

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*

Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Johnson, Governor Joseph, House

and or common "Oakdale"

2. Location

street & number 424 Oakdale Avenue not for publication

city, town Bridgeport N/A vicinity of

state West Virginia code 54 county Harrison code 033

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                   | <b>Public Acquisition</b>                      | <b>Accessible</b>                                   | <input type="checkbox"/> entertainment                |
| <input type="checkbox"/> object                 | <input checked="" 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 John F. McCuskey

street & number 424 Oakdale Avenue

city, town Bridgeport N/A vicinity of state West Virginia

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Harrison County Courthouse

street & number West Main & Third Streets

city, town Clarksburg state West Virginia

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes  no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records

city, town state

## 7. Description

|   |                                       |   |   |                 |
|---|---------------------------------------|---|---|-----------------|
| <b>Condition</b>                              |                                       | <b>Check one</b>                            | <b>Check one</b>                                  |                 |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent | <input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated | <input type="checkbox"/> unaltered          | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site | date <u>N/A</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> good                 | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins        | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered | <input type="checkbox"/> moved                    |                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair                 | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed    |   |   |                 |

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Governor Joseph Johnson House, also known as "Oakdale" is located on a half-acre lot that is bordered on the north by Johnson Avenue (named for the governor), on the west by Oakdale Avenue (named for the house), and on the south by Maple Street, in the town of Bridgeport, Harrison County, West Virginia. Several large, stately trees grace the grounds.

Constructed in 1818 for then Assemblyman Joseph Johnson, "Oakdale" was originally a two story frame residence. It was re-modeled about 1840 in the form of an Italianate residence. Still two stories, it is basically a rectangular, wood residence, with clapboard siding. The house is three bays wide on the front (Oakdale Avenue) elevation, and four bays long. At the north side elevation there is a three-sided projecting bay. The house is surmounted by a metal standing seam hipped roof. There is a central corbelled chimney dating from the 1818 period, as well as an end chimney that occupies the middle bay of the rear elevation and is part of the c.1840 re-modeling. The house itself rests on a cut-stone foundation, in excellent condition; obviously the work of master stone masons of the period.

The Governor Joseph Johnson House has two entrance doors. The principal entrance is at the left bay of the front facade and has a one story, one bay porch of Italianate design, being upheld by two Doric squared columns. The roof of the porch is surmounted by a delicate, spindle-like balustrade. The wood floor and steps of this porch were replaced in recent times by concrete. There is a similar, though unelevated, porch at the end bay of the Maple Street (south) side elevation.

All windows, at both first and second floors, have wooden pedimented window hoods and delicate surrounds. The windows have six over six lights on the second floor and nine over six lights on the first floor. The cornice of the roof line contains evenly spaced curved brackets that are typically Italianate.

At the rear elevation of the property there is a high hedge that encloses a small brick-paved courtyard. A small, one story, gabled roof clapboard sided building, attached physically to the residence, opens onto the courtyard. This building appears to date from the Victorian period.

The interior of the Governor Joseph Johnson House is typical of the rectangular residences of the period. Central halls on both the first and second level run along the north side of the interior, as does the main staircase with its gently turned spindle-like balustrade. Rooms with hardwood floors are high-ceilinged and rectangular in configuration.

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During the late 19th century the original one story, single bay porches described above were removed and replaced with a one story, wrap-around veranda, of the kind so popular in the late Victorian period. This Victorian addition was removed c.1970 and facsmilies of the original porches replaced.

Most of the exterior detailing described above, especially the evenly spaced brackets in the cornice, the window hoods and surrounds, and even the window light arrangement, were the result of the major "Italianization" of the house about 1840. Johnson built the house in 1818 as a young man with a new and growing family; by 1840 he had become an established attorney, state legislator, and U.S. Representative and was on his way to the state's governorship. He altered the house to reflect his changed circumstances.

The Governor Joseph Johnson House, or "Oakdale" is Bridgeport's finest example of Italianate residential architecture and is one of the county's most historically significant homes. A bronze plaque was placed on the southwest corner of the building in the late 1970's.

