

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 for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Thralls, Ernest, House

other names/site number N/A

### 2. Location


street & number Route 218 South at TR 353 & TR 522 N/A  not for publication

city or town Spraggs (Wayne Township) N/A  vicinity

state Pennsylvania code PA county Greene code 059 zip code 15362

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

 Exec. Dir. 3/9/99  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

PA Historical and Museum Commission  
State of Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain:)	_____	_____

Thralls, Ernest, House  
Name of Property

Greene County, PA  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
6	0	buildings
0	0	sites
3	1	structures
0	0	objects
9	1	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**  
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling  
Agriculture/subsistence/animal facility  
Domestic/secondary structure  
Recreation & culture/sports facility

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling  
Agriculture/subsistence/animal facility  
Domestic/secondary structure  
Recreation & culture/sports facility

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Spanish Colonial Revival

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls concrete

roof asphalt

other terra cotta

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance

1939-1940

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Thralls, Ernest

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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

Name of repository:

Thralls, Ernest, House

Greene County, PA

Name of Property

County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property approximately nine acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 17 566980 4400400
Zone Easting Northing
2 17 5667160 4400440

3 17 566840 4400220
Zone Easting Northing
4 17 567010 4400240

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Clinton Piper
organization date December 1998
street & number RR #4, BOX 89A telephone 724.537.2738
city or town LATROBE state PA zip code 15650

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Roy and Diane Brendel
street & number RR #1, BOX 135 telephone 724.435.7197
city or town Spraggs state PA zip code 15362

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

*Thralls, Ernest, House  
Greene County, Pennsylvania*

**Section Number 7                      Page 1**

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The Ernest Thralls House, approximately two miles south of the town of Spraggs on State Route 218 in Wayne Township, is located near the intersection of Forney Hollow Road (TR 522) and Old Church Lane (TR 353) in southern Greene County. This nomination consists of a nine-acre portion of the 133-acre Thralls property. The nine-acre portion contains the Thralls complex and its immediate setting bordered on the east and west by steep hills and intersected by Roberts Run. The complex has nine contributing buildings and structures including a circa 1939/1940 Spanish Revival house, a tenant house, three sheds, and a horse barn. Contributing structures on the property are: an open sheep shed, pig shed, and chicken coop. To the south of the Thralls House is a non-contributing 1980s pool. Small-scale landscape features within the curtilage not included in the resource count are: a simple concrete highway bridge over Roberts Run, a stone and brick exterior fireplace/grille, a split rail fence with stone piers around the semicircular entrance drive to the house, and a stone pier, the last being the remainder of a part of a simple stone footbridge over the tributary stream that was built at the same time as the house. The Thralls House, despite some minor changes, continues to retain much of its distinctive Spanish Revival detailing, setting, and outbuildings.

The property's focal point is the 2 ½ story Thralls House, a 64' wide by 51' deep concrete block house with terraces at the front and rear. (*Photo #1*) It is a Y-shaped house with a first floor plate slightly larger than the second floor plate. The first floor is clad in native stone veneer with a header brick belt course and second floor of stucco veneer.

Most of the windows in the house are original metal casements with original glass block surrounds. Typical of the Spanish Revival style, the windows have either brick lintels and sills or rough-hewn lintels with brick sills. The house has a raised basement of stone clad concrete with a watertable composed of a header row of bricks while a row of soldier bricks accentuates the basement openings.

Also common to the Spanish Revival style is the low-pitched hipped and gabled roof with straight barrel mission tile laid in regular courses. (*Photo #5*) Portions of the tile roof were replaced with three-dimensional shingles in the 1980s. The roof has exposed rafter ends and a standing exterior end chimney on the west elevation. Colorful decorative tiles or vents are typical on the roof's many gable ends. Overall, the house retains the majority of its original finishes and details.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

*Thralls, Ernest, House  
Greene County, Pennsylvania*

**Section Number 7 Page 2**

---

The asymmetrical facade of the house, with seven window openings, is oriented north. A two-story semicircular stone veneer tower serves as the formal entrance to the house. *(Photo #11)* Colorful Mexican tiles accent the concrete steps to the heavy wood front door. The door has three large stylized strap hinges and two small square leaded-glass windows, one placed slightly higher than the other depicting a bird and flowers. *(Photo #13 & #14)* Under the door's threshold are additional Mexican tiles. A tile-roofed hood on wood consoles extends over the top of the door. Flanking the door are iron sconces. *(Photo #12)* On one side of the door is a rectangular stained-glass window, and on the other side is a small casement. The tower's second floor has a tall narrow glass block window with smaller casement windows to either side. The glass block window has iron grillework at the bottom and a single Mexican tile above. The front facing gable west of the tower has a first floor casement window with glass block sidelights and fanlight. On the second floor is a less elaborate casement window. East of the tower is a bay extending beyond the second floor plate with a tiled roof and casement window.

