

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

For HCRS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic "Sycamore Dale"

and/or common Gibson-Wirgman-Williams House

2. Location

street & number County Route 8 ___ not for publication

city, town Romney vicinity of congressional district Second

state West Virginia code 54 county Hampshire code 027

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Mrs. Paul Williams and heirs

street & number County Route 8

city, town Romney vicinity of state West Virginia

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Hampshire County Clerk's Office

street & number Hampshire County Courthouse

city, town Romney state West Virginia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes no

date ___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

"Sycamore Dale", or the Gibson-Wirgman-Williams House, is located in a beautiful, picturesque setting overlooking the South Branch of the Potomac River southwest of Romney, county seat of Hampshire County, West Virginia's oldest county.

"Sycamore Dale" is a two story brick "L" shaped residence that is primarily Greek Revival in nature, that except for some minor alterations, remains very much the same as when the building was completed in 1839.

The brickwork is laid in a Flemish bond arrangement and was fired nearby. The lumber for the residence was also milled nearby. "Sycamore Dale" is graced with two end chimneys and a medium gable roof of tin. The front of the house is symmetrically divided into five bays centered on a large two story, one bay wide portico, which is easily the residence's most dominant feature. This two story portico is supported by eight Tuscan columns and is surmounted on the second level with a Greek Revival style pediment with plain entablature. Both the first and second levels of this stately portico have graceful Greek Revival entrance doors, both of which are flanked by triple paned sidelights and surmounted by multi-paned transoms. There is a graceful wrought-iron balustrade on both levels of the portico, and a stone stairway by which one reaches the first level of the portico.

The five bay front elevation, which is 52 feet in width, has six over six windows, one on each level of each bay, surmounted by paneled wood lintels and flanked by wooden shutters.

The length of the ell is 87 feet. A one story, 65 foot porch runs along the outer ell. A two story, enclosed porch at the rear was an early twentieth century addition and has been removed by the present owners.

The dining room-kitchen, toward the rear of the ell, were added in 1910 by the Williams Family. This addition is roofed with beams from another structure nearby.

Much of the fine, handcarved, interior woodwork has been preserved in the house and contrasts pleasantly with Victorian-motif wallpaper. All doors in the house are also handcarved.

Here and there can still be seen bullet holes in the lumber of the house, left over from the Civil War.

The two end chimneys service four large fireplaces in "Sycamore Dale". The fireplace in the living room is new, though it harmonizes well with the others which are only slightly modified from their original appearance.

Sycamore Dale is filled with beautiful period furnishings, as Mr. Paul Williams, the last owner, was, among his other activities, an antique dealer. Most of the furnishings are either ante-bellum or Victorian in origin.

There were once extensive slave quarters on the grounds of the "Sycamore Dale" estate; these, however, are no longer extant.

FHR-8-300A
(11/78)

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"Sycamore Dale", set in its idyllic location overlooking the South Branch of the Potomac, is a well preserved reminder of a vanished way of life and of age swept away by the cruel tide of civil war.

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 type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input checked="" 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)	
					local history

Specific dates 1836 - 39

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Gibson-Wirgman-Williams House, or "Sycamore Dale" as it has been known historically, is significant as a good example of Greek Revival style architecture in a rural setting¹; but more significantly, for its close association with Civil War events in Hampshire County² and its association with several families of important significance to Hampshire County history.³

Explanatory Notes

1. "Sycamore Dale" is a significant example of Greek Revival style architecture in a rural setting. Located just outside the town of Romney, county seat of Hampshire County, West Virginia, "Sycamore Dale" was constructed between 1836-39 with the use of slave labor. The building's most prominent feature is its two story, one bay portico featuring Tuscan columns and entablature. The front doorway, or main entrance, is Greek Revival in nature and is flanked by sidelights and surmounted by a transom. The building features Greek Revival styling throughout; this aspect of its significance is more thoroughly addressed in Part 7, Description.

2. "Sycamore Dale" was situated adjacent to the Romney Covered Bridge, to the west of the South Branch of the Potomac River, and therefore a strategic location for any force attempting to take Romney. Romney itself was considered such a strategic location by both Northern and Southern forces in the Civil War that it changed hands an incredible 56 times during the war, certainly one of, if not the highest such figure in the history of that conflict. When Federal forces first moved on Romney on June 11, 1861, there was Confederate resistance to their crossing of the bridge. This resistance consisted of Confederate sharpshooters who had commandeered "Sycamore Dale" and were using it as a "sharpshooter's nest." The Federal forces, commanded by famed Union General Lew Wallace (later Governor of New Mexico, Minister to Turkey, and author of such famed historical novels as Ben-Hur), advanced across the bridge and succeeded in dislodging the Confederates. General Wallace then gave orders for "Sycamore Dale" to be burnt before proceeding on to Romney. Upon his return later in the day he found the house intact and, after heated inquiry, found that his captain had been dissuaded from the act of arson by the owner, David Gibson. After listening to Mr. Gibson's plea himself, General Wallace relented and, it is said, used the house as his headquarters for a time.