# 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 type="checkbox"/> military                       | <input type="checkbox"/> social/<br>humanitarian                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799            | <input type="checkbox"/> art                     | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering            | <input type="checkbox"/> music                          | <input type="checkbox"/> theater                                     |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce                | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy                     | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation                              |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900-                | <input type="checkbox"/> communications          | <input type="checkbox"/> industry               | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other (specify)<br>State History |
|   |  | <input type="checkbox"/> invention              |   |  |

Specific dates 1818, c.1840 Builder/Architect Not Known

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Governor Joseph Johnson House, or "Oakdale", located at Oakdale Avenue and Maple Street, in Bridgeport, Harrison County, West Virginia, is significant for having been the home of Joseph Johnson, the only governor of Virginia from the Trans-Alleghany region and one of antebellum Western (now West) Virginia's most significant public figures.<sup>1</sup> It is also locally significant as a good example of Italianate residential architecture.<sup>2</sup>

### Explanatory Notes

<sup>1</sup>. This Italianate residence was constructed for Joseph Johnson (1785-1877), one of the most important statesmen of western Virginia during the years before West Virginia statehood, and the only person from what is now West Virginia to serve as governor of Virginia during that period.

Joseph Johnson was born in New York in 1785 but came, with his family, to what is now Harrison County, West Virginia in 1801. A self-educated man, he became a leading businessman in Harrison County, as well as dabbling in the law. He first came to public attention in 1811 when he was elected a constable for the county. In the War of 1812 Johnson was captain of the "Harrison Riflemen", a local militia unit. In 1815 he was elected to the Virginia Assembly to represent Harrison County, and subsequently was re-elected in 1818, 1820, and 1822. While serving as a member of the General Assembly, he sponsored a bill that authorized the creation of the town of Bridgeport (1816). In 1823 Johnson ran for the U.S. House of Representatives against the incumbent, famed orator Philip Doddridge, a man whose reputation as a speaker was such that Daniel Webster once said that he (Doddridge) was the only man he ever feared in debate. After a spirited contest, Johnson defeated Doddridge and entered the House of Representatives. He was re-elected to Congress in 1825, but did not seek re-election in 1827. Eight years later (1835), however, he again sought the congressional seat successfully and was re-elected in 1837 and 1839, retiring from Congress in 1841. A delegate to the Democratic National Convention in 1844, Johnson was persuaded by western Virginia democrats to make yet another run for the U.S. Congress, and did so successfully. In 1846, rather than seek another Congressional term, Johnson ran for the Virginia Assembly against incumbent Whig John Duncan, local power in the Whig party. Johnson won the race.

A delegate to the Virginia Constitutional Convention of 1850, Joseph Johnson chaired the all-important committee on suffrage, which recommended significant changes in voting rights and also in representation; changes that favored western Virginia. In March, 1851, Joseph Johnson was elected

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Governor of Virginia by the Virginia General Assembly under the old (1829) constitution, the last Virginia governor to be so elected. In September of 1851, due to the popular election clause of the new constitution, Governor Johnson was nominated for governor by the democratic party. His Whig opponent was George W. Summers of Kanawha County, thus pitting two western Virginians against each other in Virginia's first popular gubernatorial election. As with every other contest in his life, Johnson won and thus became the last legislatively elected and the first popularly elected governor of Virginia.

As governor, Johnson favored internal improvements, free schools, and agricultural and industrial development. Significantly, he also urged the state assembly to purchase Mount Vernon, home of the nation's first president, and can thus be said to be one of America's first historic preservationists. The assembly did not heed Governor Johnson's plea, and Mount Vernon became the property of the Mount Vernon Ladies Association in 1859.

