### National Register of Historic Places Registration Form Registration Form **Registration Form**



This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable". For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

1. Name of Property
Historic name George Townsend House
Other names/site number
2. Location
Street & number61872 Hwy 136 Not for publication []
City or town Tecumseh Vicinity []
State Nebraska Code NE County Johnson Code 097 Zip code 68450
3. State/Federal Agency Certification
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. I recommend that this property be considered significant [] nationally [] statewide [X] locally. ([] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)    Author
In my opinion, the property [] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. ([] See continuation sheet for additional comments.)
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
State or Federal agency and bureau
4. National Park Service Certification
I, hereby, certify that this property is:  [Ventered in the National Register.  [] see continuation sheet.  [] determined eligible for the National Register.  [] determined not eligible for the National Register.  [] removed from the National Register.  [] other, (explain):  Signature of Keeper  Date of Action

George Townsend House Name of Property		Johnson County, Nebraska County and State			
5. Classification					
Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)  Category of Property (Check only one box)		Number of Reso (Do not include previous	Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)		
_√_ Private	√_ Building(s)	Contributing	Noncontribut	ng	
Public-local	District	2		Buildings	
Public-state	Site	· .		Sites	
Public-federal	Structure		· .	Structures	
	Object			Objects	
		2	0	Total	
Name of related multiple pr (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of		Number of cont listed in the Nat		es previously	
N/A	<u></u>	N/A			
6. Function or Use				er Table	
Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions.)		Current Functio (Enter categories from			
Domestic; single dwelling		Domestic; single dwelling			
			·		
		<del></del>			
	<del></del>		<u> </u>	<u> </u>	
<u> </u>					
7. Description					
Architectural Classification		Materials			
(Enter categories from instructions.)		(Enter categories from	n instructions.)		
Late 19 <sup>th</sup> Century & 20 <sup>th</sup> Cent	tury Revivals;	Foundation Co	ncrete		
Classical Revival; Neo-Class	ical Revival	Walls Wood - F	rame		
		Roof Asphalt			
	<del>and Many Johnson of American</del> Second	Chimney	-Brick, Pillars & I Wood & Cement	Pilasters – Wood , Portico-Wood	

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

George Name of	e Townsend House Property	Johnson County, Nebraska County and State
8. Sta	atement of Significance	
(Mark "X'	able National Register Criteria in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property hal Register listing.)	Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions.) Architecture
A	Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.	
В	Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.	
<u>√</u> c	Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.	Period of Significance 1913
D	Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.	Significant Dates
	a Considerations 'in all the boxes that apply.)	1913
Propert	y is:	Significant Person
A	Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.  Removed from its original location.	(Complete if Criterion B is marked above.)  N/A  Cultural Affiliation
c	A birthplace or a grave.	N/A
D	A cemetery.	
E	A reconstructed building, object, or structure.	
F	A commemorative property.	Architect/Builder
G	Less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.	Edgar W. Cook – contractor/builder

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

### 9. Major Bibliographical References

<b>Bibliography</b> (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or	more continuation sheets.)
Previous documentation on file (NPS):	Primary location for additional data:
Preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested	√ State Historic Preservation Office
Previously listed in the National Register	Other State agency
Previously determined eligible by the National Register	Federal agency
Designated a National Historic Landmark	Local Government
Recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #	University
Recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #	Other     Name of repository: Property owner

10. Geographical Data	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	
Acreage of property 1 acre			
UTM References (place additional UTM references on a continu	uation sheet).		
Zone Easting Northing	Zone Easting	Northing	
<b>1.</b> 14 733701 4471687 <b>3. 2. 4.</b>			
[]	See continuation shee	t .	
Verbal Boundary Description			
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)			
Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)			
11. Form Prepared By			
name/title Sheila Smack			
organization	date July 17, 2	2006	<del></del>
street & number 61872 Hwy 136	telephone		
city or town Tecumseh	state NE	zip code	68450
Additional Documentation		· · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · · ·	
Submit the following items with the completed form:			•
Continuation Sheets			
Maps			
A <b>USGS map</b> (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's A <b>Sketch map</b> for historic districts and properties having large a		ources.	
Photographs			
Representative <b>black and white photographs</b> of the property.			
Additional items Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)			
Property Owner			
Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)			
name/title Sheila and Dan Smack			
street & number 16872 Hwy 136	telephone 402	2-335-5948	
city or town Tecumseh	state NE	zip code	68450