The facade's eastern portion has four openings on each floor. The floor plate of the second floor is slightly larger than the first floor creating an overhang supported with metal posts on the first floor. The openings on the first floor include a kitchen window, kitchen entrance, breakfast room window, and stair window. *(Photos #9 & #10)* Two openings serve the kitchen: including a large opening originally filled with glass blocks and a central casement window. The opening was reduced, the glass blocks removed, and the casement window was replaced with a smaller operable 1960s window. The second opening to the kitchen is a simple door fronting onto north terrace adjoining the driveway. Near the door is an original metal sconce. The third opening is an original casement surrounded by glass blocks to the breakfast room. Further west is a small casement illuminating the back stairs. Across the second floor are two large metal casement windows to the north bedroom and two smaller windows to the west light the second floor hall and back stairs.

The east elevation is three openings wide. *(Photo #8)* At the basement level are two garage doors and an adjoining man door. The first floor porch on the elevation's southern end was enclosed with glass in the 1960s. The central opening on first and second floors is a large glass block window with an original metal casement window in the center. Similar to the facade, the original first floor kitchen window opening had a central casement window with glass blocks surrounding it. The glass blocks were removed and partially in filled in the 1960s when a smaller operable

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

*Thralls, Ernest, House  
Greene County, Pennsylvania*

**Section Number 7                      Page 3**

---

window was installed.

Between the two cross gables of the south elevation is a terrace edged in metal railings. In the center of the terrace is a stone and brick well head with a tile roof. (*Photos #6 & #7*) The first floor of the central portion of the south elevation has three openings: a center opening with double French doors and a fanlight. Casement windows with glass block surrounds flank the doors. The second floor balcony was enclosed in the 1960s and the adjoining exterior stair removed.

The eastern cross gable on the south elevation has casement windows at the basement, first and second floors. The cross gable to the west of the terrace has a balcony on the first floor and a porch and balcony on the second floor. The original first floor French doors were replaced in the 1960s with a picture window and imitation stone. An arched porch extends from the second floor gable end with a central French door opening to a large balcony. A portion of the stone clad basement is exposed on this elevation with a wood paneled door and a casement window to the west.

The house's west elevation has three openings and a tall standing end chimney. (*Photo #2*) The chimney has stone veneer on the first floor, stucco accented with three Mexican tiles on the second floor, and on the top is a tiled-roof chimney cap. The south end of the elevation has stone steps to a secondary living room entrance. (*Photo #3*) The wood panel door is similar in detail to the front door with leaded windows depicting birds and flowers. It also has a tile roof supported by consoles overhead. South of the door is a glass block window, and to the north is a one story alcove that extends beyond the floor plate of the second floor with a hipped roof and large stained glass window. The second floor has a single casement window and two glass block windows flanking the end chimney.

The plan of the first floor radiates from the stone tower containing a half bathroom, storage closet, and foyer. The tile foyer has an integral colorful Mexican-inspired rug pattern original to the house. (*Photo #13*) The walls of the foyer are paneled in dark wood with a decorative grille work panel on the east wall. The main stair, composed of a single run, landing, and second shorter flight, is adjacent to the foyer. The bottom three steps of the otherwise closed stair project beyond the wall. They are fitted with elaborate turned newel posts, balusters, and handrail salvaged from another house by the original owner, Ernest Thralls. Similar balusters and handrails are used from

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

*Thralls, Ernest, House  
Greene County, Pennsylvania*

**Section Number 7 Page 4**

---

the landing to the second floor where an original wrought iron fixture illuminates the space.

The first floor is surprisingly modern with an open plan living room, dining room, and study. All the original details are intact unless otherwise noted. *(Photo #16)* Each room is finished with hardwood floors, beamed ceilings, simple wood baseboards, cornices, window surrounds, single recessed panel doors with glass knobs, and wall sconces. Portions of the living room and dining room have paneled walls. Many of the windows in these rooms have deep sills lined with Mexican tiles.

