

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Oscar Taylor House

and/or common Stephenson County Historical Society Museum

2. Location

street & number 1440 South Carroll Avenue not for publication

city, town Freeport vicinity of

state Illinois code 012 county Stephenson code 177

3. Classification

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Freeport Park District

street & number 1200 S. Park Lane, Read Park

city, town Freeport vicinity of state Illinois

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Stephenson County Courthouse, County Clerk

street & number

city, town Freeport state Illinois 61032

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title See "Continuation Sheet" has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records

city, town state

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Item number 6

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TITLE

1. Historic American Buildings Survey
2. Illinois Historic Structures Survey, Inventory of Historic Structures in Stephenson County.
3. Illinois Historic Landmarks Survey, Inventory of Historic Landmarks in Stephenson County

DATE

- |                   |                |
|-------------------|----------------|
| 1. September 1970 | federal survey |
| 2. October 1972   | state survey   |
| 3. November 1973  | state survey   |

DEPOSITORY

1. Library of Congress
2. Illinois Department of Conservation
3. Illinois Department of Conservation

CITY

Washington, D.C.  
Springfield, IL  
Springfield, IL

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

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

The Oscar Taylor Home located at 1440 South Carroll Avenue, Freeport, Illinois is an Italian villa type mansion built in 1857 of roughly textured, locally quarried limestone with walls two feet thick. The eaves are supported by large paired brackets, and the windows are marked by simplified hoods at the tops and sills below. The plan is symmetrical; although, because of projecting polygonal bays on each side, a sun porch on the south and the varied composition with cupola above and lower kitchen wing behind, symmetry is not very obvious.

The house is two stories high with a basement and full attic. The entrance is centered on the east front with an ornate wooden porch with iron railings which came from one of the balconies of the Brewster House. Over the front door is a fan-shaped window. In the entrance hall is a chandelier suspended from a rich plaster centerpiece thought to be original to the home. The four downstairs rooms have chandeliers in the Victorian style.

The home is located between Jefferson and Pershing Streets, facing South Carroll Avenue, with fencing on all four sides with two stone pillars at the driveway entrance. Surrounding the home is an arboretum containing many old and few rare trees, including a yellow birch and a large American beech.

Structural changes inside the home have been minor. The basement floor has been cemented; two rooms on the second floor were made into one to form the exhibit room. Original heating was by fireplaces and stoves, but the house is now heated by a furnace.

The exterior changes have been minor also. Storm windows were added as was a TV antenna. The north side porch has been screened and concrete blocks have added support to it. The west side and bottom of the porch have wooden lattice type coverings. The cistern and hand pump are close to the porch.

Double front doors lead into a longitudinal hall with staircase. On the first floor, the two parlors can be separated by sliding doors. The south wall in the back parlor has a floor-to-ceiling built-in bookcase with glass doors and with carvings on the drawers at the bottom of the bookcase.

On the first floor also is the dining room which opens onto the sun porch by means of double doors with shutters, one panel solid and one louvered. A library and the kitchen area are on the first floor, along with a bathroom. The kitchen area includes a pantry, doors to stairs leading to the second floor and stairs to the basement as well as doors to both porches.

The floor in the dining room is of 10" wide oak boards and that in the library of 7-1/2" pine. The parlor floors are carpeted, and the walls are all papered.

There are four Italianate marble fireplaces with marble mantels on the first floor. All windows in the home are approximately ten feet high. The shutters

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are on the inside of the windows and are divided into two parts. The lower part is six feet high combination louvered and solid, and on the top they are four feet high of the same structure. All windows and doorways have hand carved, painted 10" wide moldings.

The curving stairway has two coffin niches at the landing near the top. On the second floor is the large exhibit room. In the hallway is a large floor-to-ceiling cabinet ornately carved and having glass doors. The office of the Historical Society is on this floor as are the living quarters of the resident curator which consist of a living room, bedroom, bathroom and storage area.

# 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 checked="" 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 1857 ~~Builder~~ Architect Otis Wheelock, Boyinton & Wheelock

## Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

This is an Italianate stone house built by Oscar Taylor, a banker and practicing attorney in Freeport. The house was built in 1857, is typical of the pre-Civil War period, and was the center of much of the cultural life of the city at that time. The architect was Otis Wheelock of the Chicago firm of Boyington and Wheelock.

Mr. Wheelock also drew the plans for the Brewster House built in 1857 in Freeport where Lincoln and Douglas stayed during their 1858 Freeport Debate in the city. Mr. Wheelock was also the architect for the first Presbyterian Church of Freeport built in 1867 and still in use.

This was the first of Freeport's big houses and provides a glimpse of the aristocratic life in Freeport in the mid-to latter nineteenth century. It was owned only by the Taylor family until 1944 when, through a monetary bequest of Charissa Taylor Bass (daughter of the Oscar Taylors) and the gift of the homestead by the grandsons of the Oscar Taylors, Morris and Donald Taylor, the Stephenson County Historical Society was formed. It then became the property of the Historical Society and the museum of the Society. The house/museum still reflects the gracious living of the 1800's.

