

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Shadow Lawn

and/or common Woodrow Wilson Hall

2. Location

street & number Cedar Avenue & Norwood Avenue not for publication

city, town West Long Branch vicinity of

state New Jersey code 034 county Monmouth code 025

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Monmouth College

street & number

city, town West Long Branch vicinity of state New Jersey

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Monmouth County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Freehold state New Jersey

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title New Jersey Historic Site Inventory has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1977 federal state county local

depository for survey records Labor and Industry Building

city, town Trenton state New Jersey

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The present central building of Monmouth College is the second Shadow Lawn. For a short time in the summer of 1915, the first house was the site of the "summer White House." President Woodrow Wilson used Shadow Lawn as a base for re-election and narrowly defeated Charles Evans Hughes that autumn.

On June 11, 1918, Hubert Templeton Parson and his wife Maysie acquired the property for \$800,000. The original 65-acre estate grew into 108 acres. Half the land was set aside for farming. Parson became the country gentleman on the estate, although he conducted business in New York City. The house burned to the ground in January, 1927.

Parsons started planning immediately for the new house, based on the ground plan of the old. After seeing Whitmarsh Hall, the Stotesbury palace in Chestnut Hill, Pennsylvania, they decided to hire Horace Trumbauer, the architect of that vast American Versailles. The ultimate irony is that the Parsons were building what the local paper called "the finest country estate in the world" just as the Stock Market Crash of 1929 would end the illusions of great estates forever. The house is a massive block of pale Bedford Indiana limestone. James Maher describes the building:

From the porte cochere on the east (right) to the Watteauesque exedra that closes the formal "Versailles gardens" on the west (left), one's eye traverses a sweep of almost five hundred feet. The main block of the palace has a three hundred-foot foundation span along its principal (east-west) axis. The servants' wing, which extends at a shallow angle from the north-west corner of the house, adds another eighty feet to the main foundation. The wing is almost completely screened from the viewer on the lawn by the colonnade that closes the north side of the garden, and the trees behind it.

The great horizontal range of the palace is emphasized by four lateral bands: the terrace balustrades on the ground level, a plain projecting stone course above the first floor, a deep formal cornice above the second floor, and a parapet-balustrade along the edge of the roof.

There are fifty-seven windows on the south facade, all but one of them plain vertical rectangles with deep reveals, simple molded surrounds, and mullionlike sashes (even though they are double hung). The one deviant window has a sober segmental arch at its head; it lies precisely at the center of the composition. The linearity of the facade is relieved by a discreet use of decorative details:

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below				
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	X	landscape architecture	religion
1400-1499	archeology-historic	conservation		law	science
1500-1599	agriculture	economics		literature	sculpture
1600-1699	X architecture	education		military	social/
1700-1799	X art	engineering		music	humanitarian
1800-1899	commerce	exploration/settlement		philosophy	theater
X 1900-	communications	industry		politics/government	transportation
		invention			other (specify)

Specific dates 1927 **Builder/Architect** Horace Trumbauer (1869-1938)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

In the history of American palace architecture, Horace Trumbauer was the finest practitioner of the French classical tradition as Richard Morris Hunt had been to the Loire Valley chateaux tradition. At Shadow Lawn, Trumbauer had no historic precedent to follow and as a result he designed a very large and very sober French residence, noble in magnitude and subtle in its felicities around a pseudo-Italian floor plan. Shadow Lawn was the largest commission to come his way since 1898, when he was commissioned to design Lynnewood Hall, a Palladian-Georgian echo of Rome for Peter A. B. Widener. Trumbauer was also to be praised for the Neo-Georgian Widener Library at Harvard, the late Greek-revival Philadelphia Museum of Art, and the Late Gothic-Revival campus of Duke University. Although there was a tendency to be very critical of eclecticism, it should be remembered that these lavish estates were high style in the first quarter of the 20th century.

