

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

FINAL

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 Mishawaka Reservoir Caretaker's Residence

other names/site number WPA House

2. Location


street & number 16581 Chandler Boulevard N/A ☐ not for publication

city or town Mishawaka N/A ☐ vicinity

state Indiana code IN county St. Joseph code 141 zip code 46544

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this ☒ Y 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.)



5/13/98

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

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

Mishawaka Reservoir Caretaker's Residence

St. Joseph IN

Name of Property

County and State

**5. Classification****Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private  
☐ public-local  
☐ public-State  
☐ public-Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

- ☒ building  
☐ district  
☐ site  
☐ structure  
☐ object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	1	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use****Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC:

Single Dwelling

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC:

Single Dwelling

**7. Description****Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

19th &amp; 20th c. REVIVALS:

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation

CONCRETE

walls

BRICK

roof

ASPHALT

other

STONE

**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.

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL HISTORY \_\_\_\_\_

ARCHITECTURE \_\_\_\_\_

**Period of Significance**

1938-1947 \_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Dates**

1938 \_\_\_\_\_

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A \_\_\_\_\_

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A \_\_\_\_\_

**Architect/Builder**

Works Progress Administration \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

Name of repository:

Mishawaka-Penn Township Public Library \_\_\_\_\_

Mishawaka Reservoir Caretaker's

Name of Property

St. Joseph IN

County and State

**10. Geographical Data**Acreage of Property Less than one acre**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 

1	6	5	6	7	9	3	0	4	6	0	9	7	5	0
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Zone Easting Northing2 

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3 

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Zone Easting Northing4 

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☐ 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 Glory-June Greifforganization Consulting Historian date 08/07/97street & number 1753 South Talbott telephone (317) 637-6163city or town Indianapolis state IN zip code 46225**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 Peter De Keverstreet & number 16581 Chandler Boulevard telephone (219) 258-4217city or town Mishawaka state IN zip code 46544**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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Mishawaka reservoir caretaker's residence St. Joseph County IN

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The Mishawaka reservoir caretaker's residence presently sits on a rise, facing south, about three-tenths of a mile south of its original location next to the city's reservoir, amidst the Mishawaka Hills south of the city.\* It was necessary to move the house to save it, as it was to be demolished if it had remained on the reservoir site. Next to the house, on the east, is a recently built modest garage (a corner is visible in photo 2) with a driveway leading up to it. A sidewalk runs from the drive to the front door of the house (photo 1), which originally had a small gabled roof sheltering the stoop, with lattice work on either side. This was lost in the move, but the current owner plans to restore it. Near the southeast corner of the house stands a curving metal light pole with a hanging glass globe, which came from and was part of the original site.

The solid brick house is one-and-a-half stories and essentially rectangular. A gabled bay extends from the north end of the west side of the house (photo 2). There is a three-sided bay window on the east side (photos 1,3) with metal-framed casements, as are all the windows in the house. All are original, and most even have their original screens. (The wood frame storm windows still used were constructed by the third occupants of the house, probably in the late 1940s.) North of the bay window embedded in the wall on the east side (see photo 3) is a limestone plaque inscribed "Built By Federal Works Progress Administration, 1937-1938." From the gabled roof a fieldstone chimney rises just behind the peak east of center (see photo 2). The main entrance is centered on the south facade; there is a rear entrance (photo 3) at the east end of the north elevation. (Around 1945 the residents of the house constructed a sheltered entryway for the rear door; this was lost in the move, and the owner intends to leave the entrance as it had been built originally, without a shelter of any sort.)

The interior of the house is remarkably intact. All the original trim and hardware remain. Through the front door one enters the living room, which boasts a modest brick fireplace and the three-sided bay mentioned previously (see photo 4). A stairway to the left (west) of the entrance leads to the attic, now serving as a very large bedroom. Forward (north) of the front door is a pass-through to the dining room and the small kitchen on the east. West of the entry to the dining room is a hallway leading to the bathroom on the right (with original tub) and two small bedrooms. Beneath the attic stairs are those leading to the full basement, which lies below the seven-inch poured concrete slab upon which the house rests. The house had a full basement in its original location as well; the original outside entrance to it remains, on the north end of the east side.

