

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

WASHINGTON

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

1. Name

historic Lewis H. Thomas House

and/or common

2. Location

street & number R.R. not for publication

city, town Virden X vicinity of Interstate 55 and North Virden Road

state Illinois code 012 county Montgomery code 135

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Unoccupied Residence

4. Owner of Property

name John B. Hendricks and Darlene H. Fuchs

street & number c/o Marc E. Fuchs, 110 S. Cleveland St.

city, town Farmersville vicinity of state Illinois 62533

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Montgomery County Courthouse

street & number Courthouse Square

city, town Hillsboro state Illinois

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Illinois Historical Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes X no

date 1974 federal X state county local

depository for survey records Illinois Department of Conservation

city, town Springfield state Illinois

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" 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 Lewis Thomas House represents an evolution of preference in architectural types. The original design, developed by architect, Elijah E. Myers, (discussed in Section 8 hereof), was decidedly Victorian, as shown on Exhibits A, B and C reproduced from Bicknells Village Builder, a Victorian Architectural Guidebook, first published in 1874. Exhibit C, the architect's drawing, and Exhibit D, an etching of the house as built taken from An Atlas Map of Montgomery County, published in 1874, are identical almost to the exact detail.

In 1888, a fire did substantial damage to the House. Exhibit E is a reproduction of a photograph taken shortly thereafter, looking from north of the House to the south. This indicates that the entire roof was burned off, but that the main structure was left intact. (St. Jour.-Reg., Spfld, IL 12-11-71)

Exhibit F is a reproduction of a photograph taken from Montgomery County History published in 1896. This photo is from the south side of the house looking north, and clearly shows the datestone above the front door, bearing the date 1888. Except for another small fire in 1939 which burned off the cupelo, or pointed tower roof;¹ the House looks the same today as it did after the 1888 renovation (see recent photographs), and is now of the towered Italianate style. The renovation seems to have changed the roof line, and removed the corner stone moldings and Victorian exterior appointments. (See Exhibits B, C, D, E, F, and recent photographs)

¹Lucille Visser Fuchs, personal interview, January 5, 1983. Lucille Visser Fuchs, age 63, lived in the House at the time of the second fire.

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Apparently, the 1888 fire did interior damage, causing the need for substantial replacement of woodwork, doors, and fireplace mantels. This writer, in removing the mantels for off-premises storage, has personally observed pencilled notes on the plaster walls, behind the mantels, indicating that they were installed in 1888.

The mansion is 80 feet in height, from the top of the front observatory to the ground. It has a breadth of 54 feet east to west and a length of 85 feet north to south. It consists of 3 stories and a 4th floor observatory (tower). The roof is attached by 17 iron rods passing down some 20 feet into the solid brick walls, at the 17 corners of the building.² The interior walls are plaster over brick. It contains 7 fireplaces, which originally provided heat for the home. A basement underlies the entire House.

It has 15 rooms, consisting of a kitchen, pantry, dining room, 2 parlors, sewing room, library, 4 bedrooms, and servants quarters. The circular main stairway ascends from the ground floor to the attic. The fireplace mantels vary from plain in the upper floor to elaborate in the parlors. The hardware is original. The floors are pine, except in the library which is inlaid hardwood. Virtually all of the original fabric still remains. The woodwork is pine, finished to give it a hardwood appearance by a staining technique popular at the time. It is unaltered today. The house contains 3 picture

²Illustrated Atlas Map of Montgomery County, Illinois. Brink, McCormick and Company, 1874, page 36.

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windows - 1 on the front (or south), 1 on the west and 1 on the east. The west window is boarded by cut and stained glass. Originally the home had 3 porches. Thomas had an apiary in the attic story designed so that bees could pass through the walls of the house by means of pipes. This arrangement kept the beehives out of the reach of moths and the bees away from people.³

The house is framed with full two by twelve inch, double joisted cypress wood. Two of the picture windows contained leaded stained glass. Most windows have shutters that fold into the surrounding window woodwork.

