

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARK NOMINATION

NPS Form 10-900

USDI/NPS NRHP Registration Form (Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO

Page 1

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

1. NAME OF PROPERTY

Historic Name: WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO

Other Name/Site Number: N/A

2. LOCATION

Street & Number: Murphy Road

Not for publication: N/A

City/Town: Chadds Ford Township (formerly Birmingham Township)

Vicinity: N/A

State: PA

County: Delaware

Code: 045

Zip Code: 19317

3. CLASSIFICATION

Ownership of Property
Private: X
Public-Local: _
Public-State: _
Public-Federal: _

Category of Property
Building(s): _
District: X
Site: _
Structure: _
Object: _

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing

3
1
1
3
8

Noncontributing

_ buildings
_ sites
_ structures
_ objects
_ Total

Number of Contributing Resources Previously Listed in the National Register: 0

Name of Related Multiple Property Listing: N/A

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

4. STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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.

Signature of Certifying Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of Commenting or Other Official

Date

State or Federal Agency and Bureau

5. NATIONAL PARK SERVICE CERTIFICATION

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ___ Entered in the National Register
- ___ Determined eligible for the National Register
- ___ Determined not eligible for the National Register
- ___ Removed from the National Register
- ___ Other (explain): _____

Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

6. FUNCTION OR USE

Historic: Domestic
Recreation And Culture

Sub: Residence
Art Studio

Current: Recreation And Culture

Sub: Museum, Art Studio

7. DESCRIPTION

ARCHITECTURAL CLASSIFICATION:

House
Colonial Revival

Studio
Colonial Revival

Outbuildings
No Style

MATERIALS:

House
Foundation: Stone/Concrete
Walls: Brick
Roof: Asphalt
Other:

Studio
Stone
Weatherboard
Asphalt

Barn
Stone
Weatherboard
Asphalt

Pump House
Concrete
Brick
Wood

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 4

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Describe Present and Historic Physical Appearance.**Overview**

The Newell Convers Wyeth House and Studio Historic District is composed of three buildings, five structures, and one site located within an 18 acre property just east of the Brandywine Creek near Route 100, in Chadds Ford Township (formerly Birmingham Township), Delaware Co., Pennsylvania. The principal resources are the Newell Convers Wyeth (N.C. Wyeth) house and studio. The house is a two-story, ell-shaped building constructed in 1911 and expanded and remodeled in 1926. The studio is a one-story, ell-shaped building, also constructed in 1911. Additions were constructed in 1923 and 1930-1. The two other resources on the property are a barn, built in 1912, and a pump house (counted as a structure), built in 1923. The property's buildings are linked thematically by the presence of several architectural elements such as broad clapboard siding, large overhanging eaves, white paint, and an all-header brick pattern. Some of these elements were specified by Wyeth. The remaining four resources are the remnants of Wyeth's clay tennis court (c. 1926 but counted as noncontributing due to the loss of integrity), just west of the house, the brick entrance gate posts, probably constructed in 1911, a stone and concrete retaining wall in front of the house, c. 1911, and a split rail fence on the front lawn south of the house and barn, which replicates the original (counted as noncontributing). The grounds of the property are counted as one contributing site because of the importance the setting played in Wyeth's work.

The Historic District

The N.C. Wyeth House and Studio, which encompasses the entire N.C. Wyeth property, rises to the south from the Brandywine Creek floodplain. Murphy Road runs along the northern end of the property. The driveway begins between the gate posts structure at the northwest corner of the property and approaches the house from the east. It connects to a circular drive which serves the barn, pump house, and house. The driveway continues up the hill east of the barn to the studio, located directly behind and south of the house. Spread out north and west of the property is the Brandywine Valley. Though much of the view is now obscured by the property's mature trees, the magnificence of the valley is evident in Wyeth's art work.¹

The property consists of open fields, a lawn area, an orchard, and woodland. The surrounding landscape has a similar character. Between Murphy Road and the house, open fields occupy a gradual upward sloping hill. Wooded areas are found along the east and west edges of the property. A small brook runs along its eastern border. Just north of the house and barn, a rebuilt split rail fence structure, replicating the original, spans the yard. The house, pump house, and barn occupy a relatively flat area near the center of the property. The slope increases significantly south of these buildings and towards the studio. A mature apple orchard, planted by Wyeth, is east of the studio. Rough terrain consisting of large rocks and boulders is located in the woods west of the studio. Open fields and woodland occupy much of the area behind the studio where the slope continues to rise to an elevation of 300 feet.

The 300 foot rise on the southernmost part of the property played an important role in American

¹ Two paintings by N.C. Wyeth, *Fence Builders*, 1915, and *Last of the Chestnuts (Tree Cutters)*, 1917, depict the village of Chadds Ford and the Brandywine Valley from the property.

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 5
National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

history. During the Battle of Brandywine (September 11, 1777), the American militia line stretched east to west across this area. Today the property is situated within the Brandywine Battlefield National Historic Landmark (1961). On the whole, the Brandywine Valley's history and natural landscape had a tremendous impact on N.C. Wyeth and his family. It is evident in the property's architecture and the paintings that originated from it.

(In 1982, the Brandywine Conservancy², Chadds Ford, Pa., acquired the property from the Wyeth estate for \$1.00.³ In 1996, the studio and much of the grounds were restored to their 1945 appearance, the year N.C. Wyeth died. Few major changes to the property have occurred since Wyeth's death. The restoration and interpretation includes unfinished paintings present in 1945 and everyday items never removed from the property.)

The House and Retaining Walls

N.C. Wyeth had his house built in 1911. The architect and builder was William Draper Brinkle, a.k.a. William Draper Brinkloe (1872-1933) from Wilmington, DE. Construction began in May and the family moved into the house in November. The style was Colonial Revival, as evident in the plan, materials, scale, and rough symmetry. Sitting on a gentle rise, the house overlooks the broad sloping lawn and the Brandywine Valley. In Colonial tradition, a rectangular-shaped, random coursed stone wall structure retains a flat lawn or terrace in front (north) of the house. The retaining wall includes stone steps connecting the terrace to the lawn below. Behind the house, a brick wall retains the hill rising to the studio. Brick and stone steps interrupt the wall and lead to a stone path that curves its way to the studio, as specified in N.C. Wyeth's letters.

In 1926, an addition was placed on the rear of the house to make room for Wyeth's growing family. William Price, Jr., son of Philadelphia architect William (Will) Price, is credited with the design. However, based on letters and sketches Wyeth wrote in 1922-3 from Needham Massachusetts, the addition was actually designed during this time through a collaborative effort between N.C. Wyeth and another Wilmington architect, Walter S. Brown. (In 1923, Wyeth put the project on hold, and later hired Price.) With the addition, the house adopted its present ell-shape. The modern kitchen in the addition replaced the original kitchen. Redesigned, the original kitchen became the Wyeth's dining room. (It will be referred here as the "breakfast" room, per Price's floor plans.) While the addition necessitated some changes in 1926, little has changed since then.⁴

1911 House Exterior

The 1911 section is based on a rectangular plan with a kitchen extension (now the breakfast

² The Brandywine Conservancy is a nonprofit institution dedicated to preserving the artistic heritage and natural and historic resources of the Brandywine region and other parts of America, including the N.C. Wyeth property. Its two programs consist of the Brandywine River Museum, which focuses on American art, and the Environmental Management Center, an environmental consulting, planning, and advocacy organization.

³ See Section 8. - Statement of Significance, for more details.

⁴ The addition was featured in "The American Architect," September 5, 1927. The photographs, plans and elevations demonstrate the building's integrity.

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO**Page 6**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

room) on the east end. The details and proportions of the house's large windows and shutters, end-gabled roof, and brick construction are similar to Quaker meetinghouses throughout the area. The two story core (although, one could argue a 1-1/2 story core, given the roof lines), has an end-gabled, asphalt shingled roof and brick walls. A large balcony and porch run the length of the north facade. A pent roof above the first floor windows and door runs the length of the south facade. A brick chimney protrudes from the west end and is corbeled with three courses of brick on the top. A concrete date stone on the west side of the chimney reads "Wyeth 1911." The kitchen (now breakfast room) wing is attached to the east end. Its roof profile is slightly lower than the main section.

The N.C. Wyeth house was designed in the Colonial Revival style, yet there is also evidence of the Arts and Crafts movement. For example, only the rough headers are visible on its brick-clad walls. This pattern was called "curious" in "The American Architect" (September 5, 1927). The 1926 addition, pump house and gate posts also employ this all-header pattern.

