

PH 1508748

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

DATA SHEET

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED NOV 7 1977
DATE ENTERED MAR 29 1978

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
Mueller-Wright House

AND/OR COMMON
Mueller-Wright House

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
Washington and Mueller Sts., east corner
CITY, TOWN
Wrightstown
STATE
Wisconsin 54180
VICINITY OF
8th
COUNTY
Brown
CODE
009

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Village of Wrightstown
STREET & NUMBER
CITY, TOWN
Wrightstown
VICINITY OF
STATE
Wisconsin 54180

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Brown County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER
100 South Jefferson
CITY, TOWN
Green Bay
STATE
Wisconsin 54301

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Wisconsin Inventory of Historic Places
DATE
1976
DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
State Historical Society of Wisconsin
CITY, TOWN
Madison
STATE
Wisconsin 53706

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT

GOOD

FAIR

DETERIORATED

RUINS

UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED

ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE

MOVED

DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Mueller-Wright House is a good and somewhat unusual example of the Greek Revival style. The central portion was built probably some time in the 1850s. In 1872 Carl G. Mueller made the extensive additions which produced the structure as it appears today. The original two-story central pavilion is flanked by symmetrical one-story wings; all three gables feature full pediments. The main roofline of the wings is supported by four Doric piers and covers a porch which extends across the front of the house. The pediment of the central gable shields a recessed balcony on the second story.

All sections of the house are of dimension lumber balloon-frame construction, although the studs and joists in the original portion are not arrayed in the standard 16-inch-center configuration.

All but the rear of the house has been preserved substantially as it was after the 1872 remodeling. The front section houses the museum of the Wrightstown Historical Society. The rear of the house has been converted into an apartment which provides both a source of revenue for the society and housing for a responsible individual who keeps an eye on the place. In the restoration, an effort was made to preserve as much of the original fabric as was sound. Most of the clapboard, for example, is original although the flush boards under the front porches were replaced by clapboard. The interior of all but the apartment portion retains the original flooring, mouldings, doors, and hardware.

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 type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		association with	
				locally significant	

SPECIFIC DATES 1850s, 1872 BUILDER/ARCHITECT persons

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Mueller-Wright House, a landmark in the Village of Wrightstown, and the focal point of the village's historical self-consciousness, draws its significance from its association with two men: Hoel S. Wright and Carl G. Mueller. A lion's share of Wrightstown's development through the last two-thirds of the nineteenth century may be attributed to the efforts and enterprise of this pair.

Hoel S. Wright, for whom the Town and Village of Wrightstown are named, came to Wisconsin as a U.S. Government surveyor in the early part of the 1830s. In 1833 he and his wife and family settled on the east bank of the lower Fox river, at the mouth of Plum Creek. Wright was born in Vermont, and like many others, moved west in steps: first to upstate New York and then on into the Old Northwest. He was an active land speculator, and in the early years of his Plum Creek settlement he operated a trading post there. The post was the first of a series of commercial enterprises which would make Wright's fortune in Wisconsin and which would, in large part, lead to the development of a thriving community at Wrightstown in the latter part of the nineteenth century. In 1836 the military road from Fort Howard to Fort Winnebago was cut; it ran through Wright's settlement and Wright established a ferry service across the Fox there to handle the increasing traffic. Travellers along the new road commented that Wright's was the "only house between DePere and the Indian settlements in Calumet County."¹

In the next decade and a half Wright replaced his ferry with a toll bridge, joined with a company of others to haul lead by steam-powered towboat over the Fox-Wisconsin waterway from southwestern Wisconsin,² built Wrightstown's first mill, opened the American House hotel at the bridge, and became an instrumental partner in the Green Bay and Taycheeda Plank Road Company, which planned to connect Green Bay and Fond du Lac via Wrightstown. The 1850s saw a lumbering boom in the lower Fox Valley, and Wright, with his Plum Creek mill, was in its vanguard. In 1855 his son, Fairchild, established a steam powered mill which employed 60 men. By the time the 1860 Census was taken, Wright's settlement had been formally named Wrightstown, and had grown to a population of 663 men, women, and children.³

