

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

FINAL

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Old Timbers

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number U.S. Army Jefferson Proving Ground N/A not for publication

city or town Madison vicinity

state IN code IN county Ripley code 137 zip code 47250

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 _____ Date _____

State of Federal agency and bureau _____

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

Paul R. Roberts _____ January 13, 1995
Signature of certifying official/Title _____ Date _____

Indiana Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	Signature of the Keeper _____	Date of Action _____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register:	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain): _____	_____	_____

Old Timbers
Name of Property

Ripley County, IN
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER/seasonal, short-term,
recreational residence

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

CRAFTSMAN

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE/limestone

walls STONE/limestone

roof ASPHALT

other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Old Timbers
Name of Property

Ripley County, IN
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

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

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1932

Significant Dates

1932

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Elzner, Alfred O.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

National Park Service

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Old Timbers is located in Ripley County, in southeastern Indiana, in Jefferson Proving Ground. It is in the southwestern part of the county, in Shelby Township, on Big Graham Creek. The surrounding area is isolated and wooded, with rolling hills (photo 1).

The building is of masonry construction, with fourteen-inch walls. The stone is coursed, limestone rubble (photo 2). The structure is one-and-a-half stories high, and has a gable roof. The roof is slightly raised over the center section of the house, where there is a large living room. Now covered with asphalt shingles, the roof originally had wood shingles. In plan, the building is a long rectangle, with gable-roof extensions.

The entry to the house is near the north end of the front (west side) of the building (photo 2). The door is composed of vertical boards, and has four lights in the upper part (photo 9). Doors and windows throughout the house have distinctive iron hinges and handles, forged by students at Berea College in Berea, Kentucky, an institution which promotes the study of Appalachian crafts. Above the door, on the roof, there is a dormer window with a jerkin-head roof.

To the north of the door are two window openings, each with a pair of wood casements with iron hinges. Each casement has three lights. Windows have stone sills. There is a long, timber lintel which extends above the door and two windows to the north. All windows in the house are similar to these. To the south of the door is a wood, casement window, with a wood lintel. Just south of this window, a wing, which houses the kitchen and a servant's room, extends to the west. There are several small, two-light, windows on the north side of this wing, and larger windows on the west and south sides.

Beyond the kitchen wing, there is an enclosed porch (photo 3). In the center is a board door flanked on each side by a window with two casements. These windows extend from the base of the wall to the eaves. On the other side of each of these windows is a stone pillar. Beyond the stone pillars on each side is a set of three like windows, making this part of the facade almost entirely glazed. Above this section on the roof is a continuous shed dormer with several small, grouped, casement windows. Beyond this section are three small windows, and then another cross-gable extension, which houses a bedroom (left in photo 5).

The south facade (photo 5) has a small gable-roof section which extends from the main part of the facade on the first level only. The main part of the facade has a window with a pair of casements on the first floor. In the gable is a large opening with a pair of casements in the center, which is flanked by a single casement on each side, separated from the pair by a wood mullion.

The east facade has relatively few projections. The main one is an entry for the large living room (photo 7). Extending the width of that room across this facade is a stone terrace with a railing composed of stone posts and wood beams. The terrace overlooks Big Graham Creek, which runs through a ravine below (photo 8). Windows are almost continuous on the living room part of the

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east facade. Besides these windows, there are several similar, casement windows. There is a shed roof dormer with three pairs of casements near the north end, and another dormer near the south end with a jerkin-head roof. The north facade has three windows on the ground floor and one in the gable.

The house is relatively plain on the exterior. The few decorative elements include the iron hinges on windows and doors, and exposed rafters under the eaves. There are six, plain, stone chimneys.

A few changes have been made to the house since 1940 when it was acquired by the U.S. Army. Wood shingles on the roof and dormers were eventually replaced with asphalt shingles. Screen doors were added.

The door near the north end of the west side of the house opens onto a corridor (photo 9). At the north end of the corridor is a game room. On the east side are a storage room and gun room. On the west side are a kitchen and serving room. Beyond the kitchen is a servant's bedroom and bath. At the south end of the entry corridor is a large living room, 60 feet long and 22 feet wide (photos 11, 13). There are inglenooks with large stone fireplaces at each end of the room (photo 12). The ceiling extends one-and-a-half stories to the roof, where structural elements - heavy, hand-hewn timbers - are exposed (photo 14). The timbers used in the construction of the house were taken from pioneer barns in the area. The east side of the living room opens to the wood terrace which overlooks Big Graham. To the west is an enclosed porch. On the south side of the house are three bedrooms and bathrooms.

