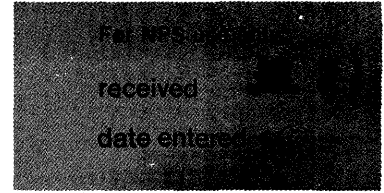


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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 Van Swearingen - Shepherd House

and/or common "Bellevue"

2. Location

street & number Route 1, Box 88 N of Shepherdstown N/A not for publication

city, town Shepherdstown vic. vicinity of ~~Shepherdstown District~~

state West Virginia code 54 county Jefferson code 037

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 type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>N/A</u> 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Mr. and Mrs. Henry Shepherd, V

street & number Route 1, Box 188

city, town Shepherdstown vicinity of _____ state West Virginia

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Jefferson County Courthouse

street & number _____

city, town Charles Town state West Virginia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date _____ federal state county local

depository for survey records _____

city, town _____ state _____

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

"Bellevue" is so-named because it stands on a high bluff commanding a beautiful view of the Potomac River. A broad tree-shaded lawn surrounds the house to the west, south and east. The eastern elevation of Bellevue faces Maryland and a broad bend of the river which flows in a southeasterly direction about 400 feet below the house site. The 2-story brick and stone residence is situated on Shepherd Grade a short distance north of the Shepherdstown corporate limit.

Bellevue is a Colonial Revival-style mansion that assumed its present appearance as the result of design changes c.1907. Its dominant feature is a full tetrastyle Ionic portico that shelters a fan-lighted entrance and a balconied center bay. The triangular pediment of the portico is centered with a lunette and the cornice of both the entablature and raking eaves is embellished with modillion brackets. Tall windows of the 5-bay front are 2 by 2 doublehung sash with segmental arches reflecting style changes of 19th-century origin, probably of the High Victorian period. The ridge of the portico is perpendicular to the ridge of the main hipped roof which is covered with standing seam metal. A 2-story wing at the east elevation that is set back from the facade of the main block (a 1-story screened-in porch encloses the angle of the L) is of brick and contains a doorway and windows of early (Federal design) origin.

Bellevue has changed during its more than two centuries of existence. When the house was built in the last third of the 18th century, it was 1 or 1½ stories in height and was of stone construction. During a later occupancy, a second story was added, this of brick, and the brick upon stone facades subsequently assumed a distinct Victorian manner as indicated by photographs surviving in the possession of the current owners. When the house was again refurbished another owner selected Colonial refinements for the exterior which have remained virtually unchanged since c.1907.

The interior is grand reflecting the Antebellum flavor of the exterior. A spacious entrance hall is appointed with early American refinements, the dominant feature of which is the stairway with an open stringer, a molded mahogany rail and finely paneled dado. Opening to the left of the center hall is a capacious drawing room with its two principal areas divided by a post and lintel arrangement of paired and fluted Ionic columns. The trim and paneled areas are painted white. Opening to the right of the center hall is a large dining room with a high ceiling and paneling painted white. It is probable that finish of the major first floor spaces reflect architectural modifications chosen by an architect who was commissioned by the owners c.1907.

Despite structural evolution of the mansion through the generations, Bellevue remains an ancient seat reflecting a serene dignity and historical aura shared by few other sites in West Virginia.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian		
<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) Local History		
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention				

Specific dates c.1773;c.1907 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

"Bellevue", situated on a bluff overlooking a bend of the Potomac River near Shepherdstown, Jefferson County, West Virginia is significant as having been home to two families highly significant in the history of West Virginia's Eastern Panhandle¹. It is also significant as an architectural work of landmark status that has survived from before the American Revolution².

EXPLANATORY NOTES

1. "Bellevue" was constructed, as a one-story stone residence, in 1773, in what was then Frederick County, Virginia, by Joseph Van Swearingen. He was the son of Thomas Van Swearingen, a prominent figure in pre-Revolutionary Virginia who had the distinction of having defeated George Washington for a seat in the House of Burgessés on the future president's first attempt at public office in 1757. According to local tradition, the site of "Bellevue" was where a battle was fought between Catawba and Delaware Indian tribes and the supposed burial site of a Delaware chief. Joseph Van Swearingen is an individual who played very important roles in the history of the area that is now the Eastern Panhandle of West Virginia. Serving as a captain in the Berkeley County militia at the outbreak of the American Revolution, Van Swearingen formed the 12th Virginia Regiment, rose to the rank of Colonel in Washington's army, and fought at the Battle of Germantown on October 4, 1777. Shortly thereafter he was appointed Lieutenant, or Commander, of Berkeley County (including present day Jefferson and Morgan Counties), due to the resignation of General Washington's brother Samuel, and served as such until the close of the war in 1783. He received, for his war services, a 4,000-acre land grant from the U.S. Congress. From 1787 until 1796 Van Swearingen was one of the 16 prominent citizens who successfully organized the newly formed Jefferson County, being a member of the first county court and also, by appointment of Governor James Monroe, one of the county's first justices of the peace. Van Swearingen also served as the second High Sheriff of Jefferson County, from 1805 until 1807, and was chairman of an Anti-Embargo Convention in 1809.