The main feature on the north or front facade of the house is the balcony. Running the length of the main section, the balcony is supported by five square wooden posts that have the effect of continuing through the balcony floor to support the railing above. The arrangement, including a cross hatch railing pattern between the posts, is similar to that found in Mount Vernon, albeit one story. A terra-cotta tiled porch is located below the balcony.

Although the first floor arrangement of the door and windows is asymmetrical, the second floor openings and large, center dormer reestablishes an overall symmetry to the house. The north facade of the main section consists of six openings, three on each floor. The kitchen extension also has a double sash window arrangement on the first floor. The main entrance to the house is through a door near the eastern corner of the main section. The door's bottom third is paneled; the upper two thirds consist of a nine-light window. Two large, 8 x 12 light sash windows are located west of the door. All of the first floor openings on the core are flanked by the original louvered and paneled shutters and hardware.

A variation of this three-bay fenestration arrangement is repeated on the second floor, giving the house its symmetrical appearance. The main feature here is the large, gabled wall dormer in the center. It provides an entrance to the balcony via a door in the upstairs hall. A brick Syrian arch supports the brickwork above the door. (Identical arches are found over the six windows on the main section's west end.) The two flanking windows consists of double sash window treatments. A second door to the balcony is found off the master bedroom near the northwest corner. Its use doubles as a window.

The fenestration on the rear or south of the building consists of four openings, three on the first floor and four on the second floor. A doorway near the southeast corner provides access into the living room. The door has 15 lights flanked by long, narrow, sash windows. Two other windows on the first floor are identical to the large windows on the north facade. The pent roof, running the length of the north facade, is a design feature found in many Colonial houses in Southeastern Pennsylvania.

On the east end of the 1911 section is the kitchen and sewing room wing. It has a lower profile than the main section and is slightly offset to the south. With the advent of the 1926 addition, the roof was extended up and to the south, matching the roof height of the main section on the

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO**Page 7**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

south side. This enlargement has had the effect of off-setting the chimney to the south. Several architectural elements found on the studio and the barn are evident on the extension. For example, broad white clapboard covers the gable area on the east end. Like the studio entrance, the roof extends several feet over the north wall. It protected an entrance that was removed in 1926. The large windows that occupied both walls of the northeast corner were also removed, making way for the present double 6 x 6 sash windows.

1926 Addition Exterior

By the mid-1920s, the Wyeths had run out of bedroom space and needed a larger kitchen, breakfast, play, and laundry areas. In 1926 the artist hired Philadelphia architect William W. Price, son of noted architect William Price to complete the design of the addition Wyeth and Walter S. Brown collaborated on three years before. The result was a new wing added to the south side of the kitchen extension. It included a modern kitchen, bathroom, and washroom on the first floor, and two bedrooms and a bathroom on the second floor.

The addition fairly matched the all-header brick pattern found on the original section. The gable area on the south end was clad in the broad white clapboard found elsewhere on the house and other buildings. Unlike the end-gabled roof of the 1911 house, however, the 1926 addition has a gambrel roof running north to south. This design was Wyeth's idea, possibly to reflect that of the 1923 addition to the studio.⁵ The resulting architecture is both distinctive yet closely linked to the original house. As the 1927 article in *The Modern Architect* stated, "the character of the old house was retained in the design of the exterior of the new portion."⁶ Six dormers protrude from the roof, three on each side. Five are gabled dormers; the center dormer on the west side is a shed dormer. The latter is much wider than the others to provide light and space to the second floor hall.

The addition is accessed from two doors on the east side, a basement door on the west side, and through the south end of the kitchen extension. The kitchen door sits under a large hood that protrudes into the gambrel roof above. In the Colonial tradition, a wooden bench is anchored into the brick wall south of the door, resting on a small brick porch. The other door, just left of the kitchen door, leads to a hall and stairs to the second floor. Both doors have large, wrought iron strap hinges similar to those found on heavy barn doors. On the west side of the addition, brick stairs lead down one flight to a basement door. A concrete block wall retains the earth from the steps.

House Interior - First Floor

The interior of the N.C. Wyeth House is a collection of functional rooms whose number increased as the family grew and needs changed. Its centerpiece is its immense living room - the central family gathering place which has changed little since 1911. The house contains mementos from various Wyeth family members. Its numerous book shelves are filled with hundreds of old books from the greatest western authors. Much of the furniture in place during Wyeth's time is still there, as are paintings, clocks, and other family items. Some of these items may have been used as props for various Wyeth family paintings.

⁵ N.C. Wyeth, personal letter, November 11, 1922, Brandywine Conservancy.

⁶ *The American Architect*, September 5, 1927.

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO**Page 8**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Briefly, the 1911 portion of the house consists of a large living room and breakfast room (originally the kitchen extension) on the first floor, separated by a stairway. The second floor has three bedrooms, a linen closet, and hall. A sewing room and bathroom occupy the space over the breakfast room. The 1926 addition is accessed through doors on the south walls of both floors of the kitchen extension. The first floor of the addition has a pantry, a kitchen, a bedroom, a bathroom, and closets. (The bedroom was originally a washroom.) The second floor has two bedrooms separated by stairs and a hall located under the large shed dormer (mentioned above) on the west side.

The most prominent room of the house is the living room. This large space, measuring 30' x 23', continues the Colonial theme of the exterior. Twelve beveled wooden beams, measuring twelve inches tall by five inches wide support the nine foot ceiling above. The exposed beams and the long, rectangular shape of the room create a low, horizontal feeling, typical of Colonial architecture. Natural light from six large, sash windows reflects off the room's white colored plastered walls and woodwork. The windows are deeply recessed (approximately one foot) in the building's masonry walls. Artificial light is provided by four three-light sconces, two over the fireplace and two near the bookshelves on the south wall. The west end of the room is dominated by a large brick fireplace flanked by recessed cupboards. The north side of the room has a large recessed shelf filled with books. The walls are graced with a chair rail and an eight inch beaded floor molding. The latter runs along the original oak flooring.

There are four entrances into the living room. The main entrance is from the north side under the balcony, and after passing through a small vestibule. Another exterior doorway is located on the south side of the room. Two other doorways are located near each corner of the living room's east wall. They connect the living room with the breakfast room.

The other prominent room in the house is the breakfast room, located in the former kitchen wing. The wing was totally reconstructed in 1926 as part of the addition project, in which the kitchen became the "breakfast" room. As mentioned, William W. Price is credited with the design, though Wyeth's letters indicate that the main elements of design were the result of an earlier collaboration between Wyeth and Wilmington architect Walter S. Brown. The main feature of the breakfast room is the stained wooden paneling, ceiling beams, and stairway to the second floor. The cross-patterned wooden paneling is similar to that found in New England's Colonial architecture, perhaps reflecting its influence upon Wyeth at that time. The pine ceiling beams run east to west, and have the effect of making the room appear smaller than it is (the room measures 9.5' x 22'). The fireplace, which juts approximately one foot into the room from the east wall, is a simple arrangement featuring a cream colored stucco face, a brick interior, a wooden beam serving as a lintel, and a plain mantel, all resting on a stone hearth.

The 1927 article in "The American Architect"⁷ best describes the evolution of the kitchen:

The most interesting feature of the new work, perhaps, is the oak paneled breakfast room. This room was the kitchen in the original building. The old chimney has been retained, with certain alterations to the fireplace and a paneled overmantel. The reproductions of photographs of the room...suggest the texture

⁷ "Retaining Original Character in Alterations," *The American Architect*, (September 5, 1927): 335-338.

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 9

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

of the panels, which are knotted and check cracked and fantastically grained, as opposed to the stiles and rails which are fairly straight and close grained. The woodwork of the walls, ceiling beams and stairway has been stained to match a honey-colored chair which the owner, Mr. Wyeth, wished to use in the room. The floor, of random oak planks, with knots and plugs, is in keeping with the rest of the scheme. The center table [still there]...was designed by Mr. Wyeth. The fireplace grate is of hand forged iron...The result stands as an expression of the individuality of the owner, while architectural principles govern the design in its every detail.

Another feature of the breakfast room is the stairway leading to the second floor. Its newel post, instead of stopping at the top of the banister, rises to support the horizontal beam above. In turn, this beam supports many of the east/west ceiling beams running perpendicular to it. The balustrades are spindles; wainscoting runs up the west wall of the stairs to the second floor.

The 1926 addition is reached by a doorway on the south wall of the breakfast room. Immediately south of the breakfast room is the pantry, through which one finds the kitchen. Both rooms exhibit the popular kitchen design trends of the 1920s and 1930s. The pantry, sitting between the breakfast room and kitchen, is a narrow room with high cabinets with glass panes, shelves, and a sink. Both the pantry and the kitchen retain the original large, white steel porcelain sinks. A hallway running along the west side of the 1926 addition leads to the bedroom and bathroom mentioned earlier.