Stone stairways wind around the fireplaces, accessing the second story of the building. On this level, a balcony overlooks the living room on the west, south, and north. On the end of the second story are bedrooms, which served as dormitory quarters for the children and their guests (photos 16, 17).

The interior of the house reflects the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement in America. The materials used were native to the area. Local craftsman, using traditional construction methods were employed to construct the building. There are wood floors throughout. Walls are the exposed structural stone (photo 11), with a few exceptions, such as in rooms contained in the roof or in the corridor, where they are wood (photo 16). Other structural elements such as posts, girders, rafters, window sills and lintels, and interior stone columns, are generally exposed. Hardware on windows and door, fabricated by students at Berea College, is hand-forged iron, and varies in design throughout the house (photos 9, 10, 15).

Berea College students also made much of the original furniture for the house: heavy oak tables, oak chairs with rush seats woven in distinctive patterns, and oak lounge chairs upholstered in hand-woven fabrics. Some of this furniture is now housed in the Tyson Library in Versailles, the Ripley County seat.

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A few changes have been made to the house since it was acquired by the U.S. Army. Wood shingles on the roof and dormers were eventually replaced with asphalt shingles. Screen doors have been added. In general, however, the house retains a high degree of integrity. Other buildings on the property were removed. There is known to have been a saddle barn and a caretaker's house when the Thomsons occupied the property.

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Old Timbers is significant under Criterion A, in the area of Entertainment/Recreation, and under Criterion C, in the area of Architecture. The building was constructed for use as a hunting lodge for industrialist Alexander Thomson. A distinctive stone structure which exhibits the influence of the Arts and Crafts movement, it was the last commission of Cincinnati architect Alfred O. Elzner (1845-1935).

History

Ohio hunting laws led some Cincinnati businessmen to build retreats in Indiana, where the laws were less restrictive. One of these men was Alexander Thomson, owner of Champion Paper Company of Hamilton, Ohio, one of the largest paper companies in the world. Thomson wanted a country place to entertain friends and business associates. He purchased Emmett Williams' Ripley County farm in 1928. Thomson acquired adjacent farms over the years, and eventually he owned approximately 1,400 acres. At least one other Cincinnati businessman is known to have built a hunting lodge in Indiana.

Cincinnati architect, Alfred O. Elzner, was hired to design the lodge. Elzner accepted the commission for the Thomson house though he was retired. Limestone quarried near the site, and timbers from old barns in the area (hence the name, Old Timbers) were used to construct the building. The distinctive iron hardware on doors and windows was fabricated by students at Berea College in Berea, Kentucky. The lodge was built at a cost of about \$75,000.

Construction of the large house, started in 1929 and completed in 1932, created a number of jobs. Many Ripley County families, struggling through a recession in agriculture in the 1920s, were grateful for the work. Among the local men who worked on the project were Frank Miller, Lawrence Miller, and James Beach, who quarried the stone; August Rake, head stonemason; and Charles Miller, head carpenter.

It was originally planned that Old Timbers would have bedrooms off the west side of the second floor balcony. After the stock market crash in 1929, these rooms were eliminated in order to save money. Dormitory style rooms were built on each end of the balcony instead. Besides the house, a saddle barn and caretaker's house were constructed on the property. These two buildings have been removed.

After the house was completed, Charles Miller and his wife Hallie worked as caretakers. Everett Glauber, a local man who had hauled stone during construction of the house, worked as a hostler. Emmett Williams continued to live in his old house and managed farming operations. The Thomsons stayed at Old Timbers on weekends, and often had guests. One frequent visitor was Governor Leslie of Indiana.

Near the end of 1940, the U.S. Government announced the establishment of a proving ground to be built near the new ammunition plant at Charlestown. Fifty-five thousand acres of land in Ripley, Jennings, and Jefferson Counties would be purchased for the proposed facility, which would become Jefferson Proving Ground. Old Timbers was included in the proving ground site. Alexander Thomson had died in 1939. The rest of the Thomson family shared the sorrow of many of the other families in the area at having to leave their homes. Most of the buildings on the proving ground were destroyed or moved. Old Timbers was left intact to serve as a retreat for military personnel.

It is thought that other Ohio businessmen had hunting lodges in southern Indiana, though probably none were as large and well-crafted as Old Timbers. At about the same time that Alexander Thomson bought the land for Old Timbers, Powell Crosley, Jr., a Cincinnati businessman, acquired the land for his own retreat in neighboring Jennings County. This is now Crosley Fish and Wildlife Area, a state-owned property. The Crosley lodge has been removed.

