

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 Hill Crest Community Center

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 505 N. Eighth Street

N/A not for publication

city or town Clinton

N/A vicinity

state Indiana

code IN

county Vermillion

code 165

zip code 47842

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.)

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official/Title

11-5-97
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)

- 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	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	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)

SOCIAL:

Civic

RELIGION:

Church-Related

RELIGION:

Religious Facility

RECREATION/CULTURE:

Auditorium

RECREATION/CULTURE:

Sports Facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION/CULTURE:

Auditorium

COMMERCE/TRADE:

Restaurant

DOMESTIC:

Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN:

Queen Anne

19th & 20th c. AMER.:

Prairie School

19th & 20th c. REVIVALS:

Colonial Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation

BRICK

walls

BRICK

roof

ASPHALT

other

STONE: Limestone

WOOD

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)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: EUROPEAN

SOCIAL HISTORY

EDUCATION

Period of Significance

1911 - 1962

Significant Dates

1911

1922

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Isaac Pursell

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical 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:

Vermillion County Public Library-
Clinton, Indiana

Hill Crest Community Center
Name of Property

Vermillion County, Indiana
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of Property .475 acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 465101 4391402
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 Camille B. Fife and Thomas W. Salmon II

organization The Westerly Group, Inc. date December 12, 1996

street & number 556 W. 1175 N. Rd. telephone (812) 696-2415

city or town Farmersburg state IN zip code 47850

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 Mr. Robert Wallace

street & number RR 3 Box 236 telephone (317) 832-2860

city or town Clinton state IN zip code 47842

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.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Hill Crest Community Center
Clinton, Vermillion Co., Indiana

Narrative Description

Summary:

Hill Crest Community Center is a complex of three buildings, which are interconnected and thus form a single unit. They represent a mix of architectural styles. The first of these buildings to be constructed is the chapel, a one and a half story brick building erected in 1911. This structure features a gable roof and a protruding three faceted bay, which once served as a nave. The chapel has elements which reflect the Queen Anne style. Attached at the east side of the Chapel with interconnecting doors, is the auditorium/gymnasium, a brick building constructed in 1922, with a barrel vault roof. Late Colonial revival elements include the multipaned windows and the wide returns at the gable ends. The third of the buildings, which is connected on the north side by a hallway, is a c. 1922 residence of Prairie School influence, also of brick.

The complex is located on the northeast corner of Eighth and Oak Streets in Clinton, the heart of the old Italian neighborhood. The spacious lot includes a few trees and plenty of space to the east for a large parking area. It is bounded by an alley on the east side and private residential property on the north. Located on a slight topographic rise which undoubtedly gave inspiration for its name, Hill Crest Community Center is a prominent feature of the residential neighborhood in which it is placed.

Description

The chapel at Hill Crest is a one and a half story building of a pari-colored red brick, probably local to the Clinton area. It has a brick foundation, with a three-course water table of darker, oversized brick, all in a stretcher bond. A second, three-course row of darker brick highlights two (originally three) window heads on the south facade. The original main entrance, on the west side, south of the bay, has been blocked with tan limestone blocks of various sizes. Most are rock-faced, although the original plain, dressed limestone head is still in place and visible. The walls of the chapel are also of stretcher bond brick, with several window openings of flat dressed limestone. The present window openings in the chapel are either blocked or replaced with new, two-vertical light windows. The main entrance to the building is now on the south side (with modern doors), in a porch which combines the entry to the gymnasium/auditorium, under a flat roof with square posts. The roof is a combination gable and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 2

Hill Crest Community Center
Clinton, Vermillion Co., Indiana

hipped (over the projecting bay), with wide eaves, now covered with aluminum siding.

The original chapel building, once the focal point of Community Center activities, was constructed in 1911, and designed by the Philadelphia architect Isaac Pursell.¹ It originally had a shingle roof, with a square lantern and small false gables on the roof over the main entrance and on the north side of the building. Although the roof lines have been maintained, these details and the lantern were removed in the general remodelling which took place with the construction of the gymnasium in 1922. The original building also had a projecting, gabled roof wing at the center on the east wall. This was removed when the gymnasium was built, abutting (or replacing) this wall. According to Sanborn Insurance maps of 1915 and 1921, a one-story brick addition, still present, was added, sometime before the latter date. A photograph of Hill Crest, dated between 1911 and 1914 shows that the original windows were casement, six-light and that the original door was a double leaf wood panel.