House Interior - Second Floor

The second floor of the house contains a total of five bedrooms: three in the 1911 section and two in the 1926 addition. The main entrance to the second floor of the 1911 section is from the steps on the west side of the breakfast room. Upon walking up the steps, one turns left or west and enters a large hall located on the north side of the house. A doorway in the middle of the hall and under the large central dormer, accesses the balcony. Bedrooms are located along the south wall and the northwest and southwest corners of the house.

The smallest bedroom is along the south wall. Like all of the bedrooms in the Wyeth house, it has shelves filled with numerous collections of old books. A lace canopied bed sits in the center of the room. The roof line from the gabled roof above is visible along the room's south side. In fact, the entire level is built with the gabled roof line visible above the north and south walls of the house.

Between the southeast and southwest bedrooms is a linen closet. An interesting feature here is the design of the cast iron steam radiators. Their cross hatch design is similar to the railing woodwork in the balcony and gate. The bedrooms in the southwest and northwest corners have corner fireplaces sitting above the main fireplace in the living room below. These fireplaces are small brick units with molded mantel pieces. A bookshelf in the southwest bedroom features works of Dickens, Tolstoy, Shakespeare, Thomas Hardy, and others. As mentioned, a door allows access to the balcony from the northwest master bedroom.

The sewing room and a bathroom occupy the loft-type space above the breakfast room. Because of the extension's low roof profile, the roof pitch on the north side is visible from floor to ceiling.

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO**Page 10**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

The bathroom is immediately south of the sewing room. A small hallway connects the sewing room and bathroom to the 1926 section. The bedroom on the north end has twin beds placed on either side of an east facing dormer. A closet on the south side of the room is approximately three feet off the floor to make room for the stairwell located between the bedrooms. As a "pass through" bedroom, doors allow access from the north and south sides. These doors are the size of regular doors but bi-folded, allowing both circulation and privacy. The doors are notched on the upper west corners, so as to fit under the gable.

The short hallway at the top of the stairs connects the bedroom on the north end to the bedroom on the south end. Like the north bedroom, the south bedroom is lighted by east and west facing dormers. In recent years, it was used to store paintings.

The house has a full basement with three rooms. The 1911 section has a room under the living room and one under breakfast room. The latter contains the furnace. The walls are white washed stone; the floors are concrete. The room under the 1926 section was designed as a playroom for the children. As such, it is finished with wooden walls and floor.

The Studio

The Wyeth Studio is a four-part, ell-shaped, one-story building sitting on the rise approximately 75 yards south of the house. The building, which telescopes from the core eastward, is composed of three studios and a small storage section, the latter creating the building's ell-shape to the south. The three studio sections contrast in size, style, and shape, yet are masterfully linked architecturally in material, placement, color, and scale. The building's most significant design feature is a huge Palladian window on the north facade of the main studio. This "north light" is the recent subject of a painting by Andrew Wyeth bearing that name.⁸

The original studio was constructed in 1911. It consisted of a cavernous studio area with a large, north facing Palladian window, an entrance wing to the west, and a glass gabled-roof "model" studio wing to the east. In 1923, the model studio wing was replaced by the present mural or "lower" studio wing. Like the main studio, it features a large north facing window but with modern, vertical window band treatment in contrast to the main studio's Palladian window. About the time that the mural studio was added in 1923, a storage section was attached to the south side of the entrance wing. In 1931, a third studio was added to the east of the mural studio for Carolyn Wyeth. Small in comparison to the other studio areas, "Carolyn's Studio", as it is called, is occasionally used by N. C. Wyeth's son, Andrew Wyeth. At some point a large shed roof was attached to the rear or south facade of the main studio. It slopes downward to a line just two feet above the ground.

(As mentioned, the studio has changed little since Wyeth's death in 1945, and now stands as a reflection of that time. In the days immediately following his death, photographs were taken of the studio which created a visual record of its appearance. Using those photographs and through personal interviews with the Wyeth family, curators at the Brandywine River Museum have arranged the studio as Wyeth left it, including his props and unfinished paintings.)

The Original Studio

⁸ *North Light*, Andrew Wyeth, 1991, Brandywine River Museum.

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO**Page 11**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

The studio was built at the same time the artist was constructing his house. As such, similar design elements are present in both buildings. The landscaping also forms a connection between the house and studio. Examples of these connections include the use of broad, horizontal, clapboard siding, window arrangement, similar roof proportions, and exaggerated roof overhangs. A winding stone walk and stairs lead up the hill from the house to the studio. Privet hedgerows, still extant, line the path north of the studio's entrance.

The original studio has a front end-gabled roof over the main studio area, augmented by a lower, cross-axial roof over entrance wing to the west. The roof proportions and other details reflect those found on the area's historic architecture. For example, on the north facade, the roof crest and the upper portion of the gable extend outward over the Palladian window. This decorative feature reflects the crane housing units or hoods found on area mills. Also, the large, overhanging eaves that project over the entrance wing door are similar to those found on small railroad freight station. The black asphalt shingle roof has replaced the original wooden shingles.

The studio's most salient feature, the Palladian window, is centered on the north side of the building. The window system consists of an immense 45 x 54 light sash window flanked by two narrow, 16 x 16 light sash windows. The elliptical portion is composed of four curved bands and 13 rays. The entire window unit has 230 individual panes. Subtly designed wooden pilasters flank both side windows, with protruding wooden cornices above. A keystone, located on the arch above the elliptical window, has the effect of holding together the entire unit, and is repeated on the inside.

The fenestration on the original studio (and its additions) consists mainly of 12 x 12 light sash windows, flanked by working louvered shutters. Acorn shaped fasteners hold the shutters in place. Below the Palladian window, two eight-light casement windows provide the basement with natural light. These windows are protected by brick and concrete wells.

The studio's chimney is centered on the south or rear facade of the building. It has exposed brick from ground level up, flush with the wall. The clapboard meets it on both sides. The chimney is part of a massive brick fireplace which helped provide light and heat to the studio.

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO**Page 12**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

One enters the studio through a door on the north side of the entrance wing. The lower half of the door is paneled; the upper half has a nine-light window. A horseshoe hangs over the door. The large roof overhang shelters this entrance and a small brick porch. Upon entering the wing, the studio is visible through double doors to the left or east. Straight ahead (south) is the c. 1923 storage addition. A former window [see Photograph, left window] was converted into a door for access. The entrance wing has a ceiling with an attic above. A hatch to access the attic is located in the northeast corner. No longer in use, the attic is more easily accessed from the loft in the c. 1923 storage addition. Built-in shelves and cabinets of simple design are located on the southeast corner of the entrance wing. A pegged gun rack is located in the opposite corner, containing guns used as props for paintings and illustrations. The pearl gray paint on the walls and woodwork is original.

In contrast to the entrance wing, the studio area is quite cavernous. The roof crest is approximately 25 feet above the floor, supported by two wooden scissor-type trusses. The most visible feature of the studio is the immense Palladian window occupying the northern wall which floods the room with natural light. Simple paneled cabinets and shelves flank the window; a matching window box underneath joins them. The interior of the studio consists mainly of pearl gray colored stuccoed walls (per Wyeth's specifications), bare hardwood floors, and exposed roof trusses. Like the entrance wing and the mural studio, the paint is original. (In fact, when cleaning the walls, curators from the Brandywine River Museum were careful not to disturb names and telephone numbers, which were scribbled on the wall by N.C. Wyeth and others. The names and numbers appear near the former location of a telephone, on the west wall of the studio, between the Palladian window and the shelf.)

A massive, stepped fireplace, hearth, and chimney on the southern wall attempts to complement the Palladian window on the opposite wall. The chimney is partially obscured by a large birch bark canoe hung 10 feet off the floor. Once dark red brick, Wyeth had the fireplace and chimney stuccoed and painted white in 1923, claiming it was too distracting. To the east of the fireplace is a large sliding door. No longer in use, wooden shelves now occupy the space between the jambs. Originally built to provide access for large paintings, the door was "shelved-over" fairly early, according to Wyeth's son Andrew. A large square register in the center of the room allows heat to pass up from the furnace below. The basement is accessed through a large trap door cut diagonally into the floor near the northwest corner.

Mural Studio Addition

N.C. Wyeth expanded his studio in 1923. Requiring a space tall enough to hang large murals, he decided to remove the model studio wing on the east and construct a larger one in its place. A sketch sent to Architect Walter S. Brown on July 19, 1923, indicates that the design was entirely Wyeth's, including the clear span roof and unique tract lighting system.⁹ (Mr. Brown drew up the specific plans.)

