

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

1066
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JUN 12 1990

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

NATIONAL
REGISTER

1. Name of Property

historic name: Murray, James F., House

other name/site number: Murray - Abrams House

2. Location

street & number: 530 Louisiana Avenue

not for publication: N/A

city/town: Chester

vicinity: N/A

state: WV

county: Hancock

code: 029

zip code: 26034

3. Classification

Ownership of Property: Private

Category of Property: Buildings

Number of Resources within Property:

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	sites
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	structures
<u> </u>	<u> </u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register: N/A

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. See continuation sheet.

William G. Sanders
Signature of certifying official

6/6/90
Date

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):

Melvin Byrum 7/12/90
National Register

Signature of Keeper Date of Action

6. Function or Use

Historic:	<u>Domestic - Single dwelling</u>	Sub:	<u>Residence</u>
	<u>Secondary Structure</u>		<u>Residence</u>
Current :	<u>Domestic - Single dwelling</u>	Sub:	<u>Residence</u>
	<u>Secondary Structure</u>		<u>Residence</u>

=====
Architectural Classification:

Late 19th and 20th Century Revivals; American Movements
Neo Classical Revival
American Foursquare

Other Description: _____

Materials: foundation Stone roof Slate
walls Brick other _____

Describe present and historic physical appearance. X See continuation sheet.

=====
8. Statement of Significance

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

Applicable National Register Criteria: B, C

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) : N/A

Areas of Significance: Architecture
Industry

Period(s) of Significance: 1903 - 1925 _____

Significant Dates : 1903 1905 _____

Significant Person(s): Murray, James Fraser

Cultural Affiliation: N/A

Architect/Builder: J. A. Snyder, Beaver Falls, PA. Architect

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.
X See continuation sheet.

X See continuation sheet.

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 # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data:

State historic preservation office

Other state agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

X Other -- Specify Repository: Owner, Ms. Leona Abrams, 530 Louisiana Ave., Chester, WV

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property: 1 acre approx.

UTM References: Zone Easting Northing Zone Easting Northing

A	<u>17</u>	<u>537080</u>	<u>4495520</u>	B	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>
C	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	D	<u> </u>	<u> </u>	<u> </u>

 See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description: See continuation sheet.

Inclusive of Parcel #67, an L-shaped lot at the corner of 5th St. and Louisiana Ave., Hancock Co. Assessor's Map, Chester Corporation, District Map #5, January 1961.

Boundary Justification: See continuation sheet.

The nominated property is inclusive of land historically associated with the house at 530 Louisiana Avenue, Chester.

11. Form Prepared By

Name/Title: Rodney S. Collins, Architectural Historian

Organization: WV Division of Culture & History Date: April 26, 1990

Street & Number: The Cultural Center Telephone: 304-348-0240

City or Town: Charleston State: WV ZIP: 25305

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The Murray House occupies a large lot with deep lawns and large shade trees at 530 Louisiana Avenue, Chester, Hancock County, West Virginia. The elevated site lends the large blond brick house, and its 2 1/2 story frame dependency, a formal elegance that was more pronounced in the early 20th century when the house site was devoid of trees, and residential construction was located a considerable distance from the Murray home. Oriented with a west-facing entrance elevation and view of the picturesque Ohio River Valley, entrance to the house is now primarily through a door at the north elevation, beneath a deep porch and porte cochere.

Designed in 1904 by architect J. A. Snyder, of Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, construction was undertaken and completed in 1905. The date of construction is recorded in a tile at the front door. An especially interesting part of the home is the entrance vestibule with a mullioned door frame and brilliant collection of beveled and leaded side and transom lights. Griffins, in earth tones, are part of the mosaic tile flooring in the entrance vestibule.

Planned as an L, the house is distinguished by several post-Victorian design elements that combine American Four Square and Neo Classical Revival features. State-covered intersecting hipped roofs and numerous hipped dormers draw attention to the roof; its high corbel-capped brick chimneys complete a dramatic roofscape. Blond brick walls are pierced with large double-hung windows, all with heavy stone lintels and several with transoms containing stained glass. Stone quoining at all corners of the building add to the formal quality of the design. Framing the whole is a very deep wraparound porch that occupies nearly all of the west and north elevations at the ground level. The wood Ionic porch columns and dentiled cornice are the house's principal classical features.

Interior spaces are intact and well preserved. Formality is the intent of design in the entrance hall which contains heavy, varnished trim, beamed ceiling, and flanking parlor doorways equipped with pocket doors. Fireplaces are built with double-stack mantels, many with overmantel mirrors, and each with ceramic tile-clad firebox surrounds. Another significant interior feature is the built-in dining room china cupboard with oak drawers and double glass doors.

Dependency (contributing)

The Murray "barn" was constructed c. 1903. An intriguing 2 1/2 story frame structure, it exhibits many characteristics of the late Victorian American house

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building tradition. Built on a raised red brick basement, the 5th Street facade is higher than the rear wall which is "revetted," or embanked. The steeply pitched gable-on-hip roof is covered with handsome patterned gray slate. An octagonal lantern, its roof also covered in slate, is crowned with a spectacular copper weather vane - an eagle with full wingspread. Accenting the vertical massing is a gable on each of the four roof planes.