Another significant event of the Civil War to occur at "Sycamore Dale" was the surrender of the famous "McNeill's Raiders." "McNeill's Raiders" were a group of Confederate regulars, usually numbering no more than 60 to 70, who harrassed Union forces in guerrilla fashion between 1862 and 1865. Among their many exploits they captured a total of over 2600 Federal soldiers, including their famous and daring capture of Union Generals George Crook and Benjamin F. Kelly on February 21, 1865. Captain McNeill and his rangers surrendered to Union forces on April 12, 1865 on the lawn in front of "Sycamore Dale," one of the final actions of the Civil War in West Virginia.

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3. The Greek Revival mansion known as "Sycamore Dale" has been inhabited by a series of families prominent in Hampshire County social, political and economic history. The house was constructed in 1836-39 for David Gibson, the work done primarily by his over 100 black slaves.

David Gibson was a prominent Hampshire Countian. Born in Winchester, Virginia in 1795, he moved to Romney in 1814 after serving as a Sargent-Major in the War of 1812. Involved in a merchantile business, he became a director of the Valley Bank in 1823 and President of the Bank in 1837. Gibson served Hampshire County as a Justice of the Peace for over forty years (1820-1861), was Hampshire County Representative to the Virginia Assembly in 1839-40, and sat on the County Commission of 1861 that declared Hampshire County in favor of the Confederacy. In addition, David Gibson helped found the Romney Classical Institute and was a founder of the famous Romney Literary Society in 1819. His eldest son, Issac Gibson, died fighting for the Confederacy. David Gibson died in 1870.

James A. Gibson, son of David, inherited "Sycamore Dale" on his fathers death. James Gibson was also prominent in Hampshire County affairs, serving as County Assessor for two decades (1876-1896), and as a County Commissioner and a postmaster. James Gibson sold the property in the 1870's to James Wirgman, described as a "sea-captain". James Wirgman founded a short-lived newspaper in 1897 called the Hampshire Times.

"Sycamore Dale" was purchased in 1908 by Samuel Holland Williams from Wilbur Wirgman, nephew and heir of James. Samuel Holland Williams was a prominent farmer and merchant and Confederate Civil War veteran. He married Harriet Taylor, member of a locally prominant family, and together they raised nine children at Sycamore Dale. Of these nine children, nearly all rose to some degree of prominence in Hampshire County affairs: W. M. Williams, eldest son of Samuel Holland Williams, served as Mayor of Romney 1925-1927 and President of the First National Bank of Romney until his death in 1960; Paul Williams, who inherited "Sycamore Dale", succeeded W. M. Williams as President of the First National Bank and served until his death in 1980; George H. Williams, served Hampshire County in the W.Va. Senate from 1941 to 1945; Phil Williams was a prominent coal operator in central West Virginia; and Eugene Williams, who served as President of the Western Maryland Railroad Company.

"Sycamore Dale" has, therefore, been a focal point for many significant aspects of Hampshire County history for nearly a century and a half.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bi-Centennial History of Romney, 1762-1962, Romney, W.Va., 1962
 Brannon, Seldon W., ed., Historic Hampshire, McClain Printing Co., Parsons, W.Va., 1976.
 Federal Writers Project, Historic Romney, 1762-1937, Romney, W.Va., 1937.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 3

Quadrangle name Romney, W.Va.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

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1	7
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6	9	1	9	0	0
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4	3	5	6	3	8	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

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 Zone Easting Northing

C

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Verbal boundary description and justification Beginning at a point on the first contour line where it intersects an unimproved access road approximately 100 feet east of the intersection of the access road with Hampshire County Route 8, thence in an easterly direction along the northern side of the access road approximately 300 feet, thence south and south-

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

state code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michael J. Pauley, Historian

organization Historic Preservation Unit
W.Va. Dept. of Culture & History date

street & number Science & Cultural Center
Capitol Complex 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 Clarence Moran

title Director, Historic Preservation Unit date October 6, 1980

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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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CONTINUATION SHEET "Sycamore Dale" ITEM NUMBER 9 PAGE 2

Kern, John W., "Sycamore Dale" Historic Inventory Form, W.Va. Dept. of Culture & History, Charleston, W.Va., 1979.

Maxwell, Hu and Swisher, H.L., History of Hampshire County, Parsons, W.Va., 1972, c. 1897.

"Oral Interviews with Mrs. Paul Williams," June - July, 1980.

