

**SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD**

NRIS Reference Number: 91000447 Date Listed: 4/29/91

Wells-Twyford House  
Property Name:

Tyler WV  
County: State:

\_\_\_\_\_  
Multiple Name

-----  
This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Patricia Andrus  
Signature of the Keeper

5/22/91  
Date of Action

=====  
Amended Items in Nomination:

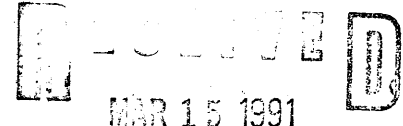
The Period of Significance for this property had to be clarified. The building is nominated for Architectural significance under Criterion C, so the Period of Significance is confined to the year of its construction, until the year that the contributing barn was constructed - 1842 - Ca. 1910. This has been confirmed with Michael Pauley of the WV SHPO.

\_\_\_\_\_  
**DISTRIBUTION:**

National Register property file  
Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

447

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name N/A  
other names/site number Wells-Twyford House

2. Location

street & number WV Route 2 and Kahle St.  not for publication  
city, town Sistersville  vicinity  
state West Virginia code WV county Tyler code 095 zip code 26175

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site		sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure		structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object		objects
		<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:  
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official [Signature] Date 3/5/91

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

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.  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:)

Patrick Andrews 4/29/91

[Signature] Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

## 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)

Other: I-house

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Sandstone

walls Weatherboard

roof Asphalt shingle

other \_\_\_\_\_

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Wells-Twyford House was built prior to the Civil War to function as the main dwelling on a farm tract of six hundred twenty-two acres south of Sistersville in Tyler County, Virginia. The two-story frame structure contains eleven rooms, two stairways, five fireplaces, and three chimneys. The wooden mantel pieces, baseboards, closet, and woodwork trim are all painted and have a plain, utilitarian design. Interior walls of the original rooms are of horse hair bound plaster on wood lath. The most decorative feature of the house is the stairway in the central hall which contains newels, railings, and balusters from cherry wood. A unique feature of the house is the bedroom over the kitchen which, at one time, was only accessible by a staircase leading from the kitchen. Conjecture is that this was a bedroom for the slave cook or kitchen help when the house was constructed. The one auxiliary building on the lot is a two-story, two car garage that may have been used as a barn at the turn of the century.

The Wells-Twyford House faces the east at the mouth of Narrows Run Hollow. It sits on a high stone foundation and has an L-shaped configuration. Another way to describe its shape is an I-House with a rear el attached on the northwest side of the I. The front of the house has a symmetrical composition with a passage through the center of the house. These features are basic to late Georgian architecture but, as was common west of the Appalachians, adaptations to climate and to changing lifestyles brought modifications to the basic plans.

The best example of adaptation of the house to the land is the selection of the site. Being at the mouth of Narrows Run Hollow with nine windows and a central door facing the hollow has assured all residents of the house cool, comfortable summer nights. Even in modern times no consideration to air condition the house has been entertained. The house is situated above the Ohio River flood plain so that it has never been flooded. An example of adaptation to the climate is the incorporation of the kitchen at the end of the el instead of being a separate building. The slave/cook had a room above the kitchen instead of being housed in a separate building. The L-shaped back porch was enclosed on both ends to give shelter from prevailing storms from the west and south. The end of this porch behind the kitchen was made into a room that has served as a pantry and as a laundry room. The other end of the L-shaped porch, also facing south, was enclosed to shelter an entrance to the cellar. This entrance was through a door in the porch floor which hinged to an upright position and permitted a person to go into the walkway and down stairs

See continuation sheet

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 1

into the cellar without being exposed to inclement weather. Having the cellar beneath a portion of the house instead of in a separate building is still another example of adaptation of house design to the climate.

The east elevation of the house is five bays wide. In recent years dark green shutters have been installed on the five upstairs windows and the two exposed windows on the first level. The corners of the house are defined with vertical boards approximately six inches wide with a slightly elevated one inch frame. The top of the cornerboards are square shaped and outlined by the same one inch frame strip giving the impression of a capital. Old photographs of the house reveal that the cornerboards and window casings were painted a dark color to contrast the white six inch weatherboard siding. There is a one story twenty-six foot long front porch on this east side of the Wells-Twyford House. The porch is supported by four turned, square base posts and is decorated with wood carved filigreed pattern along the ceiling-roof line. The two steps and their abutments are flat river sandstones. The front entry of the house is a wooden, paneled door with transom and side lights. There are two rows of five lights installed  $4\frac{1}{2} \times 13$ " in the transom. The sidelights which flank the door on both sides are composed of three rows of two lights installed  $13 \times 4\frac{1}{2}$ ".

