

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED MAY 24 1978

DATE ENTERED JUL 12 1978

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Thomas Lawson House

AND/OR COMMON

Same

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Wabash Avenue

__ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Grand Rivers

__ VICINITY OF

1

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Kentucky

021

Livingston

139

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

__DISTRICT

__PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

__AGRICULTURE

__MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

__UNOCCUPIED

__COMMERCIAL

__PARK

__STRUCTURE

__BOTH

__WORK IN PROGRESS

__EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

__SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

__ENTERTAINMENT

__RELIGIOUS

__OBJECT

__IN PROCESS

YES: RESTRICTED

__GOVERNMENT

__SCIENTIFIC

__BEING CONSIDERED

__YES: UNRESTRICTED

__INDUSTRIAL

__TRANSPORTATION

__NO

__MILITARY

__OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

William G. Tuller, Jr.

STREET & NUMBER

Box 111

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Grand Rivers

__ VICINITY OF

Kentucky

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Livingston County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Smithland

STATE

Kentucky

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

__FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN

STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

| CONDITION | | CHECK ONE | CHECK ONE |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT | <input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> GOOD | <input type="checkbox"/> RUINS | <input 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 Thomas Lawson House is a 2 1/2-story Queen Anne residence of frame construction that faces south towards Wabash Avenue in Grand Rivers, Kentucky (1970 pop., 438). Completed in 1876, this house is characterized by irregularity of plan and massing, variety of interior and exterior textures, multi-form openings, high and multiple roofs, and small-scaled detail.

Immediately north of the Lawson House is an 8-unit trailer park. To the east and south are several 1960s buildings of brick construction, and to the west are several late 19th-century dwellings in various states of repair. Two large bodies of water, Kentucky Lake and Lake Barkley, are several thousand feet to the west and east respectively.

The building's foundation is of brick, and there is a basement occupying three-fourths of the subterranean level. The first floor of the main facade and a portion of the east are served by an L-shaped porch that employs a balustrade and decorative posts (see photo 1). The main entrance is set within a beveled wall, and a conical-roofed turret serves among the dominant visual elements.

Typical of a Queen Anne frame dwelling, the Lawson House's exterior has a finish of both horizontal siding and sawtooth shingling. The upper levels are treated with emphatic cornices, and several windows are filled with stained glass.

At the northeast is a hip-roofed, one-room addition that has a small recessed entrance porch. This addition is believed to have been made ca. 1880. At the north (see photo 2) is a rear entrance sheltered by a pent roof. From this side, one views the complex arrangement of roofs.

The entrance foyer and the dining room beyond have coffered ceilings and opening frames of oak (see floor plan and photo 3). The foyer also contains a straight flight of steps that enters the turret and winds upward to the third level.

There are three corner fireplaces on the first and second floors each. All mantels differ, but each is treated with scaled-down classical detail, and some are given chimney pieces that incorporate mirrors (see photo 4). Door and window frames in the sitting room are enlivened by raised surfaces that create an undulating pattern (see photo 4). This treatment of interior fittings is repeated in several chambers on the second floor.

The dining room contains a built-in cupboard for the display of glassware, and the kitchen has wainscoting--as does the staircase in the turret. The second floor is also approached by an enclosed staircase in the kitchen. One portion of the attic is finished, and may have been used as a servant's quarters.

(continued)

8 SIGNIFICANCE

| PERIOD | AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW | | | |
|---|--|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING | <input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499 | <input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC | <input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION | <input type="checkbox"/> LAW | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599 | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS | <input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE | <input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY | <input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> ART | <input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING | <input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC | <input type="checkbox"/> THEATER |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE | <input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY | <input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION | | |

SPECIFIC DATES **ca. 1876**

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Located on a rise overlooking the village of Grand Rivers in far western Kentucky, the Thomas Lawson House stands as one of the last and certainly the most identifiable reminders of the brief boom era of the late 19th century which resulted from the attempt to establish an iron industry in the community. This large Victorian house, the most impressive building in Grand Rivers, was constructed as a residence for Thomas Lawson, the developer responsible for the planning and construction associated with the project. Although these plans were ultimately to fail, the period was one of the most historic events in the life of this small Kentucky town.

Grand Rivers, formerly known as Nickell's Station or Nicholasville, was originally situated between what were the Tennessee and Cumberland Rivers--now Lake Barkley Lake and Kentucky Lake.¹ The area, even as early as the mid-1800s, was known to be rich in pig iron. The Swanee Iron Works, founded by William Kelly in 1851, was located only five miles from Grand Rivers. (Kelly's Swanee Furnace, in Lyon County, listed on the National Register August 26, 1971). Around 1876 Thomas Lawson, an industrialist-financier from Boston, passed through Nicholasville and concluded that the location had potential as an iron manufacturing center.² Lawson obtained financial backing from Eastern sources and the Grand Rivers Company was formed. Large tracts of land were acquired in and around Grand Rivers and two charcoal furnaces were constructed in the immediate vicinity. A row of six houses were erected along what is now known as Lawson's or Millionaire's Row for company administrators.³ A large brick commercial building known as the "Boston Block" was constructed in the center of town--which had since been renamed "Grand Rivers" by Lawson. Investors seemed optimistic. As stated in a promotional pamphlet:

No enterprise was ever commenced under brighter auspices or with a more favorable promise of success. There is an assurance in every feature of it which commends itself to the judgement of all, of the grand results that must attend it and the feasibility of their accomplishment. The mines are there with their inexhaustible wealth, the rivers are there with their wonderful adaptability to commerce, the great West is there with its demand for cheaper and more reliable supplies of iron and coal, capital is there for carrying out its plans, and energetic action is there to bring all together in a unity that shall make the city of Grand Rivers a phenomenal success.⁴

(continued)

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Additional information provided by Mr. J. L. DeWeese, Jr., Grand Rivers, Kentucky.

