National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

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

Indianapolis

city, town

FINAL

For NPS use only

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7. Description

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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Despite its proximity to two other historic districts, Culver remains entirely distinctive in terms of its visual qualities, historical development and architectural significance

Culver's streetscape is unlike that of any other district in Evansville. The tract of land on which the district developed was laid out with little continuity or precision. Its layout features relatively short blocks with streets running on both cardinal points and obliquely. Buildings observe different setbacks, generally depending upon the pretentiousness of the owner. The result is a picturesqueness absent in the long vistas and gridlike uniformity of other districts. The landscape is grassy and umbrageous after the better part of a century of growth, a feature which belies the barreness of Culver's early use as farmland. The greatest period of historical development for the Culver district occurred around the turn of the century, from about 1890 to 1910, when the majority of its 79 primary buildings were erected. By 1929, except for a handful of more recent intrusions, the Culver district had been fully developed. The basis for Culver's architectural collection rests upon a mix of late Victorian and early 20th century styles. In this respect, Culver is a transitional phenomenon.

As a turn-of-the-century residential enclave, the character of the Culver district embodies an architectural diversity peculiar to that time. The Queen Anne, the Shingle Style, the American Foursquare featuring Arts and Crafts or Adamesque detailing, the Craftsman Bungalow, the Stick Style, the Colonial Revival, and the later Prairie School can be found side-by-side in the district. Somewhat out of the ordinary is the credible 1916 rendering of the Swiss Chalet. Most of the houses are of frame construction, and although many have been repainted white (or, in some cases, clad with white aluminum siding), a few bear authentic period colors. While frames predominate, there are a number of brick residences, and one house is entirely veneered with native Indiana limestone.

The compact district is exclusively residential, devoid of any churches and public buildings (although the school from which the district and the neighborhood takes it name is adjacent) The only institutional building is the Rathbone Home, an imposing Colonial Revival residence built for elderly women in 1905. A disturbing trend in the last few decades has been the conversion of some of the larger homes into sleeping rooms or multi-family dwellings. However, this trend seems to have been arrested in the last few years.

The integrity of the district can be ranked fairly highly. The declaration of the neighborhood as a conservation area by the City of Evansville follows renewed interest in the area by a combination of long-time and newly established residents. A few of the frame houses have fallen victim to aluminum siding and other earlier forms of artificial siding, but happily these are infrequent and do not substantially detract from the character of the district. The trend toward conversions mentioned above seems to have been arrested in the last few years, though even in Riverside—a more highly developed historic district—this has proven to be a thorny problem. In short, Culver possesses a sound housing stock whose marginal decline has been met with private and public rehabilitation efforts.

The Culver district is clearly distinctive. Mentioned already is Culver's unique street-scape, an early suburban environment featuring short streets laid out by several different individuals without the direction of a centralized plan or authority, a condition in contrast to the regularization in Riverside to the west and Washington Avenue to the north.

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form Continuation Sheet

Culver Historic District

Item Number 7

Page 1

Barriers border the district on the south in the form of East Riverside Drive, a major thoroughfare, and the post-WW II housing facing it. On the east, the old Culver School forms an edge, now incongruous after a series of unsympathetic alterations executed over the past half-century. The bungalow housing also to the east of the district is a largely newer variety and has not survived homeowners' impulse to cover with aluminum siding, vinyl, asbestos, and the like.

Following is an annotated partial list of buildings which contribute to the character of the district. Numbers in parentheses refer to photographs.

1167 S.E. Second Street (#1)

Southeast Second Street is the heart of the Culver Historic District. The street is not only special architecturally, but also presents the district's most significant environment. In spite of the alterations to the porch and original paint scheme, this house is an apt introduction to the street. Built in 1890 for the James Blackman family for \$2,300, this Queen Anne cottage forms a part of the dense, close-to-the-street row of buildings which comprises one side of Southeast Second. In counterpoint to number 1167 and the other dwellings on the southwest side of the street are the more commodious, grander houses on the other side.