\*location shown on USGS map



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Mishawaka reservoir caretaker's residence

St. Joseph County IN

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Mishawaka reservoir caretaker's residence is an unusual manifestation of the work of the WPA in Indiana, and as such it is significant under Criterion A (in the area of social history). The building is also significant under Criterion C, as it is representative of a 1930s cottage and demonstrates typical construction methods employed by the WPA. As the building was moved in order to save it, Criteria Consideration B must be applied. Its present location was the closest available to its original site, and the building is so intact and unusual—caretakers' dwellings constructed by the WPA are rare—that its relocation should be no obstacle to its listing.

The origins of the caretaker's residence begin with the construction of Mishawaka's new water storage reservoir amidst the hills south of Dragoon Trail in 1929. Rapid population growth aided by a large influx of immigrants following World War I had greatly increased demand on the city's water supply. But the onset of the Great Depression prevented any further improvements until the New Deal programs introduced by President Franklin D. Roosevelt's administration provided the means for state and local governments to undertake public works projects. St. Joseph County was the site of considerable New Deal activity, starting with the introduction in 1933 of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (FERA), which covered some rudimentary work projects, and the Public Works Administration (PWA), which funded large-scale public construction projects. In 1935 the new federal Works Progress Administration (WPA) unveiled a comprehensive work relief program that provided the potential for all manner of employment, in hopes of matching the skills of the unemployed to jobs that local and state governments created. In addition to developing or improving parks (including Battell Park, listed in the National Register), schools, and streets, Mishawaka applied to the WPA for several projects to upgrade the city's water system, including the expansion of sewer lines and the construction of a storage building for the water department. (That structure still stands in the 200 block of Virgil Street.)

In 1937 Mishawaka sought WPA funds to construct a caretaker's residence for the recently built reservoir. The city justified its unusual request by noting the reservoir's isolated location outside the city limits, and that when the gates to the water supply were found disturbed in any way, the water department felt compelled to drain the reservoir lest there was the slightest chance the supply might have been contaminated. The solution seemed to be to build a residence, to be "occupied by a responsible party, having authority as caretaker," next to the reservoir to discourage intruders from entering the grounds. Unlike those in the few other caretaker's residences that the WPA built, the occupants would

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Mishawaka reservoir caretaker's residence St. Joseph County IN

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not be actual employees of the water department. The city was very careful to point out that, nevertheless, this residence was to remain publicly owned and was being built for the good of the public, as a means of guarding the city water supply.

In December 1937 the WPA authorized the funds for the project that would employ approximately thirty men, but actual construction did not begin until March 1938. The original proposal estimated the total cost of the project at slightly over ten thousand dollars, but the city requested and received an additional supplement of nearly \$2100, most of which went for labor. While the total figure seems a bit hefty for a modest house in the 1930s, the dwelling, with its solid brick walls and seven-inch poured concrete floor over a full basement, was substantial in its construction. The mission of the WPA was labor-intensive, and the house, with details like the fieldstone chimney and the limestone project marker plaque, reflects the fact that a number of skilled workmen were employed on it. The limestone marker, incidentally, was carved in Bedford, giving work through the WPA to unemployed stonecutters there. The house was completed by the end of the year, and in February the Mishawaka Board of Public Works completed a lease agreement with William D. Buckles, who was past seventy years of age. Buckles and his wife would reside in the house by the reservoir in return for his service as a "watchman and caretaker." They lived there about four years, apparently moving to their son's residence sometime before the death of Mrs. Buckles in 1943.