Collins, Lewis and Collins, Richard. History, Legend and Lore--Livingston County.
Published by Journalism Class, Livingston Central High School, 1974, p. 82.

(continued)

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY .17

UTM REFERENCES

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Nominated area includes the house site and the corner lot (75' x 100') bounded by Wabash Avenue to the south and, to the east, by an unnamed paved street.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| | | | |
| | | | |

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Gloria Mills, National Register Program Coordinator / Daniel Kidd, Architectural Historian

ORGANIZATION

Kentucky Heritage Commission

DATE

5-78

STREET & NUMBER

104 Bridge Street

TELEPHONE

(502) 564-3741

CITY OR TOWN

Frankfort.

STATE

Kentucky

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

Edward W. Miller

TITLE

State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

5/19/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

MEMBER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

Charles O. ...

DATE

7-12-78

DATE

7-11-78

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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Thomas Lawson House
CONTINUATION SHEET

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The Lawson House boasts a Delco battery system in the basement that provided this building with the first electrical power in Grand Rivers. The house also boasts the first indoor plumbing in town, and surviving in the second floor's bathroom are several original fixtures that include a marble wash basin, a ponderous bath tub with brass plating (see photo 5), and a wooden watercloset.

In addition, there are numerous original brass door knobs and locks throughout, and much of the hardwood flooring has been retained. The current owner is presently conducting a step-by-step restoration that is sympathetic to the original fabric of both the exterior and interior.

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Thomas Lawson House
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Lawson's dream of another Pittsburgh in western Kentucky was not to materialize, however. Rail transportation was found to be prohibitively expensive for the shipment of the ore, nor could river transportation be used to full advantage because of the lack of docking facilities.⁵ The discovery of higher grade ore in the North and better and cheaper transportation struck the final blow to the development of the Grand Rivers iron industry. The scheme collapsed before Lawson had the opportunity to live in his house on Millionaire's Row.

Misfortune also befell the Boston Block. The building burned in 1944, with only a small portion of which proved salvageable.⁶ It is now being used as the fire station and Masonic Hall.⁷ Other visible landmarks of the era are the solidified cinders from the furnaces which now protrude as a eery remain from the waters of Kentucky Lake.⁸

The town has experienced little expansion since the boom days of the late 19th century. In the hope of creating a tourist attraction, a process is underway to execute a steamboat motif for commerical building facades. The Lawson House, however, will be unaffected. The residence, a fine representative of the Queen Anne style and the most elaborate in Grand Rivers, is presently being restored by the owners for use as a residence-museum. Except for bath and kitchen facilities, the restoration is being completed as authentic to the original as possible. All the well-executed interior fittings have survived, and a great amount of the original hardware is extant. The effect of the exterior treatment is opulent, especially in comparison to other buildings in the region. The irregular massing, variety of textures, and complex roof arrangement render it linear richness. The builder is unknown, but the design was most likely adapted from a pattern book. Regardless, the Lawson House exhibits quality workmanship and is indicative of the once-successful status of the owner.

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FOOTNOTES

- ¹ History Legend and Lore, p. 82.
- ² J. L. DeWeese, Jr., personal interview.
- ³ Only three, including the Lawson House, of the original six houses remain. One has been drastically altered on the interior and the other is presently vacant and in deteriorated condition.
- ⁴ Promotional pamphlet for Grand Rivers Company.
- ⁵ J. L. DeWeese, Jr., personal interview.
- ⁶ The brick sidewalks around the commercial building remain.
- ⁷ Herald Ledger (Eddyville), November 30, 1977, p. 1.
- ⁸ Sun-Democrat (Paducah), August 16, 1959, Section B, p. 14.

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Thomas Lawson House
CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

"Grand Rivers Company." (Promotional Pamphlet). No date.

" 'Steamboat' Theme Adopted by Grand Rivers to Attract Tourists." Herald Ledger
(Eddyville), November 30, 1977, p. 1, 13.

Sun-Democrat (Paducah). August 16, 1959, Section B, p. 14.

Thomas Lawson House
Livingston County, Kentucky

Dan Kidd
Kentucky Heritage Commission
Frankfort, Kentucky
First-floor plan
No Scale
Map 2
Sketch of Map of first-floor.

THOMAS LAWSON HOUSE
LIVINGSTON COUNTY, KENTUCKY

FIRST-FLOOR PLAN
NO SCALE

JUL 12 1978

MAY 24 1978

- A FOYER
- B PARLOR
- C SITTING ROOM
- D DINING ROOM
- E GUEST ROOM ADDED LATER
- F KITCHEN AND PANTRY
- G CHAMBER