Johnson left the governor's office in 1856 and returned to his home in Bridgeport. A Presidential Elector for the Constitutional Union Party in 1860, Johnson was opposed to secession but supported Virginia after she left the Union. He was forced to leave his home in Bridgeport and live behind Confederate lines for the duration of the Civil War. There was an attempt by Union authorities to arrest him at his home in 1861, and his house was looted by Federal troops. Johnson returned to Bridgeport in 1865 and lived quietly there, a respected elder statesman (he had chaired the 1861 committee that voted to take Harrison County into secession with Virginia) until his death in 1877 at the age of 92.

The house passed to his daughter Catherine in 1877. It stayed in the Johnson family for many years, then passed out of family hands in the mid-20th century. Passing through a succession of owners, it is currently the property of the McCuskey Family. Mr. McCuskey serves as Finance Commissioner of West Virginia at this writing.

2. The Governor Joseph Johnson House is, without question, the finest example of Italianate residential architecture in Bridgeport, one of the leading cities of Harrison County, West Virginia. Constructed in 1818 and re-modeled in c.1840 as an Italianate villa for then U.S. Congressman Joseph Johnson, the house has undergone changes, in particular the removal of a late Victorian period one story veranda that was itself a latter addition to the house and has had its Italianate portico restored. Several reconnaissance level (or "windshield") surveys of Bridgeport by the State Historic Preservation Office of West Virginia have revealed that the Governor Joseph Johnson House is one of the city's most architecturally significant residences, and is without question its finest example of the Italianate period. For a more detailed description of the Italianate features of the property, See Part 7.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Blythe, Nellis, "She Walked Over the Mountains", West Virginia Hillbilly,  
Richwood, W.Va., February 14, 1976  
Davis, Dorothy, History of Harrison County, West Virginia, Clarksburg, W.Va.,  
American Association of University Women, 1970

## 10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property .5 of an acre

Quadrangle name Clarksburg, W.Va.

Quadrangle scale 1":24,000'

### UTM References

A 

|      |          |            |
|------|----------|------------|
| 17   | 36139210 | 4134185010 |
| Zone | Easting  | Northing   |

B 

|      |         |          |
|------|---------|----------|
|      |         |          |
| Zone | Easting | Northing |

C 

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

Beginning at the southeast intersection of Johnson Avenue and Oakdale Avenue; thence in a line due south 100 feet along the east side of Oak-

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Michael J. Pauley, Historian

organization Hart & Pauley

date September 1, 1986

street & number 4651 Victoria Road

telephone (304) 744-9342

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title SHPO

date February 13, 1987

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

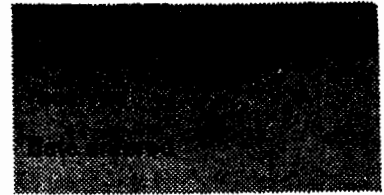
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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Part 9 Major Bibliographical References...2

Haymond, Henry, History of Harrison County, From the Earliest Days of Northwestern Virginia to the Present, Morgantown, W.Va., Acme Publishing Co., 1910

Kester, Bert E., Joseph Johnson, Governor of Virginia, Morgantown, W.Va., 1939 (Thesis, M.A., West Virginia University, 1939).