10.

south west along the eastern side of the access road approximately 400 feet to the second contour line, then generally north west following the second contour line approximately 600 feet to the point of beginning.

*note: second contour line is the 700' elev. mark (bold-brown line)
first line is the light brown line; encompasses virtually the site
bounded by the access road and the 700' elev. mark.*

ROMNEY QUADRANGLE
WEST VIRGINIA
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)
SE/4 KEYSER 15' QUADRANGLE

5262 1 NW
(SPRINGFIELD)

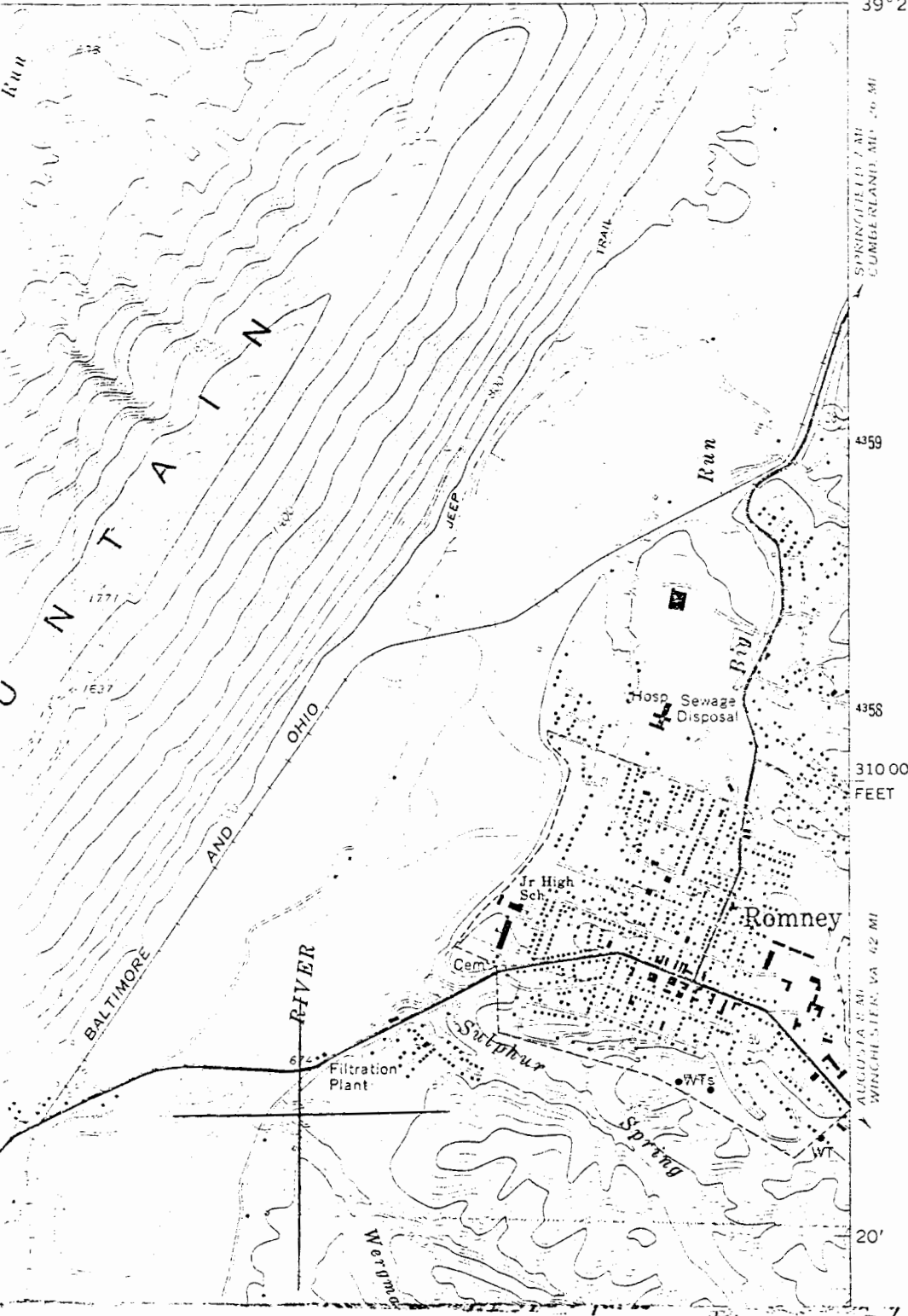
91

92

2 210 000 FEET

78° 45'

39° 22' 30"



SPRINGFIELD, PA 1/2 MI
CUMBERLAND, MD 1/2 MI

4359

4358

310 000
FEET

AUGUSTA, GA 1/2 MI
WIRCHIE, VA 1/2 MI

20'

"Sycamore Dale"
Romney, Hampshire
Co. W.V.
Romney Quad.
W. V.
17/691900/4356380

