United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

1. Name of Property

historic name      Vanmetre, Thomas, House
other names/site number    N/A

2. Location

street & number  3093 Golf Course Road    not for publication   N/A
city or town      Martinsburg    vicinity    ✓
state    West Virginia                           code   WV        county       Berkeley           code   003         zip code    25405

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, as amended, I hereby certify that this 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 meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

signature of certifying official/Title

West Virginia Division of Culture and History
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

signature of commenting official/Title

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. 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): _________________
5. Classification

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Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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

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7. Description

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<td></td>
<td>roof METAL</td>
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<td>other WOOD</td>
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Narrative Description

Refer to Continuation Sheets
### 8. Statement of Significance

#### Applicable National Register Criteria

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<td>A</td>
<td>Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.</td>
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<tr>
<td>B</td>
<td>Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>C</td>
<td>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.</td>
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<td>D</td>
<td>Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.</td>
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#### Criteria Considerations

Property is:

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<td>removed from its original location.</td>
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<td>a birthplace or a grave.</td>
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<td>a cemetery.</td>
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<td>E</td>
<td>a reconstructed building, object, or structure.</td>
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<td>a commemorative property.</td>
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<td>less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years</td>
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#### Areas of Significance

**ARCHITECTURE**

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**Period of Significance**

1838; 1847

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**Significant Dates**

1838; 1847

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**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

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#### Narrative Statement of Significance

Refer to Continuation Sheets

#### 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography**

Refer to Continuation Sheets

**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

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**Primary location of additional data:**

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Name of repository:

Berkeley County Historic Landmarks Commission
10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property  less than one acre

UTM References

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Verbal Boundary Description  Refer to Continuation Sheets

Boundary Justification  Refer to Continuation Sheets

11. Form Prepared By

name/title  David L. Taylor, Principal
organization  Taylor & Taylor Associates, Inc.
date  March, 2009
street & number  9 Walnut Street
telephone  814-849-4900

city or town  Brookville
state  PA
zip code  15825

Property Owner

name  Cynthia K. Nichols and Albert L. Nichols
street & number  3093 Golf Course Road
city or town  Martinsburg
state  WV
zip code  25405
7. Description

Location and Setting

The Thomas Vanmetre House (Photos 1-14) is a 2-story, 5-bay, red brick house, vernacular in character,\(^1\) with a side gable roof of standing-seam metal. It is located on a 1.51-acre tract at the end of an unnamed lane which extends northward from Golf Course Road (County Road 36), adjacent to the B & O Railroad in the Opequon District of rural Berkeley County, West Virginia, east of the county seat of Martinsburg. The nominated tract includes the Thomas Vanmeter House (Photos 1-5, 7-12) and a brick summer kitchen beside the house (Photo 6), along with a 1950s wood garage, a c. 1920 wood dependency, and a c. 1950 concrete block shed, all of which are located in close proximity to each other north of the house. The two contributing historic resources associated with the nomination date from within the Period of Significance and retain integrity in all of its composite qualities, while the other resources within the nominated tract date from outside the Period of Significance and are non-contributing features. The nomination includes only the VanMetre House and its dependencies; a large barn and several additional outbuildings on a hilltop c. 500 feet northeast of the house was formerly associated with the house but is now under separate ownership and is part of a significantly larger parcel which will be the site of a residential subdivision development.

Nominated Resources

**Thomas Vanmetre House**, residential (Photos 1-5, 7-12)

**Date:** 1838; 1847

1 contributing building

Exterior

This is 2-story central-passage brick I-house with a 5-bay facade (Photo 1), a side gable roof, and interior gable-end brick chimneys. A single-story 1½-story side-gable-roofed common bond brick kitchen section, thought to date from Thomas Vanmetre’s original 1838 acquisition of the land, is built against the east gable end of the main house and is set back from the plane of the house (Photo 1). The single-story section features a tall brick chimney on the exposed gable end; a portion of its facade is in-filled with weatherboard and a small shed-roofed wood frame addition is built onto the rear of this section (Photo 2).