The Floyd Swartzlander family next moved in with their three children in February 1944, but their stay was brief, ending tragically. Mr. Swartzlander was a lineman for the city, and succumbed to the injuries he sustained in a work-related accident in October of the same year. A middle-aged couple, Dwight and Mabel Snyder, began their long residency in the house shortly after. The Snyders' lease agreement required a very modest monthly rent of \$15 along with Mr. Snyder's watchman/caretaker duties. Interestingly, Snyder was also a lineman for the city, and indeed, was a pallbearer at Floyd Swartzlander's funeral. The seeming coincidence may be as simple as the fact that the city's water and electric services were in one department, under Superintendent A.R. Klein, who had first proposed the caretaker's house as a WPA project. The Snyders lived there for decades and were the last occupants of the house in its original location. Dwight Snyder died in 1969; the city allowed his widow to remain in the house as long as she wished, which turned out to be 21 years.

But long before Mabel Snyder vacated the residence in 1990, the city had determined a caretaker was no longer needed and let the maintenance of the house, which fortunately was wonderfully sound, slide. The water department did, however, board it when it became empty. During the early

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Mishawaka reservoir caretaker's residence

St. Joseph County IN

1990s the fate of the caretaker's residence was extremely tenuous. Preservationists were bound to save the unique building, but few others, at least initially, saw the merits of the house. Its location was a problem; the city wanted to demolish it and rejected various solutions involving adaptive reuse on the site. To save it, the house had to be moved, which at first seemed an impossible task, given the poured concrete floor. Meanwhile, preservation groups had begun a public campaign to save the caretaker's residence, ultimately resulting in the city's agreement to sell the house with the stipulation that it be moved from the reservoir site. The integrity of the house's setting had to be sacrificed if it was to survive. The preservation group Beiger Heritage purchased the house, and after considering a number of unfulfilled options, moved the house in 1995 to a vacant lot in a nearby subdivision, only three tenths of a mile from the original site. During the lengthy efforts to save the caretaker's residence, one of the group's board members became interested in buying the house in order to make it his home, and thus it came about.

The Mishawaka reservoir caretaker's dwelling is a significant and rare example of WPA construction: that of an individual custodial residence. Stylistically it is a typical cottage of the 1930s, and it differs from the few other known WPA custodial cottages extant in Indiana, which were all built later. The others all were/are on state lands; there are no other custodial residences built by the WPA on municipal property known in Indiana. One in Lincoln State Park, built in 1941, has been altered beyond recognition; another at Driftwood State Fish Hatchery was recently demolished. There remains only the custodian's residence, which has been altered, at Fawn River State Fish Hatchery, a contributing building to the historic district of the same name listed in the National Register early in 1997. That frame dwelling, which exhibits some Cape Cod influence, differs significantly from the Mishawaka house. In truth, the Mishawaka reservoir caretaker's dwelling stands alone as a remarkably intact example of WPA workmanship applied to domestic architecture.



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MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

De Kever, Peter J. House on a Hill: The Story of Mishawaka's WPA House.  
Unpublished manuscript, Mishawaka 1996.

Greiff, Glory-June. Making a Better Indiana: WPA, Labor and Leisure.  
Indianapolis: United Auto Workers Community Action Program Council, 1982.

\_\_\_\_\_. The New Deal in St. Joseph County, Indiana. Context Prepared for  
the Historic Preservation Commission of South Bend and St. Joseph County,  
South Bend 1997.

\_\_\_\_\_. Potential WPA Historic Properties in Indiana. Compiled from  
microfilmed WPA index cards at the National Archives, 1988. On file at  
Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana.

New Deal Newspaper Clipping File, Mishawaka-Penn Public Library.

Recovery in Indiana. Indianapolis: Governor's Commission on Unemployment  
Relief, 1933-1936.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary is that of Lot 2 in Kalka's Subdivision, Mishawaka, Indiana.

Boundary Justification

The boundary conveniently encompasses the historic building on its new  
lot.