

STATE: Pennsylvania
COUNTY: Philadelphia
FOR NPS USE ONLY
ENTRY DATE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
 ((NATIONAL HISTORIC INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM
 LANDMARKS))

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

1. NAME

COMMON:
Thomas Eakins House

AND/OR HISTORIC:
Thomas Eakins House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER:
1729 Mount Vernon Place

CITY OR TOWN:
Philadelphia

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT:
3

STATE:
Pennsylvania

CODE:
42

COUNTY:
Philadelphia

CODE:
101

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
<input type="checkbox"/> District <input type="checkbox"/> Site <input type="checkbox"/> Object <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/> Object	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Public <input type="checkbox"/> Private <input type="checkbox"/> Both	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Occupied <input type="checkbox"/> Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/> Preservation work in progress	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/> Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/> No

PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Agricultural	<input type="checkbox"/> Government	<input type="checkbox"/> Park	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/> Comments
<input type="checkbox"/> Commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> Private Residence	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify)	
<input type="checkbox"/> Educational	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Religious	<u>Cultural Center</u>	
<input type="checkbox"/> Entertainment	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Museum	<input type="checkbox"/> Scientific		

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNER'S NAME:
City of Philadelphia

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:
Philadelphia

STATE:
Pennsylvania

CODE:
42

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC:
Department of Records

STREET AND NUMBER:
City Hall

CITY OR TOWN:
Philadelphia

STATE:
Pennsylvania

CODE:
42

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:
none

DATE OF SURVEY:
 Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN:

STATE:

CODE:

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

Undergoing restoration. (Check One)

Excellent Good Fair Deteriorated Ruins Unexposed

(Check One)

Altered Unaltered

(Check One)

Moved Original Site

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Eakins House, built circa 1854, is a four-story townhouse with the first three stories of brick and the fourth of wood. White marble steps lead into the house, and the front door and the windows of the first three floors have marble sills and lintels. The rooms are high-ceilinged, and the house is very deep. Today the structure is undergoing renovation by the city of Philadelphia for use as a museum in the depressed neighborhood where it is located.

Boundaries: Beginning at a point 57' 10" east of the NE intersection of Mt. Vernon and N. 18th Streets, at the SW corner of the Eakins House lot, thence E 31' to the SE corner of the lot, thence 110' N to the NE corner of the lot, thence W 31' to the NW corner of the lot, thence S 110' to the point of origin. This encloses a rectangle of 3410 square feet that encompassed the Eakins House lot at the time of the artist's occupancy.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Pre-Columbian	<input type="checkbox"/> 16th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 18th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 20th Century
<input type="checkbox"/> 15th Century	<input type="checkbox"/> 17th Century	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 19th Century	

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known) **1857-1916**

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Education	<input type="checkbox"/> Political	<input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning
<input type="checkbox"/> Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> Other (Specify) _____
<input type="checkbox"/> Historic	<input type="checkbox"/> Industry	<input type="checkbox"/> Science	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> Invention	<input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian	_____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Art	<input type="checkbox"/> Literature	<input type="checkbox"/> Theater	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> Military	<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	<input type="checkbox"/> Music		
<input type="checkbox"/> Conservation			

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Thomas Eakins' dedication to his career and artistic principles has seldom been equalled by any other painter. Rebuffed and scorned by his native city, he held to his artistic integrity. His realism and robustness appear in his work and testify to the triumph of his vision over the pettiness of a parochial Philadelphia society.

Born in Philadelphia in 1844, Eakins lived there--except for four years abroad--until his death in 1916. He studied drawing for four years in high school, never receiving less than a perfect score in the subject. After study at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, he spent three years in Paris and a fourth in travel on the Continent. Returning to Philadelphia, he soon impressed his character and beliefs upon the consciousness of the community. His belief in realism often led to dissatisfaction on the part of his portrait subjects, whose innermost characters he exposed; even Walt Whitman was at first irritated by a portrait Eakins did in 1887, though he later praised the profoundness of Eakins' insight. Eakins was a superb teacher, but his insistence on the use of nude models forced his retirement from the staff of the Pennsylvania Academy in 1886. Somewhat ostracized, Eakins thereafter turned more and more to portraiture.

The Eakins House, located at 1729 Mount Vernon Place, was built about 1854. His father purchased the house when Eakins was two years old and the artist lived there until his death, inheriting the house in 1899. The house is presently under renovation by the City of Philadelphia, for future use as a museum.