The main house features a facade of Flemish bond brick (Photo 1) which is distinguished by a centered entry with a multi-light transom (Photo 2); the original front door has been replaced with a unit which matches the original in dimension. The entry is shielded by a single-story pedimented portico supported by attenuated Doric columns, with the sides enclosed within a plain spindle wood balustrade (Photo 1). This single-bay portico is similar to those appearing on other Berkeley County properties including the John Vanmetre House (NR 2005) and Miller Tavern (NR 2006).

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\(^1\)The term “vernacular” as it is applied in this context, conforms to the definition appearing in Ward Bucher’s *Dictionary of Building Preservation* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1996, p. 512):“a building built without being designed by an architect or someone with similar formal training, often based on traditional or regional forms.”
Vanmetre, Thomas, House
Berkeley County, WV

Section Number 7 Page 2

Fenestration is flat-topped, nine-over-six on the first story and six-over-six above, a pattern of fenestration often seen with Federal-style both in urban east coast centers and in the hinterlands of then-Virginia. The windows rest on extended stone sills and are capped with jack-arched lintels. Flanking the interior gable-end chimneys at attic level are fixed four-light sash (Photo 4). The roof of both the main house and the one-story section are clad in standing-seam metal (Photo 1). The side and rear elevations are of common bond brick (Photo 3, 4). Centered on the asymmetrically-massed 4-bay rear elevation is an original 6-panel wood door (Photos 3-5).

Interior

The interior of the Vanmetre house (Photos 7-12) features a central hallway with a single-run open-string stair with a modestly detailed turned newel on both the first and second floors, a balustrade with attenuated plain balusters, a locally-distinctive hexagonal banister, and a face string with stylized scroll-face string panels (Photo 7). Both the newel and the handrail appear to be of walnut. The stairway of this house is unusual in that it runs from the rear of the house toward the front, rather than the opposite. Originally, two rooms of roughly identical size flanked the hallway. A bathroom has been constructed on the northern end of the easternmost of these rooms, which serves as the diningroom. Both of these principal rooms have original fireplaces with Classically-derived wood mantles. The diningroom is also trimmed with a chair rail and a plate rail and a chimney cupboard is adjacent to the fireplace (Photo 8, 9).

The kitchen section, which, as noted above, is thought to pre-date the main house, incorporates a substantial cooking fireplace with a segmental-arched opening (Photo 10). Appended to this section on the rear is a small projecting shed-roofed “mud room” wood addition (Photo 4). An enclosed stair with steep winders accesses the unfinished upper story of this section.

The second story of the main house (Photo 12) includes a central hallway containing the upper portion of the stair balustrade along with two bedrooms with fireplaces and mantles. A bathroom and office were inserted into the northern ends of each of the upstairs rooms decades after the original date of construction. The basement is unfinished as is the attic, which is accessed by an enclosed stair from the second-story hall.

Random-width flooring is found in most rooms. Trim is simple in its detailing, including paneled doors, bull’s-eye corner blocks and reeded surrounds, and modest baseboards.

Summer Kitchen, residential dependency (Photo 6)

Description: 1-story side gable-roofed brick summer kitchen with a standing-seam metal roof and an open shed-roofed overhang. Access is through a single door on the south elevation, through a vertical board door with strap hinges. A semi-circular oven opening has been cemented over.

Date: c. 1838
1 contributing building
Garage, residential dependency (Photo 13)

Description: wood frame automobile garage with gable roof and gable-end orientation and a single overhead door on the facade, dating from outside the Period of Significance

Date: c. 1950

1 non-contributing resource

Shed, residential dependency

Description: 1-story gable-end-oriented shed of wood, finished in vertical boards, dating from outside the Period of Significance

Date: c. 1920

1 non-contributing resource

Shed, residential dependency (Photo 14)

Description: 1-story concrete block shed with rearward-sloping shed roof, in deteriorated condition, dating from outside the Period of Significance

Date: c. 1950

1 non-contributing resource

Shed, residential dependency (Photo 14)

Description: modestly-scaled shed of wood construction built on a foundation of poured concrete and finished in shiplap siding, with a rearward-sloping shed roof, dating from outside the Period of Significance