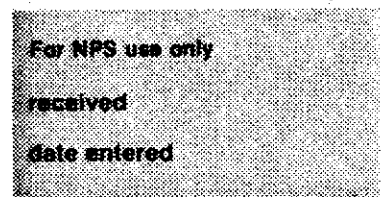
Oscar Taylor opened the first bank in Freeport before 1852 and was a practicing attorney in Freeport. He organized the Copper Scroll lightning Rod Company in 1861 which continued in business beyond 1880 being under the management and direction of Mr. Taylor contantly.

He was most famous for his accurate tract index of records still in use presently by the local abstract company. Taylor started the business of abstracting or digesting the deeds and transactions affecting title to property in 1858 with the firm name of O. Taylor and Son.

Oscar Taylor was the son of John W. Taylor who succeeded Henry Clay as speaker of the House of Representatives in Washington. Oscar Taylor was an abolitionist and his daughter, Mrs. Charissa (Frank) Bass said runaway slaves were hidden in the basement during the Civil War. This was done by means of a separately walled small basement room which had a door hidden by shelves for fruit jars attached to it. The door as described is still there. On the wall near the window in the cupola is the inscription: "Geo. W. Bradley, 2nd Lt. Ellis Rifles, June 17, 1861, Gone to Was - Killed June 9th, 1863, near Vicksburg." Military records show that he enlisted in Rockford in May 1861, but his connection with the Taylors is not known.

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In the Taylor Room, which contains many of the family's articles, is a plaque which reads:

"Distinguished guests: The Hutchinson family. In 1857 these famous Abolitionist singers dedicated the house one Sunday night singing Home Sweet Home'."

Underneath are the names of distinguished guests:

"Horace Mann	James Russell Lowell
Bayard Taylor	Ralph Waldo Emerson
Horace Greeley	Artemus Ward
George Sumner	Edward Everett Hale
(Ambassador to France)	Jane Addams
John G. Saxe	Edith Hibbard"

The Postscript to the 1970 Stephenson County History reads:

"He (Mr. Taylor) supported Lincoln and helped prepare the town for the Lincoln/Douglas Debate held August 27, 1858. . . . Mrs. Taylor headed a group of women called the Soldiers' Aid Society who helped by raising money for soldiers and their families -- for almost four years they raised \$100. per week by all kinds of entertainment. They felt that funds could not be placed directly in the hands of the recipients, so Malvina (Mrs. Taylor) gave one day a week to buying and disbursing supplies.

"Still interested in literature's effect on the young people, the Taylors promoted the organization of the Shakespeare Society."

The Shakespeare Society is still active in Freeport.

The Postscript to the 1970 History continues:

"Its (the Society's) first performance, As You Like it, was given on their ground with a background of pines. Their gardens were always beautiful and the flowers were shared with friends and neighbors.

"When she was 60 years old, Mrs. Taylor took up china painting. At 78, she painted and exhibited 136 plates portraying the wild flowers of Illinois. The exhibit was solicited by the Illinois Committee to be hung in the Illinois Women's Building at the World's Fair in 1893.

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"The family consisted of four children: Elizabeth, Mrs. Jerome Maynard, who died early leaving a daughter, Elsie Maynard; Oscar who married and had two sons, Donald and Morris; Winnifred, who never married but was occupied with social work locally and with prisoners in Joliet and wrote of her experiences; and Charissa, who married Frank Bass at 6 p.m. on August 2, 1892, just three miles and 50 years away from her parent's wedding day.

"The house was named Bohemiana by Winnifred, a house of memories. The Taylors and Basses set out almost every tree on the grounds, a lasting tribute to them. The Taylors celebrated their 67th wedding anniversary in 1909. Three weeks later Malvina Snow Taylor died and thirteen weeks after that Oscar Taylor followed her.

"The Basses continued the heritage pattern laid out by the Taylors, taking part in all of Freeport's good life. Frank Bass died in 1929 and Charissa Taylor Bass in 1939. . . . .

Through the years, it has been the aim of the Society to keep the gracious, self-reliant feeling of the early settlers, so that our young people will have an idea of how life went on in early times."

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Page 1

Barrett, Mary X., ed., 1970, History of Stephenson County  
Mt. Morris, Illinois: Kable Printing.

Bass, Diane, July 1983, interview.

Historic American Buildings Survey, "Oscar Taylor House",  
form 10-445, September 1970, by Paul E. Sprague.

24 June 1957, "Historic Society Picnic," Freeport Journal-  
Standard, p. 4.

Tilden, M.H., 1880, History of Stephenson County, Illinois,  
Chicago: Western Historical Company.



# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Attached sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name FREEMPORT EAST, IL.