The exterior of the mural studio had to be compatible with the existing building, especially since the size requirement could undermine the near symmetry and scale of its original, two-wing design. To maximize ceiling height without increasing the roof height, the floor level is below ground, five steps lower than the main studio level. The mural studio's gambrel roof was

⁹ Brandywine Conservancy Archives.

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO**Page 13**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

designed to optimize the clear span area below. This combination provided the artist with a large, unobstructed area for hanging murals while maintaining the compactness of the wing it replaced. The mural studio's gambrel roof runs east to west, equaling the height of the original section. The width of the addition, however, is approximately four feet less than the main studio and set back from the main studio's north facade.

The main access to the mural studio is from the east side of the 1911 section. A large, double bi-fold door separates the two studio areas. The large door feature was important for Wyeth; his immense murals required a viewing distance of at least fifty feet. Standing in the 1911 studio and looking east enabled him a clear view of his murals from that distance.¹⁰

Like the 1911 studio, a large window unit dominates the mural studio's northern facade. Gone is the Colonial style fenestration; the new window is a Modernistic style-influenced, vertical pane arrangement occupying the lower half of the gambrel roof and the center of the north wall. It bends where the wall joins the roof. Instead of hundreds of small panes with wooden mullions, its ten massive window sections are held in place by metal strips. Small hopper-type windows below provide ventilation. The banded fenestration allows maximum penetration of soft northern light into the studios, a light favored by artists. The windows also provide sweeping views of the property and the Brandywine Valley, major sources of inspiration for Wyeth. In addition, the mural studio has a door and a 12 x 12 light sash window on the south side. The window is identical to most of the building's other single sash windows.

The mural studio's pearl gray walls are clad with horizontal beaded board paneling. Much of this paneling is visible between exposed studs and rafters. Plywood has been tacked up to the east wall to hold murals and other large works. A wooden frame stair/ladder system on wheels (partially reconstructed based on period photographs) allowed Wyeth to reach the top of the mural some 30 feet above the floor. Two steel I-beams running east to west support the roof and eliminate the need for a truss system. The beams also support the trough of lights, a unique lighting system developed by Wyeth. The system enables light fixtures to move along the east/west running beams, adjusted accordingly for a mural's light requirements. Another unique feature in the studio is its graffiti: a hand-written poem signed by Andrew Wyeth in 1940 is scribbled on the southeast corner.¹¹

Circa 1923 Storage Wing

N.C. Wyeth attached a storage wing to the rear or south of the west entrance wing of the original section around 1923. Its narrow, rectangular shape creates the complex's ell-shape. The extension continues to be used for painting and prop storage. The one story, front end gabled addition is built into the slope south of the studio. Approximately 35 feet long, it has two 12 x 12 sash windows opposite one another on its east and west walls. A door having six large windows provides access from the west side. One interesting feature is the double casement window arrangement on the south wall. It is positioned high enough to allow light into the main floor of the section as well as into the loft above. Light reaches both areas because the loft level

¹⁰ N.C. Wyeth personal letter to Walter S. Brown, April 1, 1923, which Wyeth stated the need to examine the large mural works from a distance.

¹¹ The short poem is written in pencil on the southern wall. Describing a rainy night while working on a portrait, it was signed "Andrew Wyeth January 1940."

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO**Page 14**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

begins approximately 12 feet from the south wall. This floor placement also allowed the painter to store taller items in the southern end of the addition. A hole cut into the south side of the entrance wing's roof connects its attic to the loft.

"Carolyn's Studio" - the 1931 Studio Addition

In 1931, a third section was added to the east side of the mural studio for use by Carolyn Wyeth, N.C. Wyeth's daughter¹². The scale, shape, and materials of this single-story addition incorporates Colonial style influences, perhaps reflecting Wyeth's New England roots. The addition is much smaller than the other sections and forms a "telescoping" arrangement east from the main studio. The addition continues to be used occasionally by Andrew Wyeth.

Like the previous sections, the addition is clad in broad, white clapboard. It is protected by a steeply pitched, end-gabled roof. A large, banded window arrangement on the north wall and roof provides natural lighting. The bands of windows, separated by vertical steel mullions, are a similar yet simpler version of the fenestration found on the mural studio. The east end of the addition is completely clad in clapboard. The sole access is through a paneled door on the south facade, so as to not disturb the mural wall in the adjoining studio. A 6 x 6 sash window flanked by louvered shutters is adjacent to the door.

The Barn (contributing building)

In 1912, Wyeth had a barn built east of the house. Its first floor includes space for parking cars, sleds and wagons, two horse stalls, and a wood shop. A covered equipment area and chicken coop extend out the back or south, creating an ell-shape. The second floor consists of a loft and a former bedroom for the maid. There are also two small shed extensions or "warts" on its south wall. A front end-gabled roof protects the main section of the barn. The barn measures approximately 40' x 45'.

Like the property's other buildings, the barn remains essentially unaltered since Wyeth's time. It also displays vestiges of Wyeth family life. "Not a very large barn, but including a hen house (under the same roof) and three stalls and a carriage room for three carriages."¹³ Today, sleds, furniture, picture frames, and other items are scattered about the building. A metal sign nailed to the shop wall reads "Repeal the 18th Amendment," perhaps reflecting Wyeth's sentiments on the subject.

The barn's architecture is thematically connected to the property's other buildings. It is clad in broad white clapboard and has large, overhanging eaves. On the north side, immediately under the crest, the entire gable extends over the first floor. Just under the crest, a beam extends outward for use with a block and tackle system. Three doors immediately under the beam provide access to both barn levels and the upper reaches of the loft. Reflecting the Palladian window on the studio, the woodwork above the upper most door is curved. In contrast to the property's other buildings, however, the barn's fenestration is both numerous and randomly spaced.

¹² For additional information on Carolyn Wyeth, please see Section 8. - Statement of Significance. Also see *Carolyn Wyeth, Artist*, Exhibition, Brandywine River Museum, January 13 - May 20, 1979; Exhibit Catalog, featuring interview with Carolyn Wyeth by Richard Meryman, Published by the Brandywine Conservancy.

¹³ Wyeth Letters, December 8, 1911, N.C. Wyeth Letters, Brandywine River Museum, Chadds Ford, Pa.

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO**Page 15**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Specifically, the barn is a three-part additive building facing north. The 1½ story main building largely consists of a garage, stable, and work space on the main floor and a loft above. The garage area, which was originally used to hold carriages and sleighs, faces the house to the west. The shop is on the east side and contains a built-in workbench, cupboards and shelves. The stable area is in the center of the building, and includes two small stalls on the south side of the building, a walk-through to the north side, and winding stairs to the loft. The loft occupies most of the second level. Its walls are partially finished in beaded stained paneling. Several items are strewn about the loft, including a large, flat, wooden box used for sending works of art, marked "N.C. Wyeth, Chadds Ford, Pa." In the center of the southern side of the loft is a finished maid's bedroom. Clad in unfinished beaded pine paneling, the room is now used for storage.

The south facade of the main section of the barn also has two small shed-roof additions or "warts." One served as an outhouse facility. The other has a shed roof that starts low and drops almost to the ground. It houses a subterranean room that can be reached only through a small door in the rear of the horse stalls. Its use has not been determined.

Two successive additions are located on the south wall near the southeast corner of the building. The first addition, near the southeast corner, was added sometime before 1917. It consists of a small room connected to the shop and a covered equipment shelter, the latter open to the east. Thick stone walls denote the end of the addition. A chicken coop has, in turn, been added to its north end. Together they form the "ell" shape of the building.

The Pump House (contributing structure)

In 1923, N. C. Wyeth rebuilt the water pump house just east of his house. Claiming in a letter to Walter S. Brown that the original one looked like a "water closet", he suggested in words and sketches a structure much like the present pump house. "I want something built as low to the ground as practicable - like an old fashioned spring house," he wrote.¹⁴ Later he suggested using brick and sketched a curved stair scheme.¹⁵ The result is very much like a spring house, set low and into the hill, with a front-end gabled roof. The exterior's all header brick pattern is identical to that of the house. The familiar broad white clapboard protects the gable ends. The building is entered from the north by going down several winding, stone stairs situated between thick stone walls. The interior is mainly concrete. Three small windows supply light. Sheltering the entrance and stairway is a large overhanging roof with cedar shingles. A small bell tower or cupola, circa 1950, is centered on the roof. The brickwork, the overhang, and bell tower provide an artistic version of an otherwise utilitarian building. The pump house is approximately 10 feet wide by 20 feet long.

