

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

1. Name

historic "Templemoor" (preferred)

and/or common "Templemoor" (preferred); Post-Crawford House

2. Location

street & number State Route 20 _____ not for publication

city, town Romines Mills —X vicinity of congressional district First

state West Virginia code 54 county Harrison code 033

3. Classification

| | | | |
|------------------|---------------------------|-----------------------|--------------------|
| Category | Ownership | Status | Present Use |
| ___ district | ___ public | ___X occupied | ___ agriculture |
| ___X building(s) | ___X private | ___ unoccupied | ___ commercial |
| ___ structure | ___ both | ___ work in progress | ___ educational |
| ___ site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | ___ entertainment |
| ___ object | ___ in process | ___X yes: restricted | ___ government |
| | ___ being considered | ___ yes: unrestricted | ___ industrial |
| | | ___ no | ___ military |
| | | | ___ other: |

4. Owner of Property

name Mr. L. L. Crawford

street & number Templemoor Farm

city, town Lost Creek _____ vicinity of state West Virginia 2638

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Harrison County Courthouse

street & number West Main Street

city, town Clarksburg state West Virginia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title _____ has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes ___X 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

"Templemoor" (c. 1874) is the name of a great brick house located in a picturesque rural setting on the Clarksburg-Buckhannon Turnpike (State Route 20) approximately halfway between Romines Mills and Peeltree in Harrison County, West Virginia. The High Victorian Italianate 2½-story mansion was built for Ira Carper Post, father of Melville Davisson Post (1869-1930), the noted West Virginia short-story writer and novelist. "Templemoor" was the boyhood home of the author who would achieve national fame as a master of the detective-mystery school of fiction. The house has witnessed relatively few physical changes and remains much as it was when it was the seat of a 2000-acre farm. A working farm of 300 acres still surrounds the house.

The imposing character of the house is due in part to the deep lawn fronting upon the entrance elevation and extending approximately 150 feet to the highway. A curving carriage path extended in the 19th century across the lawn to the front porch but its former course is now marked only by several evergreen trees.

Most Italianate of the mansion's features are seen in the front elevation. A low-pitched cross gable centered with a round-topped window graces the facade above the single-bay porch. The tall narrow windows of both the first and second stories are headed with segmental brick arches and are capped with brick hoodmolds. A brick beltcourse at the frieze level provides footing for paired wooden brackets of the eaves. Alternating large (scroll) and small (rectangular) wooden brackets embellish the eaves of the east-facing and north-facing gables. This bracketwork treatment is typical of the American Italianate period house.

The combination hip and gable roof is ensheathed with well-preserved slate shingles in color bands of gray, green, and red. The red tone is especially eye-catching. Rising at the center of the roof mass is a square cupola with round-topped windows and bracketed eaves.

A single-story round parlor bay window faces north; it is roofed with a metal mansard bonnet. The south facade is pierced with a 2-story round bay window which is southwest of a significant secondary entrance. Sidelights of this doorway are tall, narrow arched panes in brilliant (original) blue glass. The sandstone foundation blocks beneath the bay windows and throughout the foundation course generally exhibit hammered/textured surfaces.

Thirteen rooms finished in the finest grade heavy walnut comprise the finished interior spaces. This display of West Virginia hardwood is unexcelled anywhere in the state. Other substantial qualities of construction and finish are evident in the massive rough walnut timbering of the full attic (A 3-flight stair rises into the attic's open cupola.) and half basement. The brick walls are 18 inches thick and the ceilings of the various hallways and rooms are 14 feet, 3 inches in height.

Grandest of the entry hall's significant features is the great walnut double door. The segmental transom comprises the door head and it is divided between each leaf of the door. The doorhead (part of the door itself) transom is glazed in brilliant blue panes.

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To the right of Templemoor's entrance hall is a double parlor and to the left a bedroom and dining room. The open stair at the left rear of the hall ascends in two flights to the second floor. The newels and spindels are quite ornate. Rising at the right rear is a 4-flight service stair leading to the attic. Original light fixtures and 19th century-style crystal chandeliers are seen in the major first floor rooms. Not original to the house are marble mantels in the hallway and right (first) parlor which were brought to the house from Fairmont in the mid-20th century.

Typical of Templemoor's tall, narrow windows are those of the parlor. Occupying the entire space of the round window bay are louvered and paneled wood blinds (shutters). Each interior window space is covered in a similar fashion. Fabric necessary to cover the double-hung windows requires the present owners to fashion curtains 100 inches in length, and this insures cover for glass sashes only.