Date: c. 1920

1 non-contributing building
8. Significance

Overview

The Thomas Vanmetre House meets National Register Criterion C for architecture, for its position as a well-preserved example of a nineteenth-century Berkeley County Federal-style brick I-house with a facade finished in Flemish bond. The Period of Significance is 1838, marking Thomas Vanmetre’s acquisition of the property and the approximate date of construction of the earliest part of the house (and perhaps the adjacent summer kitchen as well) and 1847, when tax records suggest that the main house was erected. The house and its historic dependency retain integrity in its composite qualities of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and feeling. Integrity of association is not applicable to this property since its significance does not derive from its association with an important historic event or person.

History of the Property

William Gooch served as the Colonial Governor of Virginia from 1727 until 1749. Among Gooch’s priorities was the protection of Virginia’s western territory both from Native Americans and from incursion by the French. In 1730, three years after Gooch assumed office, the Governing Council of the Colony of Virginia issued orders for this section of the colony to be settled. Originally part of Spottsylvania County, a new county, Orange, was formed in 1734, followed by Frederick County in 1738. Berkeley County was formed from portions of Frederick County in 1772. Adam Stephen (1718-1791) had commanded a division during the American Revolution and became the county sheriff. In 1773 he laid out Berkeley County’s new county seat of government along the Alexandria and Warm Spring Road, the well-traveled overland route which connected Alexandria, Virginia and the town of Bath, now Berkeley Springs. Adam Stephen christened his new town Martinsburg, after his friend Thomas Bryan Martin, a nephew of Lord Fairfax. Midway into the nineteenth century the railroad came to Martinsburg and Berkeley County’s fortunes paralleled those of both the Cumberland Valley Railroad and the Baltimore and Ohio. The B & O trackage runs adjacent to the Thomas Vanmetre House.

The nominated tract was part of a 1752 424-acre land grant from Thomas, Lord Fairfax, to John Lindsey. It lies north of the Alexandria and Warm Springs Road and is reached by a lane, the right-of-way of which has been reserved in deeds throughout much of the history of the property. The Vanmetre family was among Berkeley County’s earliest pioneer families. John Vanmetre received 40,000 acres west of the Blue Ridge Mountains as early as 1730. The Lindsey tract


Adjoined property owned by John Vanmetre’s son, Abraham. Various subsequent conveyances resulted in the tract being owned by William Covenhaver who, upon his death c. 1823, left the property to his five sons. In 1836, the surviving Covenhaver sons and their wives conveyed the 107-acre tract to Thomas Vanmetre (Fig. 1). Tax records suggest that a modest improvement was made to the property in 1838; it is thought that this increase in valuation reflects the construction of the smaller brick side wing of the property and may also include the construction of the summer kitchen. This date marks the earlier of the two Periods of Significance of the property. A substantial increase in assessed valuation indicates that Vanmetre built the main house in 1847, a date which marks the second of the Periods of Significance. Thomas Vanmetre apparently flourished as a farmer and eventually owned several farms in the area. In his Will, dated 1874, Thomas Vanmetre left various tracts to his children and a life estate in the nominated property to his surviving wife, Mary McQuilken Vanmetre (1806-1889). Upon her death, the property passed to their son, Obed Vanmetre (Fig. 2). It remained in the Vanmetre family until 1926. Various subdivisions over the next decades resulted in the composition of the nominated tract which contains 1.51 acres.

