

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Taylor, Fernando G., House

and or common Taylor-Kaiser-Smith House

2. Location

street & number Northeast corner of Main and Tyson Streets N/A not for publication

city, town Versailles N/A vicinity of

state Indiana code 018 county Ripley code 137

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name John Schuerman, Neil Comer

street & number Schuerman Law Offices, Courthouse Square

city, town Versailles N/A vicinity of state Indiana 47042

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Ripley County Courthouse

street & number Courthouse Square

city, town Versailles state Indiana 47042

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Indiana Historic Sites
title and Structures Inventory

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1985/86 federal state county local

depository for survey records Indiana Department of Natural Resources
Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology

city, town Indianapolis state Indiana

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one	
X excellent	deteriorated	unaltered	original site	
good	ruins	X altered	X moved	date August 23, 1983
fair	unexposed			

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Fernando G. Taylor House is located in downtown Versailles, across from the Ripley County Courthouse. It was moved there in 1983 from its original site one block south, where it had been threatened with demolition. The house has been restored and now houses the Schuerman Law Offices.

The two-story, rectangular, wood frame house measures 44 feet wide by 36 feet deep, and sits on a foundation of poured concrete faced with coursed field stone. The original foundation was dressed limestone. The hip roof, with its covering of standing-seam sheet metal (applied over the original wood shingles about the turn of the century) has four interior chimney stacks--one on each of the end walls and two on the back wall, which were partially dismantled during the move, then rebuilt. The sawn decorative eaves board around the perimeter of the roof is an accurate reproduction of the original, based upon physical and documentary evidence. The exterior walls are sheathed in wood clapboard siding.

The symmetrical, five-bay main facade is on the west side, with the entrance in the center bay. A single-story, flat roofed porch shelters the entrance, and features two square posts, with two pilasters against the house. There were four posts originally, but the inside posts were amputated below the architrave. Above the architrave molding and paneled frieze of the porch is the same sawn trim found on the eaves of the house. The front door is surrounded by a transom and sidelights that are made up of unusual elongated octagons, five lights on each side and two lights in the transom. The front door itself is unglazed and has four panels. The four first-story windows as well as the second-story window above the front door, all have six-over-nine, double-hung wood sash; all other windows on the house have six-over-six lights. The windows are fitted with hinged wood louvered blinds which are thought to be original although, when open, they partially conceal the label-molding trim at the tops of the windows.

The north side of the house has three bays. An entrance is in the center bay on the ground floor, and is sheltered by a porch with round columns and a gabled roof. The original porch had a flat roof and square columns, but was replaced some time ago. The entrance is flanked by windows, and three second-story windows are aligned with the first floor openings. The south side of the house is similar, but with no entrance.

The rear of the house has changed somewhat from the original. The new site is sloped, allowing an entrance and double-hung windows in the basement (which is now a full basement, rather than a one-room cellar as on the original site). The house had acquired some additions that were removed during the move. Two small windows had also been added, one of which has been eliminated. A kitchen door on the ground floor has been changed into a window, and a non-original upstairs door has been converted into a window, as well, making three windows on the first and second floors in direct alignment with one another, plus a small bathroom window on the second floor.

The interior is arranged with rooms flanking the central stair hall. The hall is eight feet wide and extends about half the depth of the house, ending at the kitchen. On the north side are a parlor in front and the dining room in back, which has an exterior door on the north wall and an interior door communicating directly with the kitchen on the south. South of the central hall is another parlor in front, and the kitchen in the rear, with a small pantry separating the two rooms. (See floor plans.) The ceilings are 10 feet on the first floor and nine feet on the second. The single-flight staircase has balusters sawn out of flat boards; painted wood graining survives on the staircase, flooring, and other woodwork in the hall, a relic of the late 19th-century redecorating. On the second floor

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	religion
1400-1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science
1500-1599	agriculture	economics	literature	sculpture
1600-1699	X architecture	education	military	social
1700-1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian
X 1800-1899	commerce	exploration settlement	philosophy	theater
1900-	communications	industry	politics government	transportation
		invention		other (specify)
Specific dates	c. 1860	Builder Architect	Unknown	