Irene Mueller, a granddaughter of Carl G., maintains that the Mueller-Wright House is an amalgam of Hoel S. Wright's last house in Wrightstown and the Carl G. Mueller home-stead. While it is impossible entirely to document the story, there is evidence to suggest that Wright was responsible for the center portion of the structure. Nonetheless, Irene Mueller's account seems in need of some revision. She maintains that the Wright portion was built sometime around 1843. Travellers' accounts from the late 1830s suggest that Wright had a substantial house in Wrightstown as early as 1837.⁴ It is unknown what may have become of it. Elizabeth Dayton, an early Wrightstown settler noted in her published "Recollections" that Wright lived in his American House hotel "for some

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

[see attached]

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 0.4
 UTM REFERENCES

A	<u>1,6</u>	<u>40,73,6,0</u>	<u>4,90,85,6,0</u>	B			
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C				D			

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot 27C, Block One (1), according to the recorded Assessor's Plat and Replat of Mueller's Addition to the Village of Wrightstown, East side of the Fox River, Brown County, Wisconsin.

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	DATE
David Donath, Preservation Assistant	9/28/77
ORGANIZATION	TELEPHONE
State Historical Society of Wisconsin	608/262-2970
STREET & NUMBER	STATE
816 State Street	Wisconsin 53706
CITY OR TOWN	
Madison	

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

Richard Kearney

TITLE Director, State Historical Society of Wisconsin

DATE 10/24/77

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION	DATE 3-29-78
ATTEST: <i>Walter Cole</i>	KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER	DATE 3-16-78

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SIGNIFICANCE (cont.)

time" after he built it in 1847. By her arrival in 1858, however, Wright was living in a private dwelling.⁵ Thus, it would seem that the original part of the later Wright house was not built before sometime in the 1850s. Its balloon-frame dimension-lumber construction would tend to corroborate this dating.

In 1863 Hoel Wright divided a large part of his property between his sons: Fairchild and Lucien. He sold the house lot to Lucien for \$50.⁶ It seems likely that this being a family transaction, Hoel sold it to his son for a nominal amount, since even without a house, the lot would likely have been worth more than \$50. It sat athwart the Green Bay and Taycheeda Plank Road, fronted on the river, and had dockage. Soon after, when Wright and his son left town, Lucien sold the property, along with 520 acres of farmland, to Winsor A. Mowry, a Chicago investor, for \$4000. The rural acreage was assessed that year at \$600, and even allowing for a speculative selling price on the farmland, the part of the total selling price which could be attributed to the house lot would have been considerable. In 1871 Carl Mueller paid Mowry \$2000 for the house lot.⁷

Based, then, upon the combination of oral history and tradition and documentary evidence surrounding the property, it seems that Hoel Wright had a dwelling on the site probably sometime in the 1850s, that this property passed to his son Lucien in 1863, and that Lucien, selling his holdings in Wrightstown and moving, perhaps with his father, in 1865 sold the property to Winsor A. Mowry, a Chicago investor. Mowry invested heavily in Wrightstown in this period, but did not list himself as a Wrightstown resident; Irene Mueller maintained that Mowry never lived there, and that the house deteriorated between 1865 and 1871 when Carl Mueller bought it.⁸

The history of the house during Mueller's ownership is less subject to conjecture. Carl G. Mueller emigrated from Germany in 1856, and he settled in Wrightstown in that year. Hoel Wright hired him as clerk in the American House, and he worked there for the next two years. Then he opened a general store, the first of a series of enterprises which would soon make him as prominent a figure in the town as his erstwhile employer Hoel Wright. By 1863 he was buying sizable chunks of real estate in the town; in 1866 he built a new, more elegant, general store at the intersection of Washington and Ferry Streets; in 1871 he purchased a steam powered saw mill which employed 50 men. He was very much at the center of Wrightstown's bustle and prosperity which marked the decades between the outbreak of the Civil War and the decline of growth in the 1880s and after. He is remembered in Wrightstown both as an enterprising man and as a civic-minded philanthropist. He frequently held local elective office, and in 1869 donated the land for St. John's Evangelical Lutheran Church. A street in the village is named for him.⁹

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SIGNIFICANCE (cont.)