The smokehouse and barn, both located near the house, are original structures, built approximately the same time as the house. The smokehouse has a gabled roof and outside dimensions of approximately 15 feet north and south by 8 feet east and west. The barn has a gabled roof, 2 large hay lofts, box stalls, a milking area, a feed room, and a cattle shed. It is approximately 60 feet north and south by 40 feet east and west. Both the smokehouse and the barn have been recently painted. The smokehouse originally located north of the house, was, at some point, moved to the east side (see Exhibit E and recent photographs).

The house sits on an elevated plain which is clearly visible from both directions on Interstate 55.

Renovation of the House is now in process. A new roof has been installed, all windows have been repaired, the east and west porches have been re-built, and the front, or south porch is in construction process. Detailed attention

³Ibid., page 36

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is being given to original design. The west porch woodwork replacements were recently hand crafted to match the deteriorated original pieces.

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 checked="" 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 checked="" 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 1863-65 Rebuilt, 1888 Builder/Architect Elijah E. Myers

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Lewis H. Thomas House is significant in two areas: architecture and agriculture. The structure is significant because it represents a well preserved example of the design of a known Victorian architect of the period, as modified by the intervening event of 1888. This modification displays the evolution of preference from Victorian to that combination of design schemes prevalent in the 1880's.

Elijah E. Myers is credited with the design for this house.¹ Other of his accomplishments include the Brinkerhoff Mansion in Springfield, Illinois, the Macoupin County Courthouse in Carlinville, Illinois, and the State Capitol Buildings of Texas, Michigan, Colorado, Utah, and Idaho.² At least the first two of the structures mentioned are, to the knowledge of this writer, on the National Register. While a significant contributor to period architecture, E.E. Myers was not always looked upon with the greatest admiration. He seems to be famous for vast cost overruns, particularly dramatized by the Macoupin County Courthouse.³ He was also known for his lack of attention to a completion schedule as with the Texas State House.⁴ The Macoupin County Board charged Myers with the task of designing a structure that would cost not more than

¹Glen Watkins, Bicknell's Village Builder, A Victorian Architectural Guidebook, American Life Foundation and Study Institute: (New York, repub. 1976)

²Detroit Free Press, Detroit, Michigan, March 6, 1909, page 12, Column 1 & 2

³Paul Goeldner. Speech given to meeting of Society of Architectural Historians. (Spring, 1976)

⁴Frederick W. Rathjen. The Texas State House, The Southwestern Historical Quarterly, Vol. LX, (April 1957)

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\$50,000.00. The final bill came to just over 1.3 million dollars!⁵

Fortunately for Lewis Thomas, the cost estimate of his house, \$30,000.00,⁶ was closely followed, but only, perhaps, because much of the labor was performed by his own farm help.⁷

This farmhouse may be the most intact example in Montgomery County of a large-scale farm in the period 1852-1900. The farm is reflective of Thomas' innovative spirit. It was a showplace, a stop for travelers to picnic⁸ and observe his novelty animals - bear, peacock and deer. Thomas called it Union Grove Stock Farm. It was known for his purebred Cottswald Sheep, Durham Cattle, Berkshire hogs, and the Osage Orange hedges, as discussed later herein.⁹ It was farm life in the grand manner.

The man, Lewis H. Thomas, is significant as a key figure in the development of agriculture in this portion of Illinois. He was one of the first to enter significant amounts of prairie land in northern Montgomery County; he introduced to this area the Osage Orange or Bois D'Arc hedge, after which he successfully petitioned to have the township named.¹⁰ Lewis Thomas was born in 1827 in

⁵Goeldner, op. cit.

⁶Watkins., op. cit.

⁷Illustrated Atlas Map of Montgomery County, Illinois. Brink, McCormick & Co., 1874, page 36

⁸Montgomery County History, 1896

⁹Atlas Map., op. cit.

