

433

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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received
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 Starr Piano Company, Administration Building

and/or common Administration Building

2. Location

street & number 300 South First Street ___ not for publication

city, town Richmond ___ vicinity of congressional district 10

state Indiana code 18 county Wayne code 177

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Park and Recreation Board, City of Richmond, Indiana

street & number 50 North 5th Street

city, town Richmond ___ vicinity of state Indiana

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Wayne County Recorder's Office, Wayne County Administration Bldg

street & number 401 East Main Street

city, town Richmond ___ vicinity of state Indiana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Starr Piano Factory Ball State Architectural Thesis, Robert Galbraith, 1975
 title Whitewater Valley Study City Planning Associates Inc. 1971 (Mishawaka) has this property been determined eligible? yes no
 date 1-19-78 Requested by City of Richmond, Indiana federal state county local
 as Starr Piano Company, Richmond
 depository for survey records City Plan Commission and SPUR and Architectural Library
Ball State University
 city, town Richmond ___ vicinity of state Indiana

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site	
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved	date ca 1900
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Situated in the flood plain of the East Fork of the Whitewater River, the Starr Piano Company Administration Building is a five sided, two-story detached industrial building. Outside dimensions of the building measure thirty feet on the south elevation, eighty feet on the east elevation, fifty-three feet on the northeast elevation, fifty-three feet on the northwest elevation and ninety-two feet on the west elevation. The building is of load bearing brick construction on a concrete foundation with iron posts and frame and steel beams supporting the second floor and roof. Outlining the flat built up roof, except on the west elevation is a parapet wall extending two feet above the roof line capped with concrete. Below the parapet wall is a projecting brick cornice with brick dentils. On the roof is evidence of a skylight that has been removed.

Fenestration for the building is typically a three feet by eight feet double hung wood unit with concrete sills and steel lintels. On the south elevation off a concrete stoop is a double entrance door with a single lite transom above, and on the second story level is the former location of walkway that once provided access to a building that has since been demolished. On the north elevation off a concrete loading platform is a single entrance door with a single lite transom above, and adjacent overhead loading door. On the west elevation in the second story level is an intact walkway to a building presently being demolished. A chimney for a second floor fireplace projects above the parapet wall at the northeast corner of the building.

The Administration Building contains seven rooms on the first floor and three rooms on the second floor. The inside walls and ceilings on both floors are plastered and flooring material is tongue and groove two-inch wide hardwood. On each floor is a built-in wall safe and adjoining records room constructed of reinforced concrete. In the northeast corner of the second floor is a brick fireplace with an oak mantle. The most striking interior feature is a twenty-foot by thirty-foot open oval stairwell located approximately in the center of the building. Immediately above the stairwell is evidence of a ten-foot by fifteen-foot skylite that has been removed from the roof. An L shaped oak stairway has been vandalized so that nothing remains of the railings and bannister.

The Administration Building has been vacant for a number of years and has deteriorated due to the lack of periodic maintenance, vandalism and the effects of weather. However, the Richmond Park Department has taken measures to secure the building and for the present, the condition of the building has been stabilized.

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 checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates **1872 - 1935** 1910 Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Starr Piano Company Administration Building, built ca. 1900, is significant for its historic associations with the development of early industry in Richmond and the State of Indiana and also its association with the development of the early recording industry.

The Whitewater River Valley and its uplands provided the (necessity) for the early settlement of Richmond in 1806. Such assets, as timber, clay for bricks, springs and water power for mills, fostered steady growth for Richmond. The National Road crossed the River at the north end of the Starr property on a covered bridge. Early travelers noted the beauty of the valley and the bridges. By 1840, only mills, tanneries and quarries occupied the valley.

George Trayser moved his small piano ^{forte} company into one of these early mills in 1872. James M. Starr was president of this company and a Mr. Richard Jackson was secretary with Mr. Trayser as general manager. This company is reported to be the first piano company west of the Alleghenies. A four-story addition to the mill was added in 1878 and employment rose to 35. A company reorganization was initiated in 1884 as a joint venture of James and Benjamin F. Starr and the company became known as the James M. Starr and Co. They produced the new upright piano that carried the "Starr" name and stressed the quality of the material and workmanship of their product. Up to fifteen (15) pianos a week were produced.

Henry Gennett and his father-in-law John Lunsden, piano retailers from Nashville, Tennessee, bought into the company in 1893 and reorganized it as the Starr Piano Company. In 1894, a major fire destroyed the old mill and the four-story addition. But by 1910, Starr, in a promotional catalogue, boasted over 10 acres of factory floor space under roof and 35 acres of lumber with a work force of 600 people. They referred to their company as the pioneer of the western piano industry. The company produced over 15,000 pianos in 1915 and won awards of every major exhibition ^{of Starr} Fair. (1880-Cincinnati; 1877-Nashville; 1904-St. Louis; 1909-Alaska-Youkon; 1915-Panama-California.)

The real significance of Starr came in 1915 with the development of the recording industry. Starr was one of the first companies to promote folk music, hill-billy and spirituals. Many early musicians traveled to Richmond to record for Starr Records under the Gennett label. These artists include Hoagy Carmichael, Gene Autry, Jelly Roll Morton and Louis Armstrong. In 1919, William Jennings Bryan came to Richmond and recorded his famous "Cross of Gold" speech. Gennett was possibly the first commercial recording concern to enter the ethnic field. In 1926, the first portable recording equipment, developed by Starr, accompanied Dr. J. Walter Fenkes of the Smithsonian Institute to the Grand Canyon to record the music of the Hopi Indians.

9. Major Bibliographical References

1874 Atlas, Wayne County, Griffing, Stevenson & Co., Philadelphia
Gennet Records of Old Time Tunes 1928 (Catalogue Reprint by John
Edwards Memorial Foundation)

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

Quadrangle scale _____

UMT References

A
Zone Easting Northing

B
Zone Easting Northing

C

D

E

F

G

H

Verbal boundary description and justification

The property is an irregular shaped tract located in the east and west side of the
Whitewater River, between Main Street Bridge on the north, the "G" Street Bridge on
the South, Whitewater Boulevard on the west and the C&O Railroad tracks on the east.

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 Daniel S. Dooley, Asst. Planning Director

organization Richmond City Planning Department date 6/6/80

street & number 50 North 5th Street telephone 1-317-966-5561

city or town Richmond state Indiana 47374

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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title date

For HCERS 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