Entrance Structure (contributing objects)

The entrance of the N.C. Wyeth property is marked by three brick pillars on the northeast corner. Given its architectural details, it was probably constructed in 1911, with the advent of the house. The three foot high, square pillars are topped with cedar shingled, pyramidal roofs. Two pillars hold up a small wooden gate; the third pillar, located on the east side of the road, supports the driveway gate. The cross hatched woodwork pattern of the swinging gates match that of the

¹⁴Personal letter from N.C. Wyeth to Walter S. Brown, May 9, 1923.

¹⁵Personal letter from N.C. Wyeth to Walter S. Brown, June 7, 1923.

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO**Page 16**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

balcony on the house. The all-header brick pattern also matches that found on the house and pump house.

The Tennis Court (non-contributing)

In the woods west of the house are the remains of Wyeth's clay tennis court, constructed in 1926. According to family letters, soil removed for the 1926 addition was used to create a flat surface for the tennis court. Little used since Wyeth's death in 1945, large trees now grow out of the court as it slowly reverts to forest. Because of the loss of integrity, the tennis court is noncontributing to the district.

The Grounds (contributing site)

Because the landscape of Wyeth property often was the inspiration for some of his work, the grounds as defined by the verbal boundary description are counted as a contributing site.

Summary

The N.C. Wyeth House and Studio Historic District retains much of its 1945 appearance, the year N.C. Wyeth died. The buildings not only retain their architectural integrity, but many everyday items used by Wyeth and his family. Perhaps the property that most compares to the N.C. Wyeth House and Studio, in terms of integrity and significance, is the nearby Wharton Esherick House and Studio, (NHL-1994), in Paoli (Tredyffrin Township, Chester Co.) Pennsylvania. There the public may view the artist's studio and residence, household items, and his art work.

The resources on the N.C. Wyeth property are as much a part of Wyeth as are his paintings. They characterize the land he loved and the culture and history he treasured. Though neither a farmer nor historian by trade, N.C. Wyeth lived the country life in the historic Brandywine Valley. This not only inspired him, but two generations of his famous and talented offspring.

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

8. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

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

Nationally: X Statewide: _ Locally: _

Applicable National Register Criteria: A X B X C X D _

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

NHL Criteria: 2

NHL Theme(s): III. Expressing Cultural Values
2. Visual and Performing Arts
6. Popular and Traditional Culture

Areas of Significance: Art

Period(s) of Significance: 1911-1945

Significant Dates: 1911

Significant Person(s): Wyeth, N.C. (1882-1945)

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: Brinkle, William D.; Brown, Walter S.; Price, William W.

Historic Contexts:

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO**Page 18**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

State Significance of Property, and Justify Criteria, Criteria Considerations, and Areas and Periods of Significance Noted Above.

The Golden Age of Illustration as a chapter in the history of American art is uniquely interpreted by N. C. Wyeth's house, studio, and property in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania. The buildings and idyllic setting give form to the life and career of one of the period's most successful illustrators. Despite national recognition for his easel paintings (he was elected to the National Academy in 1941) and for public and private mural commissions, the fame N.C. Wyeth enjoyed was largely due to his illustrations for books and magazines. Like other great painters who worked as illustrators--notably Winslow Homer, Frederick Remington, and John Sloan--Wyeth was able to infuse many of his illustrations and paintings with an extraordinary sense of the American spirit. His best paintings are those subjects he knew best, many depicting the rural farm scenes that surrounded his home and anchored his life. So deeply did N. C. Wyeth plant his roots in Chadds Ford that a family of American artists--three generation of Wyeths spanning the twentieth century--has been nourished by this site.

During the early decades of this century, when Americans depended upon books and periodicals for information and entertainment, Newell Convers Wyeth (1882-1945) conceived and painted illustrations that excited the imagination of generations of readers. Pirates, cowboys, Native Americans, knights, history's most famous people--hundreds of characters came alive through the powerful, dramatic images that Wyeth set onto canvas and panel. In a career that spanned four and a half decades, N. C. Wyeth, as he was known, illustrated some ninety books and countless stories for such prestigious magazines as *Harpers*, *McClure's*, the *Saturday Evening Post*, and *Scribner's*. He was one of the preeminent illustrators of his day, with the line "Illustrated by N. C. Wyeth" accorded a prominence on book jackets equal to the name of Robert Louis Stevenson and Arthur Conan Doyle. Today his work is recognized by scholars and collectors as among the finest produced within the American illustrative tradition. Generations of readers recall the added dimension that Wyeth pictures brought to many stories. So enduring are some of Wyeth's characters, such as the unforgettable Old Pew of *Treasure Island*, that Scribner's has re-issued for modern readers its series of classic adventure stories illustrated by N. C. Wyeth.

But the label "illustrator" carried pejorative connotations. To transcend the stigma, Wyeth painted and exhibited many still life, landscapes, portraits, and thematic paintings. These paintings, ranging from early canvases in a variety of impressionistic techniques to tightly controlled panels in egg tempera that date from later years, have been studied and exhibited extensively in major museums worldwide during the last several decades. Wyeth also earned a national reputation as a muralist. Today, many of his murals, such as those for the Missouri State Capitol Building, remain in situ; others, as in the case of those for the Metropolitan Life Insurance building in New York City, have been carefully preserved as architectural renovations render original sites obsolete. Finally, Wyeth produced a large body of commercial work that was featured on calendars and in published advertisements.

For more than three decades, all of Wyeth's commissioned work and most of his personal painting were done in a studio situated on a hill above the family's home in Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania. Wyeth cared deeply for the property he had purchased in 1911 with the proceeds from the illustrations for *Treasure Island*, his first book for Charles Scribner's Sons. His great attachment to the land is reflected in his landscape paintings but also in his illustrations, for he

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO**Page 19**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

firmly believed that nature was universal in appeal and that medieval knights could stand as easily beneath a local beech tree as in Sherwood Forest. And with the land as a setting, Wyeth fashioned a life for his family that exemplified the major themes important to his own thinking. The proximity of house to studio encouraged the integration of work and family life--his five children developed their own artistic tendencies within an atmosphere charged with creative energy and a deep love of the land.

Literally and figuratively, N. C. Wyeth established roots in Chadds Ford. From his first year as a property owner when he planted rye, timothy, and seed potatoes, to the early 1940s when he posed for a photographer in his mature apple orchard, Wyeth worked his land and drew spiritual strength from that experience. He also raised a family on this land, a family whose younger generations continue to have a significant impact on the course of American art. N. C.'s son, Andrew, and Andrew's son, James, both began their art training in N. C. Wyeth's studio. For each of them, the land, the house, and the studio symbolize inspiration drawn from father and grandfather.

N. C. Wyeth's choice of Chadds Ford, Pennsylvania, as a site for his home and studio was not accidental. In late October 1902 Wyeth, as a young art student, left his home in Needham, Massachusetts, to enroll in the Howard Pyle School in Wilmington, Delaware. The most renowned illustrator of his day, Howard Pyle (1853-1911) taught classes from November to May in his Wilmington studio; during the summer months, the school moved about ten miles north to Chadds Ford, occupying several buildings on the site of the Brandywine Battlefield (National Historic Landmark, 1961). Here the students painted outdoors and enjoyed the countryside. As a Pyle student, Wyeth spent the summer of 1903 in Chadds Ford. A country boy at heart, he fell in love with the Brandywine valley, not only because the scenery reminded the homesick New Englander of New Hampshire, but also because he felt the spell of the area's rich historical heritage.¹

Wyeth completed his studies with Howard Pyle in 1904. For several years he worked in studios in Wilmington, establishing himself as a young illustrator of great promise. In 1906 he married Carolyn Bockius of Wilmington. For a short time the couple lived only a few blocks from Pyle's Wilmington studio. But Wyeth chafed under Pyle's oppressive influence and he longed for country living. In May 1907 the Wyeths left the city to rent property in Chadds Ford. Later in the summer, Wyeth described to a friend how "the very quiet and pastoral country fit the dreams of (his) early boyhood: of the meadow brook, of the big willows, of plowed fields, of hay cocks in the burning sun, the smell of cows and the calls of the barnyard." He wrote, "never have I felt the real story of nature as I have this summer."²

His art reflected his profound response to the natural beauty of the area. During the summer of 1907 he began work on a series of five large oil pictures of various aspects of farm life in the Brandywine Valley; four of these paintings appeared the following year in *Scribner's Magazine*. All of them depicted the area's rolling hills, the harvest, and the people who lived on the rich farm land. By 1910 his youthful enthusiasm for western subjects, upon which he had built his

¹ See letter NCW to Edwin Wyeth, dated 14 July 1903 and printed in *The Wyeths, The Letters of N. C. Wyeth, 1901-1945*, edited by Betsy James Wyeth, Boston: Gambit, 1971.