The chief designer in Trumbauer's firm was Julian Abele. By the time the work on Shadow Lawn began in 1927, Abele was the aesthetic alter ego in the studio. It was the subtle elegance, the good taste, and style that Abele derived from the work of the 18th century French master Jacques-Ange Gabriel. Abele graduated from the School of Architecture at the University of Pennsylvania in 1902, thus becoming the first black to practice architecture professionally in the United States, and the first American black to study architecture at the Ecole des Beaux Arts in Paris. Horace Trumbauer, to his credit, sent his disciple to study in Paris and paid him handsomely throughout their professional association. There was a deep, mutual respect between the two architects. Shadow lawn was the last palace they designed together.

The second Shadow Lawn was the last of Hubert T. Parson's ventures in real estate. As a young Protege of Frank Woolworth, the five and ten cent store magnate, Parson began as a \$12 a week bookkeeper and ended his career as president of the vast F. W. Woolworth empire. Although Parson was clever enough with figures, he had also the same fatal need as his mentor, Woolworth, to acquire vast estates, expending large sums on imperial splendor. The odd thing about Parson and his wife Maysie, is that they rarely entertained, if at all. At one point, Parson had a Fifth Avenue house, a town house, (Hotel Particulier) in Paris, and the "country estate" at Long Branch, New Jersey.

While the new palace was being built in 1927, no expense was spared. Parson wanted a bowling alley on the lowest level where special foundations were required because of ground water. This special construction cost an extra \$600,000 and the alleys were never used. The most incredible part of this vast building scheme is that Parson, the businessman must have known that the 1929

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property less than 1 acre

Quadrangle name West Long Branch Quad.

Quadrangle scale

UTM References

A

1	8	5	8	4	5	6	0	4	4	5	9	0	4	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

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

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carolyn Pitts, Arch. Historian

organization History Division NPS

date August 10, 1984

street & number 1100 L Street, N.W.

telephone 343-8166

city or town Washington, DC

state

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title date

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 2

- A shallow, one-story portico in the central bay in which four Doric columns frame three arched French doors that give onto a terrace with steps leading down to a large circular fountain containing a group of sculptured figures.
- A wrought-iron railing above the portico, and a row of block modillions under the deep cornice band above the second floor.
- Small cartouches at the centers of the window heads on the first floor, and decorative brackets--carved volutes--at the centers of the window heads on the second floor.

The formal garden to the west of the palace was designed in Paris by Achille Duchene. The colonnades he used to close the north west sides of the formal gardens--that on the north a peristyle teahouse and that on the west a "water organ". . . serving as an exedra--adapted from the circular peristyle known as "la Colonnade" bosquet at Versailles. A study of Duchene's plans indicates that economies were made both in the execution of his architectural and in his planting scheme

Each of the other facades of the palace has interesting features most commanding of them being the massive two-story portico on the north facade which serves as the principal entrance. Six columns across the front, and two more on each side, rise two stories to Ionic capitals which support an entablature and parapet (or attic) behind which, on the flat roof, Maysie continued to give evening parties for Parson, herself, and her sister Bertha, and an occasional friend. Pendant festoons, a characteristic decorative device of the French renaissance . . . fall from the volutes of the Ionic capitals down the face of the massive smooth columns about thirty inches. The device is peculiarly French, a knowledgeable accent that reminds the viewer that the portico is more French than Italian.

If there is a major flow in the design of the palace, it must be the solarium on the roof that Mrs. Parson demanded--it does violence to the symmetry of Trumbauer's design.

The interior court (cortile), one of the finest features of the house, is Trumbauer's work. Plastered to simulate courses of limestone, it has bays of French basket-handle arches on the first floor and rectangular gallery openings above, all separated by giant marble pilasters. The cortile is 100 feet long, 25 feet wide, and rises almost 70 feet to an amber skylight. To the south is an adjoining reception area also 100 feet in length and 35 feet wide. A large marble stair rises to the balconies. Maher continues:²

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 3

A four-manual Aeolian Skinner organ, which automatically played a hymn for Parson each morning during breakfast before he was driven up to New York, used the great hall as a vast resonating chamber that amplified the sound until God's praise shook the palace. Its pipe and echo lofts are concealed at the ends of the galleries; its manual console, rarely touched, is on the first gallery; and its Duo-Art automatic playing mechanism, used daily, is on the mezzanine. The organ cost Parson \$100,000.