1201 S.E. Second Street (#2 and #3)

This house (and one or two houses next door to it) was constructed as speculative housing by a prominent Evansville builder. Christ Kanzler, an industrious German immigrant to the city in 1870, operated one of Evansville's largest general contracting firms and was active in many other business and civic associations. Building permit records indicate that Kanzler began construction of numbers 1201 and 1209 in the fall of 1892 and completed them for about \$1,800 each. The houses were sold for \$2,800 and \$4,200, respectively. The middle house at 1205 was probably built by Kanzler, but permit records are silent on this.

1208 S.E. Second Street (#4)

This and other houses on the northeast side of Second Street are oriented perpendicularly to the right-of-way, unlike the angled lots on the other side. Number 1208, at the corner of S.E. Second Street and Madison Avenue, is believed to have been erected for William G. Brown in about 1863, making it one of the earliest buildings in the district. The two story frame dwelling exhibits Gothic Revival qualities somewhat obscured by an 1896 remodeling and the more recently applied asbestos shingle covering.

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only received date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page 2

1213 S.E. Second Street (#5)

In the spring of 1889 this lot and the lot next door were sold for \$750 and \$600, respectively, by a grain dealer and sometime land speculator, Mr. North Storms. The cottage at number 1213 was built by Mrs. Delia Clarke and her husband William, a bookkeeper for Storms. The house next door cost \$1,000 to build.

1214 S.E. Second Street (#6)

This house has significant associations with both a prominent Evansville manufacturer and an architect. Built in 1909 for William A. Koch, the house was designed by the Evansville firm of (William) Harris & (Clifford) Shopbell. Koch was an executive with several large manufactories while he occupied this house, including a metal bed factory and a stove works. Harris & Shopbell were in the process of developing a regional practice when the Koch house was built (Harris died in 1910; Shopbell carried on until the Depression), and the house was one of their finest efforts. The generous site, smooth Indiana limestone ashlar exterior, pantile roof, art glass, brass hardware, and Rookwood fireplace made it an exceptional house. Its formal yet ahistorical design can be likened to the work of Chicago's George W. Maher.

1219 S.E. Second Street (#7)

This house is believed to have been built for rental purposes in about 1874. The owner was Dr. George Cosby, and the vertical, bracketed house is characteristic of the Italianate mode then still in vogue in Evansville.

1220 S.E. Second Street (#8)

An attorney, Edwin Taylor, probably build this house 1895. The association with the next owner, however, is more significant. In 1920, the house was purchased by F. Harold Van Orman, Jr. Van Orman made quite a name for himself as a politician and businessman while he lived here. He was elected state senator in 1920 and lieutenant governor in 1924. Van Orman gained prominence in the business world by managing a hotel chain (some claim the first) which included some eleven hotels in seven states and three in Europe.

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only received date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page

3

1226 S.E. Second Street (#9)

The "Swiss Chalet style of architecture" may have been incongruous to the residents of the more formal Riverside neighborhood in 1916, but it was at home among the diverse plans and styles of Culver. The architects, the firm of F. Manson Gilbert, had shown themselves to have an appetite for eclecticism, and this house is rare for the neighborhood and the city in general. Brown creosoted shingles cover the house, and low, over-hanging eaves give the two story building a lower "gabled appearance," as the newspaper put it. The \$10,000 house was completed in the summer of 1916 for Dr. Randolph Hurst.