Architecture

The architecture of Old Timbers reflects ideas of the Arts and Crafts movement, popular at the time of its construction. The movement originated in Europe, and was championed by British architect, William Morris Hunt. The movement was a reaction to the machine age, responsible for the mass-produced, overused ornamentation of the Victorian era. Many young American architects, including Frank Lloyd Wright and Charles and Henry Greene, embraced the Arts and Crafts philosophy, which promoted the use of simple designs, native materials, exposed structural elements, and traditional craftsmanship.

There are a few Arts and Crafts style houses in the city of Batesville, in Ripley County. Buildings which have a rating of "outstanding" (considered to be eligible for the National Register of Historic Places) in the Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory include the Hillenbrand House on N. Walnut Street (07004), the Weber House on N. Walnut Street (07005); and the Hillenbrand House at 129 N. Main Street (07023).

In rural Ripley County the influence of the style is seen occasionally in small houses of the Bungalow style, which employed elements of the Arts and Crafts mode. In Shelby Township, where Old Timbers is located, no examples of the Arts and Crafts or Bungalow styles were identified in the Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory.

The west half of Shelby Township was acquired in 1941 for Jefferson Proving Ground. In this part of the township, few structures remain from the pre-World War II era. The east half of the township is rural in character. Most resources identified in the Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory in this area are 19th and early 20th century houses, bridges, and farm buildings of vernacular types. The only structures to receive a rating of "outstanding" were a

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Section 8 Page 3 Old Timbers

stone, one-room school house (45001), and a timber-frame, round barn (45015).

When the Thomsons first came to Shelby Township, they recognized the building traditions of the area as manifested in these structures. As they began to discuss the design of the house with Alfred Elzner, it was decided that native materials should be used. Since there were limestone quarries in the area, and local craftsman with the necessary masonry skills, stone was selected as the material for the walls. Elzner and the Thomsons admired the local pioneer barns, with their massive, hand-hewn timbers. Timbers from a number of barns were acquired for use in the structure. Having designed its buildings, Elzner was familiar with Berea College, where traditional craft techniques are taught. It was decided that hardware for doors and windows, as well as some of the furnishings for the house, would be fabricated by students of that institution.

Old Timbers was an unusual commission for Elzner, a nationally-known architect recognized for his pioneering work in reinforced concrete. Elzner was born in Cincinnati and trained as an architect at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology. He returned to Cincinnati in 1887 and formed a partnership with George M. Anderson. They designed the Ingalls Building, the first reinforced concrete skyscraper in the world, completed in 1903. Other works of the firm included the Denton Building and Children's Hospital in Cincinnati, the Hot Springs Hotel in Hot Springs Virginia, and Berea College in Berea, Kentucky.

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An Atlas of Ripley County, Indiana. Philadelphia: D.J. Lake and Company, 1883.

Aerial Photo of Old Timbers and Vicinity (1937), Collection of National Archives Cartographic and Architectural Branch, College Park Maryland.

"Architecture Loses Noted Figure," Cincinnati Enquirer, November 27, 1933.

Baker, Sue. For Defense of Our County: Echoes of Jefferson Proving Ground. Indianapolis: Guild Literary Services, 1990.

"Death Ends Distinguished Career; Alexander Thomson, Industrialist Was Head of Largest Paper Firm," Cincinnati Enquirer (June 1939).

"Hunting Lodge for Mr. and Mrs. Alex Thomson," Construction blueprints (partial set), Elzner and Anderson, Architects, Cincinnati, Ohio, March 1930 (in possession of U.S. Army Jefferson Proving Ground).

Indiana Department of Natural Resources, Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology, Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory, 1985 (Ripley County).

Ripley County History Book Committee. Ripley County History, 1818-1988. Dallas: Taylor Publishing Company, 1989.

Thomson, Chilton. Old Timbers. Smithtown (New York): Exposition Press, 1981.

Thomson, Chilton, Cleveland, Ohio, son of Alexander Thomson. Telephone interview, February 10, 1994.

Withey, Henry F. Biographical Dictionary of American Architects, Deceased. Los Angeles: New Age Publishing Company, 1956.