Maysie had one hundred twenty-eight rooms--twenty-two of them in the servants' wing--to decorate and oversee. There were eight state salons on the first floor: two master suites, each with a bedroom, boudoir, dressing rooms, and two baths; and three guest suites, each with a bedroom, boudoir, and bath, on the second floor; and, nine guest bedrooms, each with a bath, and nine with boudoirs, on the third floor. Each floor had a flower room with marble counters for cutting and preparing the daily deliveries from the gardens. (She had more than one hundred plants strewn about, and she was severe with the house staff when she found a dead leaf on any of them.) And, up on the third floor Maysie had a small kitchen where she sometimes made the family dessert

It was generally acknowledged that the Parsons enjoyed a hodgepodge of luxury not always tasteless. "Coherence eluded her," it was said, or to be direct, she simply couldn't make up her mind about decor.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

financial disaster was imminent but he was the prisoner of his own illusions caught in a world committed to the pursuit of affluence by building ever larger palaces, the mute evidence of status among the princes of commerce.

By the beginning of 1929, in spite of his large personal fortune, Parson had spent \$7,500,000 on the house in Long Branch. In November 1929, 80% of Parson's stock in Woolworth was wiped out. As the depression ground on, his losses were in the millions but he continued to indulge Maysie her decorating whims at Shadow Lawn. Another \$500,000 was spent on the Solarium. Finally, it all collapsed. Woolworth's directors decided it wasn't wise for one of its directors, his wife, and her sister to be living in a new \$10,000,000 palace with 96 rooms and 100 servants while thousands stood in line for bread and soup. Parsons troubles compounded. By 1932, he was in arrears in federal income taxes and West Long Branch real estate taxes. He tried to sell Shadow Lawn but no one wanted a \$10,000,000 estate. Before the end of 1938, Parson lost all his palaces. In 1939, the estate was sold for \$100. The vast collection of costly but mediocre furniture was sold at auction in May 1940 at a great loss. Parson died of a heart attack two months later, but the durable Maysie outlived him by sixteen years. The estate became Monmouth College in 1956.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page

Bibliography

Maher, James T. The Twilight of Splendor. Little Brown, Boston, Mass. 1975

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page

Footnotes

1. Maher, James T. Twilight of Splendor, Little Brown and Company, Boston, Mass. 1975 pp. 375-76.
2. Ibid., p. 378.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page

Beginning near the point in the center line of Norwood Avenue where the same is intersected by the center line of Whalepond Brook, thence 1. Along the center line of Norwood Avenue north 16 degrees, 49 minutes east, 515.30 feet; thence 2. still along the center line of Norwood Avenue, north 7 degrees, 20 minutes east, 206.58 feet; thence 3. still along the center line of Norwood Avenue, north 1 degree, 15 minute east, 1,256.58 feet to a point in the center line of Cedar Avenue; thence 4. along the center line of Cedar Avenue, north 82 degrees, 38 minutes west, 1,005.25 feet to a point; thence 5. south 3 degrees, 27 minutes west, along the east line of the property owned by Pollak, 477.83 feet; thence 6. Continuing along the east line of said Pollak's property, south 3 degrees, 49 minutes, 30 seconds west, 93.38 feet to the southeast corner of said Pollak property; thence 7. north 89 degrees .01 minutes 30 seconds west, along the south line of said Pollak property 369.27 feet; thence 8. still along the south line of said Pollak property, north 89 degrees, .08 minutes west, 740,27 feet to a point in the east side of Larchwood Avenue; thence 9. along the east side of Larchwood Avenue, south 0 degrees, 44 minutes, 30 seconds west, 586,49 feet to a point; thence 10. continuing along the east side of Larchwood Avenue, south 1 degree, 13 minutes, 30 seconds east, 309 feet to a point; thence 11. still along the east side of Larchwood Avenue, south 2 degrees, 34 minutes, 30 second east 590.58 feet to a point; thence 12. still along the east side of Larchwood Avenue, south 18 degrees, 11 minutes, 30 seconds west, 85.95 feet to a point in the center line of Whalepond Brook; thence 13. easterly, along the center line of Whalepond Brook, this being the boundary line between the Borough of West Long Branch and Township of Ocean, 1,980 feet, more or less, to point of beginning.