

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOI'S USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS**1 NAME**

HISTORIC Hannah - Oehler - Elder House

AND/OR COMMON

Hannah House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

3801 Madison Avenue

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Indianapolis

VICINITY OF

6th

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

STATE

Indiana

CODE

018

COUNTY

Marion

CODE

097

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

Robert Elder et. al

STREET & NUMBER

55 East Cragmont Drive

CITY, TOWN

Indianapolis

VICINITY OF

STATE

Indiana 46227

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTIONCOURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Recorders Office

STREET & NUMBER

City-County Building

CITY, TOWN

Indianapolis

STATE

Indiana 46204

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Survey of Indianapolis and Marion County

DATE

1977

☐ FEDERAL ☐ STATE ☒ COUNTY ☐ LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

☐ EXCELLENT
☒ GOOD
☐ FAIR

☐ DETERIORATED
☐ RUINS
☐ UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

☐ UNALTERED
☒ ALTERED

CHECK ONE

☒ ORIGINAL SITE
☐ MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The structure is a 2½ story detached residence, in plan a large block minus its southeast corner, connected to a smaller two story wing with gallery. Architecturally, the house is Italianate. The House is constructed of brick bearing walls laid in common bond; stone lintels are used over windows. The roof is a low hip form punctuated with four brick chimneys with corbeled caps.

Main Block: The front facade is symmetrically divided into five bays with strict vertical alignment of wall openings throughout the two stories and attic. Central doorway is clearly Greek Revival, having a rectangular transom broken by two engaged piers and decorated with small brackets; the door is flanked by sidelights and edged with wide moldings. The windows are tall and narrow (influence of the Italianate) with double-hung sash, six over six panes with extremely thin muntins. The original exterior shutters hang at each window. Centered above the doorway on the second floor is a pair of windows, taller and narrower than the others, opening to the floor; this pair was intended to give access to an uncovered balcony formed by the original porch (existing porch dates from the early 1900's). The low hipped roof ends in wide eaves supported by paired brackets. Small rectangular windows which align vertically with other fenestration are centered between each pair of brackets. The bracketed cornice continues on all four sides of main block. South and north facades each feature original porches. The south loggia, with entry through two double-hung windows opening to floor, is three bays wide with four square columns symmetrically framing the two window openings of the first floor of this facade. Columns support a wide and simplified entablature edging a metal-covered roof. Flat pilasters adjoin the wall directly behind each column. The north porch is one bay wide with two square columns and pilasters identical to those on the south loggia. The north porch protects a side door, opening into the dining room. The original porch on the front facade was probably similar in form and detail to these porches.

Kitchen Wing: The north facade continues beyond the main block of the house in a lower two-story wing covered with a low hipped roof. The wing contains a kitchen on the north side and a two-story gallery on the south side, featuring square columns identical in form to those on the porches. A two-story brick structure stands at the southeast corner of the kitchen wing, connected only by its two story porch. The dependency utilizes low brick segmental arches over windows and doors. An exterior stair located in the gallery gives access to second floor rooms. Its hip roof is edged with a shallow eave over a plain, non-bracketed cornice.

Other than routine maintenance, the only main alteration to the exterior has been the removal of the original porch and the construction of the existing porch across the front facade. This change probably took place early in the twentieth century.

Interior: The first floor plan features a wide central hall which bisects the main block from front to back, continuing outside as the gallery of the kitchen wing. There are two formal rooms on either side of the hall; on the south, double parlors and on the north, a sitting room and dining room. All have fireplaces. The dining room connects to the kitchen wing, which contains pantry, kitchen, and a small hallway with three-run stair to the second floor. Ceiling height is 14 feet throughout main block. The parlors and the sitting room retain original Greek Revival mantles; each is identical, having square wood pilasters, a plain frieze, and simple mantle shelf. The fireplace in the kitchen is much larger than others in the house; the kitchen also contains a clever pass-through between pantry and dining room, concealed in a dining room cupboard.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

7

PAGE

1

The first floor hallway retains its original poplar floor, laid in 8-inch boards. All interior trim in formal rooms is intact, and classical in style; baseboards are about 10 inches wide, with molded top edge; doors are ten feet high throughout, having six panels; and doors and windows are trimmed with low pediments, decorated with stylized acanthus forms of cut wood.

The main stairway rises on the north side of the hall, eighteen steps in a well open to the second floor ceiling. Decoration includes ornamental scrollwork brackets, turned balusters and newel post, and flat, thin handrail which travels from newel to top of second floor landing. At the end of the straight 18-step flight is a landing as wide as the hall, on which a door opens to the second floor of the exterior gallery; from the landing the stairs change direction and complete their ascent to the second floor with three more steps. The second floor plan features a central hall which gives access to four bedrooms and a sitting room. Three of the bedrooms contain original Greek Revival mantles for fireplaces; tall, six panel doors are topped with glass transoms; woodwork is wide and uniform in the Greek Revival manner. The west end of the hall is closed off to form a sitting room, containing the paired floor-to-ceiling windows which open to the front porch roof. A bath is located between the two bedrooms on the north side. Access to the kitchen wing is available both through the gallery and through the bedroom located over the dining room. The floor level in wing is three steps below that in main block. Ceiling height in front rooms is at least 14 feet; in kitchen wing it is considerably lower. The second floor of kitchen wing contains a small (8x10 ft.) room, perhaps a nursery; a stairhall; and another, larger bedroom. The fireplace mantle in this room is Federal in style, having thin flutes incised across the frieze. A door in the hall and windows in a large bedroom open to the exterior gallery, which offers both light and ventilation.