In 1871 Carl Mueller bought the Wright house lot from Winsor Mowry. Irene Mueller recalls hearing that her grandfather found the house in sorry shape, and soon after securing the property he began the extensive remodeling which produced what we now know as the Mueller-Wright House. Tax records from the period are confusing, but a comparative analysis of the value of the house lot with a nearby lot which was unimproved through the 1890s reveals a noticeable rise in the value of Mueller's lot between 1872 and 1873. Thus it would seem that most of the remodeling took place in 1872.¹⁰

Carl Mueller died in 1886, but the house remained in the Mueller family until it was purchased by the Village of Wrightstown. A Fort Howard Foundation Grant made possible both the purchase and the restoration and preservation of the house as a museum and showcase of Wrightstown's history.

¹Josiah A. Noonan, "Recollections of Wisconsin in February, 1837," VII, 412, and Franklin Hathaway, "Surveying in Wisconsin, in 1837," XV, 393, Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin; Ruth D. Roebke, From Bridgeport to Wrightstown (Wrightstown, Wis., 1971), 11-13.

²Orin Grant Libby, "Significance of the Lead and Shot Trade in Early Wisconsin History," Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, XIII, 309.

³Roebke, Wrightstown, 11-52 passim.

⁴Roebke, "The Mueller-Wright House," in America's Bicentennial and Wrightstown's Diamond Jubilee (np, nd.), based upon interviews with Irene Mueller; Noonan, "Recollections," VII, 412, and Hathaway, "Surveying," XV, 393, Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin.

⁵Elizabeth Dayton, "Recollections of Early Wrightstown," Bella French, ed., The American Sketchbook: History of Brown County, III (Green Bay, 1876), 273-275.

⁶Deed, Hoel S. Wright to Lucien B. Wright, 11 Apr. 1863, 5 Deeds 308, Register of Deeds, Brown County Courthouse, Green Bay. cf Assessment Rolls, Wrightstown, 1859-1900, Brown Series 4, Green Bay Area Research Center, State Historical Society of Wisconsin. 1859-1863 show the division of Hoel Wright's real estate.

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SIGNIFICANCE (cont.)

⁷Ibid.; Deed, Lucien B. Wright to Winsor A. Mowry, 7 October 1865, 10 Deeds 658; Deed Winsor A. Mowry to C. G. Mueller, 14 October 1871, 25 Deeds 15, Register of Deeds, Brown County.

⁸Assessments passim, 1859-1880, show Mowry's holdings. In the deeds examined, Mowry always listed himself as being "of Chicago, Illinois." Roebke, "Mueller-Wright House."

⁹Ibid., and Roebke, Wrightstown, 30-83.

¹⁰Roebke, "Mueller-Wright House," and Wrightstown, 90. Assessments passim, 1870-1887. The study compared the assessments for lot 2, Block 2, E.S.F.R., (Mueller-Wright House) and lot 22, block 1, Mueller's Addition.

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Martin, Deborah B., History of Brown County Wisconsin: Past and Present, 2vv. (Chicago, 1913).

Noonan, Josiah A., "Recollections of Wisconsin in February, 1837," Collections of the State Historical Society of Wisconsin, VII, 409ff.

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Roebke, Ruth D., From Bridgeport to Wrightstown (Wrightstown, Wis., 1971).

_____, "The Mueller-Wright House, America's Bicentennial and Wrightstown's Diamond Jubilee (n.p., n.d. [1976]).