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Still standing in Versailles are about two dozen structures which date to the middle of the 19th century. About a quarter of these are wood frame; the rest are of masonry construction. The Taylor House compares favorably with other buildings of any description in the town, but special distinction accrues to it because it is perhaps the best remaining example of frame construction from this period. While based upon a standard formula of vernacular tradition, it is also indicative of the pervasive influence of the "picturesque" Gothic Revival style in America, as promoted by Andrew Jackson Downing and others. In the Taylor House, the decorative eavesboards, the label moldings over the windows, and the front porch design are examples of the adaptation and "borrowing" of decorative design details--whether copied directly from pattern books or modeled after features which were, in turn, derived from these sources--and the application of them to otherwise "standard" house plans. The Taylor House, by virtue of its initial conception as built, and the overall integrity of its original physical fabric, and having more recently benefited from what can only be considered an exemplary restoration program, deserves recognition as one of this small town's most outstanding assets. Although the house has been moved, it is nominated because it is significant primarily for architectural value.

Although the precise date has not yet been ascertained, archival research conducted to date suggests that the house was built circa 1860 for the family of Fernando G. Taylor. Taylor was born in Vermont about 1820; in 1849 he married Mary Malvina Hunter, whose father, John Hunter, was one of the founding fathers of the town of Versailles. The Hunter family was prominent in business and civic affairs in Versailles throughout the 19th century. Taylor (described in the 1860 Census as a "trader") died about 1865, but the house remained in the possession of his immediate family until 1905. In 1908 it was deeded to Bruno F. and Laura Thum Kaiser, who resided in the house the remainder of their lives, leaving it to their daughter, Anna. Anna and her husband, Carl Lee Smith, had occupied the upstairs since their marriage. The house was purchased from Mrs. Smith by the present owners when it was threatened with demolition.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acres of nominated property Less than one acre

Quadrangle name Versailles

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

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

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot #1 and four and one-half feet off the south side of Lot #2 in the Town of Versailles

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

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Link Ludington, Preservation/Restoration Consultant

organization Restoration Design Associates date April 20, 1986

street & number 511 Broadway telephone 812/265-3714

city or town Madison state Indiana 47250

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 *Kurt A. Hart for J. M. Pedersen*

title Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer date 7-23-86

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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Continuation sheet Fernando G. Taylor House Item number 7 and 9 Page 1

the rooms are situated around the L-shaped upper hall. The room in the southeast corner was divided to create a bathroom and kitchen as part of an old remodeling; this alteration has been retained and is the only significant deviation from the original condition of the house. There were no fireplaces, only flues for wood stoves with tiny mock mantels purely for decorative effect. Some had been removed, but they have been reconstructed, using the remaining originals as models. The random-width, tongue-and-groove plank flooring is poplar as is most of the other lumber in the house. The doors still possess much of their original hardware, including cast-iron rim locks, ceramic knobs and keyhole escutcheons. At least some of the escutcheons were originally silver-plated, and some still have the swinging draft guards.

Item number 9

Public records (Ripley County Courthouse):

Deed records, Recorder's Office

Tax assessment records, Assessor's Office

Will of F. G. Taylor, Will Record C, p. 123/Probate Order Book 3, p. 117, Clerk's Office

Justice of the Peace Book of John M. Stewart, Johnson Township, 1855-60 (town plat)

U.S. Census records (Ripley County Historical Society):

Decennial Census for 1840, 1850, 1860, 1870, 1880

Pamphlets/brochures: (Schuerman Law Offices):

Indiana Junior Historical Society: Versailles, a Small Indiana Town, 1818-1976.
Indianapolis, 1980. (40 pages)

Ludington, Link: Descriptive brochure for Fernando G. Taylor House (Schuerman Law Offices), Courthouse Square, Versailles, Indiana. Versailles, Indiana, September, 1985. (4 pages)

Other sources of information: (Schuerman Law Offices):

Letter from Ann Gibbs, R.R. 2, Holton, Indiana, 47023, to John Schuerman, dated May 14, 1984.

Interviews with Mrs. Ron Evans (November 17, 1983), Mabel Evans (January 20, 1984), Herbert Thompson (date not noted) and casual conversations with various other individuals regarding the history of the house and its occupants.

(PERCEVALLE)

VERSAILLES QUADRANGLE
INDIANA—RIPLEY CO.
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