Flooring of the entrance halls and kitchen wainscoting are carpentered in alternating planks of walnut and butternut. (The hallway floor appears in an inlay style.) Other fine woods include a dark wood (native cherry?) in the ornate mantel of the second parlor.

Templemoor is furnished in part with 19th century furniture. A number of pieces said to be original to the house are found in the first parlor, hallway, and in several upper bedrooms.

With the exception of the two marble mantels, a late detached garage and certain kitchen modernizing renovations, Templemoor remains much as it was when it was built for the Post family about 1874. Survival of fine woodwork, ornate brass hinges and other hardware lends the residence on a rolling valley floor the atmosphere of true High Victorian lineage. Its present owner, Mr. L. L. Crawford, a former sheriff of Harrison County, has sensitively maintained the house and property. Before the Crawford acquisition of the house in 1958, the property was owned by Post family heirs.

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 type="checkbox"/> agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> economics | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> literature | <input type="checkbox"/> sculpture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699 | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> education | <input type="checkbox"/> military | <input type="checkbox"/> social/ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> art | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> music | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> theater |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> WV history |

Specific dates c. 1874

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

"Templemoor", a significant example of rural Victorian architecture in West Virginia, was the boyhood home of writer Melville Davisson Post (1869-1930) who achieved national fame as a novelist, short-story author, and master of the detective-mystery field of fiction. Association of Templemoor with the youthful and young adulthood periods of Post's life is thought to have had considerable influence on the author's outlook on life, morality, and deep interest in the mysteries of nature. Post was always a West Virginian and it was to the state of his birth that he frequently returned to replenish creative energies.

Templemoor was built c. 1874 for Ira Carper Post, father of Melville, on a large tract twelve miles southeast of Clarksburg in Harrison County. The "Big Home", as the Posts occasionally called it, was constructed of locally produced brick and walnut timber in the fashionable Italianate mode. Adhering in certain stylistic respects to the Italian Villa Style, Templemoor possesses the high central cupola, low-pitched cross gable, round and segmental-topped openings, and paired brackets associated with the style popular in the United States during the mid-19th century, and deriving from the picturesque houses of Italian rural areas. No architect or builder has yet been identified as the designer of Templemoor, though the plan may have been taken in part from a 19th century plan-book and utilized by a local builder. One refined detail, notably high quality metal cresting, has disappeared from the roof of the front elevation porch. Other refined details such as the blue (nearly cobalt blue) transom glass suggest the professional touch of an architect familiar with products and materials of distant markets (Wheeling?).

Melville Davisson Post was a member of a distinguished family with deep roots in north-central West Virginia. He was born in a modest framed dwelling on Racoon Run in Elk District of Harrison County. About 1874, the family moved into a great new brick house a short distance away, and it was here that Post grew into young adulthood amid the pastoral surroundings of a large cattle and horse farm. The English sounding name "Templemoor" was given to the house by Post's mother, Florence May Divisson Post; its quaint ring echoes other local designations such as "Craigmoo" and "Peeltree". Although deeply influenced by the beauty and lore of Templemoor's surroundings, (His first playmates were sisters Maude and Emma, two of four brothers and sisters.) Post was not seriously interested in farming. Following local training he was sent to West Virginia University at Morgantown where the A.B. and LL.B. were awarded in 1891 and 1892. Post's highly successful but brief law practice at Wheeling and Grafton was terminated largely by reason of the attorney's interest in writing.

In 1896, while practising law at Wheeling, Post published a volume of detective stories, The Strange Schemes of Randolph Mason. Influenced by the analytical requirements of his legal training, Post developed the famous character Randolph Mason who used the loopholes of the law to avoid criminal justice. With this book Melville Davisson Post's career was established and his subsequent popularity secured for him a place among the most successful American writers of the early 20th century. Another

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noted work was Dwellers in the Hills (1901), a long story centering upon cattle buyers in West Virginia. The Nameless Thing (1912); Uncle Abner; Master of Mysteries (1918); The Mountain School Teacher (1922), were among other of the successful and acclaimed novels and stories by Post.