² NCW to Sidney M. Chase, *Letters*, p. 212.

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO**Page 20**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

reputation, was replaced by a passion for the valley surrounding him.

Letters indicate that Wyeth made several attempts to buy property in Chadds Ford between 1907 and 1911. In March 1911 his offer to buy 18 acres on the north slope of an area called Rocky Hill was accepted and he wrote his family elatedly "I am feeling like a *man* now! I have bought the most glorious sight in this township for a home!" The deed in his hands, he said, gave him "a new reason for living," and prophetically, "I am totally satisfied that this is the little corner of the world wherein I shall work out my destiny."³ Though the site and style of living would be rural, two railroad connections in the village of Chadds Ford made the printers and publishing houses of Philadelphia and New York easily accessible to the young illustrator.

Plans for building on the property were made immediately. A letter dated March 7, 1911, provides some insight into Wyeth's involvement with the design phase of the project. "As I look through the fat envelope of sketches of plans made in the past, I find that fundamentally they are all the same. Extremely simple in arrangement and very moderate in size." The drawings he sent his family in Needham, he said, "embody pretty much the scheme--only I have changed from frame to brick--it is more durable, will cut the winds, and cheaper; and with white trimmings and green shutters and big chimneys, I shall perpetuate Bayard Taylor's spirit in architecture!"⁴ By March 14, "plans" had been sent to William Draper Brinckle, a Wilmington architect.⁵ At the same time, Wyeth sent a complete description to his mother. "It is a farm house, pure and simple," he wrote. "It will harmonize absolutely with the country and will not stick out on the landscape....The house will be of brick, oven-roasted brick, a little off the garish red, and only the ends to show thus (including a pencil sketch of brick work)...which will be very colonial in effect, warm and practical."⁶

The same letter documents the thinking that produced the design. The house, Wyeth wrote, "will have features of quaintness that will add to its 'homey' character...For instance, a feature of the back will be a sort of first story eve or overhang which will not interrupt with the light, but will be somewhat of a protection during the rains." Again he reiterated, "the general design is of the very simplest farm house." This letter included a pencil drawing of both the front and rear facades, with floor plans of the first and second stories. The extant drawing shows that the architect made few changes in Wyeth's overall design.

William Draper Brinckle (1873-1933) graduated from the University of Pennsylvania School of Architecture in 1895. According to city directories, by 1900 he had returned to his native Wilmington to practice. In the early teens, Brinckle (or variously, Brinckloe) moved his practice to Easton, Maryland, maintaining his office in Wilmington for a few years. No one in the Wyeth

³ NCW to his family, *Letters*, p. 376.

⁴ NCW to his family, *Letters*, p. 376. Wyeth was familiar with "Cedarcroft," the home of Bayard Taylor (1825-1878), noted author, poet, traveler, translator, and diplomat, in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania. The similarities between Cedarcroft and Wyeth's design extended only to the points listed by Wyeth.

⁵ A postcard from his sister-in-law, Hildegard Bockius, to NCW indicates that she had delivered "plans" to the architect on 14 March.

⁶ NCW to Henriette Zirngiebel Wyeth, unpublished letter of 15 March 1911, collection of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Wyeth.

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO**Page 21**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

family recalls hearing why N. C. Wyeth selected Brinckle for the job, but Brinckle seems to have specialized in small, relatively inexpensive "homey" houses throughout his career. In 1924 he published *The Small Home, How to Plan and Build It* (New York: Robert M. McBride & Co.). Included in the book were 60 plans for low cost dwellings, several of which have design elements reminiscent of Wyeth's house.

Ground was broken for the house about May 12, 1911. Extant letters document the construction progress and several archival photographs show the building at various stages. The family moved into the house in mid-October, less than a week before the birth of the Wyeths's second child and first son, Nathaniel Convers Wyeth. Construction was completed in November. On December 18, Wyeth wrote to his mother: "How I look forward to our life in this snug and compact little house--although new from the hands of the builders, the place breathes an atmosphere entirely its own, an atmosphere many an older house would gladly boast of. Its utter simplicity, its beauty and quaintness of form and its perfect freedom from the yoke of pretension--this striking combination, invests it with the lovable quality, that spiritual feeling, which makes one want to always live in it."⁷ A letter dated April 7, 1913, indicated that the interior decoration of the upstairs (wallpaper, pictures, etc.) was not completed until that time.

In June 1911 Wyeth told his parents that he had decided to build the studio simultaneously with the house. No letters confirm that he was responsible for the design of the studio, but given his personality and the extent of his involvement in the design of the house, it is difficult to imagine that the basic concept was not his alone. The main studio, dominated by an imposing window on the north facade, would be flanked on the west and east by two smaller rooms, the west room serving as an entrance room and the east room as a small solarium with its roof of glass. The focal point of the main room would be a large brick fireplace with mantel. An extant set of nine blue prints shows that the original plan included a 30' x 16' garage on the south side of the building, however, an undated "List of Changes" attached to the Architect's Specifications stipulated that the garage would be omitted and a set of large doors would be placed in the south wall of the main studio.

Letters indicate that when the family moved into the house in late October, Wyeth eagerly anticipated completion of the studio in several weeks. A Wyeth family photograph of the south facade of the studio, probably taken in the winter of 1911-1912, shows the large door in that wall, and two small windows flanking the chimney just below the roof. Later letters hint vaguely that there was trouble with the plasterers, who had to redo the job in 1913. At that time, a letter documented that "the plastering in the studio has all been painted over a beautiful gray pearl." Wyeth enjoyed the natural aging of this surface. Other aspects of the studio architecture also served its owner well. Some thirty years after the construction of the studio, Wyeth wrote: "The unceiled and acoustical roof of this studio is one of the many features of this building which I have come to love very deeply. It is so sensitive and eloquent of so much that happens outside. Even the soft scraping sound of falling leaves in autumn becomes audible on its pitched-roof sounding board."⁸

⁷ NCW to his family, unpublished letter of 18 December 1911, collection of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Wyeth.

⁸ NCW to Caroline Pyle Wyeth, *Letters*, p. 285.

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO**Page 22**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

According to a letter of December 8, 1911, Wyeth decided to take advantage of the left-over lumber and off-season rates to have the barn built. "Not a very large barn," he wrote to his family, "but including a henhouse (under the same roof) and three stalls and carriage room for three carriages....It will fall in beautifully with the general layout of the whole place."⁹ A small ink drawing of the barn decorates one page of this letter.

Wyeth found inspiration on the property and surrounding area, painting landscapes in between commissioned work. In November 1912 he exhibited 22 of these landscapes at the Philadelphia Sketch Club, the first showing of a large group of his non-illustrative art work. Titles listed in the exhibition brochure clearly mark Wyeth's interest in his own natural surroundings: *The Brook*, *Rocky Hill*, *Boulders*, *Harvey's Run*, *The Meadow*, *The Wood Lot*, *Forsyth's Hill*, and *Brandywine Valley*. Despite the mixed reviews this exhibition received, Wyeth continued throughout the teens to paint landscapes from local scenes in loose, impressionistic techniques. Many of those canvases, such as *Fence Builders* (1915), *Last of the Chestnuts* (1917), *Newborn Calf* (1917), and *Buttonwood Farm* (1920) hold their place as major paintings in his oeuvre.

In 1921 Wyeth discussed the possibility of an addition to the house with architect Walter S. Brown, a principal in the Wilmington firm of Brown and Whiteside. The Wyeth family now included five children, and Mrs. Wyeth often had one or two of her five sisters stay for extended periods to help run the household. More space was needed. But suddenly, the opportunity to purchase his grandfather's house in Needham, Massachusetts, was presented to him. Succumbing to the powerful memories of his New England childhood and the desire to be closer to his parents, he rented the Chadds Ford house in November of that year and moved to Needham with the intention of living there permanently. By the autumn of 1922, however, the whole family longed to return to Chadds Ford. From Needham, he corresponded at length with Brown, who designed an el for the Chadds Ford house that included a breakfast room, new kitchen, laundry room, pantry, and several bedrooms upstairs, as well as changes to the facade. After almost nine months of design work, however, Wyeth decided he could not afford the proposed addition. He directed Brown to supervise only renovations to the house and studio that included the running of electrical wiring, the re-plastering of all walls, and the plastering of the studio fireplace. He gave specific instructions for a new building to house the pressure tank, well, and pump engine; this was to be built on the site of the old pump house but resemble a spring house nestled into the hillside. He also engaged Brown to begin construction on a new studio designed to accommodate mural-sized canvases. This studio was to be attached to the east of the main studio where the "glass room" stood. When the Wyeths returned to Chadds Ford in August 1923, construction in the house and studio was not quite complete.