Biography

Eakins' inherent artistic ability appeared during the formative years after his birth in Philadelphia on July 25, 1844. While in high school, he studied drawing for four years, never receiving less than a perfect score in the subject. Following study at the Pennsylvania Academy of the Fine Arts, Eakins journeyed to the center of the art world, Paris, in 1866 and remained there for three years. The best teachers became his, and although they taught him much, Eakins' point-of-view remained his own. While in Europe, the young artist also travelled, finding a trip to Spain in December 1869, especially valuable. That excursion stimulated a great admiration for the Spanish masters, for their

(continued)

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Royal Cortissoz, American Artists (New York, 1923), 77-82.
 Lloyd Goodrich, Thomas Eakins, His Life and Work (New York, 1933), 4, 74, 77, 83-84, 87, 90, 96, 97-101, 105, 111-114, 122, 141-144, 146-147, 149-150, 152-154.
 Samuel Isham and Royal Cortissoz, The History of American Painting (New York, 1927), 525.
 Metropolitan Museum of Art, Loan Exhibition of the Works of Thomas Eakins (New York, 1917) VI-VIII.
 Eugene Newhaus, The History and Ideals of American Art (Stanford, Calif., 1931), 174. (Continued)

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY	O	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN TEN ACRES																				
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CORNER																						
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APPROXIMATE ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: .1

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE: Richard E. Greenwood, utilizing material from Mary Bartlett Cowdrey's study of Theme XX: Arts and Sciences, subtheme: Painting & Sculpture for the

ORGANIZATION: National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings, 1965
Historic Sites Survey DATE: 8/14/74

STREET AND NUMBER:
1100 L Street NW

CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: D.C. CODE: 11

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION **NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION**

As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is: National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/> (NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) Name _____ Title _____ (NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) Date _____	I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register. (NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) Designated: <u>Dec 21, 1965</u> Director, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation <u>date</u> Boundary Certified: (NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS) <u>date</u> Date <u>6-19-75</u> Chief, Hist. & Arch. Surveys ATTEST: _____ Boundary Affirmed: _____ Keeper of the National Register Director, OAHPS <u>date</u> Date _____
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8. Significance: (1) Thomas Eakins House

personalities as much as for anything, and he never became their imitator. He returned to Philadelphia in 1870, where he lived until his death on June 25, 1916.

By the time of Eakins' death, Philadelphia was well aware of the artist and his character. Although not a great talker, Eakins enjoyed people and their company; and his sense of humor often appeared in the practical jokes that he worked on friends. Neither publicity nor fame pleased him--indeed, his adherence to principle eventually stimulated attacks on his work and reputation. Completely individualistic, Eakins was an agnostic, and his only version of the crucifixion shirks any religiosity, showing rather a human being dying a cruel death. He remained a bachelor until January 1884, when he married Susan Hannah Macdowell.

Eakins' "Crucifixion" illustrates the realism of the artist. Throughout his long painting career, Eakins remained the realist in immediate contact with the people and environment of his own community. There is almost nothing of the exotic, the romantic, or the literary in his work. He never labored for beautiful effect, but

Disregarding small truths, he concentrated on the most significant elements of reality, searching always for essential structure, character, and action.¹

It is not odd, therefore, that in portraiture Eakins probed his sitters for their personalities and that their portraits exposed their characters. Walt Whitman at first expressed irritation at the portrait Eakins did in 1887, but "the more I get to realize it," Whitman subsequently said, "the profounder seems its insight."² Unlike Whitman, other of Eakins' sitters could not accept the artist's insight into their inner souls.

In his painting, Eakins' concentration on his subject always was dominant. He paid little attention to design, background, or color for color's sake. At the same time, one never loses sight of his great appreciation and understanding of the human body, which he studied and knew as a surgeon would. It was Eakins' insistence that the artist know the human body, moreover, that brought him into conflict with society.

Eakins was a superlative teacher, and it was he who made the art school of Pennsylvania Academy the leading one in the country in the 1870's and 1880's. He began to teach there in 1873, immediately introducing revolutionary methods,

1.

Lloyd Goodrich, Thomas Eakins, His Life and Work (New York, 1933), 143-44.

2.

Quoted in Goodrich, Eakins, 122.

(continued)

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8. Significance: (2) Thomas Eakins House

which stimulated the students greatly. Central to his teaching was his emphasis on the study of the human anatomy, and Eakins invited surgeons to lecture on the body and dissect cadavers for his pupils. The artist also insisted upon the use of nude models, scorning the use of plaster casts of statues. Until a change in the board governing the school occurred, Eakins successfully applied his theories in spite of some criticism. But when his best defender retired from the board, Eakins' support evaporated, and a furor over his use of the nude forced his retirement in February 1886. After Eakins' departure, the school reverted to its former methods and became innocuous.

The disaster in 1886 not only affected the school, but Eakins. He had lost a position of leadership, and thereafter was somewhat ostracized by the affluent in the city. Even more important, Eakins began to turn from his earlier painting of the nude, landscape, and genre pieces, and did more and more portraiture. His concentration on portrait painting has left us with many notable portraits, but he probably would have developed his art more broadly and with even greater results if he had not been a victim of outraged Victorian sensibilities.

Since Eakins' death in 1916, his art has achieved popularity. His scenes of the Schuylkill River are now well known, as are his two famous "Clinics," "The Gross Clinic" and "The Agnew Clinic." But on the part of many there is a deeper appreciation of his portraits, such as his "Walt Whitman," which reflect a universal fascination with the individual.

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9. Major Bibliographical References: (1) Thomas Eakins House

Also, Dr. Margaret B. Tinkcom, Philadelphia Historical Commission, to
S. S. Bradford, Northeast Regional Office, National Park Service,
April 3, 1964.



Thomas Fakens House
Philadelphia Quad. Pa.-N.J. USGS 7.5'
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