An alcove on the west end of the living room has a colorful stained glass window Ernest Thralls salvaged from another house. *(Photo #17)* Along the west wall is a fireplace with a raised stone hearth clad in Mexican tiles. *(Photo #19)* The portion of the fireplace below the mantel shelf is built of large stone slabs with a central panel of Mexican tiles depicting a man in a pastoral landscape. The large wrought andirons on the hearth are original to the house. The stonework above the wood mantel shelf consists of thinner slabs laid in regular courses. The southern end of the living room has a tile floor similar to the foyer with a second integral rug pattern.

The dining room contains wood wainscoting, an elaborate built-in sideboard, and a large mirror with a carved frame flanked with sconces. *(Photo #21)* South of the sideboard is a door with three vertical glass panels opening to a service hall while north of the sideboard is a door to the terrace at the front of the house. *(Photo #24)* On the north end of the room is a small study raised above the dining room and separated by a grille work gate and adjoining grille work screen. The study has beamed ceilings and casement windows. *(Photo #22)* French doors on the southern end of the dining room open onto the south terrace. An original glass/crystal chandelier hangs from the ceiling above the center of the dining room.

The service hall off the dining room contains a storage closet, access to the basement steps, a stair to the second floor hall, and a casement window. An arched opening at the eastern end of the service hall opens to a square breakfast room with wood paneled walls and a circa 1970 ceramic tile floor. *(Photo #25)* The northern end of the room has a large casement window surrounded by glass blocks with a second smaller window on the west wall. To the east is the kitchen with 1970s cabinets and a door to the north terrace. On the southern end of the breakfast room is a door to the present family room that was a bedroom during the Thralls ownership.<sup>1</sup> The south and west



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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

*Thralls, Ernest, House  
Greene County, Pennsylvania*

**Section Number 7                      Page 5**

---

walls of the room have casement windows while to the east is a full bathroom, closet, and small sun porch. The bathroom has two glass block windows, original fixtures, and tile walls. The present owners removed and replaced the bathtub with a washer and dryer.

The second floor of the house has many of the same original finishes as the first including hardwood floors, cornices, simple baseboards, and inlaid doors. The second floor hall extends from east to west. A small room used as a sewing room during the Thralls ownership is north of the hall.<sup>2</sup> The current owners use it for storage. (*Photo #26*) The master bedroom and adjoining bathroom are at the west end of the hall. At the east end of the hall are two bedrooms that share a bathroom with large glass block windows, tile floors and walls, and original fixtures.

The master bedroom has a stone fireplace similar to the living room accented with Mexican tiles at the base, the hearth, and under the mantel shelf. (*Photo #27*) Above the mantel shelf is a stone slab depicting a street scene. Flanking the fireplace are glass block windows. The southern end of the room has a set of French doors opening to an arched porch and adjoining balcony. On the east wall of the master bedroom is a door to the bathroom. The present owners installed a large soaking tub in the 1980s, enclosing a portion of the hall to accommodate it. The other two bedrooms each have closets and details similar to the master bedroom. In the hallway near the bedrooms are several storage closets and a door to the back stairs. Over the stairs is a hatch to the attic crawl space above. The second floor porch, also accessible from the main hall, was enclosed with windows in the 1960s.

The full basement has three spaces finished with concrete floors and walls. The eastern portion contains a two-car garage and a small adjoining kitchen for canning garden vegetables. The basement's central portion has an original half bathroom in the northwest corner. The western portion has an original stone fireplace and exterior door on the southern wall.

Across Route 218, roughly five hundred forty feet west of the Thralls House, is a contributing circa 1940 concrete block tenant house with stuccoed walls and standing seam metal clad gabled roof. (*Photos #28 & #29*) It is presently used as a rental property. This house is detailed in a manner similar to the Thralls House, albeit much simpler. This one-story rectangular building (roughly 35' by 40') also has metal casement windows with wood lintels and brick sills and some decorative tiles in the gable ends. The northwest elevation has a one-car garage at the basement level.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

*Thralls, Ernest, House  
Greene County, Pennsylvania*

Section Number 7 Page 6

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Closer to the Thralls House is a group of circa 1940 outbuildings. Southeast of the house is a contributing 8' by 10' log shed used for potting plants. It has a gabled roof of straight barrel mission tile. *(Photo #8)* Thralls likely recycled the logs for the building from another building on the property. South of the log shed are two contributing frame buildings raised above the ground on concrete blocks. *(Photos #32 & #33)* The 10' by 20' building has a shed roof of standing seam metal, and it is used for storage. A second 20' by 30' building has a gabled roof of tar paper. It is used as an additional garage. Approximately 500 feet southwest of the Thralls house is another contributing building, a horse barn with a low pitched gable roof measuring 25' by 40.' It is used for storage. *(Photo #34)*

