

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received _____
date entered _____

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Dewees-Preston-Smith House

and/or common Dewees-Preston-Smith House

2. Location

street & number 1339 Poplar Street N/A not for publication

city, town Terre Haute N/A vicinity of ~~Congressional district~~

state Indiana code 018 county Vigo code 167

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 type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Vacant

4. Owner of Property

name Terre Haute Civic Improvement, Inc.

street & number 810 Merchants National Bank Building

city, town Terre Haute N/A vicinity of state Indiana 47807

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Vigo County Recorder's Office

street & number Vigo County Courthouse

city, town Terre Haute state Indiana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town state

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
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

This old structure is situated in the center of a lot at the southeast corner of Poplar and Thirteen and One-Half Streets. The address of the house is 1339 Poplar Street. The residence is an example of the Southern vernacular style of the post-colonial period. Most walls of the structure are composed of stone. The structure is one and one-half stories tall. Typical of this southern house type, the half story results from the raised basement which accommodates two rooms and a dividing hallway. This floor plan is repeated in the full story. The main, north facade, with its three bays, is most interesting. The central bay is the transomed entrance which opens into the central hall which separates two rooms. The entrance is flanked by a window on each side.

Across the front of the house is a veranda with eight square posts with cut-out brackets. Between the posts is a balustrade. The veranda is supported by eight square brick piers with stone caps. The facade faces Poplar Street to the north and is covered with stucco.

A veranda originally ran across the rear, or south, side of the house, but much of it has been enclosed. The south side had also suffered an addition. The gable end wall on the west side is not stone but rather wood frame. In the 1940's, the stone wall collapsed and the wall was replaced with wood frame. Another alteration has been the removal of the wooden stairway to the front veranda.

A fire in November, 1979, destroyed the roof and the frame addition on the south side. The interior is intact with the exception of the ceilings. The roof has been replaced.

In both the front and rear yards are many trees and shrubs. Very little has changed concerning the house and its grounds.

Plans are to return the building as much as possible to its original appearance.

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

Specific dates 1823-1826

Builder Architect Built by Major George W. Dewees

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Dewees-Preston-Smith House is the most important historic house in Terre Haute. Completed in 1826, it is the oldest remaining structure in the city. Wilbur D. Peat described the house as the "most reminiscent of southern American houses" in his Indiana Houses of the Nineteenth Century.¹ Nowhere else in the area is there a house of comparable age and fabric in this vernacular style so common in Louisiana.

Its builder, a Frenchman named Major George W. Dewees (c. 1776-1834), came to Vigo County from New Orleans in 1820, bringing his young wife, Matilda, their son, a few servants, and three slaves. Described as a "grim old man, thick-set, with iron-gray hair and whiskers, small eyes, and a very sour look," he operated a general store on South Second Street and was president of the Public Library. In 1823, he purchased a 160-acre tract of land bounded by today's Poplar Street on the north, College Avenue on the south, 13th Street on the west, and 20th Street on the east, and began to clear his farm land. That year he also began construction of a house and other farm buildings.

Major Dewees retained ownership of this property until his death from a lingering illness in 1834. His last few years were shrouded in tragedy. His son was killed by marauding Indians, and his wife disappeared after he filed for divorce in 1832.

In the following years the farm and house were owned by Major Dewees's sister, Ann Potts, and niece, Elizabeth Patterson. By 1841, Dr. Marcus Hitchcock owned it. Nathaniel Preston purchased it in 1843. It remained in his family until the death of his granddaughter, Mrs. Natalie Preston Smith, in 1973. Mrs. Smith left it to Mr. and Mrs. Richard Van Allen in her will.² In the autumn of 1979 it was damaged by fire. The structural integrity of the house, however, based upon its 18-inch thick walls with stone work extending several feet out from the foundation, was unaltered by the blaze, and it will be renovated.

1. Wilbur D. Peat, Indiana Houses of the Nineteenth Century, Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society: 1962) p. 18.
2. The information upon which this sketch is based is from David Lewis, "The Dewees-Preston House", Leaves of Thyme, Vol. 26, No. 9 (November, 1975), pp. 3-6. The Leaves of Thyme is a publication of the Vigo County Historical Society.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Peat, Wilbur D., Indiana Houses of the Nineteenth Century. Indianapolis: Indiana Historical Society, 1962, P. 18, Plate 24.

Lewis, David, "The Dewees-Preston House." Leaves of Thyme, Vol. 26, No. 9. (November, 1975)

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property 1.72 acres approx.

