

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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# NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*  
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

## 1 NAME

HISTORIC

Hooker-Ensle-Pierce Home

AND/OR COMMON

Pierce Home

## 2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

6531 Oak Hill Road

CITY, TOWN

Evansville

VICINITY OF

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

8th

STATE

Indiana

CODE

018

COUNTY

Vanderburgh

CODE

163

## 3 CLASSIFICATION

### CATEGORY

DISTRICT

BUILDING(S)

STRUCTURE

SITE

OBJECT

### OWNERSHIP

PUBLIC

PRIVATE

BOTH

### PUBLIC ACQUISITION

IN PROCESS

BEING CONSIDERED

### STATUS

OCCUPIED

UNOCCUPIED

WORK IN PROGRESS

### ACCESSIBLE

YES: RESTRICTED

YES: UNRESTRICTED

NO

### PRESENT USE

AGRICULTURE

COMMERCIAL

EDUCATIONAL

ENTERTAINMENT

GOVERNMENT

INDUSTRIAL

MILITARY

MUSEUM

PARK

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

RELIGIOUS

SCIENTIFIC

TRANSPORTATION

OTHER:

## 4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Neil V. & Jane E. Pierce

STREET & NUMBER

Route 3, Box 148, Oak Hill Drive

CITY, TOWN

Evansville

VICINITY OF

STATE

Indiana

## 5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

County Recorder's Office, Room 231

STREET & NUMBER

City-County Bldg, Civic Center Complex

CITY, TOWN

Evansville

STATE

Indiana

## 6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

DATE

FEDERAL  STATE  COUNTY  LOCAL

## 7 DESCRIPTION

### CONDITION

EXCELLENT  
 GOOD  
 FAIR

DETERIORATED  
 RUINS  
 UNEXPOSED

### CHECK ONE

UNALTERED  
 ALTERED

### CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE  
 MOVED DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The house sits at the end of a tree-lined, 275 ft. front lawn. It faces west. It is two-storied and has white weatherboarding with green trimming on windows, front door, and screens. The house measures 50 ft. across the front and has a screened front porch with four large square columns all across the first floor. Four windows with six-pane sashes and a centered casement window are visible above the long porch roof. A driveway leads up the right side of the lawn and encircles the house. Many trees and shrubs, some decades old and some young ones, surround the house and are scattered about both front and back lawns. The house is approximately 40' deep on the north side and about 27' deep on the south. A portion of the north side to the rear is one-storied. Beyond the house about 46' north and 60' to the east, there is a neat, white-framed garage situated among trees.

Inside downstairs, there are two living rooms with a front hall between them across the front of the house; behind those rooms are a kitchen, dining room, bedroom, bath and laundry room. Floors throughout are mainly narrow oak flooring, dark-stained with hot linseed oil. The walls are papered, and furnishings are principally antique, many of family origin.

The present house evolved by stages from a 20 ft. square log cabin built in 1839. It was built on a slight rise and faced west. On the north wall there was a large brick fireplace with a small closet to the right and a two-sash window to the left. There was a centered front door onto a narrow front porch on the west wall of the cabin. On the east wall there was a solid wooden door of unusual construction. We have always called it a "batten" door. Seven, one-inch thick boards of widths varying from 3 1/2" to 5 1/2" are tongue-and-grooved to fit tightly together. They are stabilized by two, one-inch thick boards, beveled and wedged-shaped, which were driven through five-sixteenths inch deep slots from right to left. One board is about 4 1/2" down from the top of the door and the other is about 5 1/2" up from the bottom. On the south wall of the cabin a ladder led to a loft above. From floor to ceiling, the walls measured just under seven feet. The gable roofline of the cabin extended on the west side to cover a narrow porch of probably 4 ft. The windows had glass panes, a prerequisite of the bride who would occupy the cabin, and the original sashes which are still in use, contain some of those first panes. These are identified by the wavy lines and the bubbles in the glass. Logs to build this cabin were hewn from virgin trees on the government grant. The huge sills, some still with tree bark and some hand hewn, are visible from the present basement.

A short time after the first cabin was built, a second cabin, approximately 18' square, was erected about nine feet south, and the roof of the original cabin was extended to cover both log structures. A cellar for storage of root vegetables had been dug and the cabin placed over it. Cellar walls were brick, but the floor was earthen. An outside door, almost level with the ground, could be lifted, revealing a ladder down into the cellar. This second cabin also had two, two-sash windows and a door opening onto its front porch. On the north wall a door opened into the space between the cabins. On the south wall there were built-in closets and shelves on each side of a centered, 6 ft. wide chimney. A small grate was used for heating this room, and there was no loft above. In here the walls were plastered. One section on the east wall was painted black, and on that portion Levi Hooker's children practiced their spelling words and

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arithmetic combinations daily. Probably no more than ten years later a 12' x 14' kitchen and a back porch were added behind the original cabin. This room had a small chimney at the east end. Behind the second cabin a 10' x 17' bedroom, also with a small chimney, was added. Now the space between the cabins, was floored and the area became an open-ended breezeway, no longer a "dog trot".