1229-1231 S.E. Second Street (#12)

Harris & Shopbell were responsible for the design of this house. Engaged by Miss Priscilla Bertha Scherer in the summer of 1908 to prepare plans for a "flat" building, they endowed it with features of the Arts and Crafts movement then in vogue in the city. Whether they remodeled an existing building or planned for new construction is not known. However, the improvements, according to building permit data, cost in the neighborhood of \$5,000. Miss Scherer was one of those rare, self-supporting 19th century women who were able to carve out a niche in the business world and live relatively comfortably. Arriving from Mt. Carmel, Illinois, in 1874 (at age 27), she opened up a 'hair work and goods' shop on Third Street just off Main. She was one of the city's early professional beauticians, continuing in this type of service as a shop proprietor until her death in 1924. In 1889, after having lived at the same location as her shop for years, she purchased the Second Street property, which included a house, from Mrs. Parmelia Taylor who ran a dairy from this location during the 1870s. Both women--Miss Scherer and Mrs. Taylor (a widow) -- appear to have had an enterprising spirit, a factor which adds a measure of color to the Culver district's history.

1240 S.E. Second Street (#14)

The informal character of the neighborhood and of the times inspired owners to be less ceremonious about the plan and appearance of their houses. The wide, screened veranda, narrow siding (originally brown-stained), large yard, and ahistorical ornament of this house are evidence of the trend toward casualness on S.E. Second Street. The designers, Harris & Shopbell, used elements of domestic building familiar to most when the house was planned in 1906, but their design portended the spirit of the Prairie School with its wide eaves and ground-hugging qualities. The owner was Augustine G. Torian, a prominent Main Street merchant. Successive owners, however, achieved prominence far beyond Evansville. In 1920, the house was purchased by Joseph Graham, owner of the Graham Bros. Truck Company and later developer of the Graham-Paige Automobile. In 1925, John Giltner Igleheart bought the house. Igleheart was a member of a respected local family and originated packaged flour which was nationally marketed under the well-known "Swansdown" label.

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only received date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page 4

1301 S.E. Second Street (#15)

Frank J. Schlotter was one of Evansville's finest turn-of-the-century architects, and his popularity was evident in Culver. This house and the two next door represent Schlotter's ability to vary the style of architecture within a single theme. Number 1301 was commissioned in 1909 by J. William Gleichman, then vice president of Hoosier Storage Battery Company. The house incorporates what might be called an Arts and Crafts influence in its amber glazed brick, leaded art glass windows, and tile roof ridges.

1307 S.E. Second Street (#16 and #17)

Schlotter's design for this dwelling, commissioned by banker Joseph Shapker in 1908, holds forth the same general block massing plan and decorative program as seen in the Gleichman house. However, here the theme is varied by using frame siding and details based in the Colonial Revival. Number 1311, also by Schlotter and designed for clothing manufacturer David S. Bernstein in 1906, is much the same as number 1307.

1320 S.E. Second Street (#18)

The Rathbone Home is the district's grandest building and has been an anchor in the neighborhood's recent revitalization. Situated on a generous, tree-filled lot, the Home was constructed in 1905 according to the design of Harris & Shopbell. The Rathbone Home was conceived as a memorial to Evansville banker George Rathbone "for the care and support of aged women," primarily unpensioned retired school-teachers. The building was enlarged in the 1930s and again in the 1960s, but during both expansions the monumental portico and Georgian detail were preserved. In about 1967, ownership of the Home passed to Welborn Baptist Hospital who continued the established "personal" style of service to the elderly and retained the original structure of trustee management. However, continuing geriatric care in conformance with state regulations at this 78-year-old facility has proved unfeasible and the hospital has been forced to vacate the building and put it up for sale. At this time (1983), it awaits a new owner and a development plan.

1317 S.E. Second Street (#19)

This Queen Anne house has seen its better day. Built in 1897 for furniture manufacturer Albert Karges, the frame house is now covered in aluminum siding and its decorative porch posts and rails have been replaced or removed. However, the rock-faced limestone corner tower, other stone trim, and the general massing of the house are still evident today.