Architectural Context and Applicable National Register Criterion

The Criterion C significance of the Thomas Vanmetre House is vested in its position as a well-preserved unpainted Berkeley County brick I-house which dates from the fourth decade of the nineteenth century. It represents the I-house is all of its characteristic physical components and with the Flemish bond brick finish of its facade, the property is particularly distinctive, in that most brick houses dating from this period in Berkeley County were finished in the substantially less decorative common bond. Flemish bond was more often reserved for the grander in-town residences and plantation houses, rather than the more modest I-house. This property retains its original unpainted brick finish, along with its 9/6 and 6/6 historic wood windows and historic standing-seam metal roof. Although bathrooms and a small office room have been inserted, the interior clearly retains the feeling of the original two-over-two plan which defines the I-house, along with the central hallway with an intact staircase, newel, and banister. Original trim, mantles, and doors are unaltered as well. Two features of this house are particularly distinctive. First, the stair is oriented from rear to front, rather than the opposite. This design feature has not been identified elsewhere in Berkeley County and in neighboring Jefferson County has only been identified in three properties. The Jefferson Country properties include the 1834 Raleigh Moler House and 1835 George Moler House, both near Bakerton, which are three bays in width and exhibit winder stairs rather than the open-string straight-run stair seen in the five-bay Thomas Vanmetre House. The third Jefferson County example is “Mountain View,” a side-passage house built in 1813 by James McCurdy House near Kabletown, which, according to information provided by the Jefferson County Historic Landmarks Commission, “was added to an older wing and the stair was reversed to give access to a door to that wing. It also allowed for a hall window.

The presence of a summer kitchen augments the historicity of the property in an age when dependencies such as this
which have outlived their usefulness are often lost. Summer kitchens were built as detached structures, typically not
exceedingly far from the main house with which they were associated. They provided a venue for cooking which was
away from the main house, to keep as much heat as possible away from the main house during the summer months. They
also reduced the danger of fire from the cooking processes. Some, like the one associated with this property, contained a
bake oven.

The I-house is among the most prevalent of the nineteenth- and early twentieth-century traditional house forms.
Warren Roberts described traditional architecture in *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*: “Folk architecture may be
said to be traditional architecture. . . In folk architecture, traditional plans are followed in that the owner or builder (who
may be the same person) follows a design or plan with which he is familiar either in that it is the prevailing pattern in the
area in which he lives or it is one employed by his forebears.”

I-houses are also among the most popular regional forms of traditional architecture throughout the Midwest and
Upland South. They are universally two stories in height, two rooms across, and one room deep. Some incorporate a
central hallway and a rearward-projecting ell and some are embellished with high-style ornament. The Vanmetre House,
a central-hallway I-house, lacks some of this more high-style detail, such as the returns of the cornice on the gable ends
which often appear in houses of this period. However, the rectilinear multi-light transom over the front door adds a touch
of ornament to an otherwise modest exterior and may have been inspired by builders’ guides of the day.

The I-house as a traditional house type was christened by cultural geographer Fred Kniffen in a 1935 study of
Louisiana folk house types. Kniffen (1900-1993) was a long-time Louisiana State University faculty member and a
leading interpreter of the cultural landscape who was described as having been the greatest influence on the current
generation of cultural and historical geographers. He so named these houses because the builders of most of the homes in

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3E-mail correspondence to preparer from John Allen, Jr., Chairman of the Jefferson County Historic Landmarks

6Ibid.

7Warren Roberts, “Folk Architecture,” in Richard M. Dorson, ed. *Folklore and Folklife: An Introduction*
his study area came from Indiana, Iowa, and Illinois. He expanded his discussion of this leading folk house type in his 1965 article, “Folk Housing: Key to Diffusion,” and recognized these homes as representing the dominant traditional house type found throughout the South and the Midwest.

The “I” house was first recognized in Indiana in 1930 as constituting a link with the Middle Atlantic Source area. It was recognized again in the middle thirties in Louisiana in the form of a house introduced . . . in the late nineteenth century by settlers from Kentucky, Illinois, and Michigan . . . these qualities all “I” houses unfailingly had in common: gables to the sides, at least two rooms in length, one room deep, and two full stories in height . . . These constant qualifies, a continuous distribution, still-extant logical evolutionary stages, and almost exclusive association with economic success in an agricultural society indicate a common fundamental concept. Of all old folk types, the “I” house is by far the most widely distributed, notably as a rural dwelling.8

The significance of the I-house as described by Kniffen lies in its position as one of the “humbler buildings [which] by reason of their adherence to type and numerical superiority are far more important as markers of basic cultural processes than are the uniquely designed individual structures.”9 As rural areas were settled and agricultural lands cleared, a new agrarian middle class was born and Kniffen continues, “the ‘I’ house remained the symbol of economic attainment and . . . its only requisites, one-room depth and two full stories could be in any medium.”10 Roberts notes, “by and large, the house or barn that a man builds during his lifetime may be considered his major tangible achievement.”11 Linking Roberts’ narrative to Kniffen’s description, the medium chosen by Thomas Vanmetre for his “symbol of economic attainment,” his “most tangible achievement” was brick, laid in Flemish bond, with a characteristic symmetrical five-bay facade and central-passage interior plan.