Johnson County, Nebraska

**George Townsend House** 

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determined eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, (15 USC 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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Located in Tecumseh, Nebraska, the George Townsend house was constructed on an 80 acre working farm situated on a bluff west of Tecumseh. The bluff vantage point provides a panoramic easterly view of the town of Tecumseh with the front of the home in direct alignment with the Johnson County Courthouse. Tecumseh is situated in the southeast portion of the state. Tecumseh was established as a town in 1856 with a name of Frances, but later renamed to honor a famous Native American chief, Tecumseh. Tecumseh was established as the county seat on February 13, 1857.

The George Townsend house is a two-and-half story Neoclassical Revival frame house clad with wooden clapboards. The house has two primary entrances, two secondary entrances, a hipped roof with four dormers, and an exterior bricked fireplace. The house is basically rectangular in shape with an extension on the west side that provides additional space for the kitchen and study on the first level and bedrooms on the second level, and on the east side there is a curved bay for the dining room. The roof and dormer eaves are deep with stylized brackets and quarter round/scotia cornice molding<sup>1</sup>. The foundation is poured concrete. The windows are one-over-one double-hung of large proportions and the doors are of the Craftsman style with varied, multiple rectangular panes. The door and window surrounds are typical of the simplicity of Neoclassical Revival style, as opposed to its predecessor 19<sup>th</sup> Century Greek Revival,<sup>2</sup> such that the lines are straight and angular and the decorative molding detail is applied to the lintel.

The garden entrance faces east overlooking the town of Tecumseh and is the most decorative of the primary entrances. It provides a commanding view for travelers as they climb the hill upon leaving Tecumseh traveling west. This façade is dominated by a full-height porch supported by two classical columns. The lonic columns (smooth shaft) support a closed pediment (located at the attic level). The pediment is classically styled with a dentil cornice and an elliptical window with keystones. The entablature has no decoration with the exception of dentil molding for the cornice. On the roof level are two double-windowed dormers located on either side of the pediment. There are two rectangular pilasters with lonic capitals embracing the front door. The front entrance consists of a twelve-pane door (Craftsman) flanked by double-hung lights finished with paneled bottoms. Directly above the front door, on the second level, are two side-by-side double-hung windows. Flanking on either side of the centrally located front door are symmetrically placed window groupings. On the left, the windows are comprised of a single double-hung window on the second story that is centrally situated above a composite window grouping of three located on the first level. On the right, a single double-hung window on the second story is centrally located above a grouping of five double-hung windows in a curved bay. The foundation supporting the bow window configuration follows the same bowed form.

The second primary entrance faces south with a four-pillared open porch extending the full width of the house. This entrance faces the main highway that passes between the house and a golf course. On the first level of this façade is a centrally located four-pane door (Craftsman) flanked by two large double-hung windows. This entrance leads to the living room. On the second story there are two double-hung windows symmetrically positioned above the first floor windows. On the roof level is a centrally located double-windowed dormer.

The west side of the house provides a secondary entrance that leads to the study and includes the brick fireplace. This entry door diverges from the Craftsman form and tends toward Victorian with an oval light and egg-and-dart molding. The windows on the first and second floors are one-over-one. On the roof are two double-windowed dormers that are directly opposite the dormers on the east side. There is also a cellar door entrance that leads to the basement.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Sherrill Whiton and Stanley Abercrombie, Interior Design & Decoration, 2002.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> Marcus Whiffen, American Architecture Since 1780 – A Guide to the Styles, 1969.

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The entrance to the kitchen is located on the north side of the house and that is contained in an enclosed porch. There are two pocket windows that slide up into the wall in the dining room, a stationary window for the kitchen, and double-hung windows on the second floor all of which are symmetrically balanced.

Upon entering the house from the garden side, you step into the foyer. The woodwork throughout the house is maple with a medium finish and tooled in the Craftsman style. In every apportionment, the interior is classic Craftsman. The moldings are straight and angular as is typical of the Craftsman style, but the look is lighter and delicate which sets it apart from traditional heavier dark oak Craftsman interiors. The decorative metal furnishings (door knobs, window pulls and switch plates) are brass and rectangular in shape. The woodwork, including baseboards, crown molding, cove molding, and plate rails, are intact throughout the house. The flooring is maple with exception of the kitchen and second floor, which are fir. The walls are hardboard (Trademark Registered, Patented May 22, 1894, June 11, 1912, Aug 6, 1912) fashioned in 3-foot by 5-foot sections. The house was electrified at the time it was built. Some of the original lighting remains in use today, as do the switch plates.