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only received date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page 5

1330 S.E. Second Street (#21)

This is the unfortunate mate of the Karges house across the street. Built for dry goods merchant Gilbert Walker in 1896, this Queen Anne has also been covered in an aluminum shroud. Its porch has fared a little better, though, for its railings and columns survive. The significance in the turn in S.E. Second Street at this point rests in the roadway's former role as the principal, direct route connecting Evansville with the landing at the confluence of the Ohio and Green rivers to the southeast.

1403 S.E. Second Street (#23)

Constructed in 1905 for the Louis A. Daus family, this prominently sited house was, but a year ago, fast approaching a state of 'demolition by neglect.' Daus was a dealer in steamboat supplies, and the house he had built for himself and his family was a grand frame structure designed in an energetic Queen Anne mode by Frank J. Schlotter. Toward mid-century, ownership of the property passed into other hands and neglect concerning maintenance became the standard. Recently, the house was 'rescued' by Daus' grandson, restored and resold by him. A landmark of Culver neighborhood revitalization, its owner-occupant status has been retained by a preservation-conscious new owner.

1407 Howard Street (#30)

The erection of fashionable apartment blocks was a type of residential development begun in Evansville at the turn of the century and took hold, thereafter, in nearly every part of town. However, when the developers of the Donaldson Arms Apartments boasted that "a gigantic project is realized in Evansville" upon its completion in October 1923, they were not too far from the truth. The three-story, E-planned block contained sixty units intended to provide "an ideal home life," as the newspaper put it, "for young families on their way up." Designed by Evansville architect Charles Troutman, the Donaldson Arms was outfitted with every modern convenience and amenity including built-in appliances and furniture, soundproofing, and even radio service "as part of the building's permanent equipment." Long corridors were eliminated by planning apartments in clusters of six around ten separate stair towers. Considered an asset to the neighborhood as well as to the city, this modern complex featured walls plastered with white stucco and regularly spaced windows framed by green shutters. While the interior plan remains essentially intact, the stucco finish of the exterior deteriorated, and in about 1953, the building was entirely 'jacketed' with brick. At this time, brown brick was used in alternating bands; light colored between floors and darker at window level, producing a ribbon effect. The original terraced landscaping plan and approaches are still an integral component of the present architectural program.

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only received date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

Page

1504 Howard Street (#32)

Contractor George L. Miller and Sons designed and built this house in 1923 for Dr. Victor Jordan, a prominent local dentist. The newspaper announcing its completion in September of that year noted that this "California-type bungalow" featured many unique conveniences such as built-in cabinets and interior decoration which included red gum woodwork with bamboo trim. The "California" designation may have suited the citizens of Evansville at the time, but today Prairie School would probably be more accurate.

1508 Howard Street (#33)

This handsome Georgian Revival house was built in 1917 for Frank Daus on land purchased from his father, Louis, who lived at the corner (see 1403 S.E. Second Street). The Daus family owned and operated Anchor Industries, outfitters for steamboats. The two-story frame house (unfortunately aluminum sided) is now the residence of Marilyn Durham, author of the best seller "The Man Who Loved Cat Dancing."

1512 Howard Street (#34)

Permit records declare that Frederick J. Scholz, Jr., planned to construct a five-room house here in 1917 for #3,500. The symmetrical one-story bungalow possesses what can only be called Craftsman period details. Scholz was the president of the family-owned monument works.

1524 Howard Street (#35)

Number 1524 (right foreground) was a quality built dwelling when erected for Charles H. Gardner in 1923. Its contractors, Long & Smith, followed plans drawn by architect Harry E. Boyle of Evansville, and the Craftsman bungalow produced is characteristic of the early 20th century housing found in the Culver district. The cost of the house was estimated to be approximately \$7,000.

12 Madison Avenue (#39)

Though this is one of the oldest houses in the district, the early history of the building is a puzzle. Number 12 lies in a portion of the district platted in 1837 as Goodsell's Enlargement and annexed to the City of Evansville in 1866. Research suggests that the house was erected between 1863 and 1866, and that its first known occupant was Thomas Jefferson Hollingsworth. The vernacular, three-bay dwelling is constructed of brick and is two stories tall with a gable front. Hollingsworth was a wholesale dealer in china, glass, and Queensware.

