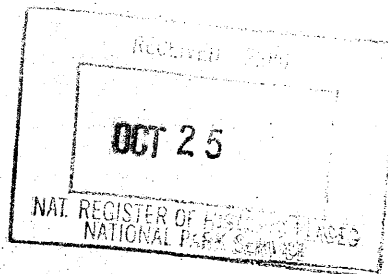


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

11779



National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

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

1. Name of Property

Historic name John M. Thayer House

Other names/site number NeHBS #LC13:D6-1177

2. Location

Street & number 1901 Prospect Street

Not for publication

City or town Lincoln

Vicinity

State Nebraska Code NE County Lancaster Code 109 Zip code 68502

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Lawrence Sommer
Signature of certifying official

10/21/02
Date

Director, Nebraska State Historical Society
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.

see continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.

see continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain): _____

Edson H. Beal 12/5/02

[Signature]
Signature of Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- Private
- Public-local
- Public-state
- Public-federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	Buildings
		Sites
		Structures
		Objects
1	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Queen Anne Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Foundation Limestone

Walls Clapboard and Shingles

Roof Wood Shingles

Other _____

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Politics and Government

Period of Significance

1889-1906

Significant Dates

1889, 1906

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)

John M. Thayer

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Bullder

G.W. Peters (architect)

John F. Harrison (builder)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- Preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
Previously listed in the National Register
Previously determined eligible by the National Register
Designated a National Historic Landmark
Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location for additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
X Local Government
University
Other
Name of repository: Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Department

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10. Geographical Data

Acreege of property Less than 1 acres

UTM References (place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet).

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1.	14	694600	4518350	3.			
2.				4.			

[] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anne Bosshardt, Tim Noerlinger, Chris Beltzer, Historic Preservation Interns; & Ed Zimmer, Planner
organization Lincoln/Lancaster County Planning Department date July 29, 2002
street & number 555 South 10th Street telephone (402) 441-7491
city or town Lincoln state NE zip code 68508

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

Additional items

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

Property Owner

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

name/title James E. and Marcia W. Young
street & number 1901 Prospect Street telephone (402) 476-8267
city or town Lincoln state NE zip code 68502

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determined eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, (15 USC 470 et seq.).

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

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DESCRIPTION

The John M. Thayer House in Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska is a frame, two-and-a-half story Queen Anne style residence built for Nebraska Governor John Thayer and his wife Mary around 1887 by Lincoln architect George W. Peters and carpenter John F. Harrison. The house displays the complex roof of hips and gables, irregular windows, ornamented chimneys, and the decorative shingle-work characteristic of the Queen Anne style. Except for changes to the front porch, which are very common among Queen Anne houses, the Thayer House retains a very good degree of integrity of exterior fabric. Significant interior spaces and woodwork also survive.

The John M. Thayer House in Lincoln, Nebraska is a wood-frame, two and a half story Queen Anne style residence built for Nebraska Governor John Thayer and his wife Mary around 1887 by Lincoln architect George W. Peters and carpenter John F. Harrison. Peters, an early Lincoln architect, was listed in the City Directories at this time as an associate of J. H. W. Hawkins, a Cornell-schooled master architect who worked in Lincoln in the late 1800's. Later, Peters would also work for a short time with Cornell-trained master Lincoln architect Ferdinand Fiske.

The Thayer House is located at 1901 Prospect Street in the Near South neighborhood of Lincoln, Nebraska. The immediate area was platted into houselots during the city's explosive growth during the 1880s, but only a relatively small number of houses were built this far south of the center of the city before the "Panic of 1893." As a consequence the immediate surroundings of the Thayer House include residences developed over five or more decades, of a wide variety of styles, scales, and degrees of integrity. The area has rich diversity but does not appear to have potential for historic district designation. The house has a prominent corner location and the yard has mature landscaping including a large maple tree in the rear yard. A frame garage at the south end of the lot does not appear to date from Gov. Thayer's period of ownership and occupancy and is regarded as a non-contributing structure on the property, but given its modest scale and appropriate placement it in no way detracts from the house.