The main floor includes a foyer, living room, dining room, study, kitchen, and bathroom. From the foyer, the access to the study, an open staircase to the second level and a built-in bench for storage and seating beneath the staircase are visible. The dining room is located to the right, and the living room is located to the left. A square, pillared archway separates the foyer and dining room.

The dining room has a built-in, glass-front china cabinet that is flanked on either side with built-in benches and pocket windows. The walls are paneled to chair rail height with wainscoting. Painted hardboard was installed above the wooden wainscot panels, as was a wrap-around plate rail. Wooden beams divide the ceiling into nine sections with a singular light fixture in the center section. The five one-over-one bay windows provide an excellent view of Tecumseh to the east.

The foyer and living room are separated with sliding, flat-paneled pocket doors. The focal point of the living room is the fireplace with a maple mantel and brick hearth and surround. On the left side of the fireplace is a window and built-in bench. Prior to the addition of a bathroom adjacent to the living room, there also existed a window and bench to the right of the fireplace to create a perfect symmetry of windows, benches and fireplace. The ceiling, as in other rooms of the house is trimmed with molding. The walls are finished in painted hardboard.

The study is accessible from the foyer by passing through a doorway under the staircase. The study is finished with wrap-around plate rail, painted hardboard, and molding.

The kitchen can be accessed from the study as well as the dining room. There remains only one original built-in cabinet. The remaining cabinets are replacements from a later time period. The floors in this room are fir.

The second floor can be accessed from the formal staircase in the foyer or from the maid's staircase in the kitchen. There are five bedrooms, a bathroom, and walk-in linen closet on the second floor. The formal staircase is central to the bedrooms and its opening is wrapped with a balustrade. Those bedrooms with openings that face the staircase feature doors with glass etched panels; apparently to allow light from the bedrooms to flow into the stairwell. All of the bedrooms have spacious, walk-in closets and are well lit, each containing at least two large windows. The master bedroom is extremely spacious and has five windows that provide views to the east, south, and west.

A two-car detached garage (built in conjunction with the house) is situated northeast of the house. The garage is constructed of rusticated concrete blocks with decorative wreath blocks located at the wall corners and in random linear alignment along the wall. The original doors have since been replaced with newer doors. It has a hipped roof with a metal

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

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roof ventilator (original) perched in the center of the roof. The garage was electrified at the time of construction. The interior has poured concrete floors and lathe and plaster finished walls.

Prior to constructing the house, George Townsend began farming his 80-acre property. He constructed a barn and other farm related structures, and transported a house from Shenandoah, lowa; which he used as temporary housing. The barn is no longer extant.

The grand entrance to the farmstead is a horseshoe driveway encircling an area that formerly contained a formal garden. The eastern access directs you to the farm proper and the western access deposits you at the garden entrance of the house. The formal garden was planted with shrubbery and flowers and it had at its center a stone fountain. This formal garden has since given way to a mowed lawn and a previous owner removed the fountain. Nonetheless, when climbing the western hill upon leaving Tecumseh, the traveler's vision is automatically directed to a spectacular, grand home that overlooks the North Fork of the Big Nemaha River valley.

The overall integrity of the George Townsend house is good. During the previous 65 years, the house was allowed to slip into disrepair and some modifications were made. Two lonic pillars and the associated capitals on all of the pillars were removed. A wrap-around porch was also removed, as was a balustrade on the roof of the front porch. Interior changes to the house are minor and include the installation of a bathroom on the first floor during the 1970's. The kitchen windows were replaced with a picture and crank-out. The current owner recently replaced all double hung windows on the first floor. These new windows retain the size and form of the original windows. Much of the change that has occurred to the exterior is subtractive. However, historic photos do exist and the current owner intends to rehabilitate the exterior as time and funding permits.

The seven aspects of integrity, location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association are all represented by this historic property.

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The George Townsend house is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places at the local level under Criterion C in the area of architecture. Constructed in 1913, this house is a fine example of Neoclassical Revival near Tecumseh, Nebraska.