¹⁰O.L. Basken & Co., History of Bond and Montgomery Counties: (Chicago, IL. 1882) Page 396

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Greene County, Illinois. He studied surveying at the Carrollton Academy in Carrollton, Illinois, and, in the Spring of 1851, entered 970 acres of land in the township later called Bois D'Arc. This entry was by far the largest up to that time.¹¹ Thomas immediately enclosed and criss-crossed the entire farm with hedge. Such an extensive experiment was considered rash,¹² but Thomas, who had studied the successful work of Jonathan Baldwin Turner¹³ was undaunted. The idea of lopping, or cutting, hedge was improved upon by Mr. Thomas and he accomplished the first successful hedging in the township. Others followed his example and northern Montgomery County hedges were soon fully developed.¹⁴

Hedge fences are significant in the evolution of American agriculture. Turner, the great agriculturalist, reported on the status of the Osage Orange in 1845,¹⁵ and in 1847 published his first circular extolling the virtues of the Osage hedge.¹⁶ Through his leadership, this native Arkansas tree¹⁷ became the most popular species for live fencing. Live fencing, or hedging, was then

¹¹Ibid., page 275

¹²Atlas Map, op. cit., page 36

¹³Chapman Bros. History of Montgomery and Bond Counties: (Chicago, IL 1892) page 119.

¹⁴Atlas Map, op. cit., page 36

¹⁵Mary Louise Rice. The Role of the Osage Orange Hedge in the Occupation of the Great Plains. Master's Thesis, University of Illinois, 1937. page 19

¹⁶Daryl Watson. The American Hedge: A Passing Feature of the Agricultural Landscape. Graduate paper, 1976, page 5

¹⁷Ibid., page 3

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the most widely used method for livestock confinement until the latter part of the 19th century when concern grew that the hedge was a depletor of valuable moisture and soil nutrients.¹⁸

The writer has herein referred to the hedge interchangeably as "Osage Orange" and "Bois D'Arc", the latter term being that for which the township of site location is named. The Osage tree was named after the Osage Indians of Arkansas. They used its tough wood for bows, and thus the French explorers referred to the tree as Bois D'Arc.¹⁹

In the period during which Mr. Thomas pioneered hedging in Bois D'Arc Township, Illinois was becoming the national leader in live fencing. In 1871, more land was enclosed by hedge in Illinois than in any other state. The figure was 22,606,406 acres.²⁰ Thomas was the leader in the leading state. In 1856 he was awarded first premium, diploma and the Society's first gold medal for "best and largest amount of well set and cultivated hedge on one farm, not less than 2 summer's growth, in the hedge row", by the Illinois State Agricultural Society. The same year he received their first premium and silver medal for "best hedge of 1000 rods and upwards".²¹

¹⁸L. A. Bailey, editor. Cyclopedia of American Agriculture: The McMillan Company (New York, 1907), page 273

¹⁹John A. Waider, Hedges and Evergreens, New York; Orange Judd, 1865, page 32

²⁰Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture (1871), pages 507 and 510

²¹Transactions of Illinois State Agricultural Society. Lanphier and Walder Printers (Springfield 1857) page 125.

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Mr. Thomas placed a number of timber groves on the farm. The first grove was a 10 acre lot planted in locust timber in the spring of 1852. Another lot of 15 acres was put out in the spring of 1854. In eleven years from the first planting, the groves furnished enough cords of wood to burn 300,000 bricks. These bricks were made on Mr. Thomas's farm. They now form the walls of the mansion. An ornamental grove was put out in 1853 near where the mansion was afterwards to be erected. This grove comprised 15 acres, and included about every variety of timber indigenous to the United States. In 1858, the Illinois Agricultural Society awarded Mr. Thomas another gold medal for the "best grove of cultivated timber".²²

The evidence as presented herein would tend to show that Thomas, the agriculturalist, was not only a local pioneer, but an innovator. He was a key figure, both locally and state-wide, in developing the Bois D'Arc hedge, not only for which the township of location is named, but which takes a significant place in the development of American Agriculture.