Three structures also contribute to the complex. Southwest of the Thralls House three hundred twenty feet, on the west side of Roberts Run, are two frame structures: a 16' by 20' pig shed and a 15' by 20' chicken coop. *(Photo #35)* Both structures are raised above the ground with concrete blocks and have standing seam metal shed roofs with exposed rafter ends. They are used for storage. Sixty feet north of the house, across Forney Hollow Road, is a 15' by 20' open sheep shed. It is constructed of wood posts supporting a flat metal roof. Directly south of the Thralls house is a non-contributing 18' by 20' pool dating to the 1980s that replaced an original pond Ernest Thralls built.<sup>3</sup>

The Thralls House is an excellent and intact example of the nationally popular Spanish Revival style. Despite its northeastern location, the house has preserved details characteristic of the style that was popular in the American southwest, Florida, and California. Changes to the house, outbuildings and setting have been minor and have not significantly altered the integrity of the property as a whole. The Thralls House, its outbuildings, and unspoiled setting serve as a singular example of the Spanish Revival style in rural Greene County.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

*Thralls, Ernest, House  
Greene County, Pennsylvania*

**Section Number 8                      Page 1**

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The Ernest Thralls House is locally significant under criterion "C" of the National Register as a singular example of Spanish Revival architecture that was popular across the country from 1920 through 1940. The style recreated the appearance of Spanish Colonial houses of the American southwest. The Thralls House is a culmination of the ideals and aspirations of its builder, Ernest Thralls, who traveled extensively, especially to the American southwest. Thralls' exposure to this architecture strongly influenced the style and materials he chose for his retirement home. The period of significance begins circa 1939 with construction of the main house and continues through 1940 at which time the property achieved its present appearance.

**Family History and Development**

George Washington Ernest Thralls (known simply as Ernest Thralls) was born in Spraggs, Wayne Township, Greene County in March of 1885, son of Richard H. and Charlotte Temple Thralls. Richard, originally from nearby Blacksburg, West Virginia, was a builder and local school director.<sup>4</sup> Richard and Charlotte purchased the farm of William and Rebecca Phillips in April of 1885.<sup>5</sup> They lived in a small frame house on the property where they raised seven children. Ernest resided with his family on the property until circa 1902 when he moved to the southwestern portion of the United States for two years. In 1904, he enrolled at Valparaiso University in Indiana, graduating in 1908 with degrees in Pharmacy and Chemistry. Thralls worked for several years as manager of retail drug stores in West Virginia, New Mexico, Colorado, and Indiana. His first marriage to Fannie Galloway of Kentucky lasted from 1910, to her death in 1916. His second marriage, in 1918, was to Terre Watkins of Hattiesburg, Mississippi, a sister of a college friend. Neither marriage produced children.<sup>6</sup>

Thralls was commissioned as an officer in the Indiana National Guard serving along the Mexican border in 1916 and subsequently serving abroad in World War I. He appears to have served full-time until achieving the status of Major, Cavalry Reserve in 1929. During a practice session Thralls' pistol accidentally exploded, causing serious nerve damage and eventual deafness in both his ears. It was a condition that ultimately caused his retirement from the service. After his service career Thralls worked with his brother Francis, also a Valparaiso graduate, as a regional insurance manager for the Massachusetts Protective Insurance Company at Central Savings Bank Building in Baltimore, Maryland.<sup>7</sup>

Richard Thralls died in 1917 and Charlotte in 1927; Ernest subsequently inherited the 133-acre Greene County farm. His primary residence continued to be in Baltimore, although his personal

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

*Thralls, Ernest, House  
Greene County, Pennsylvania*

**Section Number 8                      Page 2**

---

correspondence indicates he was overseeing the farm's operation from Maryland. He relates to a friend in a 1937 letter that he was building the largest apple orchard in the county having successfully reforested portions of the property with 20,000 walnut and locust trees.<sup>8</sup> His sister Lucy and her husband resided in nearby Spraggs, and they apparently oversaw the property on a daily basis. The combination of Ernest's and his brother's declining health resulted in the subsequent closing of their insurance office in late 1937.