A wide front porch overhanging the 5th Street entrance is complete with turned posts, openwork wood brackets, and balustrade with turned balusters. Other late Victorian details include imbricated wood shingles in the gable faces.

The barn was apparently designed to function as a residence and office for James Murray. Mr. and Mrs. Murray lived in it while their large brick house was under construction in 1905.

The Murray House (purchased in 1944 by the Abrams family) and barn serve to impart a sense of style and living conditions prevalent among local upper classes of the early 20th century. The resources are extraordinarily well preserved and are significant reminders of earlier lifeways in West Virginia's Northern Panhandle.

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The Murray House and barn meet Criterion B of the National Register because they are associated with James Fraser Murray, (1844-1925), an individual important in the Northern Panhandle's developing oil industry. The buildings possess additional significance under Criterion C as outstanding examples of residential design and construction for an upper middle class family in Hancock County, West Virginia, during the first years of the 20th century.

James F. Murray is remembered as a spunky wildcatter in his early days, and in his mature years as a successful oil operator in West Virginia's Northern Panhandle. Born in Oxford County, Canada, in 1844, to Scotch parents, Murray left home at the age of 18 to work as a driller at Enniskillin, New Brunswick. A short time later he moved to Petroleum Centre, Pennsylvania. The western Pennsylvania oil fields were to teach Murray much about the booming industry. Murray found work at Pit Hole, Shamburg, McCreg Hill, Tidioute, St. Joe (Butler County), Bradford, and Balltown. In many of these places Murray went broke, and, in his own words, he was "three thousand dollars worse off than nothing." Following several failures in drilling and leasing ventures, Murray went to New Cumberland, WV, where he drilled eight wells for the Mock Brick Company. Murray also purchased oil and gas leases in Hancock County and Beaver County, Pennsylvania. After partnering himself with Mark Miller, of Sistersville, WV, 28 successful wells in the Carson fields were developed.

In many respects, Murray's career parallels the development of the West Virginia oil industry. Beginning with small, fly-by-night partnerships or companies, often called wildcat operations, fields were eventually developed and richer companies arrived to buy or lease extensive acreages. Many small operations were thus bought out and consolidated into more powerful companies. It was men like Murray, whose patience and perseverance, and wide experience in western Pennsylvania fields, built the West Virginia oil industry into one of the world's largest producing areas during the late 19th and early 20th century. Indeed, the Sistersville field would be known by 1893 as the world's largest producing area (see Thoenen, History of the Oil and Gas Industry in West Virginia, p. 207).

The house commissioned by James F. Murray at Chester, West Virginia, was designed by Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania, architect J. A. Snyder. It was built in 1905 above the town in the Chester Rolling Mills Company Addition. Possibly the finest house built up to that time in the community, the Murrays lived in a splendid 2 1/2 story "barn" adjacent to the house site while the house was under construction. This frame structure was completely finished with the tile-clad fireplaces, elaborate millwork, and steam heat. The building's copper weather vane, with its eagle finial, is one of the largest and finest known in West Virginia.

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In the July 1907 issue of the Illustrated North American, a periodical highlighting the careers of "captains and leaders of commercial progress," James Fraser Murray was given a two-page biographical sketch. The following references to Murray's house are especially interesting:

At Chester, W.Va., which is 800 feet above the sea level, overlooking the picturesque Ohio River, and commanding a view that would fill the soul of an artist with ecstasy, is a magnificent Shawnee brick home, with every known modern convenience. Here no recent invention tending to contribute to the comfort and pleasure of the occupants of the home is missing. This is the home that Mr. Murray promised his wife; this is the realization of his dreams of long ago when his pathway was obstructed by apparently insurmountable obstacles, but which he finally swept aside and passed on to the just reward which awaits the man who does not know the meaning of the word discouragement.

Even Mr. Murray's barn is as complete as many a palatial residence, being equipped with perfect electric lighting and steam heating systems, together with a modern fire apparatus. Our subject is very fond of horses and he has some of the finest blooded stock in the country.

In his beautiful home, which was only recently completed, Mr. Murray can view the magnificent walks and driveways, and the finely kept grounds with evident satisfaction. Having attained about all a man struggles for in this workaday world, he can rest in this picturesque spot and find sweet sole solace in the reflection that his many battles for supremacy were not in vain after all.

The Murray House combines several architectural styles. Cubic and rectangular massing recalls certain elements of the American Four Square style. A tower, at the southwest corner, is decidedly Post Victorian, though its concave mansard base and ogee roof line are Queen Anne in spirit. Above all, the house features Neo Classical Revival design elements. These appear in the handsome wood Ionic columns of the wraparound porch, and in the north-facing porte cochere. The cornice of both the porch and house is dentiled, while the cornice of the main block of the house is supported with block modillions.

The Murray House and dependency are unusually fine examples of period house building in Hancock County. They compare favorably with houses in the older neighborhood of East Liberty, Highland Park, and Oakland in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, 30 miles to the southeast.

Period of Significance

The period of significance begins with the construction of the barn c. 1903, and extends through the date of construction of the house in 1905, to the date of James Murray's death in 1925.

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Bibliography

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