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Bushong, Millard K., Historic Jefferson County, Boyce, Va., Carr Publishing Co., 1972.
- Conley, Phil, "A Visit to Bellevue, the Home of 'A Daughter of the State'", Charleston, W.Va., The West Virginia Review, Vol. 4, No. 2, November, 1926.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 5 acres

Quadrangle name Shepherdstown, W.Va.

Quadrangle scale 1;24,000

UMT References

A

1	8	2	5	18	6	19	10	4	13	6	19	2	19	10
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 Bounded to the east, south, and west by lawns whose limits are marked by the highest contour line (400ft.) of the Shepherdstown topographic quad., a dark brown line running to the east, south, and north; and by State Route 48 to the west (Rt. 1). "Bellevue" is thus surrounded by the contour line and Route 48 except at a southwest

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

state	N/A	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rodney S. Collins, Architectural Historian and

Michael J. Pauley, Historian

organization Historic Preservation Unit date 5-16-83

The Cultural Center

street & number Capitol Complex telephone 304/348-0240

city or town Charleston state West Virginia

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 State Historic Preservation Officer date July 13, 1983

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the
National Register

date 5/18/83


Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
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"Bellevue", Jefferson County, West Virginia

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date entered

Before his death at "Bellevue" in 1821, Joseph Van Swearingen entertained such luminaries as Lord Fairfax, George Washington, and Henry Clay.

Upon Joseph Van Swearingen's death, "Bellevue" passed to his son Thomas Van Swearingen (1784-1822), another noted Jefferson Countian. Thomas Van Swearingen began his public career with election to the Virginia House of Delegates in 1814, serving until 1816. In 1816 he was elected to the Court of Trustees of the Town of Shepherdstown. In 1818 Thomas Van Swearingen was elected to the United States House of Representatives. Re-elected in 1820, Van Swearingen served in Congress until his untimely death, age 38, on August 19, 1822.

The "Bellevue" estate passed at his death to Thomas' widow who, it is recorded, entertained "friends and less fortunate relatives over periods of months and even years, as was the custom in the south". The house next passed to their daughter, Hannah Van Swearingen Matthews, who sold the property to Willoughby Semen, who in turn sold it to W.N. Lemen. Lemen was a man prominent in local affairs. He served two terms (1890-1892) as mayor of Shepherdstown and three terms as a City councilman. He made his most solid contribution to local history by serving as treasurer of the James Rumsey Monument Association which erected the famous monument to the inventor.

"Bellevue" passed to the Shepherd family in 1900 when Henry Shepherd, III purchased the property as a wedding gift for his bride, Minnie Reinhart, a granddaughter of Thomas Van Shearingen. The Shepherds are one of the most historic Eastern Panhandle families, descending from Capt. Thomas Shepherd who founded Shepherdstown (one of West Virginia's two oldest municipalities) in 1762. In the same year (1900), the Shepherds gave a lavish breakfast on the lawn for William Jennings Bryan, and 45 other Democratic party luminaries, during Bryan's second campaign for the presidency. "Bellevue" has remained in the Shepherd family since that time, being presently owned by Mr. and Mrs. Henry Shepherd, V.

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

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2. Bellevue is a significant Colonial Revival mansion of eastern West Virginia that stands on Shepherd Grade near Shepherdstown, West Virginia, at a point overlooking the Potomac River and western Maryland. Its outstanding feature is a full tetrastyle Ionic portico and arched doorway with a semi-circular fanlight. The excellent proportions and detailing of the house suggest the design contributions of an architect whose identity is presently unknown. Bellevue has retained its present appearance since the turn of the century although the house is an ancient seat that reflects evolutionary changes and a long history of ownership by prominent citizens. Bellevue was awarded a bronze plaque designating its status as a Jefferson County Historic Landmark in 1975.

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

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

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- Doherty, William Thomas, Berkeley County, U.S.A.:
A Bicentennial History of a Virginia and West Virginia
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1972.
- Hardesty's West Virginia Counties, Vol. 8, Richwood, W.Va.,
Jim Comstock Publishing (1882), 1973
- Musser, Clifford S., Two Hundred Years History of
Shepherdstown, Shepherdstown, W.Va., The Independent, 1931
- "Oral Interview with Henry Shepherd, V," by Rodney S.
Collins, Shepherdstown, W.Va., May 6, 1983
- Spirit of Jefferson Advocate, Charles Town, W.Va.,
August 21, 1975

#10 Geographical Data - Verbal boundary description and justification

point where the boundary is formed by a straight line between
the contour line and Route 48 running east-west.