Sanborn Map Company, New York, New York, 1909.

Map of Pottstown, T. M. Fowler and Bailey, 1874.

Pottstown Mercury Newspaper, October 1905 to December 1906.

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property 0.29

UTM References

A 18 447140 4454540
 Zone Easting Northing

C

B
 Zone Easting Northing

D

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at a point of intersection of the southern right-of-way line of High Street and the eastern right-of-way line of Mt. Vernon Street, thence east along High Street for 90 feet; thence south, parallel to Mt. Vernon Street, 140 feet to an alley; thence west along the alley, parallel to High Street, for 90 feet; thence north along Mt. Vernon Street 140' to the point of beginning.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary reflects the legally recorded boundary lines for the single lot upon which the resource sits. The boundary contains the nominated building and associated land.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Robert E. Bartmann
 organization Robert E. Bartmann, AICP date January 30, 1991
 street & number 1324 Pike Street telephone (215) 376-5684
 city or town Reading state PA zip code 19604

South Meason
Montgomery County
Zone 18 - Phodaxville Quad
E 447 140 N 14454540

UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

5882.1 SW
(BOYERTOWN)

75°37'30"

40°15'

447000m. E.

4455000m. N.

READING (P.O.) 18 MI
POTTSTOWN (P.O.) 09 MI

KENILWORTH 05 MI.