George Townsend was born in Fremont County, Iowa, January 12, 1867. The Townsend family moved to Johnson County when George was an infant. He resided in the Johnson County area his entire life, attending the local public schools.<sup>3</sup> At some point in his young life he entered into partnership with R. F. Reynolds. Engaged in the sale barn business, Townsend and Reynolds completed the construction of their sale barn in February 1913.<sup>4</sup> They also purchased and managed the Farmers Feed Yard, paying \$8,000 for the business.<sup>5</sup>

As an independent businessman and farmer, Townsend actively and aggressively purchased and sold land and farms. At one point in time, he amassed a total of 854 acres and personally farmed these acres. George was a well-known cattle feeder. One newspaper article stated,

"The Townsend farm might be likened to a well organized, well equipped factory for the economic production of beef for the market, with pork as a profitable side line. As might be expected, corn is the main crop on the Townsend farm. There are 360 acres of it this year and every acre will be harvested by the hogs and cattle themselves. This has been the practice for many years. In fact, Mr. Townsend stated that his son, now grown to manhood, never has husked a load of corn. "Why go to all this expense of time, labor, and money when the hogs can do it so much better, and without the annual dickering over wage scales." About 600 acres are fenced hogtight, which aids greatly in simplifying the problem of hogging down."

At the heart of his farm is the 80 acres Townsend selected to build a "thoroughly modern home." Townsend's grand plan not only included a new home of sizable proportions, but to also create a farm of grand scale. In this endeavor, he first moved an existing home (not extant) from a farm he purchased in Shenandoah, lowa, and built a barn (not extant) on this acreage.

Townsend hired Edgar W. Cook, a well-known general contractor in the Tecumseh area, to build the barn as well as the new home<sup>9</sup>. Edgar Cook's numerous building contracts are noted in the Tecumseh Chieftain. Townsend continued to pursue his farming interests during the construction of his new home and used the relocated house as a temporary residence during this time period. On June 12, 1913, the Journal Tribune reported, "George Townsend's new residence on the hill west of this city is beginning to loom up. When finished this will be the largest residence in the county, being a two-story structure, 44x56 feet." On July 5, 1913 the Journal Tribune reported "E. W. Cook and men are pushing the work on George Townsend fine new residence, west of the city. The work will be ready for the plasterer by next week and this part of the job is to be done by Marion McColloch, the residence and barn has been wired for electric lights, which are

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> A local Tecumseh newspaper, August 1, 1940.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> Tecumseh Journal Tribune, January 30, 1913.

<sup>\*</sup> Tecumseh Journal Tribune, May 22, 1913.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>6</sup> Article written by A. G. Kittel, no date.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>7</sup> Ibid.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Tecumseh Chieftain - May 17, 1913, April 12, 1913

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Tecumseh Chieftain – May 17, 1913.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Tecumseh Chieftain – May 10, 1913.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Tecumseh Journal Tribune, June 12, 1913.

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to be furnished by the city."<sup>12</sup> With winter looming ahead, the family gradually moved their belongings to the farm and lived in the relocated house as necessary. In October, the family officially moved into their new residence. As reported in the newspaper, "George Townsend and family moved last week to their new home west of town and now George tells us that he is again an honest farmer".<sup>13</sup>

Townsend continued to farm until his unexpected death from a cerebral hemorrhage on July 30, 1940.<sup>14</sup> He was 72 years old and was survived by his wife and four children. Following his death, his wife Emma sold the home and 80 acre farm to Mr. and Mrs. Richardson who maintained the farm for five years. Then, in 1945, the Richardson's sold the farm to Mr. and Mrs. Frank Foetisch. The Foetisch's owned the homestead for approximately 59 years. Upon Mrs. Foetisch's death, the farm was sold to Dan and Sheila Smack, the present owners, in 2004.

#### Neoclassical architecture

During the first half of the 20<sup>th</sup> century, the Neoclassical style became a dominant style for domestic housing. Its popularity was inspired by the World's Columbian Exposition held in Chicago in 1893<sup>15</sup> and the Beau-Arts style. The buildings of the Neoclassical Revival are generally larger than those of the nineteenth-century Greek Revival and always simpler in effect than those of Beau-Arts Classicism.<sup>16</sup> In its ensuing popularity, the Neoclassical style rendered two phases. The first phase from 1900 to 1920 emphasized hipped roofs and elaborate, correct columns. The second phase from 1925 to the 1950's, emphasized side-gabled roofs and simple, slender columns.