Thralls studied what he had seen in domestic architecture of Mexico and the American southwest and applied his knowledge into the concrete block house he designed and constructed between 1939 and 1940. He built the house on the site of the dilapidated Thralls farmhouse. The neighboring tenant house and the present outbuildings also date to this period. Original drawings indicate that his plan for the farm included gardens, a pond, outdoor grille, a stone bridge over Roberts Run, and the planting of various trees. Much of the original planting remains intact although the orchard is overgrown.<sup>9</sup>

Ernest and Terre resided on the property until Ernest's death in 1954. He was subsequently buried in Arlington National Cemetery. In 1960, Terre Thralls sold the 133-acre property to Fred and Mary Thomas.<sup>10</sup> They owned the property until 1968, when it was sold to Darrell and Dorothy Lewis. They sold it to the present owners, Roy and Diane Brendel in 1971.<sup>11</sup> The house and its setting have not significantly changed since its construction except for the replacement of some windows, repair of the roof, and the enclosure of two porches.

**Architectural Significance**

The Ernest Thralls House derives its architectural significance from its Spanish Revival details characterizing the vernacular territorial style common in central and northern New Mexico during the time Thralls was in the region. Accenting the primarily Spanish Revival house are elements Thralls incorporated from other architectural styles including Arts and Crafts details, Mexican tiles, and Colonial Revival touches such as Palladian windows, fanlights, and square-beamed ceilings. Mexico and the southwest had a lasting influence on Thralls that resulted in the design and construction of his retirement house. The Thralls House and its supporting outbuildings are an important local interpretation of a national architectural style.

San Diego's Panama-California Exposition of 1915 coincided with the opening of the Panama

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

*Thralls, Ernest, House  
Greene County, Pennsylvania*

**Section Number 8                      Page 3**

---

Canal and spawned elaborate imitations of Spanish Revival style buildings. Architect Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue (1869-1924) created a Spanish-Colonial influenced building for the exposition's California pavilion after completing a thorough study of the style. Prior to this period, most Spanish Colonial examples followed the influence of the less elaborately detailed mission buildings with shaped parapets and quatrefoil windows. The Spanish examples Goodhue studied were more richly decorated.<sup>12</sup>

The exposition influenced other period architects to return to Spanish Colonial architecture. The style reached its pinnacle in the late 1920s, and it continued to be popular through the 1940s. The style was prolific in California, Arizona, Texas, New Mexico, and Florida where Spanish Colonial building traditions existed. Good examples of the style were not common outside of these areas, but various vernacular examples emerged in suburban plans across the country including Pittsburgh. One of the most common identifying feature of the style is the use of a tile roof, either Mission tiles shaped like half cylinders or "S" shaped Spanish tiles.<sup>13</sup>

Thralls began to consider construction of the present house with a personal letter to a friend in 1937.<sup>14</sup> He refers to a house in Mexico that he found particularly inspirational, but was expensive to duplicate in Pennsylvania. Regardless, traditional domestic architecture of Mexico and the American southwest influenced his design choices. The evolution of Thralls' ideas are clear in a series of design iterations the current owners discovered in a box of personal papers in the rafters of the house.<sup>15</sup>

The Thralls House has characteristics of the Spanish Colonial Revival style including an asymmetrical form with shallow roof pitches accented in Mission tiles, a romantic semicircular entrance tower, a stuccoed exterior and a plan of interconnected rooms opening onto a central patio with a Mission tile-roofed well head. Thralls made extensive use of casement windows, doors, and terraces, that suggest an open-air atmosphere common to areas where Spanish Colonial architecture originally developed. The use of heavy wood paneled doors at the front and west elevations of the house with wrought iron strap hinges, Talavera tiles on the exterior of the house, at the fireplaces, and around the windows are characteristic of Spanish Colonial architecture, as is the extensive use of ornate iron detailing.

In addition to the influences of the American southwest and Mexico, the house has eclectic

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

*Thralls, Ernest, House  
Greene County, Pennsylvania*

**Section Number 8 Page 4**

---

detailing drawn from other styles. Common elements of the Colonial Revival style included in the house are vernacular Palladian windows, fanlights, and arched openings throughout the first floor. The square beam ceilings in the house are also typical of the Colonial Revival, as are large turned newel post and balusters of the stair and the built-in sideboard of the dining room, which were taken from an older house. Arts and crafts detailing in the house consists of the wrought iron interior and exterior light fixtures, the use of large leaded-glass panels in the doors, the art tiling of the foyer and living room, exposed rafter ends, and open eaves of the roof.