The gymnasium/auditorium is a two and a half story building with a full basement, constructed in 1922 and abutting the chapel. It has a brick foundation, with small, two-light basement windows below a brick water table. These are, alternately, single and double. The stretcher bond brick walls are of wire cut brick in a dark range of subtly variable red-brown colors. The first floor windows are multi-paned, with stone sills. Several of these have been bricked up, including all of the windows on the east and north sides. A basement level entrance on the north side is reached by a concrete stair, protected from the weather by a shed roof between the gymnasium and the adjacent residence. On the east side, the original entry has been maintained, although the shed roof is partially sided with aluminum and a wood handicapped ramp and new lights have been installed. The original concrete stairs rose in the position now occupied by the ramp and modern concrete stairs now allow access from the east side.

Three upper level windows in both gable ends have survived and are either multi-light or louvers, with stone sills. The building has a massive, barrel roof, covered with modern asphalt shingles. It has extremely wide eaves and prominent returns at the eave line, with simple boxed cornices. A chimney, on the main building which once

¹ Davita, James J., "Italians", in Taylor, Robert M., & McBirney, Connie A., Editors, *Peopling Indiana*, Indiana Historical Society: Indianapolis, Indiana, 1996.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 3

Hill Crest Community Center
Clinton, Vermillion Co., Indiana

served the furnace for the center, has been removed for safety reasons.

The residence which adjoins the complex on the north was built c. 1922 as the parsonage. It is a two-story, square-plan brick structure, with wings on the south and east sides. Like the other two structures, it has a brick foundation, with a water table of a darker brick. The walls are made of a wire-cut, rough-finish brick in various shades of dark reddish brown. An open brick porch with brick walls and piers unifies the front facade. The windows and doors feature multiple, vertical panes and dressed stone sills. Wide overhanging eaves are evidence of the Prairie Style influence in this house, which is, in form, an American Four-Square. The main roof of the building is pyramidal, while the side and rear wings are hipped. At the rear (or east), two wings are present, with some window infill on the brick wing. The easternmost is probably the former rear porch, now with a concrete block foundation and wide aluminum siding walls. The rear door has four full, vertical lights. The entry to the basement of the gymnasium is adjacent to the rear brick wing. With the exception of aluminum siding infill in the eaves and the rear porch, and a few replacement windows, the residence is very close to its original condition.

The interior of the chapel has changed considerably since its first construction. Its walls are presently covered with modern wood-grain panelling and it has a hung ceiling, with enclosed fluorescent lights, in addition to modern chandeliers. However, it is possible to discern the area where, undoubtedly the former alter stood, since a raised dias separates the main area of the interior from the section in the bay, or nave. It presently serves as a restaurant for patrons of the community theatre which performs in the gymnasium next door. The interior of the gymnasium and its basement are relatively intact. The stage is present, with a small proscenium and a raised floor. The main floor, now used as a seating area, still contains the gymnasium markings and basketball hoop, although the bleachers are gone and the interior doors have been changed. An original entry to the gymnasium once existed on the east side of the south wall. This has been moved to created a new entrance on the south side of the west wall, adjacent to the entrance to the chapel.

The basement of the gymnasium (and, once the chapel) served as classrooms, shops and meeting rooms for the many vocational, citizenship, and social activities of the center. The basement, directly accessible from the rear outside entrance, contains a long hallway, off of which is located a main central room, a southern room

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 4

Hill Crest Community Center
Clinton, Vermillion Co., Indiana

and an eastern room, in addition to small spaces to the north. These presently serve as dressing rooms, green room and storage space for the theatre. In former times, these were occupied with center activities and storage. In addition, the main hall leads to spaces underneath the chapel, where it is likely a work shop was located for use by the young immigrant boys. The rooms under the gymnasium are plastered and painted, with doors and window surrounds originally of dark-stained wood, typical of the Arts & Crafts/Mission Style which was so popular during the first decades of the twentieth century. Many of these surrounds have been painted, but a large number remain intact, particularly in the largest, central basement room. The ceiling in this room, and others, is a modern replacement.

The interior of the residence is also finished in a simple manner typical of its era. Plaster walls and wood door and window surrounds are complemented by a rough-finish brick fireplace in the main room. Similar treatment is given to the woodwork in the upstairs rooms. Although originally accessible through a hall on the first floor leading to the chapel, a locked door presently separates the two structures. In the area between the chapel and the residence, where the first extension was built, are now located mens and women's bathrooms, with access through the west wall of the gymnasium. These facilities are new and, of course required for the adaptive reuse of the complex as a restaurant and theatre. The former parsonage is presently rented as a residence independent of the theatre and restaurant.