The north elevation of the house contains an interior brick chimney on the gabled end. This chimney has an east-west orientation. A cross member which connected the two ends of the gable has been removed. There are eight windows on this side of the house; the four on the second floor are aligned to the four on the first floor. One can deduce from the continuity of the stone foundation and wooden siding that the el which continues from the north gabled end of the house was a part of the original construction. An interior brick chimney is located in the westerly half of the el and has a north-south orientation.

The west elevation of the house reveals the end of the el, one end of the L-shaped enclosed one story porch, and the back side of the I-House with its portion of the enclosed porch. There are three windows on the second floor of the I-House portion; there is one window below on the enclosed porch. A door at ground level leads into the walkway of the cellar located under the I-House portion. The west side of the el has a small casement window which was installed in the 1950s. The west end of the enclosed porch, a finished room used as a pantry, appears to have been a part of the original construction or an addition added very soon after construction because the foundation is of the same type of stone as the house foundation and the pantry's window is like the windows in the rest of the house. The cornerboards on the west side of the el have two square capitals. Originally gutters directed the run-off from the el into a large wooden barrel that was on a platform one story high and attached to

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

the west end of the el. This arrangement was replaced by one which directed the run-off into a cistern located some ten feet from the southwest corner of the house. That arrangement has been replaced by the Sistersville city water system.

The south elevation of the house is composed of the gabled end of the I-House which has an interior brick chimney oriented east-west and has no windows. The twelve foot wide L-shaped porch attached to the southwest corner of the I-House portion appears to have been closed on the south side at or shortly after construction since there is a continuation of the stone foundation, the siding, and the inside wall of the porch is plaster over lathe. The remainder of the porch from the pantry's south wall was enclosed with siding, four windows, and a door on the south side in the 1920s. Above, the el has four windows on the second floor. The L-shaped porch has a deep overhang to give protection from the sun and other weather elements coming from the south and west.

The low pitched gable roof was originally covered by tin. This tin roof was replaced in 1976 with asphalt shingles. The windows in the house are double hung. The upper sashes are fixed. The lower sashes are fashioned so that pegs inserted in the sideframes could position them. The windows have six-over-six lights with slender muntins which provide approximately 27"x48" area of light. There are some panes of original, or very old, glass remaining in the twenty-five windows of the house.

Essentially, the exterior of the Wells-Twyford House has been modified very little since it was constructed. The crossmember ledges on the gabled ends of the I-House portion have been removed. The existing L-shaped back porch has been entirely enclosed from a partially enclosed plan at or shortly after construction. In both cases, these changes are easily reversible. Photographs are available that substantiate all of the changes to the exterior of the house and would serve as authentic guides to restoration of the house to its original, external appearance.

The interior of the Wells-Twyford House has had no basic structural alterations. There have been cosmetic changes such as the painting of woodwork and of floors around area rugs. Asphalt tiles have been placed on the floors in two of the original rooms. Plain fiberboard tiles were installed in the four upstairs bedroom ceilings and the kitchen ceiling due to the aging of plaster on lathe.

There have been modifications in the heating and lighting systems. When nearby Sistersville experienced its oil boom, wells were drilled and were productive on the Wells farm. In 1890 an oil and gas lease drawn up by A.J. Mercer to Frances R. Wells (Mrs. Barney) provided free gas to the

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

main house on the Wells farm.<sup>1</sup> This house was plumbed for gas and the fireplaces were closed. The house was wired for electricity in the early 1930s.

The desire to modernize prompted the enclosure of the offsets beside the fireplaces in two bedrooms to provide closet space and in the kitchen to provide cupboard space. The partially enclosed porch was fully enclosed to provide space for a bathroom and to make the house warmer in the winter. These interior additions are of wallboard construction and could easily be returned to the original plan.

Two doors have been cut. One is between the cook/slave bedroom and the third bedroom upstairs. The other is on the west wall of the southeast sitting room in order to provide passage to the bathroom. The steep narrow steps from the kitchen to the cook/slave bedroom have been removed. The location and the appearance in the kitchen are known from an old photograph. From viewing other restorations it seems that these two changes could be reversed and a replica of the steps could be installed with little difficulty. When one considers the age of the house and its continual use as a residence, one can only laud its design and sturdy, well crafted construction as well as its owners' conscientious maintenance.