Post, a master of plotting, expressed his ideas and theories of writing in several essays in the Saturday Evening Post (Dec. 26, 1914; Feb. 27, 1915). The plot, Post believed, was more important than character. Short stories must also have popular appeal, but they must yet "enoble" and at all times must be "entertaining." The mystery and its solution must develop side by side, and Post insisted that story climax should come at the end. Contemporary critics such as Blanche C. Williams in her Our Short Story Writers (1920), accorded Post a place next to Poe. Other contemporaries, noting Post's technical achievements in the development of brilliant plots, were nevertheless less generous, because detective-mystery fiction was then held by some as a lesser branch of literature.

Following his death in 1930, Melville Davisson Post gradually fell into relative obscurity. In recent years, however, a renewal of interest has shown itself in the appearance of a number of scholarly articles on the author and one definitive book by Charles A. Norton, Melville Davisson Post: Man of Many Mysteries (1973). Reprinting of several of his books, among these Uncle Abner; Master of Mysteries (Collier Books 1962), has contributed to the renewal of interest in Post. A measure perhaps of Mr. Post's importance in his own day is indicated by a 1926 contract with American Magazine in which the author was to be paid \$5000 for each of six stories of between 4000 and 5000 words, a very substantial remuneration; and indeed substantiating to an extent a local claim that Post was America's "highest paid author". In addition to the above figure, historian Dorothy Davis in her History of Harrison County records that Post was nominated in 1922 for the Nobel Prize for his The Mountain School-Teacher, an allegorical story of the life of Christ.

Fame and fortune allowed Post to travel abroad. Post and his beloved wife Ann Bloomfield Gamble Schoolfield ("Bloom") frequented the spas of both Europe and America. An Anglophile, Post was well received in London society. Anderson, in his "Melville Davisson Post", West Virginia History, July 1967, writes:

"He began to adopt many customs of the English gentry and to wear clothing made by fashionable London tailors. Resplendent in diamonds and pearls, Bloom was presented at the court of Edward VII; an account of her presentation and a large picture of her dressed in elaborate court attire appeared in The Wheeling Register of June 30, 1907. For a season he and Bloom leased a large house and entertained the nobility and intelligentsia in baronial style. Next to England, he preferred Switzerland. The breath-taking beauty of its majestic mountains filled him with awe, and as he gazed at their snow-crowned peaks, he marveled at the overwhelming splendor the Creator had wrought for human eyes to behold. Friendly but independent, the Swiss impressed him favorably, reminding him not a little of the hill people he knew so well in his native West Virginia."

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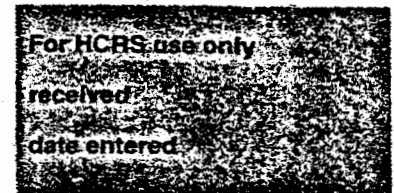
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In 1914, Post commissioned a unique and architecturally significant house a short distance from Templemoor. It was called "The Hill of the Painted Men" because Indian artifacts were discovered at the house site. Post often called it the "Chalet", an apt reference, for the building closely resembled the Swiss prototype. The "Chalet" remained the home of the author though its special charm was diminished after the 1919 death of Mrs. Post. The Chalet was destroyed in a fire about 1946.

Templemoor was always a favorite of Mr. and Mrs. Post. Although not the home of Post in later years, (he was a part-owner) the house was yet the site of his developing years as a writer. During a summer at Templemoor away from his law practice Post wrote Dwellers in the Hills, a work filled with vivid vignettes of the West Virginia hills.

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Anderson, Jack Sandy. "Melville Davisson Post", West Virginia History. (July, 1967) pp. 271-281.
- Carpenter, Charles. "The Harrison County Homes of Melville Davisson Post", West Virginia Review. (March, 1937) pp. 194-95; p. 217.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 3 acres

Quadrangle name Brownnton, WV

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

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Verbal boundary description and justification The nominated property includes "Templemoor" and surrounding lawns bounded on the East by State Route 20, on the North by a gravel driveway, on the West by a white painted fence, and on the South by a white painted fence.

