

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

FINAL -  
w/PHOTOS

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Stevens, Levi, House  
other names/site number Stevens-Thatcher-Crosson House 029-029-51196

2. Location

street & number 122 Fifth Street N/A  not for publication  
city or town Aurora N/A  vicinity  
state Indiana code IN county Dearborn code 029 zip code 47001

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*Patricia R. Roberts* 4-23-96  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

Indiana Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property (Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

- private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal

- building, district, site, structure, object

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing. Rows: buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total.

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

EARLY REPUBLIC: Greek Revival

OTHER: 2/3 I-house

foundation STONE: Limestone

walls BRICK

SYNTHETICS: Vinyl

roof ASPHALT

other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**  
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**  
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1849  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1849  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**  
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

\_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Statement of Significance**  
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

**9. Major Bibliographic References**

**Bibliography**  
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

- Previous documentation on file (NPS):
- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
  - previously listed in the National Register
  - previously determined eligible by the National Register
  - designated a National Historic Landmark
  - recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
  - recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:  
\_\_\_\_\_

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less than one acre.

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	16	681740	4324620
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Kevin Crosson

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date 2-28-95

street & number 122 Fifth Street telephone 812/926-4532

city or town Aurora state IN zip code 47001

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Kevin Crosson

street & number 122 Fifth Street telephone 812/926-4532

city or town Aurora state IN zip code 47001

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**Levi Stevens House  
Dearborn County, Indiana**

*Section 7-Description*

The Levi A. Stevens house is an excellent example of a mid-19th century Greek Revival townhouse. The two and a half story, three bay house with a low-pitch side gable roof and L-shaped plan is located in the oldest residential section of Aurora, Indiana, an Ohio River port town. The house has a rough cut limestone foundation, topped with a band course of smooth cut stone which serves as the sill for the door and two windows. The house is constructed of brick in a common bond pattern which has been painted white for many years. There is a cut stone step and it is believed that there was never a front porch on the house.

The front of the house faces south and contains three bays. The main entrance is located on the left end of the main facade. The recessed entrance has a wooden Greek Revival door surround with tapered side boards and slightly projecting hood. The wooden turn-of-the-century door has a large pane of glass in the top half, multiple wood panels in the bottom half, and trim with egg and dart detailing. The door is topped by a horizontal single pane transom directly above the opening. Narrow sidelights on either side of the doorway extend up along side the transom. The sidelight area, which is separated from the door with a wide flat board, has wood panels at the bottom panes of 20th century patterned glass above. The entrance area has a recessed rectangular ceiling with decorative moldings. To the right of the door there are two tall, 1-over-1 windows which extend up from floor level on the interior. The second floor contains three 6-over-6 wood sash windows. All of the windows have slight reveals, stone sills and lintels, plus wooden louvered shutters. Across the top of the house there are plain parapets with stone caps. The parapet to the east contains two, rectangular-shaped, bridged chimneys; the western parapet rises at a strange angle which is caused by the lack of original chimneys on this end. The roof is covered in asphalt shingles.

The Stevens house is currently connected to the structure to the east. There is approximately one foot of space between the buildings but because maintenance was impossible between the buildings, the structure to the east, when it was reclad in vinyl siding, was extended to cover this void. The east facade of the main block contained no openings, except a 6-over-6 wood sash window with stone lintel and sill in the center of the attic story. There is a recessed two story porch on the rear wing of the house which runs from the main block of the house to the northeast corner of the rear projecting wing. The recessed porch is contained under the main roof structure of the building. Both stories of the porch have been enclosed with aluminum siding. The first floor porch



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**Levi Stevens House  
Dearborn County, Indiana**

contains three stationary windows, each with twelve panes of glass, and the second floor is enclosed with groupings of three, 1-over-1, windows.

The west wall of the main block was originally void of openings except for a centered attic story window, containing a 6-over-6 wooden sash with stone sill and lintel. Later, probably in the late 19th or early 20th century, a horizontal window with stone sill and lintel and deep reveal was added on the first floor near the southwest corner to allow light into the stair/entrance hall. Also, a circa 1930s square external chimney with rectangular base constructed of rust colored, wire cut brick in a stretcher bond was added to allow the furnace in the basement to be vented. The west facade contains a recessed two story porch on the northwest corner of the main block which is under the main roof. The first and second floor porches are supported by two square posts and pilasters with simple block bases and capitals. The first floor porch has an added iron railing and the second story porch has been enclosed with 1960s louvered windows. On the first floor porch, starting on the south wall, there is small horizontal window (this probably replaced a larger, earlier window because of visual evidence of the brick not matching), a door with a single pane transom; the east wall contains two 1-over-1 windows which extend to the floor; and the north wall contains a door that leads into the current dining room. The enclosed second floor porch contains a 6-over-6 window and wooden door on the south wall; two, 6-over-6 windows on the west wall; and no openings on the north wall.