The Wells-Twyford House has almost 2700 square feet of living space. The architraves for windows and doors throughout the house are all original. The mouldings' only decorative feature is the overlapped rectangular wooden strip pattern. There are ten inch high baseboards in all rooms. All woodwork is painted. Quarter round has been added in some rooms during recent years. Floors are the wide board type held in place by square-headed nails.

The front entry of the house leads into a central hall. Opposite this front entry door is another door which opens onto an L-shaped enclosed porch. This main entry hall has an open stairway with two turned balusters to the step, each different because of varying lengths. The newel posts, balusters, and railings are of cherry wood. There are two landings and both an east and west window on the second story of the hallway. The stair well is encased on the upper level with the balusters and railing. The space below the steps under the main flight of steps is finished and is used for storage.

On either side of this central hall there is a sitting room. Each measures 17'x18'x9' and each has a fireplace. The mantels in these two rooms are of plain wood construction with beveled edges. The southeaster-

<sup>1</sup>Oil and Gas Leases 16:64, Tyler County Courthouse, Clerk of Courts Office, Middlebourne, West Virginia.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 7 Page 4

ly sitting room has two windows on the east and had two on the west. The window areas of these two westerly windows were filled in when the porch onto which they opened was enclosed. The window frames are still in place. The front northeasterly sitting room has two windows on the east and one on the north side. This northeasterly sitting room has a floor to ceiling storage cabinet built on the right side of the fireplace. This cabinet has a pair of 58" paneled doors above and a pair of paneled 24½" doors at the bottom. The carpentry, style, and hardware suggest that this cabinet may have been in the original plan of the house.

Above each of the sitting rooms is a bedroom of identical dimensions except that ceilings are eight feet high. The southeast bedroom has two windows facing east and two windows facing west. The fireplace is flanked by closets added in the 1930s. The northeast bedroom has a closet to the right of the fireplace and three windows oriented as the windows in the sitting room below. The mantels in these bedrooms are rectangular in shape and very plain.

The dining room, 15'x19'x9', connects the northeast sitting room with the kitchen. The dining room has a fireplace and floor to ceiling storage cabinet identical in size and arrangement with the one in the northeast sitting room. There are two windows on the north side of the room and one window on the south side which faces onto the enclosed porch. There is a door from the dining room to the northeast sitting room as well as a door onto the enclosed porch. There is no evidence that there ever was a door on the opening from the dining room into the kitchen. A right angle or corner enclosed stairway rises from the northeast corner of the dining room to a centrally located bedroom. There is a low door in the dining room which provides entry to a small closet under these corner stairs. There is a door on the second step of the stairway. The outside wall of the stairway is plastered wall while the inside wall is of wood. The steps are even but steep with no railing. The right angle turn is achieved by three triangular shaped steps.

The third centrally located bedroom above the dining room has two windows on the north side and two windows on the south side. There is a door which connects this bedroom with the northeast bedroom. A passageway opens into the slave/cook bedroom. A plain wooden balustrade outlines the south side of the corner stairwell. The balusters are uniformly shaped slats.

The kitchen, 13'x15', is located on the northwest end of the house and has a north window. The fireplace in the kitchen which shared the same interior brick chimney with the dining room has been enclosed. A cabinet was built in the space between the fireplace and the north wall. A case-

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 5

ment window over the sink area was installed on the windowless west side of the kitchen in the 1950s. A steep, straight stairway with a door was located in the northwest corner of the kitchen. This was the only access to the fourth bedroom on the second floor. This stairway was removed in the early 1920s. The kitchen has a doorless passage from the dining room, a door opening onto the enclosed porch, and a third door opening into the pantry.

The slave/cook bedroom, 13'x15', is located above the kitchen. There is a centrally located window on the north and south walls of the room. The stairwell in the northwest corner of the room has been covered. A passage-way into the central bedroom was cut to make this fourth bedroom accessible when the stairway from the kitchen was removed in the 1920s.

The pantry, 12'x7', appears to have been a part of the original house plan. The pantry, located on the west end of the enclosed porch, has an original window on the west side and a door opening onto the porch. The pantry is on the same level as the kitchen. It has a step down onto the porch just as the kitchen, dining room, and entry hall have.