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only received date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number

7

Page

7

31 Madison Avenue (#42)

Several Craftsman bungalows featuring wide, creosoted weatherboard and rough clinker brick were built in the city between 1900 and 1917. Frank J. Schlotter and Manson Gilbert were both known to have designed bungalows using this type of treatment and material, a program which reflects the philosophy of Gustav Stickley. However, the architect of this house is not known. It was constructed in 1910 for the Charles Barnett family. Barnett was a saleman for the Hercules Buggy Company. The preserved fabric of this house makes it an outstanding example of Craftsman architecture in Evansville.

33 Madison Avenue (#43)

City directory information suggests that 33 Madison was first occupied in 1900. The tenant was Frank Hatfield, a boot and shoe retailer on Main Street. An 1888 panoramic view of the city, however, depicts a structure on this site--probably a stables--behind the William G. Brown house at the corner of Madison and Southeast Second Street. (See 1208 S.E. Second Street.) The 1888 evidence, coupled with the general massing configuration (cross plan) and with discrepancies in the brickwork of number 33 suggests that the stables were converted in about 1900 for housing.

37 Madison Avenue (#44)

Wills & Ingle were the architects of this elegantly designed and detailed house. Constructed in 1909 for George and Rose DeBruler, the house features several Arts and Crafts motifs. Wide clapboards on the first story are surmounted by shingles on the second, and a slight bellcast further demarks the separation between stories. Windows are banded, and on the facade are grouped into a centralized oriel and a lower set with a built-in flower box (now gone except for the supports).

101 Madison Avenue (#44)

This stock-plan house from 1909 bears certain elaborations for which its architect, Frank J. Schlotter, can be credited. Its owner, Thomas C. Ruston, was a County Commissioner. A story and one-half in height, the dominant features of the house are an oversized shingled dormer and a broad stone porch across the width of the facade. Newspaper accounts report that Schlotter was extremely busy with contracts in the neighborhood at the time. The balance of this block contains frame houses, many likely built according to stock plans for speculative ventures.

8. Significance

| Period prehistoric 1400–1499 1500–1599 1600–1699 1700–1799 | Areas of Significance—Che archeology-prehistoric archeology-historic agriculture X architecture art | community below community planning conservation economics education engineering | landscape architecture law literature military music | religion science sculpture social humanitarian |
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| X 1800-1899 | commerce | exploration settlement | philosophy | theater |
| X 1900- | communications | industry invention | politics government | transportation X other (specify) Urbanism |

Specific dates 1890-Late 1920's Builder Architect Various

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The basis of the Culver Historic District's significance is two-fold. First, Culver contains important works of architecture by nearly every designer active in the city at the turn of the century. The high standards of design evident in Culver, however, are not alone in supporting architectural significance, for in Culver those structures combine to form a streetscape unlike any in Evansville. The second major component in the district's significance is as the setting for early 20th century urban growth, made possible by the arrival of the streetcar but abetted by high land values close to the city center.

Architecture

The architectural history of the Culver district encompasses a number of different issues. Although sparsely populated since the 1860's, Culver experienced intense development in the decades framing the turn of the century. As such, its basic housing stock is a transitional mix of styles, embracing the Victorian Queen Anne as well as the emerging and distinctive designs of the 20th century like the Craftsman and the Prairie School. Many of the district's works show the hand of popular architects—Frank J. Schlotter and the team of Harris and Shopbell, to name two. In concert with these talented and versatile architects were the city's principal builders, such as Christ Kanzler, whose reputation for constructing quality buildings was well established.

Art historicism aside, Culver remains a significant and distinctive historical environment. Its short streets, compact vistas, mix of large and small building sites—all characteristics detailed elsewhere in this nomination—combine to give the Culver district a sense of time and place which distinguish it from the essentially 19th century ambience of adjacent historic areas.