The Thayer House is an asymmetrical frame residence topped by a complex, wood-shingled roof. The main roof element is a steep hip with a dormer or gable in every pitch except the south (rear). The main, north facade has a large facade gable and a smaller gabled dormer. The second street facade, toward the west, has a similar combination of off-center gable and dormer. The east pitch has just a dormer and the rear (south) pitch has no dormer, but rather two unobtrusive, flat, modern skylights. The roof is punctuated with very tall red-brick chimneys at the northwest and southwest corners, and midway down the east side. The NW and east chimneys retain bulbous brickwork caps.

The walls of the house are clad in clapboards on the first story and decorative cut shingles on the second and attic levels. A large, hipped-roof porch wraps around the northwest corner. Physical evidence indicates an earlier north porch extended only to the west corner. The current porch probably was a modification of ca. 1920. It formerly had tapered square-section piers giving it the character of the porch of a Craftsman bungalow. The piers were replaced with more appropriate, multiple, turned posts with decorative brackets in the late 20th century.

The house also has a shed-roofed rear porch across the south facade. On the west facade, the gable cantilevers over the second story, visually supported by shallow, carved brackets. Off-center under the overhang, a first story polygonal bay window rises as a railing around a small, arched recess, forming a second-story porch.

Most of the windows of the house are one-over-one sliding sash of large proportions. The attic windows in both the dormers and gable ends consist of small square panes of clear glass.

The interior retains considerable original finish and configuration, with some alteration of wall placements in the kitchen area. Most of the woodwork has been painted but where stripped (including all the mantelpieces) the trim is predominantly maple. The main feature of the entry hall is an open staircase with a railing of turned balusters and square-paneled walls. The west bay window lights the landing of the stairs. A coal-burning fireplace stands in the northwest corner of the entry hall, with a maple mantel and tile surround. Double maple pocket doors open south and east from the entry hall onto the dining room and parlor, respectively.

The parlor has a fireplace centered on the east wall. The mantel is mostly maple, with decorative insets of mahogany and tile. One of the figurative tiles bears a strong resemblance to Buffalo Bill Cody. The dining room in the southwest corner of the main

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floor has a corner fireplace with maple mantel, similar in position to the fireplace in the entry hall. The kitchen in the southeast corner of the main hall has a secondary staircase leading to the upper floor. The floors on the first story are predominately maple.

The second story provides four bedrooms accessed off a north-south center hallway. On this level the floors are oak and the woodwork mostly fir, but there is another maple and tile fireplace mantel in the master bedroom in the northeast corner. The small west balcony can be reached from both of the west bedrooms rooms. The attic level is unfinished but is well-lit by the many gable and dormer windows.

The Thayer House retains characteristic Queen Anne features of complex mass and roof, decorated walls, varied windows, and tall ornate chimneys. Through the middle of the 20th century its exterior was hidden behind asbestos shingles, but with their removal by the current owners the exterior integrity is good. The altered front porch is the major alteration to the exterior. While the corner porch is a prominent element, this change is commonplace and the Queen Anne character of the overall house is still strong. The survival of so much interior character strengthens the house's ability to reflect on the period of ownership and occupancy by Governor Thayer.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The John M. Thayer House is significant in the state of Nebraska under Criterion "B" in the area of politics and government. Mr. Thayer was a Major General in the Nebraska militia (1855-1860), leader of the Nebraska First Regiment during the Civil War (1861-65), one of Nebraska's first two United States Senators (1867-71), Governor of the Wyoming Territory (1875-79), and Governor of the State of Nebraska (1887-92). Upon being elected Governor of Nebraska in 1887, Mr. Thayer commissioned a home to be built at 1901 Prospect Street in Lincoln, Nebraska, signifying the culmination of his career in politics and government. Except for the years 1893-97, Mr. Thayer resided at 1901 Prospect Street from 1889 until his death in 1906. The period of significance for the John M. Thayer House under Criterion B reflects the beginning of his residence in the house in 1889 and ends with his death in 1906.