The site is well-manicured, with lawn and a stately deciduous tree on the west lawn. In addition, an evergreen of generous proportions masks the link between the chapel and the residence, thus affording a measure of privacy. Angled parking on the south side near the gymnasium and the east parking lot provide ample facilities for the theatre patrons, along with on-street parking for peak times.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 5

Hill Crest Community Center
Clinton, Vermillion Co., Indiana

8. Statement of Significance

Summary

Hill Crest Community Center is significant for its association with an unusually large ethnic immigration in a small Indiana town and as an example of a local social service facility which was patterned after the nationally-known settlement house movement.

The Center was the focus of community service to the immigrant community of Clinton, Indiana for over fifty years. Located in an area rich in coal resources, this small town in west central Indiana attracted a large number of central Europeans, especially Italians, during the latter part of the nineteenth century and the first quarter of the twentieth. Although established under the auspices of the Presbyterian Church as a mission to the Italian immigrants, Hill Crest welcomed all nationalities and religions to its citizenship, english and vocational classes. It also offered a variety of sports and other enrichment opportunities.

Statement

Italian immigrants began to move into several coal-rich counties in west central Indiana toward the end of the last century. As early as 1878, an Italian coal miner entered the Vermillion County courthouse and declared his desire for citizenship.² It would be several decades before a mass of southern European immigrants would impact the small community of Clinton, Indiana, in Vermillion County. Their presence would be a moving force in the creation of the Hill Crest Community Center and would indelibly imprint the town with an Italian stamp. Today this influence is most widely recognized in a popular "Little Italy" festival which draws people from the surrounding area as well as several outlying states.

At the beginning of the twentieth century, midwestern states such as Indiana were exploiting their oil, gas and coal industries. Fuel was needed to stoke the fires of the new industries engendered by the rise of the automobile and improved manufacturing methods. From west central Indiana, the burgeoning railroads carried coal north to Chicago's vast steel mills. Vermillion County's mining industry began to surge somewhat after Clay County's declined. The latter had enjoyed a boom which began as early as 1858, but dwindled after the

² Turner Pub. Co., *Vermillion County History and Families*, c.1988, p. 106.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 6

Hill Crest Community Center
Clinton, Vermillion Co., Indiana

dawn of the new century.

The town of Clinton, located in the southeast portion of Vermillion County, on the banks of the Wabash River, was strategically located to benefit from the surge of midwestern coal mining. According to local sources, there were once as many as fifty-six coal mines which could be reached from Clinton, although all were not considered part of the Clinton field.³ Within the latter, there were thirty-one mines in operation during the peak year of 1920. In 1921 over 15,000 people lived in Clinton and it was estimated that about three-fourths of them were miners.⁴

Why so many Italian workers were drawn to Clinton is unknown. The town was founded early in the nineteenth century by hardy pioneers who saw potential in the access to transport afforded by the Wabash River. Later, when the railroads passed through the town, the stage was set for further development of the areas rich resources. A study of naturalization documents conducted during the 1980s revealed that most of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century immigrants to the small town were from northern Italian regions, including Piedmont and Veneto.⁵ Undoubtedly, word of the opportunities in Clinton was passed quickly among families and friends within the region.

Many factors contributed to the surge of emigration from Europe. Political turmoil in late nineteenth century Italy resulted in disastrous economic conditions for most of the population. Between 1861 and 1922, a period of sixty-one years, fifty-seven different governments held sway over the country. Although popular participation in government was mandated, only 10% of the populace was eligible to vote in 1912.⁶ Many felt powerless to influence their own destiny. The shores of America called them in ever-growing numbers. In 1907, 285,731 Italians entered American ports. Like many immigrants before them, they offered reliable, inexpensive labor to

³ W. W. Wake, in *The Daily Clintonian*, December 24, 1963, reprinted in Turner, p. 108.

⁴ *The Daily Clintonian*, June 19, 1987, Reprinted in Turner, p. 110.

⁵ Turner, p. 106.

⁶ James J. Divita, "Italians", p. 276-277.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 7

Hill Crest Community Center
Clinton, Vermillion Co., Indiana

businesses anxious to maximize profits.⁷

The peak period of Italian immigration to Indiana occurred between 1910 and 1930. These too, were years of development for Clinton and for the Hill Crest Community Center. Four to five trains per day carried miners from Clinton to the various mines around the area. In 1910 Vermillion County ranked fourth among Indiana counties in coal production.⁸ During this era, freight cars full of Indiana coal were rapidly filled for transport north. One of the larger operations, the Dering 6 mine, could produce an average of three to four thousand tons each day. More than thirty mines operated in Clinton -- ample work was available for many men.⁹

The influx of immigrant populations into the small town of Clinton, Indiana provided impetus for sympathetic, socially conscious citizens to take action. Although there may have been more than 50 nationalities represented in the community during the years before World War II, the single primary ethnic group continued to be Italians. Thus, when the Hill Crest chapel was built it was dubbed by the local newspaper the first "Italian Presbyterian" church. In fact, during those early years, the facility, operated as a mission of the presbytery, had more in common with the settlement houses well known in the east, than with a typical midwestern church.