The rear wing of the house was originally brick in a common bond on the first floor and contains two 1-over-1 windows which are probably early 20th century replacements for the original 6-over-6 sashes. It is believed that the second floor was wood, but is now covered with aluminum siding, and it contains two 6-over-6 wood sash windows.

There is a one story kitchen section extending past this original two story rear portion of the house. This section is original if not a very early addition. The rough cut limestone foundation does not match; currently, the section is covered with aluminum siding which would indicate that it was originally wooden clapboard. The west facade of the kitchen contains two 1-over-1 windows with metal shutters. The rear or north elevation of the addition contains no openings; however, originally it connected to the attached carriage house/garage which has been removed. In the space between the house and the alley to the north, there are stone foundations which indicate other structures, possibly a summer kitchen, stable or garage, were once located in this area. The east elevation of

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**Levi Stevens House  
Dearborn County, Indiana**

the addition contains two, 1-over-1, wood sash windows. Above the flat roof addition there is a wooden deck with metal railing.

The north facade of the main rear wing is covered in aluminum siding. On the first floor, east of the kitchen addition, there is an early 20th century door and a stationary twelve pane window into the enclosed, recessed porch. The second floor contains a group of three 1-over-1 windows which enclose the recessed porch and there is a door which leads to the deck over the one story kitchen wing. Located in the gable of the attic story is a 1-over-1 wood sash window.

The interior of the Levi Stevens house is very refrained in the use of applied decoration and its simple plan is dictated by the exterior openings and the recessed porches at the rear of the structure. There is a rectangular entrance/stair hall on the west side of the building. The space contains a set of stairs attached to the western wall. There is a round newel post with square base, a rounded wood handrail, and two plain rectangular-shaped (widest side facing out) spindles per tread. There is a matching newel post at the top of the stairs, a square turn with two spindles, another post, and the railing continues along the second floor hall. At the ending of this second floor railing there is a much plainer rectangular shaped post, another square turn and two spindles (narrow face out), another plain post, and a steep narrow, exposed staircase to a trap door in the ceiling which allows access to the attic space. The attic space over the main block of the house has slanted ceilings and the walls are currently covered with 20th century wall coverings. Historical uses are unknown. The attic space over the rear wing never had its walls and ceilings finished.

On the first floor, under the main staircase, a bathroom has been added and this room contains the horizontal window which is evident from the recessed porch. At the rear of the hall there is a door with transom to the northwestern recessed porch. The house contains simple, stepped woodwork and door surrounds have slightly tapered sides, a wide board across the top with an applied piece of trim horizontally across the middle which creates a simple entablature. This same decoration is evident in all of the main rooms on the first floor level. The floors throughout the house have been covered with narrow hardwood floors, most probably during the early 20th century. Also, throughout the house there are stained doors that have mortise-and-tenon joints held together with wooden pins. The doors have six recessed panels; the vertical and horizontal boards are all the same width except for the one across the bottom. There are examples of both brass and porcelain door knobs and silver-plated keyhole covers.

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The hall contains two doors on its eastern wall which enter the front and rear parlors. Both rooms have similar shapes. The south wall of the front parlor has two long windows which extend up from the floor. The eastern wall contains a large fireplace with a wooden mantle supported by two pilasters with vernacularly early 20th century, white glazed, square tiles. Two large doors with eighteen panes of glass each divide the parlors. The rear parlor contains a matching fireplace on the east wall, but it projects out slightly farther and is flanked by closets topped by false transoms on either side. Originally, the north wall contained a window to the eastern, recessed porch which has been enclosed for a bookcase. There is a door at the northwest corner of the room which leads to the dining room. The western wall of this room contains two long windows extending up from the floor, which face onto the recessed porch on the west side of the house.