JOHN M. THAYER, NEBRASKA'S "GRAND OLD MAN"

The John M. Thayer House is of statewide significance under Criterion "B" in the area of politics and government for its early and close association with Mr. Thayer, one of the State of Nebraska's most versatile early leaders.

John Milton Thayer was born in Bellingham, Massachusetts on January 24, 1820. He was raised in Bellingham on the family farm, and at 17, left to attend Brown University, receiving a B. S. degree in 1841. After graduation, Mr. Thayer returned to Massachusetts to practice law and to pursue his military interests, eventually attaining the rank of second lieutenant in the Massachusetts militia. On the family front, Mr. Thayer was married to his lifelong wife Ms. Mary Torrey Allen on December 17, 1842.

In 1854, when the Kansas-Nebraska Territory was established, John and Mary Thayer's pioneer spirit drew them west, and they relocated their family to Council Bluffs, Iowa, and later Omaha, Nebraska. Soon after arriving in Nebraska, Thayer became involved in the political and military life of Nebraska. In 1855, Thayer was granted a commission as Brigadier General of the Nebraska militia. For the following six years, Thayer primarily led campaigns against the Native American tribes of the area. In 1860, Thayer entered the political arena and was elected to his first legislative office as a member of the Territorial Council of Nebraska. For the short time before the Civil War ensued, Thayer was a very active member of the Council, proposing legislation ranging from the abolition of slavery to farm aid.

At the onset of the Civil War, Thayer enlisted in the Union Army and applied to the Secretary of War to lead a volunteer regiment from Nebraska. Speedily amassing the required 1000 volunteers, Thayer was commissioned to the rank of Colonel in the Union Army and became ranking officer of the First Nebraska Regiment on June 13, 1861. For the first two years of the war, the First Nebraska fought under General Ulysses S. Grant at such battles as Pilot Knob and Shiloh. Its successes helped the Union win the western front of the war which eventually enabled General Sherman's "March to the Sea." Colonel Thayer's bravery and that of the entire Nebraska regiment was noted by both General Grant and General William T. Sherman, whom Thayer served under during the latter stages of the war. By the end of the war, Thayer had attained the commission of Brigadier General, making him the highest ranking Nebraskan both at the outset and the end of the Civil War. He was also remembered as a kindhearted commander, sheltering escaped slaves, some of whom enlisted in the Nebraska regiment and later settled in Nebraska.

After the war, Thayer returned to Nebraska and continued a life of public service. Nebraska became the 37th state of the Union in 1867, and Thayer, a Republican, became one of its first two United States Senators. During his tenure in office from 1867-1871, Thayer shepherded Nebraska's State Constitution through Congress. He also adamantly supported the re-inclusion of the southern states into the Union, was a strong proponent of the Union Pacific Railroad, and was considered an authority on Indian Affairs by his peers. On the local front, Thayer initiated the effort to secure a U. S. Courthouse and Post Office for Lincoln, which was announced in 1873 and completed in 1879.

At the end of his term, Thayer was not re-elected to the Senate, likely due to a division in the Republican Party in Nebraska, and he returned to the plains to pursue other ventures. In 1875, Thayer was named Territorial Governor of Wyoming by President Grant, a position he held through 1879. Thayer then settled for a short time in Grand Island, Nebraska where he launched an

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unsuccessful bid for the U.S. Senate in 1883. No significant historic properties closely associated with Thayer from this or prior periods have been identified.

In 1886, Thayer re-directed his political efforts toward state government, becoming the Republican candidate for the Governor of Nebraska. Capitalizing on his support among the many veteran settlers of Nebraska, Thayer carried 64 of 76 Nebraska counties and was sworn in as Governor on January 6, 1887. During his tenure, Thayer focused on improving the education system in Nebraska and strengthening the struggling farm economy. He also attempted to resolve on-going disputes between farmers, workers and the railroads. He played an active role in 1887 in the colorful legal case concerning home rule for the City of Lincoln, which included the brief incarceration of Lincoln's mayor and City Council, and validation of the principal of home rule by the U. S. Supreme Court early in 1888.