²²Atlas Map, op. cit. page 36

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Bailey, L.A., editor. Cyclopedia of American Agriculture: The McMillan Company (New York, 1907), page 273

Basken, O.L. & Co., History of Bond and Montgomery Counties: (Chicago, IL. 1882) page 396

Chapman Bros. History of Montgomery and Bond Counties: (Chicago, IL. 1892) page 119

Detroit Free Press, Detroit, Michigan, March 6, 1909, page 12, column 1 and 2

Fuchs, Lucille Visser, personal interview, January 5, 1983, Lucille Visser Fuchs, age 63, lived in the House at the time of the second fire.

Goeldner, Paul, Speech given to meeting of Society of Architectural Historians. (Spring, 1976).

Illustrated Atlas Map of Montgomery County, Illinois. Brink, McCormick and Company, 1874, page 36.

Montgomery County History, 1896

Rathjen, Frederick W., The Texas State House, The Southwestern Historical Quarterly, Vol LX, (April 1957)

Report of the Commissioner of Agriculture (1871) pages 507 and 510

Rice, Mary Louise, The Role of the Osage Orange Hedge in the Occupation of the Great Plains. Master's Thesis, University of Illinois, 1937. page 19

Transactions of Illinois State Agricultural Society. Lanphier and Walker Printers (Springfield 1857) page 125

Waider, John A., Hedges and Evergreens, New York; Orange Judd, 1865, page 32

Watkins, Glen, Bicknell's Village Builder, A Victorian Architectural Guidebook, American Life Foundation and Study Institute: (New York, repub. 1976)

Watson, Daryl, The American Hedge: A Passing Feature of the Agricultural Landscape. Graduate paper, 1976, page 5

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Attached Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acres of nominated property 5.06

Quadrangle name DIVERNON, IL

Quadrangle scale 1:24 000

UTM References

A 16 272715 4376340
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification Four miles North of Farmersville, Illinois along the East Side of Interstate 55. In the Northwest corner of the North half (N₂) of Section 10, Township 12 North, Range 5 West of the Third Principal Meridian. Dimensions: 369 feet North and South by 597 feet East and West

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Marc E. Fuchs, Attorney

organization Agent for Owners date January 9, 1983

street & number P.O. Box 669 telephone 217-227-3294

city or town Farmersville state Illinois

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 *David Kennedy*

title *Director* date 3/21/83

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Keeper of the National Register date

Attest: Chief of Registration date



IN REPLY REFER TO:

United States Department of the Interior

NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
WASHINGTON, D.C. 20240

DEC 12 1983

The Director of the National Park Service is pleased to inform you that the following properties have been entered in the National Register of Historic Places beginning December 4, 1983 and ending December 10, 1983. For further information call (202) 343-9552.

STATE, County, Vicinity, Property, Address, (Date Listed)

ARIZONA, Maricopa County, Phoenix, San Carlos Hotel, 202 N. Central Ave. (12/08/83)
ARIZONA, Navajo County, Winslow vicinity, Chevelon Creek Bridge, Chevelon Creek, SE of Winslow (12/08/83)

CONNECTICUT, Fairfield County, Stamford, St. Andrew's Protestant Episcopal Church, 1231 Washington Blvd. (12/06/83)