The L-shaped back porch was enclosed in the 1920s. A room, 11½' square, was formed on the south arm of the porch directly behind the front southeast sitting room and provided space for a bathroom. In the 1940s this large square room was subdivided into a bathroom and dressing room. The present enclosed porch, 24'x12', serves as an entry from the sidewalk leading from the driveway. The porch is one step down from each door leading from the rooms of the house. The original exterior weatherboards remain as wall covering on the east, south, and west enclosed porch side walls. With these walls extant, restoration of the porch to its original appearance would not be difficult.

There is a fruit and vegetable cellar located below the entry hall and southeast sitting room. Before the L-shaped porch was modified, a hinged door in the floor of the porch at the south side led to the cellarway and cellar steps. It appears that the south end of the porch which sheltered the entry to the cellar was closed as this south wall of the cellarway is plaster over lathe. Presently, the cellar is accessed from an outside door which leads into the cellarway and to the steps below. These steps, as well as steps to both the front and back porches, are of riverbed sandstone.

A two-story, two car garage is the one auxiliary building that still exists. Little is known about this building other than it appeared in photos circa 1910. At that time it was located in the southwest corner of the lot adjacent to a dirt road which is now Kahle Street. The Twyfords, who were residents of the house, owned a horse at that time so it is probable that



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 6

the building was used as a barn. Around 1915 when the Twyford~~s~~ acquired an automobile, this auxillary building was moved from the southwest corner to the northeast corner of the lot so that it was near the house. The building was placed upon a concrete foundation and had a sloping entrance directly onto the main road which ran parallel to the front of the house and was the antecedent of State Route 2. When State Route 2 was restructured along the east side of the property, the garage was relocated in the northcentral section of the lot. It remains at this location. It is connected to Kahle Street by a driveway.

The barn/garage is a frame structure. It is covered with an asphalt shingle siding to simulate tan brick. It has a high gabled roof that is covered with tin like the original house roof. The floor of the garage is concrete. There are two pull-up doors on the south side or front of the garage. There are two standard size windows on the east, west and north sides. There is a flight of straight steps along the north wall that leads to the second floor. About seventy percent of this second floor is finished with interlocking hardwood boards. It is approximately twelve feet from this second floor to the apex of the gable. There are two small windows on the east and west sides of the second floor which are aligned to the windows on the first floor. Double doors with glass in the top half, a screened area above, and a window on either side are located in the gable end above the entrance to the garage.

The Wells-Twyford House itself, this description of it, and the accompanying pictures and slides are all tangible evidences that this building is an historic one for the region. Its design, size, construction, and durability provide insight into life along the northern Ohio River Valley before the Civil War. Its design is simple and utilitarian for a farm dwelling. Its size is spacious to accommodate the large families of the era. The construction is sturdy with several hand-hewn main timberbeams. Building materials of wood and river sandstone reflect the most accessible natural resources. The durability of the house reflects the quality of construction and the materials as well as the seriousness with which owners have accepted stewardship of the house. These insights have great potential for linking present and future generations to past generations.

## 8. Statement of Significance

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

nationally  statewide  locally

Applicable National Register Criteria  A  B  C  D

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

ARCHITECTURE

1854-1940

1854

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above. The Wells-Twyford House meets Criterion C of the National Register of Historic Places because it is a well preserved example of I House architecture in the local community. Its size, its enduring construction, and its relative plain interior decoration convey a practical, conservative, prosperous lifestyle based upon an agricultural economy prior to West Virginia statehood.

The Wells-Twyford House possesses the simplicity and symmetry of I-Houses that were commonly built by settlers in Indiana, Illinois, and Iowa; hence, the name I-Houses. Windows on the second floor of the house are aligned to those on the first floor. Windows to the left of the main entry are mirror images of those to the right of the entry. The central hall is flanked by sitting rooms. The front portion of the house is one room deep with bedrooms above the sitting rooms. The house sits on a high foundation. It has interior chimneys in the gable ends of the I-portion of the house. Among examples in Tyler County, this house is one of the finest examples of an I-House in existence.

Man often has adapted design to his environment and has incorporated an appealing aspect of another design into a basic plan. I-House designers utilized some elements of Late Georgian design, such as a central hall and high foundation. The builder of the Wells-Twyford House incorporated a bit of Greek Revival design when he added the cornerboards or pilasters described in Section 7, page 1, paragraph 1. This decorative detail is an enhancement of the I-House's basic design and serves as a unifying feature as the pilasters are repeated on the corners of the el.