Wyeth's first set of murals had been installed in the Hotel Utica, Utica, New York, in 1911. During the next decade, he accepted several more increasingly prominent commissions. He completed two murals for the Federal Reserve Bank of Boston while living in Needham, and he returned to Chadds Ford with a commission from the First National Bank of Boston. Studio space capable of accommodating large size canvases was crucial to his continued success in the field. Wyeth's letter to Brown of July 19, 1923, contains his ideas for the addition and several small sketches which prove that little change was made thereafter. In a subsequent letter he provided more details: the type of sky-light; I-beams capable of suspending a working platform

⁹ NCW to Henriette Zirngiebel Wyeth, unpublished letter, collection of Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Wyeth.

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO**Page 23**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

or the canvases themselves; an adjustable light trough; and a sight line from the main studio to the east wall of 50 feet. Extant photographs of the artist working in that space show how easily he adapted it to a specific commission; tall, narrow canvases (such as those for the First National Bank) were hung on the east wall, while wider canvases (for example, *The Apotheosis of the Family*, Wilmington Savings Fund Society, Wilmington, Delaware) were hung along two or sometimes three walls, usually in sections. For the First National Bank of Boston commission Wyeth had a moveable stairway built that gave him access to the higher areas of the canvases. The tower portion of that stairway (now fitted with a modern reconstruction of the original stairs) still stands in the mural studio.

In 1926 the pressing need for space in the house and a more favorable financial situation allowed Wyeth to enquire again about an addition. Brown & Whiteside was abandoned when another estimate far exceeded Wyeth's budget. The architect William W. Price was hired to do another set of plans. "We turned back to my original scheme," Wyeth wrote to his father, "which we have since improved into a very modest and attractive solution of our problem. This will cost us less than half of the more ambitious plans, and I feel sure now that it will give us just about enough room and the extra accommodations needed."¹⁰ Many of the important features from the original plan were incorporated into the new design.

William W. Price (1891-1961) was the son of the influential Philadelphia architect William L. Price (1861-1916), whom Wyeth had met while working on an early mural commission for the Hotel Traymore in Atlantic City, New Jersey. Young Price graduated from Swarthmore College in 1912 and then worked for his father as a draftsman. After serving in France during World War I, Price opened an architectural office in Philadelphia, specializing in residential housing.

Price's extant blueprints for the addition show that the space occupied by the original kitchen was remodeled into a paneled dining room, an area both these plans and the earlier plans had referred to as a breakfast room. The first floor of the new wing, projecting from the rear of the house to the south, contained a pantry, kitchen, laundry room, and bath. Two bedrooms occupied the second floor. Both Wyeth and Price considered the visual integration of the new wing with the main house of primary importance. To this end, the all-header brickwork pattern of the main house was employed on the exterior of the wing; roofs and pents in the existing house were extended and tied to the addition in ways that made the joints difficult to see. Interior woodwork in the dining room reflected colonial sources. Price's project was featured in a short article in *The American Architect* (September, 1927), under the heading "Retaining Original Character in Alterations."¹¹ In appearance, all the buildings on the property--house, studio, barn and pump house--exhibit a cohesiveness in design that can be traced to Wyeth's appreciation of local-18th century architecture.

In 1926 a tennis court was added to the property, using earth that was excavated for the new wing. Wyeth, who had undergone several recent, rigorous medical exams, hoped tennis would alleviate his weight problem.

¹⁰ NCW to Andrew Newell Wyeth, *Letters*, pg. 717.

¹¹ The breakfast room also was pictured in 1930 in *The Yearbook of the Annual Architectural Exhibition*, sponsored by the 33rd Joint Exhibition Board of the Philadelphia Chapter, A.I.A. and the T Square Club.

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO**Page 24**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

The letters N. C. Wyeth wrote from 1911 to 1945 chronicle a family deeply connected to the house and land on which they lived. The home and hearth centered and inspired each family member; the studio, particularly, became the site of family gatherings, such as grand festivities at the end of October marking N. C.'s birthday (Oct. 22), as well as those of his daughter Henriette (Oct. 22), his daughter Carolyn (Oct. 26) and his son Nathaniel (Oct. 24). Another daughter, Ann, married her father's pupil John McCoy in the studio in 1935. The natural beauty of the site infused daily life with a sensitivity that found its expression in the Wyeths' words, art, and music. Seemingly, the Wyeths drew strength from the fields, the brook, the woods, and the orchard; from the great room of the house decorated for Christmas, from a fire of chestnut logs burning on the studio hearth, or from an abundant harvest of apples. The family treasured the rich historical heritage of the area, expressed in N. C. Wyeth's large canvas *In a Dream I Meet General Washington* (1932), depicting Wyeth and his son Andrew at the Battle of Brandywine. His love for the land and his perpetual musing on man's place within nature inspired such late works as *Corn Harvest* (1943), *Corn Harvest on the Brandywine* (1936), *The Springhouse* (1944), *Pennsylvania Farmer* (1944), and *Nightfall* (1945).

From the late teens through the early thirties, N. C. Wyeth formally or informally instructed two daughters and a son in his studio. His eldest daughter, Henriette (b. 1907), studied with N. C. Wyeth and then attended the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts in Philadelphia. Henriette achieved local fame as a portrait painter, and then married Peter Hurd (1894-1984), a young art student who came to Chadds Ford from New Mexico to study with N. C. Wyeth. The Hurds lived and painted in a renovated school house adjacent to the Wyeth property (now the studio of artist Andrew Wyeth) until they resettled in New Mexico. Both Henriette Wyeth Hurd and Peter Hurd continued their careers in the American southwest.

Carolyn Wyeth (1909-1994) studied drawing and painting with her father in the studio until 1929, when Wyeth determined that she should have her own studio. During the winter of 1929-30, he had a small studio constructed to the east end of the mural studio, accessible only from the outdoors. Since that time, it has been called "Carolyn's Studio." After her father's death, she painted in his studio until ill health overtook her in the late 1980s. Somewhat of a recluse, Carolyn drew her subjects entirely from the property.

Andrew Wyeth (b. 1917) formally entered his father's studio in 1932. Many of the objects in his early drawings and oil paintings still belong to the studio collection of props and decorative arts. As he progressed in his studies, Andrew rebelled against his father's strict tutelage. To escape, he painted outdoors in the surrounding countryside, depicting the places and views that would become familiar icons in his work.

Andrew Wyeth had already experienced critical acclaim as a painter, when, in October, 1945, N. C. Wyeth died tragically in an accident at a railroad crossing not far from his home. Mrs. N. C. Wyeth and her daughter Carolyn continued to live on the property, making no major changes in the house or studio. Mrs. Wyeth died in 1973. Carolyn Wyeth, who inherited the property from her mother, taught art classes in the studio in the 1950s and the 1960s. Her most famous pupil, Andrew's son James Browning Wyeth (b. 1946), entered his grandfather's studio at the age of 12 in 1958. Little had changed in the studio since N. C. Wyeth had worked there, and James drew still lifes in charcoal from the props his grandfather had collected. Although James Wyeth spent only two years working in the studio with his aunt, critics have written that his work reflects the influences of the N. C. Wyeth paintings and illustrations that surrounded him during his

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO**Page 25**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

formative years.¹² Carolyn Wyeth continued to teach until illness made that impossible.

Through the generosity of the Wyeth family, ownership of the property and the buildings passed to the Brandywine Conservancy, an organization which operates the Brandywine River Museum in Chadds Ford. In 1982, the Brandywine Conservancy¹³, Chadds Ford, Pa., acquired the property from the Wyeth estate for \$1.00. Carolyn Wyeth, N.C. Wyeth's daughter, continued to live on the property until her death in 1994. As specified by will, contents of the house and studio not claimed by certain members of the Wyeth family became the possession of the Brandywine Conservancy, in 1996. The Brandywine Conservancy thus became the first non-Wyeth to own the property since it was purchased in 1911. Using period photographs, including those taken of the studio immediately after Wyeth's death in 1945, and information collected from interviews with Wyeth's surviving children, the Conservancy is restoring the property to its 1945 appearance. Few major changes to the property have occurred since Wyeth's death. The interpretation includes unfinished paintings present in 1945 and everyday items never removed from the property. Meanwhile, the property's legacy endures through Andrew Wyeth, Wyeth's son and renowned artist who continues to paint at the studio and on the property.

Prior to developing a public program at the studio, the building underwent some structural treatment. After a thorough cleaning the interior walls were carefully washed to remove surface dirt and grime, in keeping with Andrew Wyeth's assertion that his father prized the patina of age that had developed over the years. Many objects on display were cleaned and repaired, particularly the furniture, plaster casts, ship models and picture frames.

