

George C. and Sarah Palmer House
Westmont Neighborhood
44-46 Bucknell Avenue
Johnstown
Cambria County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5699

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WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
GEORGE G. AND SARAH PALMER HOUSE

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Location: 44-46 Bucknell Avenue, Westmont, Johnstown, Cambria County, Pa.

Description: Large, tall two-family home. Side gable roof, two-and-a-half stories, wood frame with horizontal wooden siding. Two side porches with second floor rooms overhead.

History: Although legend states that this house was a farmhouse owned by the Clark family before Westmont the suburb was created, deed research could not verify this. The house was definitely constructed by 1892, when it appeared on Fulton's map of Westmont. The house may have been built in about 1890 for George G. Palmer, who acquired the property on November 1, 1889, from the Cambria Iron Company. Sarah Palmer sold the house to Katie C. Berkey on April 11, 1892. Nearly twenty years later (February 3, 1911), Berkey sold it to George Hager, who had died by 1916 when it was sold to Benjamin Benschhoff.

Benjamin Benschhoff is listed as a teamster residing on Hinckston Ave., Rosedale, in the Johnstown city directory of 1911-12. In 1918 and 1920 he is listed at 96 Second Avenue (now Bucknell), and only in 1927 is he shown as living at the 44 Second Avenue address. Benschhoff is an unusual figure because of the numerous property transactions recorded under his name. His occupation is listed as teamster and laborer at different times which would seem to indicate a modest income. Yet he is listed as the principal in approximately 100 Cambria County property transactions involving modest residential housing. He apparently inherited land from Eli Benschhoff. The elder Benschhoff's land, Minersville (see HABS No. PA-5672), increased in value as it became a location that housed many early twentieth century millworkers.

Sources:

Deed Records (76:78, 83:76, 233:604, 278:174, 417:172), Cambria County Courthouse, Ebensburg, Pa.

Fulton, John, Map Showing Westmont Borough, Cambria Co., Pa., May 27, 1892, collection of Egin Corporation, Civil Engineering, Johnstown, Pa.

Interviews with Westmont residents.

Johnstown City Directories, 1911-12, 1918, 1920.

Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Johnstown, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP). An overview of history of the city (HABS No. PA-5669) and an overview of the neighborhood of Westmont (HABS No. PA-5671) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also additional HABS reports on buildings in the downtown and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Natalie Gillespie in August 1988 under the direction of Alison K. Hoagland, HABS historian, and Kim E. Wallace, the supervisory historian of the project. Gillespie's and other project historians' work was published as The Character of a Steel Mill City: Four Historic Neighborhoods of Johnstown, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1989), edited by Kim E. Wallace. Illustrations in the publication include large format photographs taken by HAER photographer Jet Lowe and 35 mm photographs taken by the project historians.