I-Houses often have an el extending to the rear. The Wells-Twyford House possesses this extension which was incorporated into the original construction. The el provided for food preparation and for the food preparer to be under the main roof instead of in adjacent buildings. Provision for getting food to and from the cellar was made by putting storage under the house and by having access to the area from the sheltered porch. Provision for protection from prevailing weather patterns was made by attaching the deep,

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**A. BOOKS**

Blumenson, John J., Identifying American Architecture. New York: W.W. Norton & Co., Inc., 1981.  
Kauffman, Henry J., The American Farmhouse. New York, Hawthorne Book Inc., 1975.  
Williams, Henry Lionel and Ottalie K. Williams, A Guide to Old American Houses, 1700-1900. Cranbury, N.J., A.S. Barnes & Co., Inc., 1962.

**B. BOOKLETS**

Leckey, Howard L., The Tenmile Country and its Pioneer Families, Vol. VI. Waynesburg, Penna., Waynesburg Republican, undated.

**C. RECORDS**

Deeds 13:377; 14:34,107; 57:192; 73:657 Oil & Gas Leases 16:164  
Land Books: 1861-1866; 1872-1875 Wills 3:298

Tyler County Clerk of Courts  
Middlebourne, West Virginia

Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A

- 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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

N/A

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property 3/4 acres approximately

UTM References

A 

1	7	4	9	8	8	0	0	4	3	7	7	5	0	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

B 

Zone	Easting				Northing									

C 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D 

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The Wells-Twyford House sits on Lot #227, Lincoln District, Tyler County, West Virginia and is roughly 140'x250'. Lot #227 is bounded on the east by West Virginia Route 2, on the south by Kahle Street, on the west by the Baltimore and Ohio Railroad right-of-way, and on the north by Lot # 2 # 228; (see sketch map).

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

Boundaries are based upon legally recorded boundary lines established when the farm upon which the house was built was subdivided by the Sistersville Land Company in 1905.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Geraldine T. Ferguson

organization \_\_\_\_\_

street & number 3143 Wareham Road

city or town Columbus

date January 6, 1991

telephone (614) 457-3143

state Ohio zip code 43221

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 1

L-shaped porch to the south side of the el and the west portion of the I-House. Provision for much natural light and cross-ventilation was made by the number, location, and size of the windows. The architectural design of the house was adjusted to climatic conditions but the integrity of the I-House design was and has continued to be respected.

The size of the Wells-Twyford House is large for, at least, two reasons. First, its spaciousness was needed to accommodate the large family that was common in the mid-19th century. Secondly, it was deemed more comfortable to adjust the architectural style so that living, sleeping, cooking, and food storage areas would be under one roof due to climatic conditions of the area. The floor plan that was used has accommodated residents for over 130 years with no significant alterations.

The Wells-Twyford House was constructed of native materials. The frame structure and siding were hewn and planed from local lumber sources. The high foundation and steps to the two porches and cellar are of riverbed sandstone. The interior walls are horse hair fortified plaster over lathe. There are few evidences of settling in the house, and with the exception of the upstairs and kitchen ceilings, all of the construction materials are original and in good condition.

The windows and door frames, baseboards, and storage cabinets throughout the house are original with the exception of the casement window and cabinet in the kitchen. This woodwork has a unity in simple, linear design. Two bevel-edged mantel pieces in the sitting rooms and the central hall staircase with balusters, railings, and newels of cherry wood are the only decorative features in the interior of this farmhouse.

Based upon the above information it is believed that the Wells-Twyford House possesses integrity of architectural style, exemplifies astute adaptation of style to climatic conditions, demonstrates effective use of native building materials, and preserves the craftsmanship of the time in its extant woodwork.

In addition to being significant as an architectural example, the Wells-Twyford House contributes generally to local history. The house is located south of Sistersville about a mile on State Route 2 in Tyler County. Sistersville is known throughout a four state region as an oil and gas "boom" town because of the discovery and development of the petroleum industry in the late 19th century. The economic impact upon Tyler County is reflected in the many attractive Victorian style houses along Main Street and the Wells Inn in Sistersville. Both the Sistersville Historic District and the Wells Inn are on the National Register of Historic Places as representatives of this turn-of-the-century era in Sistersville and

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number 8 Page 2

---

and Tyler County history.

