

Elizabethtown College 125th Anniversary
National Historic Preservation Trust This Place Matters Campaign & Campus Historic Building Survey
Based on the National Parks Service Historic American Building Survey
2024 Summer Creative Arts and Research Program SCARP
Ava Barton Class of 2027
Jean-Paul Benowitz, Director of Prestigious Scholarships and Fellowships and Public Heritage Studies



Troy M. Thompson (1895 – 1971)

Elsie S. Thompson (1893 – 1985)

“Dr. Troy Melvin Thompson was born on October 16, 1895, in Viroqua, Vernon County, Wisconsin. He died on June 11, 1971, at age 75 in Lancaster County Pennsylvania and was buried at the Mount Tunnel Cemetery in Elizabethtown, Lancaster County, Pennsylvania. His parents were Andrew B. Thompson (1862-1908) and Hilda T. (Bergoust) Sidie (1874-1964). In 1924, Thompson married his wife Elsie Shelly (Shantz) Thompson (1893-1985).

He was graduated from the Viroqua (Wis.) High School; had two years of pre-medical schooling at Wisconsin College, and received his doctor of medicine degree from Temple University, Philadelphia. He served his internship at Temple University Hospital, and also served for a short time as a physician at the Masonic Homes, here, prior to opening his private practice in 1925 in the former Horst building, Center Square, which he later bought, and is now occupied by the Gladell Shop and apartments.”

Dr. Thompson was best known as the first mayor of Elizabethtown as well as a prominent physician there since 1925. He was elected as Elizabethtown's first mayor in 1961 and served for four years. Before he was mayor the borough had a borough council form of government. He lived at 122 W. High St., in Elizabethtown with his wife, Elsie Thompson. Dr. Thompson showed a great interest in the success of young people. "He helped send eight men and women through college where they studied in such fields as music, medicine, art, nursing, and agriculture. For years he underwrote an annual banquet for athletes at Elizabethtown College, Elizabethtown High School, and the Patton School for Boys.¹"

Elsie Shelly (Schantz) Thompson was born on May 1, 1893 in Allentown, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania. She died on June 20, 1985, at age 92 in Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania. Her parents

¹ “Dr Troy Melvin Thompson,” Find a Grave, accessed June 24, 2024.
<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/133365439/troy-melvin-thompson>.

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were Johannes “John” Schantz (1870-1924) and Laura Smith (Shelly) Schantz (1872-1944). Elsie Thompson assisted her husband in his Elizabethtown practice for many years. She was a member of St. Paul’s United Methodist Church, the Order of Eastern Star, Chapter 407, the Elizabeth Hughes Society and the Business and Professional Women’s Club, all of Elizabethtown.²

In 1949, Dr. Thompson came forward with an offer to donate a twenty-five-acre site on East High Street for the proposed Junior-Senior High School in Elizabethtown.³

"The Etownian of March 26, 1965, gives an account of the deeding of a farm owned by Dr. Troy M. Thompson to Elizabethtown College. The valuable 110-acre farm adjoining the Elizabethtown Borough School grounds thus became the property of the College. The offer of Dr. Troy Thompson was made to the College on December 11, 1964, and was favorably received by the Executive and the Finance Committees of the Board of Trustees. The farm was given to the College in exchange for an annuity. President McAuley, commenting on the transfer, said:

This action by Dr. and Mrs. Troy M. Thompson brings highly valued property to the College and is one of the larger of such transfers received by our institution. We are deeply indebted to the Thompsons for their support of our program.

Dr. Thompson has long been associated with the College through his position as physician for its athletic program.⁴ He was honored last spring when the College presented him with a Citizen's Citation in recognition of his community service.⁵ Troy M Thompson was also an honorary member of the board of trustees in 1968.⁶

The Alumni Physical Education Center was dedicated on January 7, 1970. The ground breaking ceremony for the site was held on September 13, 1968. The people participating in the ground breaking included Troy M. and Elsie Thompson who were donors of the Gymnasium Section of the Center.⁷ The center would be known as the “Thompson Gymnasium.” The gym has a capacity of 1,000 spectators and the



² “Elsie Shelly Schantz Thompson,” Find a Grave, accessed June 24, 2024.

<https://www.findagrave.com/memorial/133365407/elsie-shelly-thompson>.

³ Richard Kerwin MacMaster. *Elizabethtown: The First Three Centuries* (Morgantown, PA: Mastof Press, 1999), 242

⁴ Kory Trout, “Horst Hall: 2 South Market Street; Elizabethtown, Pennsylvania,” May 17, 2017, <https://www.etown.edu/programs/honors/files/Horst%20Hall.pdf>; Jean-Paul Benowitz, *Elizabethtown College* (Charleston, SC: Arcadia Publishing, 2014). 21

⁵ Ralph Schlosser, *History of Elizabethtown College 1899 - 1970*. (Lebanon, PA: Sowers Printing Company, 1971), 261.

⁶ Schlosser, 294.

⁷ *Ibid.*, 314.

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building also houses the Alumni Pool, six locker rooms, an athletic training room, and weight room.⁸

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⁸ "Thompson Gymnasium - Facilities - Elizabethtown College Athletics," Elizabethtown College Athletics, accessed June 24, 2024. <https://etownbluejays.com/facilities/thompson-gymnasium/2>.