The George Townsend house best resembles the first phase styling with full-height entry porch with a classical pediment and gabled roof, classical symmetry, hipped roof and elaborate lonic columns. The window and door ornamentation are also typical of this style with lintel headers rather than arched headers.

Another prominent style during the construction period the Townsend house was the Craftsman style. The interior of this house clearly depicts this style. The interior proportions are symmetrical in the window, door, bench, china cabinet, and fireplace arrangements. The combination of Neoclassical and Craftsman styles create an interesting combination and it is bit of a surprise when transitioning from the exterior to the interior. One might expect the interior to lean slightly toward the previous Victorian period with sinuously curved molding and ornamented trim. The Townsends, however, chose the simpler, cleaner style of the Craftsman style. Not totally committed to traditional Craftsman style, they chose a light maple wood species over the darker quarter sawn oak. This choice of wood species presents a softer, elegant look that nicely compliments the Neoclassical exterior. The molding lines are angular and the pillars and newel posts are rectangular, and the interior doors have single, flat panels. The matching door and window hardware are also rectangular, but again are not typical of the Craftsman style. Rather, the background is solid and smooth and the corners are reminiscent of a Greek key design. The exterior and interior lighting that is original to the house is Neoclassical.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Tecumseh Journal Tribune, July 5, 1913.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Tecumseh Journal Tribune, October 2, 1913.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Tecumseh Chieftain, August 1, 1940.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Virginia and Lee McAlester, A Field Guide to American Houses. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 2000.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Marcus Whiffen, American Architecture Since 1780, A Guide to the Styles. 1969.

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The interior walls are devoid of wallpaper, having never been papered, and were painted in earthy solid colors of gold, green, and rust. Some of these painted walls are still visible today. The overall look of the interior is clean and elegant with the same materials and attention to detail having been applied to the first floor as well as to the second floor. Classic simplicity and elegance are the driving design guidelines of the house, and the design principles that unite the exterior and interior.

The exterior physical integrity of the George Townsend house remains good despite experiencing delayed maintenance during more than half of its lifetime. Despite the loss of some architectural details, enough design elements are intact to easily define the home as Neoclassical.

The George Townsend house is eligible under Criterion C for significance in architecture. George Townsend was a successful farmer and businessman in the Tecumseh area and was clearly interested in conveying that success through the design of this large Neoclassical style house. Townsend chose to depart from the very formal Neoclassical style and appointed the interior with Craftsman style and detailing that was popular in 1913. Despite subtractive changes in terms of integrity, this house clearly continues to convey its architectural significance as a Neoclassical style house. In 1913, the community of Tecumseh greatly admired the George Townsend house as a very modern and distinguished home, a distinction still held today.

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Tecumseh Journal Tribune or Tecumseh Chieftain; August 1, 1940.

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### **Verbal Boundary Description:**

The southern boundary of this historic property consists of the northern edge of U.S. Route 136; the western boundary is formed by a windbreak; the northern boundary is also a windbreak; and the eastern boundary is formed by a fence line. Each of these boundaries will intersect as necessary by use of an imaginary straight line.

### **Boundary Justification:**

As described above, the boundaries of this historic property include the house, the garage and land historically associated with the yard of the house itself.

#### Section 11

### **Photographs**

The following information pertains to the following 12 photographs:

George Townsend House Johnson County, Nebraska

Photographer: Stacy Stupka-Burda, NeSHPO

May 2006

Digital images in collection of the NeSHPO

Photograph	Description of Photograph	View
1 of 12	View of east façade.	W
2 of 12	View of east façade and north side.	W-SW
3 of 12	View of porch on south façade.	SW
4 of 12	View of south façade.	N
5 of 12	Exterior view, south façade and west side.	NE
6 of 12	View of west and north sides.	SE
7 of 12	Exterior detail, canted bay.	NW
8 of 12	Interior view, looking through foyer into dining room. Photographer standing in living room.	
9 of 12	Interior view of dining room and foyer.	
10 of 12	View of fireplace located in living room.	
11 of 12	View of built in cabinet in dining room.	
12 of 12	View of garage.	NE