Thralls was aware of current building trends and materials. His personal papers reveal that he referred to various contemporary plan books such as *Designed for Concrete*, a 1936 publication by the Portland Cement Association which included fifty five selected designs from a competition for the design of fire safe concrete homes.<sup>16</sup> Other sources from Thralls personal files include catalogs from the Owens-Illinois Glass Company insulux products division, promotional materials from the Ludowici-Celadon Company, producers of roof tiles, and catalogs for building details such as doors, bath fixtures, and window blinds.<sup>17</sup>

The house has a large open plan living and dining room with an adjoining study. The free flowing space and interior detailing was particularly innovative for Thralls. His use of recycled details such as the newel posts, stained-glass windows, and built-in sideboard from other older houses perhaps similar to the simple one story gable roofed dwelling which served as his boyhood home also indicates his practicality.

The nearby rental house was erected as a residence for a military friend of Thralls after the completion of the main house. The rental house, like the main house, exhibits a southwestern influence with stuccoed walls, accent tiles, and Spanish Revival fenestration patterns highlighted with casement windows.

Similar examples of Spanish Revival style architecture in the southwestern Pennsylvania region include an enclave of houses on Spanish Villa Drive in Hempfield Township, Westmoreland County. Built in the middle 1920s by insurance salesman Morris Kelley in a wooded locale, these houses use many of the same details as the Thralls House. They are generally, brightly-painted with parapets, arched windows, decorative tiles, flat roofs, towers, and tile roofed chimneys. Kelley, like Thralls, was well-traveled. He visited Florida in the early 1920s during the state's land boom and was influenced by the Spanish Revival architecture emerging there. Kelley apparently

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

*Thralls, Ernest, House  
Greene County, Pennsylvania*

**Section Number 8                      Page 5**

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designed the houses himself.<sup>18</sup>

Several 1930s and 1940s Spanish Revival style houses exist in the Point Breeze section of Pittsburgh. A large two story L-shaped example with stuccoed walls and arcaded porches is located at 414 South Dallas Avenue, but much of the original tile roof has been replaced. Another example is a two story brick house at 6635 Reynolds Avenue with a tile roof and entrance tower reminiscent of the Thralls House. A first floor modern addition slightly alters the house's appearance. A final example stands at 5488 Northumberland Street which is a stuccoed two story house has a low pitched tile roof and large arcaded facade. The primary difference between these houses and the Thralls House is the execution of the design; the Pittsburgh houses likely had architects evident in their more refined detailing.

The Ernest Thralls House represents a nationally-popular architectural style adapted by a Greene County, Pennsylvania native as a retirement retreat. The house is a locally important singular example of the style.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

*Thralls, Ernest, House  
Greene County, Pennsylvania*

**Section Number    Notes    Page 1**

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**ENDNOTES**

1. Ernest Thralls. *Circa 1939 Plans, elevations, and site plans for the Thralls House*, Collection of Roy and Diane Brendel, Wayne Township, Greene County, Pennsylvania. The Brendels retain a box of personal material consisting of photographs, plans, elevations, and site plans relating the present house as well as other miscellaneous correspondence. This original material served as the basis for the nomination.
2. Ibid.
3. Ernest Thralls. *Circa 1939 Plans, elevations, and site plans for the Thralls House*, Collection of Roy and Diane Brendel, Wayne Township, Greene County, Pennsylvania.
4. Ernest Thralls. *Circa 1930 Draft of a Biographical Sketch prepared for "Masonic Who's Who in the United States and Canada."* Collection of Roy and Diane Brendel, Wayne Township, Greene County, Pennsylvania.
5. William Phillips and Rebecca Phillips to Richard H. Thralls, deed dated 18 April 1885, Greene Count Courthouse, Waynesburg, PA.
6. Ernest Thralls. *Circa 1939 Draft of a Biographical Sketch prepared for "Masonic Who's Who in the United States and Canada."*
7. Ibid.
8. Ernest Thralls to Mrs. Stella M. Baker, Weatherford, Oklahoma, 24 April 1937. Collection of Roy and Diane Brendel, Wayne Township, Greene County, Pennsylvania.
9. Ernest Thralls. *Circa 1939 Plans, elevations, and site plans for the Thralls House*. Collection of Roy and Diane Brendel, Wayne Township, Greene County, Pennsylvania.
10. Terre Watkins Thralls to Fred J. Thomas and Mary J. Thomas, deed dated 10 February 1960, Greene County Courthouse, Waynesburg, PA.