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

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
|-------|------|--------|------|

| state | code | county | code |
|-------|------|--------|------|
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Rodney S. Collins, Architectural Historian

organization WV Department of Culture & History date January 6, 1981

street & number The Cultural Center 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date December 7, 1981

For HCRS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

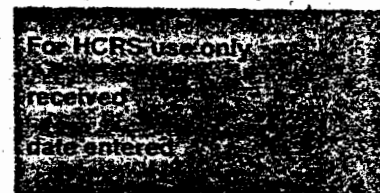
date

Chief of Registration

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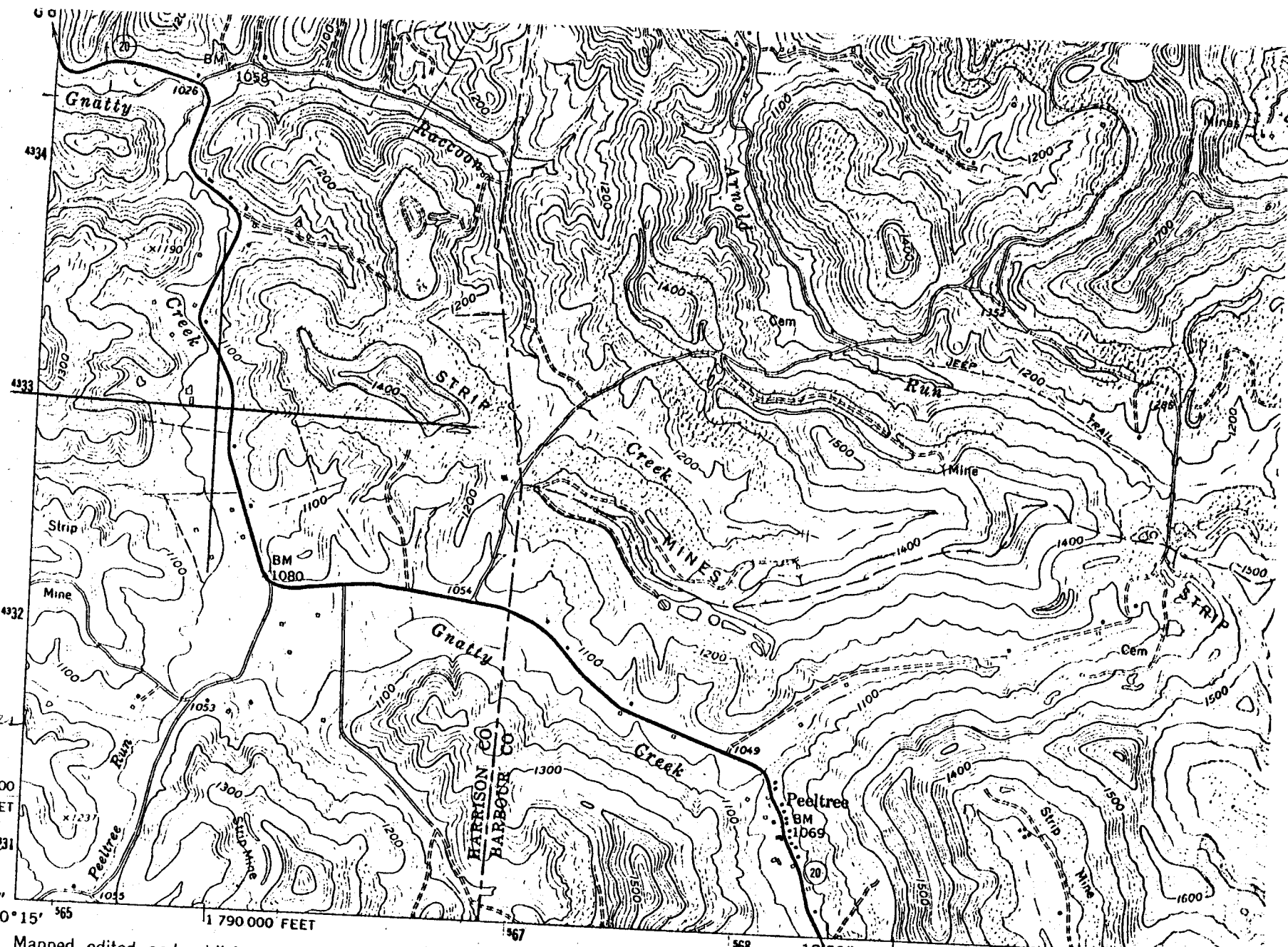
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Norton, Charles A. Melville Davisson Post: Man of Many Mysteries. Bowling Green,
Ohio: Bowling Green University Popular Press, 1973, pp. 5, 7, 11-14.

Saturday Evening Post. Dec. 26, 1914; Feb. 27, 1915.

implies
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Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
 Control by USGS and USC&GS
 Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial
 photographs taken 1957. Field checked 1961
 Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
 10,000-foot grid based on West Virginia coordinate system, north zone
 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
 zone 17, shown in blue
 Fine red dashed lines indicate selected faces and features