ILLINOIS, Cook County, Chicago, Malden Towers, 4521 N. Malden St. (12/08/83)
ILLINOIS, Cook County, Chicago, New Michigan Hotel, 2135 S. Michigan Ave. (12/08/83)
ILLINOIS, Cook County, Chicago, Oliver Building, 159 N. Dearborn St. (12/08/83)
ILLINOIS, Cook County, Chicago, S/S CLIPPER, Navy Pier 600 E. Grand Ave. (12/08/83)
ILLINOIS, Cook County, Oak Park, Ridgeland-Oak Park Historic District, Roughly bounded by Austin Blvd., Harlem, Ridgeland, and Chicago Aves., Lake and Madison Sts. (12/08/83)
ILLINOIS, Jefferson County, Belle vicinity, Judd, C. H., House, Ina-Belle Rive Rd. (12/08/83)
ILLINOIS, Kane County, St. Charles, Beith, William, House, 6 Indiana St. (12/07/83)
ILLINOIS, Lake County, Libertyville, Public Service Building, 344-354 N. Milwaukee Ave. (12/08/83)
ILLINOIS, McLean County, Bloomington, Holy Trinity Church Rectory and Convent, 704 N. Main and 106 W. Chestnut Sts. (12/08/83)
ILLINOIS, Montgomery County, Virden vicinity, Thomas, Lewis H., House, N. Virden Rd. (12/07/83)
ILLINOIS, Ogle County, Stillman Valley, Stillman's Run Battle Site, Roosevelt and Spruce Sts. (12/08/83)

KENTUCKY, Jefferson County, Louisville, Ballard, Rogers Clark, Memorial School, 4200 Lime Kiln Ln. (12/08/83)
KENTUCKY, Jefferson County, Louisville, Gaffney House (Jefferson County MRA), River Rd. (12/08/83)
KENTUCKY, Jefferson County, Louisville, Halde man House (Jefferson County MRA), 3609 Glenview Ave. (12/08/83)
KENTUCKY, Jefferson County, Louisville, Thornburgh House (West Louisville MRA), 376 N. 26th St. (12/08/83)

LOUISIANA, Terrebonne Parish, Houma, Houma Historic District, Roughly bounded by East Park Ave., Main, Roussell, Goode, School, Belanger, Church, Verret, Grinage, Lafayette, and Canal Sts. (12/08/83)

MARYLAND, Baltimore (Independent City), Dundalk Dundalk Historic District, Roughly bounded by Liberty Pkwy., Dunman, Dundark, Willow Spring and Sunship Rds., Colgate, Chesapeake and Patapsco Aves. (12/08/83)

MARYLAND, Baltimore County, Parkton, Parkton Hotel, York Rd. (12/08/83)

MISSISSIPPI, Copiah County, Hazlehurst, Cook House, 222 Extension St. (12/08/83)
MISSISSIPPI, Madison County, Tilda Bouge, (12/09/83)

ILLINOIS HISTORIC SITES SURVEY INVENTORY

1. Name of Site:

Common

Historic Lewis H. Thomas House

2. Location:

Street and Number

Hwy. 55 N of Thomasville

City or Town

Zip Code

Township

12N

Range

5W

Section

10

1/4 Section

NW

County

Montgomery

3. Classification:

Category (check one)

() District (X) Building
() Site () Structure

Integrity (check one)

(X) Altered () Unaltered
() Moved (X) Original Site

4. Ownership:

(X) Private
() Public

Status (check one)

() Occupied
(X) Unoccupied
(X) Preservation work in progress

Access to Public

(X) Yes (X) Restricted () Unrestricted () No

Present Use (check one or more)

() Agricultural () Industrial () Religious
() Commercial () Military () Scientific
() Educational () Museum () Transportation
() Entertainment () Park () Other (specify)
() Government (X) Private Residence