11. Fred J. Thomas and Mary J. Thomas to Darrell J. Lewis and Dorothy T. Lewis, deed dated 23 October 1968, Greene County Courthouse, Waynesburg, PA.
12. Darrell J. Lewis and Dorothy T. Lewis to Roy Brendel and Diane Brendel, deed dated 15 September 1971, Greene County Courthouse, Waynesburg, PA.
13. Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (Mount Vernon, New York: Consumers Union of the United States, 1987), 418.
14. Ernest Thralls to Mrs. Stella M. Baker.
15. Ernest Thralls. *Circa 1939 Plans, elevations, and site plans for the Thralls House*. Collection of Roy and Diane Brendel, Wayne Township, Greene County, Pennsylvania.
16. Portland Cement Company, *Designed for Concrete* (Chicago, Illinois: Portland Cement Company, 1936). Collection of Roy and Diane Brendel, Wayne Township, Greene County, Pennsylvania.
17. Ernest Thralls, *Various circa 1939 Advertisement for Building Material and Products*, Collection of Roy and Diane Brendel, Wayne Township, Greene County, Pennsylvania.
18. James D. Van Trump, "Spanish Villas: A Charming Legacy from the 20s." Tribune-Review 13 March 1983.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

*Thralls, Ernest, House  
Greene County, Pennsylvania*

**Section Number 9                      Page 1**

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Carley, Rachel. *The Visual Dictionary of American Domestic Architecture*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994.

Greene County Deed Books, Greene County Courthouse, Waynesburg, Pennsylvania.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. Mount Vernon, New York: Consumers Union, 1984.

Portland Cement Company. *Designed for Concrete*. Chicago, Illinois: Portland Cement Company, 1936. Collection of Roy and Diane Brendel, Wayne Township, Greene County, Pennsylvania.

Thralls, Ernest. *Circa 1930 Draft of a Biographical Sketch prepared for "Masonic Who's Who in the United States and Canada."* Collection of Roy and Diane Brendel, Wayne Township, Greene County, Pennsylvania.

----- to Mrs. Stella M. Baker, Weatherford, Oklahoma 24 April 1937. Collection of Roy and Diane Brendel, Wayne Township, Greene County, Pennsylvania.

----- *Circa 1939 Plans, elevations, and Site Plan for the Thralls House*, Collection of Roy and Diane Brendel, Wayne Township, Greene County, Pennsylvania.

----- *Various circa 1939 Advertisement for Building Material and Products*. Collection of Roy and Diane Brendel, Wayne Township, Greene County, Pennsylvania.

Van Trump, James D. "Spanish Villas: A Charming Legacy from the 1920s," Tribune-Review 13 March 1983.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

*Thralls, Ernest, House  
Greene County, Pennsylvania*

**Section Number 10 Page 1**

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***Verbal Boundary Description***