Thayer was easily re-elected to a second term as Governor in 1888, during which he advocated the creation of a Board of Railroad Commissioners and other activities meant to reduce the influence of trusts on the people of Nebraska. Thayer's second term was extended by 13 months, through January 1892, due to a controversy following the 1890 election in which Thayer was not a candidate. The winner, Mayor Boyd of Omaha, was an Irish native and Thayer contested his eligibility to serve as Governor under Nebraska's constitutional requirement of U. S. citizenship for the post. When the matter was ultimately resolved in Boyd's favor by the U. S. Supreme Court, Thayer finally vacated the office.

Upon being elected Governor of Nebraska in 1886, Mr. Thayer commissioned a home to be built in Lincoln at 1901 Prospect Street. Lincoln architect George W. Peters and carpenter John F. Harrison built the substantial 2 1/2 story Queen Anne style house in 1887-88, which Thayer purchased for \$6500. Peters was an early architect who worked at times in the late 1880's with two Cornell-trained master architects (responsible for numerous NR-listed properties in Lincoln), John H. W. Hawkins and Ferdinand Fiske. After spending his first term in several downtown hotels, Thayer moved into his new home in 1889.

After his second term as Governor, Thayer retired to 1901 Prospect Street. Unfortunately, this retirement was interrupted by several unfortunate events. In 1892, Thayer moved for a short time to Massachusetts with his ailing wife Mary, where she wished to be buried. Thayer returned to Lincoln in 1893, but likely due to economic reasons, he did not return immediately to 1901 Prospect, instead choosing more modest lodging. As a lifelong public servant and having refused a federal pension in 1893, Thayer was not financially well off. However Thayer never relinquished title to 1901 Prospect, and returned in 1897 after finally relenting to those wishing to reward his service with a federal pension. Thayer resided at 1901 Prospect until his death in 1906 at the age of 86. After his death, Thayer was accorded a military and state funeral. His casket was marched by military escort from his home at 1901 Prospect to the State Capital, guarded while lying in state in the senate chamber, and then buried under a large granite marker in the Grand Army of the Republic Circle at the Wyuka Cemetery, Lincoln, Nebraska. While this monument is a very prominent feature of the cemetery (which as a whole is listed on the National Register), Criterion F advises against the listing of "commemorative property" on the Register. Thayer's house is more strongly associated with his life and service.

Thayer was described as a man with impeccable character: "A life devoted absolutely to duty was that of General Thayer. Though provided with a college education, he came west and engaged in farming. But the state called upon him and he gave his services...He had pride too, which made him refuse the aid which the state and country so fully owed him for his services."¹ And further, "General Thayer died a poor man, but I consider his poverty an eternal testimonial to his character. He was scrupulously honest in public life."² Thus although he was said to be unconcerned with material possessions, the large Queen Anne style house at 1901 Prospect speaks of his life's work in public service to Nebraska.

¹ *Lincoln Daily Star*, "Death Claims Sturdy Pioneer," March 20, 1906.

² *Ibid.*

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Verbal Boundary Description

This nomination includes Lot 34, Prospect Subdivision, Lincoln, Lancaster County, Nebraska.

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes that urban parcel of land historically associated with the Thayer House.

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Photographs:

All photos of Thayer House taken by E. Zimmer, July 2002, City of Lincoln-Lancaster County Planning Department, Lincoln, Nebraska.

Photo 1 of 11: view from NW showing north (left) and west facades.

Photo 2 of 11: view from NE showing front facade.

Photo 3 of 11: view from west showing west facade.

Photo 4 of 11: view from south showing rear facade.

Photo 5 of 11: detail of west facade from SW.

Photo 6 of 11: detail of brackets under eaves on west facade from south.

Photo 7 of 11: interior view looking SW from front entry showing entry hall and staircase.

Photo 8 of 11: pocket doors looking east from front entry.

Photo 9 of 11: parlor fireplace from west.

Photo 10 of 11: detail of fireplace tiles on front entry fireplace, viewed from SE

Photo 11 of 11: fireplace in second floor NE (master) bedroom from west