Behind the rear parlor there is a rectangular-shaped dining room. There is a door in the eastern wall to the recessed porch. The north wall contains a door at the northeast corner to the kitchen, a corner which once had a fireplace, and a closet to the northwest. The west wall contains two windows and the south wall contains a door to the western recessed porch, plus the door into the rear parlor. The square-shaped kitchen located at rear of the building has plain woodwork and a large, walk-in pantry in the northeast corner.

The second floor of the house maintains the same floor plan as that of the first floor; however, the woodwork and door surrounds are simpler. The woodwork is merely a plain board with a mitered top edge. At the south end of the hall, a bathroom has been added, it is believed that this space historically has been enclosed, possibly as a small sitting or sewing room. A pair of stained doors divides the front and rear bedrooms. Both rooms contain fireplaces with wood mantels supported by plain pilasters. The fireplaces have their original brick hearths and later coal burning surrounds and summer screens. The rear main bedroom contains doors to the northeast recessed porch and into a bedroom over the dining room. This furthest bedroom also contains a door out onto the recessed porch.

In front of the Levi Stevens house there is a small yard, approximately eight feet deep. The west facade of the Levi Stevens house is visible from Judiciary Street and there is a large yard on this side of the property. The yard contains several 19th century brick walks and is surrounded with an early western border of the property, along 5th and Judiciary Streets, there are still limestone street gutters which are created by laying limestone rocks tightly with the narrow side exposed.



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**Levi Stevens House  
Dearborn County, Indiana**

There are also limestone curbs and directly in front of the main entrance to the house there is a limestone slab foot bridge across the street gutter (walking bridges over the gutter at the corner of 5th and Judiciary Streets have been replaced with concrete slabs). A stone wall along the city alley at the rear serves as the northern boundary of the property. The fence counts as contributing structure, but the walls and rain gutters are not part of the private lot, and are not counted. The property includes 1 contributing building (the house and all its joined sections) and 1 contributing structure (fence).

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**Levi Stevens House  
Dearborn County, Indiana**

*Section 8-Statement of Significance*

The Levi E. Stevens House is eligible for the National Register for its outstanding architecture and integrity. This two and a half story residence is architecturally significant because it is an excellent example of Indiana's earliest building styles. The 1849 residence represents an excellent example of the Greek Revival 2/3 I-house type, with fine detailing and high integrity on the exterior and interior. Because of the outstanding architecture of this home it received an outstanding rating in the Indiana Historic Sites & Structures Inventory. Although included in the already listed Downtown Aurora Historic District, the Stevens House has much individual merit.

The Levi E. Stevens House is significant in the context of early Nineteenth Century Architecture in Aurora, Indiana, 1825-1860. Aurora was platted in 1819 by Jesse L. Holman, trustee of the "Aurora Association for Internal Improvements". The original plat of the town was laid out in "fractional section". These fractional sections adjacent to the Ohio River were entered by Charles Vattier of Cincinnati in 1804. The land was purchased in 1819 by the association for the purposes of establishing a town. The original plat of Aurora contained 206 lots and six public squares. Because the decade of the 1820's was a depressed period, very little development took place until after 1836. The town was incorporated into a city in 1845 by the legislature through an act drawn up by W.S. Holman.

Boat building began in Aurora in 1824 with the construction of the Steamboat "Clinton". During the Civil War, Aurora was the home port for the "Forest Queen", the first steamboat to make daily trips between Madison, Aurora, Lawrenceburg, and Cincinnati. Accompanying the boat building industry was the construction of warehouses, distilleries, foundries, and cooperage shops. Among the entrepreneurs in Aurora by this time, the brothers Thomas and James Gaff were firmly established in their various commercial ventures, Thomas Gaff living in his "Hillforest" mansion high above Fifth Street. After the Civil War, the Gaffs built the Great Crescent Brewery, and the O.P. Cobb Nail and Iron Works was completed. The first gas lights were installed in 1874. By 1875, Aurora had 5,000 inhabitants. The "Gay Nineties" were interesting years in Aurora's history as a river port. Riverboats brought traveling theatrical groups, showboats, minstrel shows, and the calliope.

The context of Early Nineteenth Century Architecture in Aurora is represented by a number

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**Levi Stevens House  
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of properties. The Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory has identified twenty one buildings in the Aurora Historic District which could qualify for National Register listing under this context. Among the more significant buildings in Aurora at present are the 1886 City Hall and Jail on Third Street and the Hillforest Mansion. The first house, constructed by Henry Van Middlesworth, was built in 1822. It later became known as the Aurora Hotel.