Urbanism

The establishment and development of what is known as the Culver Historic District followed a pattern rooted in the late 19th century. The extension of the street railroad line to Haynie's Corner just north of the district—and then beyond by 1895—made residence in the area feasible. Culver is, after all, well to the south of the Central Business District and places of employment.

But the factors which resulted in the popularity of the Culver Historic District and the erection of its fine homes were products of land economics elsewhere. By the end of the 19th century, the choice building sites within the older, fashionable Riverside Historic District were largely all taken. Culver's relatively undeveloped lands, therefore, presented an attractive alternative for up-and-coming entrepreneurs and businessmen who sought select residential sites in close proximity to the center city.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

| 10. Ge | ographical Data | | | | | | |
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| organization | Metropolitan Development | į. | date | 2-9-83 | | | |
| street & numbe | r 216 Washington Avenue | t | elephone 8 | 312/426-5 | 5487 | | |
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| 12. Sta | ate Historic Pre | servation | Office | r Cer | tification | | |
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Beginning at the intersection of the north right-of-way line of East Riverside Drive and the east right-of-way line of Howard Street; thence north along the east right-of-way line of Howard Street 132 feet; thence west along the north right-of-way line of an alley 180 feet; thence north along the east right-of-way line of an alley to the north right-of-way line of Taylor Avenue, a distance of 340 feet; thence west along the north right-of-way line of Taylor Avenue to the east right-of-way line of Venice Street, a distance of 110 feet; thence north along the east right-of-way line of Venice Street 380 feet; thence west 21.48 feet; thence northwest along the east right-of-way line of an alley (an extension of Venice Street) to the north right-of-way line of Monroe Avenue, a distance of 431 feet; thence east 12 feet to the east right-of-way line of an alley; thence northwest along the east right-of-way line of an alley 243.43 feet; thence west 16 feet; thence north along the property line between lots #6 and #7 of Storms Place Subdivision 30 feet; thence west 8 feet; thence north along the property line between lots #5 and #8 of Storms Place Subdivision to the north right-of-way line of an alley, a distance of 42 feet; thence west along the south property line of lot #3 of Kanzlers Subdivision 75 feet; thence north along the east property line of lot #1 of Kanzlers Subdivision to the north right-of-way line of Madison Avenue 178 feet; thence west along the north right-of-way line of Madison Avenue to the east right-of-way line of Parrett Street 33 feet; thence north along the east right-of-way line of Parrett Street 222 feet; thence southeast along the west right-of-way line of S. E. Second Street 132 feet; thence east across S. E. Second Street and along the south right-of-way line of an alley to the west right-of-way line of Putnam Street, a distance of 580 feet; thence south along the west right-of-way line of Putnam Street to the south right-of-way line of Madison Avenue, a distance of 160 feet; thence east along the south right-of-way line of Madison Avenue to the west right-of-way line of an alley, a distance of 243 feet; thence south along the west right-of-way line of an alley 445 feet; thence southeast along the west right-of-way line of an alley for 210 feet; thence southwest along the northwest right-of-way line of an alley 129 feet; thence southeast along the southwest right-of-way line of an alley 12 feet; thence southeast along the south right-of-way line of an alley 15 feet; thence south along the west right-of-way line of an alley 84 feet; thence southwest along the north right-of-way line of an alley 15 feet; thence southwest along the northwest right-of-way line of an alley 12 feet; thence southeast along the southwest right-of-way line of an alley 159 feet; thence south along the west right-of-way line of Emmett Street 203 feet; thence west along the north right-of-way line of an alley 208.5 feet; thence south along the west right-of-way line of an alley to the north right-of-way line of East Riverside Drive, a distance of 582 feet; thence west along the north right-of-way line of East Riverside Drive 156.08 feet to the east right-of-way line of Howard Street, being the point of beginning.