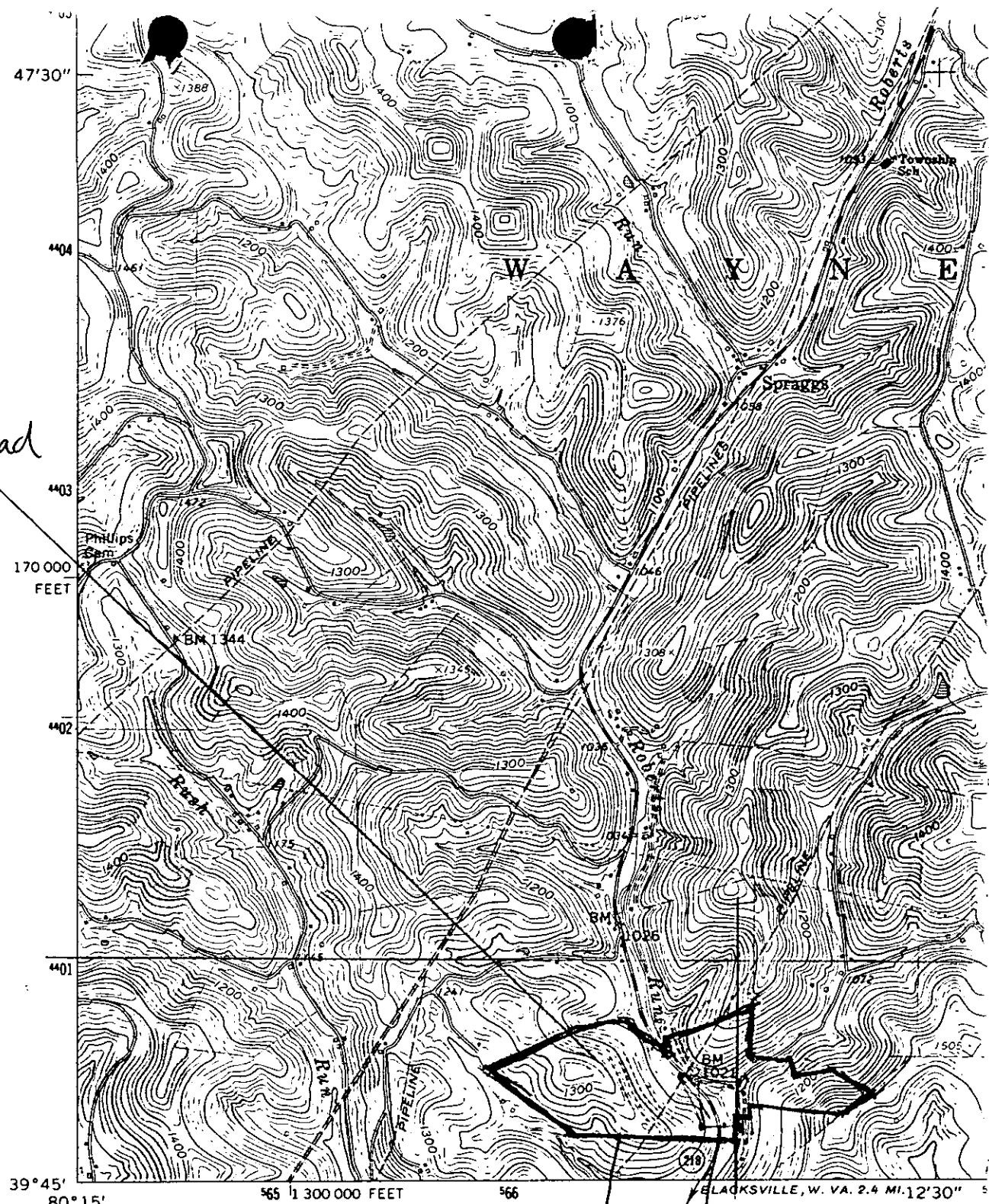
All that piece of ground situate in Wayne Township, Greene County, Pennsylvania, bounded and described as follows: Beginning at a point approximately 40 feet west of SR 218 in the northwest corner of the Ernest Thralls property; thence east 800 feet to a point approximately 20 feet north of TR 522; thence south 660 feet to a point along TR 522; thence west 402 feet to a point; thence northwest 500 feet to a point approximately 10 feet west of SR 218; thence west 150 feet to a point; thence north 190 feet to the place of the beginning. Containing nine acres more or less.

***Boundary Justification***

This boundary includes the Thralls House and its historically associated outbuildings and immediate nine acres of ground which are connected to its architectural significance. The remaining ground is excluded from this nomination since it does not relate to the architectural development of the house and outbuildings.

Ernest Thralls  
 House  
 Wayne Township  
 Greene County  
 Zone 17  
 Oak Forest Quad

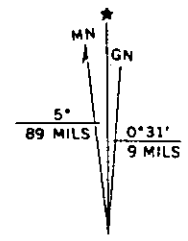
- 566980  
4400400
- 566760  
4400440
- 566840  
4400220
- 567010  
4400240



(WADESTOWN)  
 4963 III NE

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
 Control by USGS and USC&GS  
 Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1958. Field checked 1961  
 Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
 10,000-foot grid based on Pennsylvania coordinate system, south zone  
 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 17, shown in blue  
 Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked  
 All wells shown are gas wells  
 Map photoinspected 1977  
 No major culture or drainage changes observed

BOUNDARY  
 OF  
 FARM AS  
 A  
 WHOLE



UTM GRID AND 1973 MAGNETIC NORTH DECLINATION AT CENTER OF SHEET

SMALLER POLYGON REFLECTS  
 NR BOUNDARY - SEE SITE  
 PLAN