Today, visitors to the N. C. Wyeth property have the opportunity to see the studio much the way it looked in October 1945, evocative of the life and personality of the artist. Although Carolyn Wyeth added easels and other pieces of furniture for her own use, she made no significant changes to the building. The great north window, now reinforced, no longer opens as it did when Wyeth first painted there, but it still furnishes most of the light in the studio.¹⁴ Photographs taken in October 1945 show the appearance of the studio at the time of Wyeth's death, and inform the present placement of furniture and props. A reference library of approximately 600 volumes, plaster casts and geometric shapes from which the younger Wyeths drew, jugs and glass bottles used in still-lives, farm implements, guns and swords, ship models, Indian artifacts, and western gear all help to recreate the ambiance in which Wyeth worked. Many objects from the studio collections can be identified as props which occur in paintings by N. C. Wyeth and his children. Other conservation projects on many collections in both the studio and the house are ongoing.

¹² See p. 270, *Andrew Wyeth: A Secret Life*, by Richard Meryman, New York: Harper Collins Publishers, 1996.

¹³ The Brandywine Conservancy is a nonprofit institution dedicated to preserving the artistic heritage and natural and historic resources of the Brandywine region and other parts of America, including the N.C. Wyeth property. Its two programs consist of the Brandywine River Museum, which focuses on American art, and the Environmental Management Center, an environmental consulting, planning, and advocacy organization.

¹⁴ Andrew Wyeth's watercolor of the window, entitled *North Light*, was given to the Brandywine River Museum by the Wyeth family in 1996.

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

Page 26

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Note: Most of the information used for this form is primary data located at the N.C. Wyeth Archives, Brandywine River Museum, Chadds Ford, Pa.

Allen, Douglas and Douglas Allen, Jr. *N.C. Wyeth: The Collected Paintings, Illustrations and Murals*. New York: Crown Publishers, Inc., 1972.

Brinkle, William Draper. "Specifications for Studio of Mr. N.C. Wyeth, Chadd's Ford, Pa." William Draper Brinkle Architect, Wilmington, De., c. 1911. Archives of the Brandywine River Museum, Chadds Ford, Pa.

Brinkle, William Draper, Archives. Delaware Historical Society, Wilmington, DE.

Duff, James H., et al. *An American Vision. Three Generations of Wyeth Art*. Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1987.

"Interior Architecture: Retaining Original Character in Alterations." *The American Architect* (Part II) (September 5, 1927): 335-8.

Podmaniczky, Christine B. *N.C. Wyeth: Experiment and Invention, 1925-1935*. Chadds Ford, Pa.: Brandywine Conservancy, 1995.

Price, William Archives, Philadelphia Athenaeum, Philadelphia, Pa.

"W.D. Brinckloe Dies at Easton: Former Wilmington Architect Victim of Pneumonia in Md." *Evening Journal* [Wilmington, DE], 6 March 1933.

Webster, Nancy V., et. al. *Brandywine Battlefield National Historic Landmark Cultural Resource Management Study*. Media, Pa.: Delaware County Planning Department, 1992.

Wyeth, Betsy James, ed. *The Wyeths - The Letters of N.C. Wyeth, 1901-1945*. Boston: Gambit, 1971.

Wyeth Family Archives. Correspondence. Photographs. Archival material. Privately held by Mr. and Mrs. Andrew Wyeth, Chadds Ford, Pa.

Wyeth, N.C. Archives. Correspondence. Archival material including architectural blueprints and specifications. Brandywine River Museum, Chadds Ford., Pa.

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary Determination of Individual Listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- Previously Listed in the National Register.
- Previously Determined Eligible by the National Register.
- Designated a National Historic Landmark.
- Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey: #
- Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record: #

Primary Location of Additional Data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State Agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other (Specify Repository): Brandywine Conservancy
Chadds Ford, PA

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Acreage of Property: 18

UTM References:	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing	
A	18	449720	4413000	B	18	450920	4413085
C	18	450060	4412802	D	18	450685	4412302

Verbal Boundary Description:

“ALL THAT CERTAIN TRACT or piece of land situate in the Township of Birmingham in the County of Delaware in the State of Pennsylvania and bounded and described as follows to wit:

BEGINNING at an auger hole in a rock at a corner of land now or late of Lorenzo Beck and of Joseph Turner, thence by the said land now or late of the said Joseph C. Turner, south thirty-two degrees east, sixty-six perches and five-tenths of a perch to a stone a corner of land now or late of Robert Bullock; thence by the same land south sixty-five degrees and a quarter west, seven perches and four-tenths of a perch to a stone; thence south nineteen degrees and a quarter east, four perches to a stone; and south sixty-five degrees and a quarter west, thirty-nine perches and nine-tenths of a perch to a stone a corner of other land now or late of the said Robert Bullock; thence by the same north twenty-two degrees and half west, seventy perches and thirty-two hundredths of a perch to a stone in the line of land now or late of the said Lorenzo Beck; and thence by the same north sixty-six degrees east, thirty six perches and eighty-four hundredths of a perch to the place of beginning. Containing eighteen acres, one rod and thirty and eight-tenths perches of land more or less.”

Note: This information was taken from Deed Book Volume No. 52, Page 1652, dated December 22, 1982, and recorded in the Office for the Recording of Deeds of Delaware County, Pa. on December 27, 1982.

Boundary Justification:

The boundaries are based on the Verbal Boundary Description above, e.g., the 18 acre property purchased by N.C. Wyeth in 1911 and held in the Wyeth family until December, 1982, and containing all of the resources described in this form.

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO**Page 29**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

11. FORM PREPARED BY

Name/Title: Robert J. Wise, Jr. Christine Podmaniczky
Sr. Planner, Historic Preservation Art Historian, Curator
Brandywine Conservancy
Box 141
Chadds Ford, PA 19317

Telephone: 610-388-2700

Date: April 22, 1997

Edited by: Susan Kline and Carolyn Pitts
National Historic Landmarks Survey
National Park Service
1849 C. Street NW, NC 400
Washington, DC 20240

Telephone: 202/343-8165 or 343/8166

NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY
January 7, 1998

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO**Page 30**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Continuation Sheet**Maps**

- Map 1. USGS Map, Wilmington North Quad, 1993
- Map 1a. USGS Map, Wilmington North Quad, 1993, (copy) detailing resource.
- Map 2. Sketch Map - N.C. Wyeth House & Studio Property, Brandywine Conservancy, 1994.
- Map 3. Battle of Brandywine, detail, showing N.C. Wyeth House & Studio Property and troop locations on and near property, within Brandywine Battlefield National Historic Landmark; Delaware County Planning Department, 1989.
- Map 4. Chadds Ford Historic District, 1986.

Plans

- Plan 1. House, First Floor
- Plan 2. Studio

WYETH, N.C., HOUSE AND STUDIO**Page 31**

United States Department of the Interior, National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Continuation Sheet**Photographs**

Photographers: Robert Wise, Vickie Pointer, Brandywine Conservancy

Date taken: 1/1997 except where noted

Note: Circled numbers with arrows on sketch map and plans denote position and direction of camera.

1. N.C. Wyeth House and Studio Property, facing south. Foreground: Gate Post structure; background, left to right: Barn, Pump House, House, Studio.
2. N.C. Wyeth House and Studio Property, facing south. Left to right: Pump House, Studio, house (1926 addition).
3. N.C. Wyeth House and Studio Property, looking north over Chadds Ford area of the Brandywine Valley.
4. House, 1911 section (front), facing south.
5. House, northeast corner, showing 1926 addition on left, kitchen wing center, 1911 section right, facing southwest.
6. House, (rear) showing 1911 section left, 1926 addition right, facing north.
7. House, living room interior, facing west.
8. House, dining room interior, facing south.
9. Studio, north facade, showing from left to right: 1931 addition, 1923 Mural Studio addition, 1911 section, facing south.
10. Studio, 1911 section and c. 1923 rear addition (right), facing southeast.
11. Studio, south and east facades, showing, left to right: c. 1923 addition, 1911 section with lean-to, 1923 Mural Studio addition, 1931 addition, facing west.
12. Studio, interior of main studio, facing northwest.
13. Studio, interior of main studio looking into mural studio, facing east.
14. Barn, facing southeast.
15. Barn, showing additions, facing northwest.
16. Pump House, facing southeast.
17. Wood Stack object, facing east.

Historic Photographs

18. House, c. 1911, facing southwest.
19. Studio, south (rear) elevation, c. 1911, with house in background, facing north.