Quadrangle name Terre Haute, Indiana

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UMT References

A

1	6	4	6	5	9	2	0	4	3	6	7	9	6	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

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D

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

Please see Continuation Sheet #1

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Dr. William B. Pickett, Assoc. Professor of History;
William L. Selm

organization Terre Haute Civic Improvement, Inc. date August, 1980

street & number 810 Merchants National Bank Bldg. telephone 812/235-3178

city or town Terre Haute state Indiana 47807

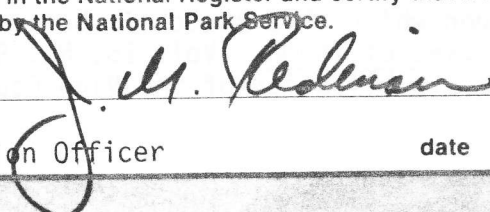
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

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 Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer date 11-15-82

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

010-10-1024-0018
EXP. 12/31/04

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

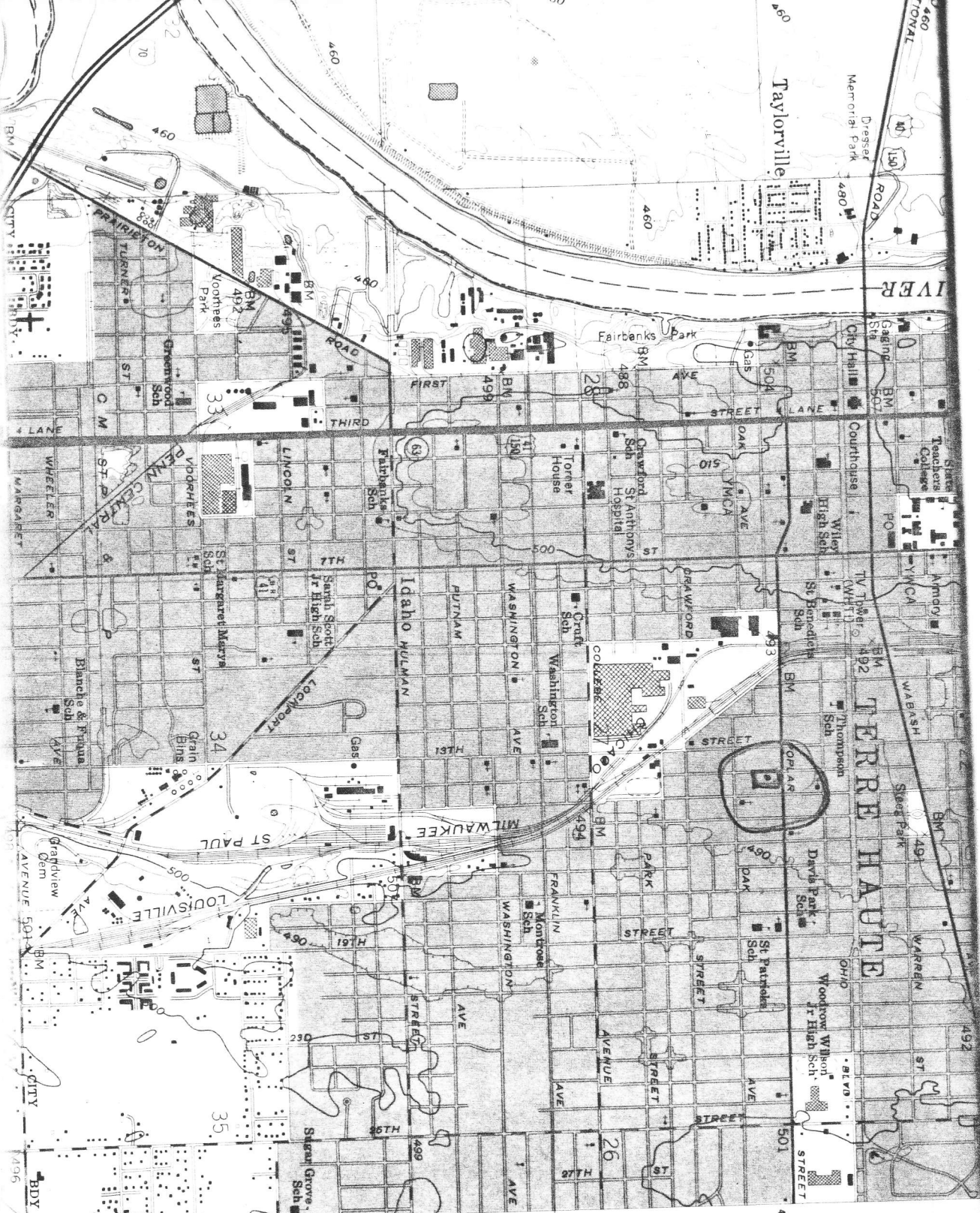
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Continuation sheet Dewees-Preston-Smith House Item number 10

Page 1

Commencing at the southeast corner of Thirteen & One-Half and Poplar Streets; thence running east along the south line of Poplar Street, one hundred twenty-five (125) feet more or less to the northwest corner of Lot No. One (1) in William Paddock's Subdivision of one hundred seventy-five (175) feet off east side of Lot No. One (1) of N. Preston's Subdivision of west 1/2 of North East 1/4 of Section 27 in Township 12 North Range 9 West; thence running South six hundred (600) feet more or less to the North line of Oak Street; thence running West along North line of Oak Street one hundred twenty-five (125) feet more or less to East line of Thirteen & One Half Street; thence North along East line of said last named street to the place of beginning in the City of Terre Haute, Indiana.



Dewees-Preston-Smith House
 Terre Haute, Indiana
 UTM Reference: 16/465920/4367960

(SEELYVILLE)
 3562 IV NE

T. 112 N
 T. 111 N

4367

2730"

4368

4366