Early homes in Aurora reflect Upland South traditions such as the I-House, Center-Passage, and other variants. The Stevens House is of the two-thirds I-House tradition which is so prevalent in Cincinnati. One might expect more examples, granted the social and economic influence which Cincinnati exerted on Aurora. However, the larger lots of Aurora may have allowed the larger I-house and central-passage house. Aurora has many more examples of I-house variations than town houses. Only five true two-thirds I's (townhouses) exist in Aurora, according to the survey. Of these, the Stevens House is the most sophisticated (next door is a typical wood-frame townhouse). Likewise, one would assume that Aurora would have more examples of Greek Revival homes, but the influence of this style seems to have been limited to details. The heavy shouldered front door surround and classical entablature of the Stevens House are as elaborate as any Greek Revival exterior treatment in town. Interior moldings and details are crafted in the Greek Revival spirit as well.

Aurora has many architecturally significant churches that were built in the second half of the Nineteenth Century, as well as many architecturally significant homes built throughout the Nineteenth Century and early Twentieth Century. Gothic Revival, Greek Revival, Queen Anne, federal, Italianate, Bungalow, and Second Empire are among the styles of homes presently found in Aurora's Historic District.

The house was built for Mr. Levi E. Stevens in 1849 on the corner of Fifth Street and Judiciary Street at the cost of 3,000.00 dollars. Mr. Stevens was a clerk on the steamboat "Fashion", owned and operated by Josiah Chambers and William Glenn. He was also a partner in the firm of J. Chambers and Company. In 1851, the name of the firm was changed to Chambers, Stevens, and Company. In 1857 the firm entered into wholesale trade in Cincinnati. Mr. Josiah Chambers, Levi's business partner, resided on Fifth Street during the same period in another house. The Chambers House is in the Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory (222), and received an outstanding rating as an example of Greek Revival/Italianate style. Mr. Chambers was a man of very decided

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**Levi Stevens House  
Dearborn County, Indiana**

character, the most prominent feature being devotion, first to Christ and next to business; a man of single aim, namely, success in whatever he undertook. He conducted all of his affairs on religious business principles, unswerving integrity and candor, it seemed almost impossible to discourage im. Chambers was a very prominent man in the community.

On January 7, 1859, Mr. Stevens sold the property to Betty Epstein for 3,500.00 dollars and moved to Cincinnati to be closer to the newly expanding business. Abraham and Betty Epstein owned and operated a clothing store in Aurora for a time and eventually sold the property to Lou Ann Greer of New York City, at a Sheriff sale on April 23, 1880. The Epstein's had a judgement against them for 9,617.00 dollars.

The brother of Levi E. Stevens, William F. Stevens built a home in 1862 on the lot behind the Levi E. Stevens house on the corner of Forth Street and Judiciary. This home is also listed in the Indiana Historic Sties and Structures Inventory (156) and received a Notable rating for an example of Queen Anne style. William Stevens was a member of the firm Chambers, Stevens & Company and was one of the original incorporators of the River View Cemetery. He was also an inventor, and had patented a number of useful articles.



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**Levi Stevens House  
Dearborn County, Indiana**

*Section 9-Bibliography*

Books

Dearborn County Interim Report: Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory. Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, 1983.

History of Dearborn and Ohio Counties, Indiana.  
Indianapolis: F.E. weakly, & Co., 1885.

Shaw, Archibald. History of Dearborn County, Indiana.  
Indianapolis: B.F., Bowen & Co., 1915.

Newspapers

The Aurora Commercial (Aurora, Indiana) 5 June 1862.

Other

Deed Record Books, Dearborn County Recorders Office, Dearborn County Courthouse, Lawrenceburg, Indiana.

*Section 10-Geographical Data-Verbal Boundary Description*

In lot #200 and the western six (6) feet of lot #199, City of Aurora, Dearborn County, Indiana.

*Boundary Justification*

This is the historic property boundary.



The state boundary as shown represents the approximate position of the low water line as determined from U. S. Corps of Engineers Ohio River charts, surveyed 1911-1914, and supplementary information

Zone 16  
 E 681740  
 N 4324640  
 Stevens, Levi E.  
 House, 122 Sth  
 Street, Aurora  
 Indiana, is  
 located where the