For the most part, the integrity of the Vanmeter House is intact. As noted in the aforementioned National Register Bulletin,

A property important for illustrating a particular architectural style . . . must retain most of the physical features that constitute that style. . . A property that has lost some historic materials or details can be eligible if it retains the majority of the features that illustrate its style in terms of massing, spatial relationships, proportion, pattern of windows and doors, textures of materials, and ornamentation.12

Clearly, the Vanmetre House retains the majority of its character-defining architectural features.

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9Ibid., p. 552.

10Ibid., p. 562-563.


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Vanmetre, Thomas, House
Berkeley County, WV

Section Number 8  Page 8

Summary
The Thomas Vanmetre House retains integrity and conforms to National Register Criterion C for architecture, as a nineteenth-century rural Berkeley County I-house with a facade finished in Flemish bond brick, counting among its architectural features a Classical Revival-style pedimented portico, a reversed staircase, a locally distinctive hexagonal banister on the main stair, and a detached summer kitchen.
9. Bibliography

**Public Documents**
Public records, Berkeley County Court House, Martinsburg, West Virginia.

**Books and Articles**


**Maps**


10. Geographical Data

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Being the southern portion of the tract described in Berkeley County Deed Book 784, Page 56 and depicted on Opequon District Tax Map 18 as Parcel 23.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The nominated tract contains only the 1.51-acre parcel currently associated with the house and its dependencies. The nominated area has been historically associated with the property since the original eighteenth-century land grant. Property north of the house, formerly part of VanMetre’s holdings, is not included within the nomination since that property is associated with an adjoining farm which is part of a proposed residential subdivision. The barn and outbuildings on the adjacent property do not add to the architectural significance of the house.
All Photographs:

**Vanmeter, Thomas, House**  
Berkeley County, WV  
David L. Taylor, 2009  
Taylor & Taylor Associates, Inc., Brookville, PA  

1. Facade, looking north and showing overall massing, including 5-bay arrangement, entrance and portico, fenestration, and single-story wing on east gable end.  
2. Facade, detail, showing rectilinear transom sash over main door, looking north  
3. Rear (north) elevation, looking south and showing 4-bay massing, interior gable-end brick chimneys, standing-seam metal roof and attached kitchen wing on east side with a small rear addition.  
4. Northwest perspective, looking southeast, and showing rear elevation, gable end with attic windows, etc.  
5. Rear (north) elevation, detail, showing 6-panel rear door  
6. Summer kitchen, looking northwest  
7. Interior, detail, showing stair, newel, face strings and hexagonal banister, looking southwest  
8. Interior, detail, showing diningroom mantle and chimney cupboard, looking northwest  
9. Interior, detail of diningroom, showing trim, chair rail and plate rail, looking across central hallway into livingroom  
10. Interior, detail of kitchen, showing cooking fireplace  
11. Interior, detail of livingroom, showing mantle  
12. Interior, second story, detail showing second-floor newel, turned newel, and hexagonal banister  
13. Garage, looking north  
14. View of non-contributing sheds north of the main house, looking north
Fig. 1 Though faintly shown, John Vanmeter's ownership of the nominated tract is depicted in this detail from the 1847 J. Baker Kearfott Berkeley County map. The property is indicated by the superimposed arrow.
Fig. 2  The 1894 Kearfott Berkeley County map shows the property in the ownership of John Vanmetre's son, Obed.
THOMAS VANMETRE HOUSE
Berkeley County, West Virginia

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Site Plan

Legend:

Boundary of Nominated Tract:

Key:
1 Vanmetre House
2 Summer Kitchen
3 Garage
4 Shed
5 Shed
6 Shed
Van Meter, Thomas, House
Berkeley Co., WV
Tax map showing parcel