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A 

16	284380	4684460
Zone	Easting	Northing

B 

Zone	Easting	Northing

C 

--	--	--

D 

--	--	--

E 

--	--	--

F 

--	--	--

G 

--	--	--

H 

--	--	--

Verbal boundary description and justification

Address: 1440 S. Carroll Ave., Freeport, IL Bounded on east by South Carroll Ave; joined by private properties which face Jefferson St. on the north, pershing St. on the south, and Chicago Ave. on the west.

(See attached copy of Deed for legal description)

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

state \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_

state \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_ county \_\_\_\_\_ code \_\_\_\_\_

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title 1) Fern Ditzler and 2) Glenn Schwendiman, president of SCHS

organization Stephenson County Historical Society

date January 9, 1984

street & number 1440 S. Carroll Ave.

telephone 1) (815) 232-4222  
2) (815) 233-1996

city or town Freeport

state IL 61032

# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ state X local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title District

date 3/22/84

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

FLORIDA, Dade County, Homestead vicinity, Rock Gate (Coral Castle), 28655 S. Federal Hwy. (05/10/84)  
FLORIDA, DeSoto County, Arcadia, Arcadia Historic District, Roughly bounded by Lee and Miles Aves., Imogene, Cypress, Pine, and Magnolia Sts. (05/10/84)  
FLORIDA, Monroe County, Key West, U.S. Naval Station, Roughly Front, Whitehead, Eaton, and Caroline Sts. (05/08/84)  
FLORIDA, Palm Beach County, West Palm Beach, Hibiscus Apartments, 619 Hibiscus St. (05/10/84)  
FLORIDA, Seminole County, Longwood, Longwood Hotel, Old Dixie Highway (05/10/84)

GEORGIA, Dougherty County, Albany, Albany District Pecan Growers' Exchange, 211—213 Roosevelt Ave. (05/10/84)  
GEORGIA, Fulton County, Atlanta, Ford Motor Company Assembly Plant, 699 Ponce de Leon Ave. (05/10/84)  
GEORGIA, Fulton County, Palmetto, Arnold, Thomas P., House, 518 S. Main St. (05/10/84)

ILLINOIS, Stephenson County, Freeport, Taylor, Oscar, House, 1440 S. Carroll Ave. (05/11/84)

INDIANA, Rush County, Rushville vicinity, Hall-Crull Octagonal House, N of Rushville (05/10/84)

IOWA, Story County, Sheldahl, Sheldahl First Norwegian Evangelical Lutheran Church, 3rd and Willow Sts. (05/11/84)

KANSAS, Labette County, Harmon Site No. 2 (14LT323), (05/07/84)

MINNESOTA, Otter Tail County, Fergus Falls, Fergus Falls City Hall, 112 W. Washington Ave. (05/10/84)  
MINNESOTA, Otter Tail County, Fergus Falls, Otter Tail County Courthouse, Court St. at Junius Ave. (05/10/84)  
MINNESOTA, Otter Tail County, Phelps, Phelps Mill District, SR 45 (05/10/84)  
MINNESOTA, Polk County, Crookston, Crookston Carnegie Public Library, N. Ash St. at Second Ave. (05/10/84)  
MINNESOTA, Polk County, Crookston, Davis, E.C., House, 406 Grant St. (05/10/84)  
MINNESOTA, Stevens County, Morris, Morris Industrial School for Indians Dormitory, University of Minnesota campus (05/10/84)

MISSISSIPPI, Madison County, Puckshunubbee-Haley Site, (05/09/84)

NEW YORK, Kings County, New York City, Weir Greenhouse, 750—751 Fifth Ave. (05/10/84)  
NEW YORK, New York County, New York City, Riverside Drive-West 80th-81st Streets Historic District, Riverside Dr., W. 80th and W. 81st Sts. (05/10/84)  
NEW YORK, Onondaga County, Skaneateles, Skaneateles Historic District, Jordan, Fennell, E. and W. Genesee Sts. (05/10/84)  
NEW YORK, Sullivan County, Glen Wild, Glen Wild Methodist Church, Old Glen Wild Rd. (05/10/84)  
NEW YORK, Sullivan County, Narrowsburg, Kirk House, Kirk's Rd. (05/10/84)  
NEW YORK, Westchester County, Yonkers, Sherwood House, 340 Tuckahoe Rd. (05/10/84)

NORTH DAKOTA, Burleigh County, Bismarck, Van Horn Hotel (Prince Hotel), 114 N. Third St. (05/10/84)

OREGON, Clatsop County, Svensen vicinity, Indian Point Site (35CLT34), E of Svensen (05/09/84)

PENNSYLVANIA, Berks County, Maxatawney vicinity, Siegfried's Dale Farm, Siegfried's Rd. (05/10/84)  
PENNSYLVANIA, Bucks County, Hartsville vicinity, Bridge Valley Bridge (Pettit's Bridge), Spans Neshaminy Creek N of Hartsville (05/10/84)