During the 1880's major changes to the "double cabin" house were made by the second generation. My great aunt, Jennie Hooker, was teaching then, and she instigated and probably paid for these changes. The breezeway was enclosed, and there was a third door opening onto the front porch, which by then became a continuous 48 feet across the two cabins. A front hall and a back hall with a door between them and the entire structure was covered with weatherboarding. An enclosed stairway, which opened into the back hall, was built against the north wall of the front hall, forming a closet under the steps. Very wide poplar boards were used for the flooring in that area, and a skylight in the roof was the only source of light. To the left was attic space under low rafters, and to the right there was a stepdown into what used to be the loft over the original cabin. That room was plastered, and the ceiling came down at a slant within a very few feet of the floor. There was a small window on each side of the big chimney, and a "monkey stove" was used for heating the room.

The first remodeling was completed in 1917 by the third generation. The entire house was raised so that a brick foundation could be placed under it. The roof over the major part of the house was raised about six feet, and two large bedrooms developed over each of the log cabins. Above the downstairs halls there was one large hall upstairs with a dressing room at the west end and at the east end the beginnings of a bathroom and a glass door onto a 10' x 17' sleeping porch. On the east side of that porch and across the south side there was a sturdy railing and protective canvas curtains, which could be buckled together when rolled down to the floor on the heavy poles through the hems. Downstairs, the room below the sleeping porch was remodeled into a kitchenette and a breakfast room. The back hall became a dining room, and a door to the inside cellar stairs replaced the former door to the upstairs. A furnace room was put behind the old cellar by excavation, and the floors in the basement were concreted. Central heating was installed. An outside stone stairway was placed at the south end of the house. Behind the first kitchen on the north, a lean-to summer kitchen equipped with sink and pitcher pump was added, and about two-thirds of the back porch was enclosed to make a dressing room. The remaining one-third of the porch was screened, and with the addition of a small porch for the kitchenette, the house then had two back porches. It still has them. In the front hall downstairs, the old stairway was replaced by an open one which went from the front hall to the upstairs. It had a chaste mahogany newel post. Matching handrail and spokes went up the stairs and continued on to outline the stairwell in the upstairs hall. The stair steps were stained mahogany and the risers were painted white to match the woodwork throughout the house. Hardwood floors were installed in the major portions of the house. The old narrow front porch was replaced by a 48' x 7' one, which was screeded about fifteen years later.

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In 1937 the fourth generation made its first major change. The two front doors of the log cabin rooms were eliminated, leaving only the center front door. The roof above the sleeping porch and bath was raised to allow a bedroom and a bath with 8' ceilings to replace those cramped areas. The fifth generation children were born and grew up in the house as it was then remodeled. In 1966 the kitchenette and breakfast room were combined into a modern kitchen with Early American decor, but no exterior changes were made. In 1968 the lean-to summer kitchen was torn off. The roofline of the first kitchen to which it was attached was extended about seven feet east, and the summer kitchenette became a laundry room. The downstairs dressing room was remodeled into a large bathroom.

The log cabins are still there and are now the foundation of the airy, comfortable country home, which five generations of the same family have called home.



## 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/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

Levi Hooker

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This house evolved from the basic double-cabin design of two log cabins with "dog trot" space, or breezeway, between them. Logs to erect the cabins were obtained from the woods on general grants, so the history was repeated by generations. Some of the logs are hand hewn, and some still have the bark on them. Each generation made its additions and changes until the house became the big, comfortable structure it is now. It is significant as an example of vernacular architecture exhibititry. Changing consists in design and use.

Levi Hooker, owner and builder of the original cabins, was a strong believer in education. He promoted education in his home with his eight children and in the community. His children were taught and made to practice the basics of spelling and arithmetic, and he spearheaded the building of a schoolhouse nearby, which was named for him, Hooker School.

Records show that in 1853 and 1869 Levi Hooker was selected, whether by appointment or election is now clear, as Justice of the Peace. According to family stories, court was held in this home in the south cabin, and there he judged petty offenders, performed marriages, and took care of minor legal matters for the community residents. His grandson, James Ensle, became a lawyer, was active in the Democratic Party, and served one term as a State Representative.

Levi Hooker was also active in the Underground Railroad before and during the Civil War. After hiding the runaway slaves no longer than necessary, they were transported to another station a few miles north hidden in a wagonload of straw or hay. While they were hiding here, the slaves were housed in a structure in a field some distance from the home. Some members of the family say it was a shed; others call it a corncrib. However, beside that structure there was a small well, fed by an underground spring, whose walls were lined with sandstone. There were visible remnants of those walls until a few decades ago when, since the spring had long been dried up, the well was filled with ashes, dirt, etc. for safety's sake. Bulldozers putting in terraces in that area to prevent erosion uncovered some of those stones this spring. According to local historians, no names of persons participating in the Underground Railroad in this area were ever published because of our proximity to the "slave states". and the operation was a very secret one.

Levi and Amelia Hooker and four generations of their direct descendants are the only persons ever to have lived in this home. For many of the years since 1940, three generations of the family have lived here together. The last member of the third generation, Florence Ensle, lived here with us until her death in 1964. So far as we know, this home is the only one in Vanderburgh County in which five generations of

Form No. 10-300a  
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the same family have lived continuously. Such a circumstance may be a rarity in Indiana.

# 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 1

UTM REFERENCES

A 16 455355 42091810  
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B           
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C           
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

D           
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

## 11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Mrs. Neil V. Pierce

ORGANIZATION

DATE

10/24/75

STREET & NUMBER

R.R. #3, Box 148

TELEPHONE

812-867-3347

CITY OR TOWN

Evansville

STATE

Indiana

## 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

DATE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE

ATTEST:

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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