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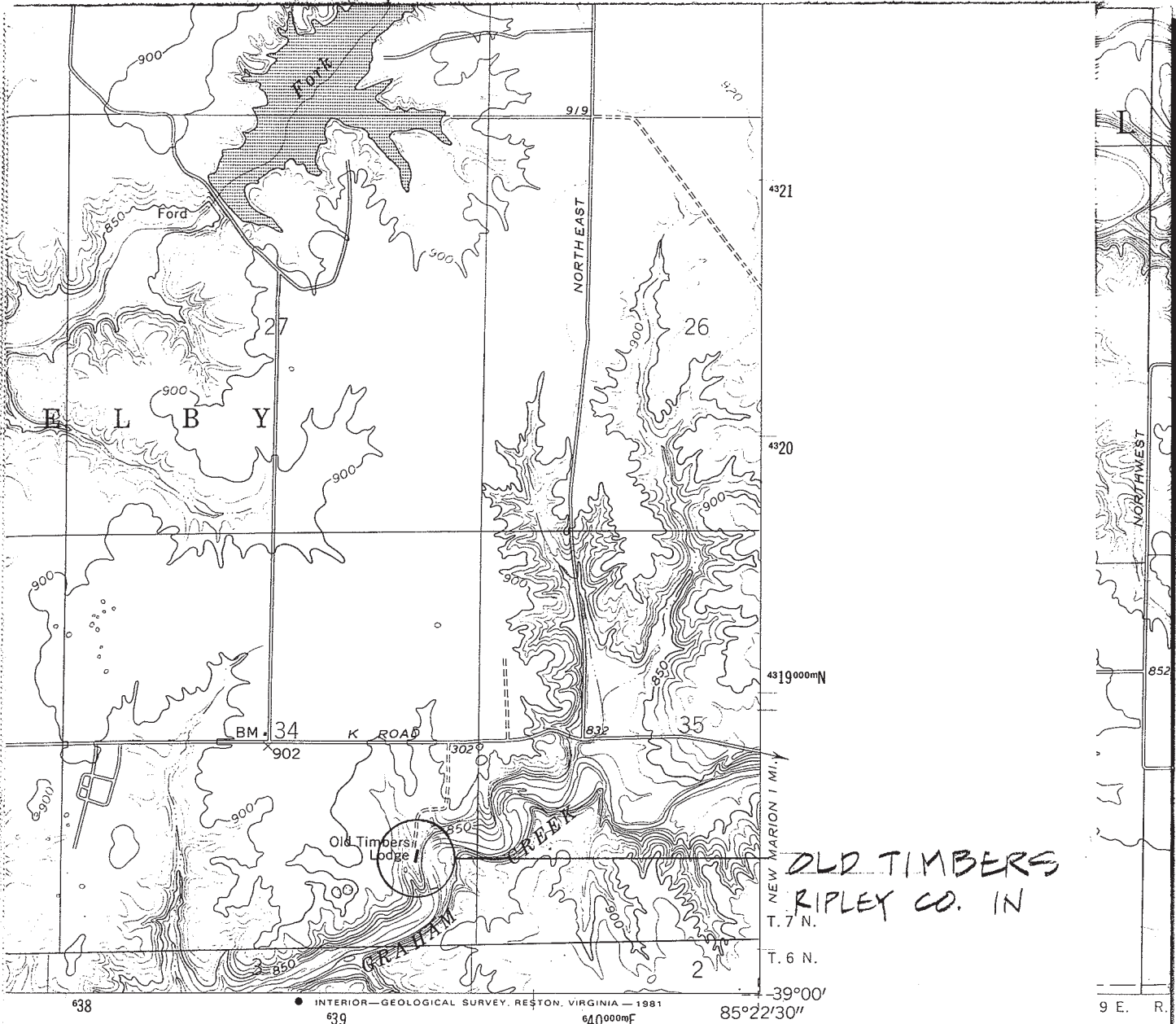
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Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at a point on the north bank of Graham Creek approximately 650 feet west of the east boundary of Section 34, Township 7 North, Range 10 East and approximately 1,200 feet north of the south boundary of said section; thence northwest along a line parallel to the northeast side of Old Timbers approximately 150 feet; thence southwest along a line parallel to the northwest side of Old Timbers approximately 200 feet; thence southeast along a line parallel to the southwest side of Old Timbers to the north bank of Graham Creek; thence northeast along said bank to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses an area necessary to include the resource and maintain its relationship to its historic surroundings.



OLD TIMBERS
RIPLEY CO. IN

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty ————— Light-duty —————
 Medium-duty ————— Unimproved dirt - - - - -

U. S. Route



RANGLE LOCATION

own in purple compiled in cooperation with State of
 cies from aerial photographs taken 1978 and other
 This information not field checked. Map edited 1980

HOLTON, IND.
 N 3900—W 8522.5/7.5

1959
 PHOTOREVISED 1980
 DMA 3962 III SW—SERIES V851

(REXVILLE)
 3861 IV NE