The Wells-Twyford House and "Welkin", a brick dwelling located on the southern boundary of Sistersville, are examples of houses built during the period prior to the oil and gas "boom" days when agriculture was the basis of the Tyler County economy. "Welkin" was the home of Charles Wells who founded Sistersville. His son, Eli, owned the adjoining 622 acres of farmland south of the Charles Wells farm. It was upon this farm of Eli Wells that the Wells-Twyford House was built. Family tradition says that the house was built in 1854.

As is the case for all buildings constructed prior to 1863 in the northern counties of the then state of Virginia, it can be claimed that the Wells-Twyford House was built in one state, Virginia, and has aged in another, West Virginia, without ever being moved from its foundation. A tangible reminder that this house was built when Tyler County was in western Virginia is the extant servant's quarters over the kitchen. In Virginia slavery was an accepted source of labor. The servant's room appears to be a unique feature of the Wells-Twyford House when this house is compared with the few remaining pre-Civil War homes in the area.

Another rather unique feature of the house is that in its relatively long history it has been occupied by members of only two families. Both of these families' ancestors were pioneers in Tyler County. Eli Wells, son of the founder of Sistersville, and his heirs lived in the house from its construction until about 1905. Oil was found on the farm property and free gas was afforded the mansion house according to an oil and gas lease in 1890. With the growth of Sistersville due to the discovery of oil and gas, the Sistersville Land Company bought the Wells farm from the estate of Frances R. Wells (Mrs. Barney Wells) in 1905. The Sistersville Land Company platted the farmland and sold lots.

Ella Margaret Twyford (Mrs. Thomas A. Twyford) and son, Laman L. Twyford, bought the house on lot #227 in 1905. Ella Margaret Twyford was the daughter of Neil Archer and a direct descendant of Michael and Elizabeth Wells. When Elizabeth Wells Archer was widowed in 1787, she returned with her son from near Ft. Jackson, Pennsylvania, to her family who "all lived on Ten Mile near the mouth of Coal Lick for sometime during the Revolution. Their migration from this section took place about 1800, with most or all of them settling in Tyler County, (West) Virginia."<sup>2</sup> This Wells family is not related to the Charles Wells family; however, both Wells families were pioneer families in Tyler County.

<sup>2</sup> Leckey, Howard L., The Ten Mile Country and Its Pioneer Families, Vol. VI (Waynesburg, Pa., The Waynesburg Republican) p.49

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places  
Continuation SheetSection number   8   Page   3  

Although the Wells-Twyford House sheltered no historically prominent person-ages, there were two residents who made special contributions to the local community. Ephraim Wells, son of Eli and co-owner of the farm and house with his brother, Barney, from 1857-1874, figured significantly in the business development of Sistersville during the oil and gas days. One of Thomas And Ella Twyford's sons, Chauncey D. Twyford, who lived in the house from 1905-1955, served as Tyler County assessor for thirty two years (1933-1964).

The period of historic significance for the Wells-Twyford House would be from its construction in 1854 to 1940. In this segment of its existence the economy shifted from one based upon agriculture to one based upon petroleum. The influx of population to work in the petroleum industry, the shortage of farm labor, the farm's location near Sistersville helped to precipitate the break up of the farm into building lots. Early in this time segment the political structure shifted from being part of Virginia to being part of a newly formed state, West Virginia. The transportation system shifted from travel by boat to travel by train, inter-urban, and automobile. The original farm extended to the Ohio River's banks and Lot #227 upon which the house sits is bounded on the east and south by streets and on the west by a railroad right-of-way.

The Wells-Twyford House now spans more than 130 years. It has been well maintained and there have been few significant modifications to the house. Because it retains a high degree of architectural integrity and it has direct ties to the early development of Tyler County, it is nominated for registry with other historically significant structures in this country.

## PICTURES

The following information applies to all of the listed photographs.

Name of the property:	Wells-Twyford House
Location:	Sistersville, W.Va.
Photographer:	Robert W. Ferguson
Date of photographs:	September, 1990
Location of negatives:	3143 Wareham Road, Columbus, Ohio 43221

Photograph Number	Description of view
1.	North and east exposure of house
2.	East exposure with front porch
3.	South exposure of house
4.	West exposure with deep L-shaped porch
5.	Barn/Garage
6.	Staircase in central hall
7.	Encased stairwell in upper main hallway
8.	Bevel-edged mantel and portion of storage cabinet in the northeast sitting room