5. Ownership of Property:

Owner's Name

Phone Number

Street and Number

City or Town

State

County

Zip Code

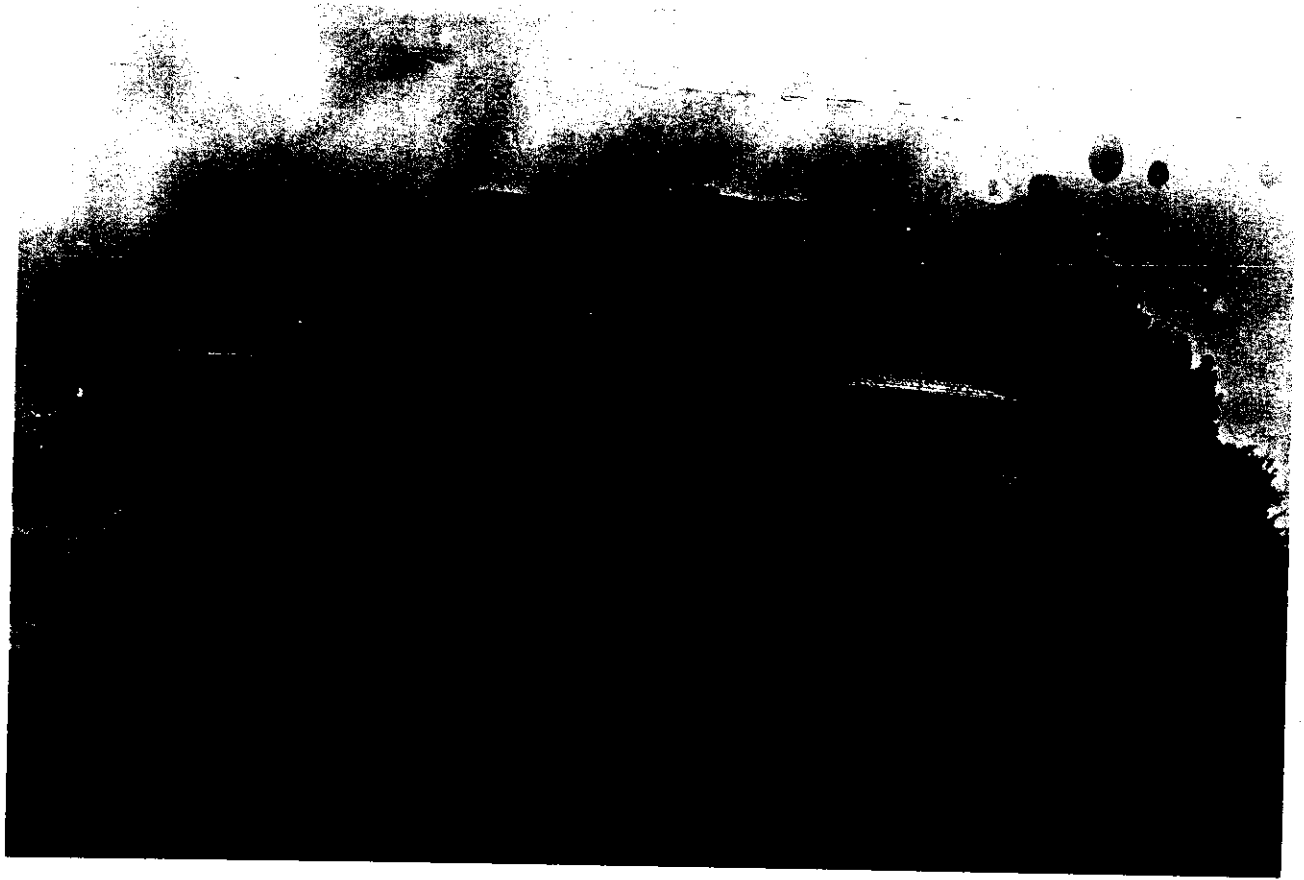
6. Description:

Condition:

(X) Excellent () Good () Fair () Deteriorated () Ruins
() Unexposed

Is there a program of preservation underway? (X) Yes () No

HOMES OF PROMINENT PEOPLE



Thomas was originally a resident of Greene Co., Illinois. He came to Montgomery County and became the typical local, large landowner and agriculturalist. He was the first in this area to use the hedge, Bois d'Arc, or Osage Orange, extensively. He won a number of medals for them. It is said that the name of the Bois d' Arc Township was chosen in his honor.

"He was the man probably responsible for the Illinois Central branching from its main line south and leading west through Springfield."

On the grounds of the building was "Woodpecker Camp", an early country resort composed of log cabins. It was a favorite of Chicago businessmen and IC trains made special stops here to accomodate them.

Re the house itself:

The bricks used in the original construction were fired on the property. A southside porch has since been torn down. The building was partially destroyed by fire in 1888 and was rebuilt.