

FINAL

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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DATE ENTERED	

**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 Elias Conwell House

AND/OR COMMON  
Conwell House

**2 LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER At the corner of Wilson Street and the Old Michigan Road  
(now U.S. Highway 421)

CITY, TOWN Napoleon

\_\_\_ NOT FOR PUBLICATION  
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT  
9

STATE Indiana 47034

\_\_\_ VICINITY OF  
CODE  
018

COUNTY CODE  
Ripley 137

**3 CLASSIFICATION**

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<b>PUBLIC ACQUISITION</b>	<b>ACCESSIBLE</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

**4 OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME Charles A. and Esther M. Youngman -- Deed Record 147, Page 328  
William R. and Norma Kay Gardner - Owner of contract equity, Misc. Record No. 20,  
Page 32, Ripley County, Indiana

STREET & NUMBER (Youngman) Rural Route 2, Osgood, Indiana 47037

CITY, TOWN (Gardner) 1123 Maxine Drive, Fort Wayne, Indiana 46807

**5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE, Recorder of Ripley County  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER P.O. Box 177

CITY, TOWN Versailles STATE Indiana 47042

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE NONE

DATE

\_\_\_ FEDERAL \_\_\_ STATE \_\_\_ COUNTY \_\_\_ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR

## 7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED      DATE _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

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

The Elias Conwell House is located in Napoleon, Indiana, at the corner of Wilson Street and the Old Michigan Road. Built about 1822, the structure is a detached building of brick construction; the walls are laid in common bond. The two story structure has a full stone basement. The House has an "L" shape with the main elevation on the long leg of the "L". The roof consists of a hipped roof joined with a gable roof over the short leg of the "L". The close eaves are decorated with the brick dentils. There are three chimneys.

The Conwell House is an example of the Federal style of architecture. A principal feature of this style is the main entrance. The paneled door is flanked by side lights and fluted pilasters and capped by a fan light. The main facade has seven bays on the first and second stories. The ground floor bays have an unusual arrangement of entrances on each end with the main entrance in the bay just left of the center window. The windows in the front and side elevations have two over two lights. The short leg of the "L" has four bays on the second story and an entrance flanked by windows on the first level. Originally, there was another window on the ground level; however, this opening was removed when this section of the building was rebricked late in the Nineteenth Century. The windows on this west side have flat radiating voussoirs while the windows in the main elevation have wooden lintels. The windows in the rear have nine lights over six lights. The rear elevation has five windows and two doorways on the first story, and six windows on the second story.

There have been only two major alterations to the exterior. One was the removal of a window when a section of the west wall was rebricked. The other change was the conversion of one of the rear windows to a door in the late 1800's.

On the inside, a wide hall bisects the house. The entrance hall has a staircase with a cherry handrail and spindles. Fireplaces have classical and Adam-styled mantelpieces. Cherry, poplar and ash woods were used throughout the house.

A low stone wall extends across the south and west sides of the house.

## 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 checked="" 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 C. 1822

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Elias Conwell

### STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Conwell House is significant as an intact example of Federal style architecture and as the home of one of Napoleon's earliest and most outstanding citizens. It is characterized by a remarkable purity of proportion and detail and has remained basically unchanged throughout the years. The main entrance has elements of the Federal style, but the arrangement of windows, side entrances and the off-center main entrance is unusual.

The house was built by Elias Conwell, who arrived in Aurora, Indiana, in 1819 and quickly became prominent in its public affairs. Born in Delaware in 1785, Conwell upon his arrive in Indiana established the first mercantile store in Aurora. He had a daughter who was married to James W. Gaff, a leading Ohio Valley industrialist and a brother of Thomas Gaff, who built Hillforest Mansion in Aurora (listed on the National Register).

Conwell moved to Ripley County and on September 24, 1821, bought 160 acres north of Wilson Street in Napoleon. He promptly built a brick kiln, brewery, and tanyard. He opened and operated a popular store at Wilson and Versailles Streets. These ventures were immediate successes, and Conwell used his new wealth to buy four town lots so he could build (about 1822) a large brick house at the corner of Wilson and Madison Streets. Conwell and his wife, Esther, a daughter of Charles Tatem of Cincinnati, made their house a center of refined hospitality, entertaining politicians and other notables.

Napoleon in the 1820's was the major point of entry for pioneers settling in Central Indiana. The town became a key stop on the Cincinnati to Indianapolis stage route, and several inns were opened to serve travelers. Conwell operated one of these inns.

Conwell lived in his large brick house until his death in 1862. In 1864 the property was sold to Henry D. Kanning. After Kanning's death in 1900, his heirs sold the property in 1905 to Grant Roberts. The property changed hands a number of times until it was acquired by the Gardners in 1976.

## 9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Herbert R. Hill, Napoleon-Pioneer Junction of the New Purchase, Outdoor Indiana, Vol. 38 (November, 1973).

Charles T. Greves, Centennial History of Cincinnati and Representative Citizens. Chicago: Biographical Publishing Company, 1904.  
(See Continuation Sheet)

## 10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one

QUADRANGLE NAME Osgood

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 16 644150 4340810

B           
ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C         

D         

E         

F         

G         

H         

### VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

A part of the Southwest Quarter of Section 20, Township 9 North, Range 11 East, more fully described as follows: Commencing at the Southwest corner of Lot Number 1 in Meyer's Addition to the Town of Napoleon and running thence West along the North line of Wilson

### 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

William R. Gardner

ORGANIZATION

DATE

May 31, 1977

STREET & NUMBER

1123 Maxine Drive

TELEPHONE

(219) 456-4350

CITY OR TOWN

Fort Wayne,

STATE

Indiana 46807

## 12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL   

STATE   

LOCAL X

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 M. Cloud*

TITLE Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE

3/5/79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST:

DATE

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 9

PAGE

History of Dearborn and Ohio Counties, Indiana. Chicago: F. E. Weakley and Company, 1885.

Napoleon Sesquicentennial Book. Aurora, Indiana: Moreton Printing, 1970.

Last Will and Testament of Elias Conwell dated November 23, 1862

Abstract to Property

Interviews on May 14, 1977:

Esther W. Roache  
415 Manchester Street  
Aurora, Indiana 47001

Phyllis Miller  
Napoleon  
Indiana 47034

Form No. 10-300a  
(Rev. 10-74)

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 10 PAGE 1

Street, which is also the South line of said Section, a distance of 304.05 feet to an iron pin, which is the true point of beginning: Thence North  $7^{\circ} 43' 30''$  East 92.60 feet to an iron pin; thence North  $75^{\circ} 49' 30''$  West 128.00 feet to an iron pin in the East Right of Way line of U.S. 421; thence South  $0^{\circ} 47'$  West along said Right of Way 122.00 feet to an iron pin in the North line of Wilson Street; thence East along said line 112.95 feet to the point of beginning and containing 0.295 acre, more or less, but subject to all legal highways and easements of record.

12'30"  
Elias Conwell  
House  
Napoleon, Indiana  
U. T. M. Reference  
16/644150/4340810