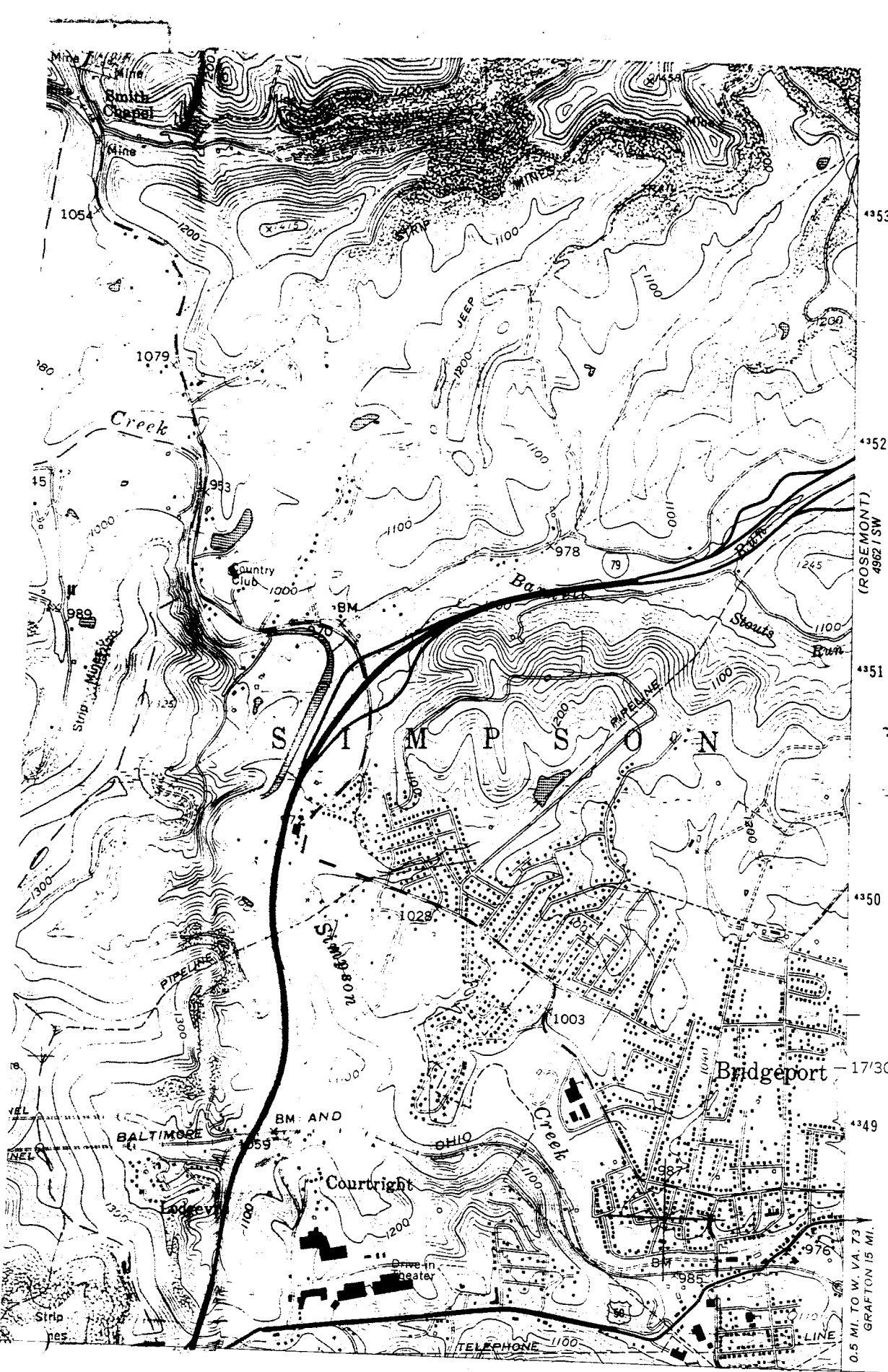
Lewis, Virgil A., History and Government of West Virginia, New York, New Century ed., American Book Co., 1912

West Virginia Heritage Encyclopedia, Richwood, W.Va., Comstock Pub., 1975

Part 10 Geographical Data....2

Verbal Boundary description....2

dale Avenue to the northwest intersection of Oakdale Avenue and Maple Street; thence in a line 75 feet due east along the north side of Maple Street to the east boundary of a brick courtyard; thence in a line 100 feet due north to the south side of Johnson Avenue; thence in a line 75 feet due west along the south side of Johnson Avenue to the point of beginning.



Johnson, Governor Joseph,  
 House,  
 "Oakdale"  
 424 Oakdale Avenue  
 Bridgeport,  
 Harrison County,  
 West Virginia

Clarksburg, W.V.  
 U.S.G.S. Quadrangle  
 U.T.M. Coordinates  
 17/363920/4348500  
 Z. E. N.

4353  
 4352  
 (ROSEMONT)  
 486215W  
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 4350  
 17°30'  
 4349  
 0.5 MI. TO W. VA. 73  
 GRAFTON 15 MI.