A stairway ascends from a door located between the two south bedrooms on the second floor of the main block to the attic above. The roof is supported by trusses made from dimensioned lumber; no beams were used in construction.

Addition: The first floor of the dependent structure southeast of the main house contains four rooms: a milk house, cooled by running water in the manner of a spring-house; a store room; to the south, a wash house or summer kitchen, with a large fireplace; and behind this a smokehouse, containing the smoke-tree and lined with metal. On the second level, reached by a stair in the gallery or porch, are two large rooms once used for servants quarters.

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 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 type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) | |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION | | | |

SPECIFIC DATES 1859;1872

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Alexander M. Hannah

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Alexander M. Hannah, builder of the house, was born in Wayne County, Indiana in 1821. Trained as a harnessmaker, he left his business in 1850 to seek his fortune in California. Joining the gold rush, Hannah earned enough money to become part-owner of a barley and vegetable ranch in California for five years. After selling his interests, he returned to Indiana, settling in Indianapolis and working for the Indiana Central Railroad. Hannah's father, Samuel, was President of that railroad, and owned extensive property in Marion County. Alexander Hannah purchased some of this land south of Indianapolis and by 1857 owned 240 acres. His personnel accounts show that in November, 1858, he purchased a load of brick from Edinburg, Indiana, for the sum of \$585.00 for construction of his substantial residence in the following year. The Italianate design of the house with Greek Revival influences, is credited to Hannah; however, it seems likely that he was influenced by the many trade publications and architectural guides which were popular in the 1850's. The sophistication of both design and construction--which utilizes dimension lumber to form trusses in the attic space--would suggest such an outside influence.

Hannah was known throughout his long lifetime as a progressive farmer, and was said to be knowledgeable of the latest scientific techniques in agriculture. He raised wheat, corn, oats and hay, as well as livestock, including cattle, sheep and hogs. Crossing Hannah's property was the Indianapolis-Southport Toll Road--the first toll road in Marion County--which was part of the very early road from Indianapolis to Madison, on the Ohio River. From 1860 to 1895, the year of his death, Hannah collected tolls from travelers using his section of the gravel-surfaced road.

In 1872 Hannah married, giving up 51 years of bachelorhood. In this same year he constructed a service building southeast of the kitchen wing, housing the smoke house, wash house, milk cooling room and servants quarters. In his later years, Hannah was a member of the Indiana General Assembly and also served at various times as postmaster, sheriff, and clerk of the circuit court. The major east-west street south of his house bears the name, "Hannah Avenue". Because he married late in life, he had no heirs and his farm was subdivided and sold after his death in 1895.

In 1899, Roman Oehler purchased the house and twenty-one acres of surrounding property. Oehler was a veteran of the Civil War and owned a prosperous jewelry business in Indianapolis. During the Oehler occupancy, the porch on the front of the house was replaced with a wider one of concrete; and several outbuildings which still stand on the property were constructed. Oehler's daughter, Romena Oehler Elder, and her husband and family were the third owners of the house, occupying it until 1962. The Elder family heirs maintain ownership of the house and five acres. For several years the house was rented; today the house stands vacant.

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 1

The house which Hannah built in 1859 is a fine example of an early Italianate structure, reflecting the decline of the Greek influence in favor of the more picturesque Italianate style. The simple mass and careful, symmetrical facade of the house are indicators of preference for Greek Revival; yet the wide eaves, elaborate bracketed cornice and tall, narrow window proportions look ahead to the Italianate vogue.

The Hannah House is also notable in that its five-acre site retains the rural flavor which speaks to its past and the accomplishments of Alexander Hannah, a progressive and highly successful Marion County farmer, businessman, and public servant. The house is situated near the center of a wide, deep lot which is edged with mature trees; in summer the site is totally screened from the traffic of Madison and Hannah Avenues. It is unusual to find such a clear reminder of Indiana's rural heritage when annexation to the City of Indianapolis and subsequent commercialization of the area has all but removed such evidence of the past from the landscape. Hannah House with its wooded lot, barn, and small outbuildings stands as a reminder of the agricultural history of Marion County.

Finally, the house is significant for the high degree of integrity maintained in the building fabric. Although unoccupied for several years, interior and exterior details are intact. Interior details include woodwork, original Greek Revival mantles, stairway, and doors; exterior details consist of original shutters and north and south porches. Even the smokehouse contains the "tree" on which hams were hung. Such details offer a rare look into the 19th century lifestyle of a successful Indiana farmer.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Pictorial and Biographical Memoirs of Indianapolis and Marion County, Indiana.
Chicago: Goodspeed Brothers, 1893.

Alexander Hannah Papers, 1857-1895, Indiana State Library.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY about 3

QUADRANGLE NAME Maywood

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 16 573 345 4395900

B 16 573 500 4395900

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C 16 573 495 4395820

D 16 573 360 4395840

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Robert Elder

ORGANIZATION

DATE

April, 1976

STREET & NUMBER

55 East Cragmont

TELEPHONE

(317) 787-5202

CITY OR TOWN

Indianapolis

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

Joseph H. ...

4/24-78

TITLE Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

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