During the mid-nineteenth century, settlement houses in major cities provided community education and recreation, especially to immigrants and racial minorities.¹⁰ Concerns for the health, social welfare and education of the working poor, especially immigrant families, increased at the turn of the century. This same concern was felt among the conscientious citizens of Clinton, Indiana, where the north side of town, after 1900, became known as the Italian section. In the first decade of the century, a small commercial district arose -- business blocks were constructed by Italian merchants to serve their constituency -- separate from the traditional downtown area to the southeast. Many of the immigrant families did not speak English,

⁷ Ibid., p. 277.

⁸ Ibid.

⁹ Turner, p. 109.

¹⁰ William Bridgewater & Elizabeth Sherwood, Ed.'s. *The Columbia Encyclopedia, 2nd Ed.*. Columbia University Press: New York, New York, 1950.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 8

Hill Crest Community Center
Clinton, Vermillion Co., Indiana

and were ill prepared to adapt to their new homeland. Sometimes homes were provided for them, but more often no provision was available. ¹¹

A common source of succor to immigrants was the Catholic Church, but in Clinton, the local church was built in the southern part of town, while the Italian immigrants were clustered in the north end. Thus, it was inconvenient to many, especially children. In addition, a certain disaffection had occurred. The Irish-born pastor refused to conduct funerals for individuals whose mass attendance and church membership was in question. In a mining community, where fatalities were not uncommon, such ceremonies were important. The ill feelings came to a head on the night of November 16th, 1909 when five men planted ninety-two sticks of dynamite in the facade of the church. Fortunately only three sticks exploded, sparing the church's utter destruction. ¹²

Two months later, in January of 1910, J. W. Robb, an elder of the old and respected Clinton Presbyterian Church, proposed that property be purchased and an Italian Presbyterian mission be established in the north end of town, where the immigrants were located. ¹³ The Synod's Committee of National Missions and the women of the Presbyterian Society joined hands to pledge their support for the project. The goals of the center would be to provide, in addition to religious training, programs in homemaking, English, character training and social activities. By October of 1911, the first building, known as Hill Crest Chapel, was constructed at a cost of \$3,000. An additional \$500 was raised, largely through the efforts of Mrs. H. P. Sidwell of Frankfort, Indiana, who personally visited the Missionary societies on behalf of the project. The additional funds provided the furnishings for the building. ¹⁴ The center welcomed all religious denominations.

Mr. Robb and his wife Margaret were the first superintendents of the Sunday school, but the expansion into adult education was accomplished by an Italian-born minister from Chicago, the Rev. C. A. Papa. In addition to the Sunday school, the activities included a fraternal society among the men and industrial classes for boys and

¹¹ *The Daily Clintonian*, August 1, 1947.

¹² *The Clintonian*, November 19, 1909, quoted in Davita, "Italians", p. 286.

¹³ Davita, "Italians", p. 287.

¹⁴ *The Clintonian*, August 4, 1947.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 9

Hill Crest Community Center
Clinton, Vermillion Co., Indiana

girls. In addition, the staff provided friendship and help to the immigrant families who were trying to learn about life in their new home.¹⁵ No doubt the presence of a native-born Italian who could speak their language was of considerable comfort.

It may have been the Association of the Italian Cristoforo Colombo Benevolenza Society No. 2 of Clinton which met at the Hill Crest Center (or another similar club). The association was the first such Italian society to be organized in Indiana (according to the State Archives), notarized on April 23, 1896. Such societies provided immigrants with benefits upon death or illness, as well as social gatherings. Mine operators were not obligated to provide for the care of families when miners were killed or injured, thus these societies served an essential purpose.¹⁶

The first building of Hill Crest was a substantial brick structure, constructed of an interesting pari-colored brick, probably a locally manufactured product (Clinton also produced a high-quality paving brick from local resources). The Synod evidently placed a great deal of emphasis on this project, as a Philadelphia architect, Isaac Pursell, was responsible for the plans. Hill Crest was one of three such centers begun by the Presbyterian Church in Indiana during the early years of this century, when immigration from southern Europe was at its peak. Neighborhood House in Gary served the workers of northern Indiana's mills and factories and Cosmopolitan Mission served Indianapolis' immigrants working in meat packing and other industries.¹⁷ Of these three, Hill Crest was located in the smallest community, yet it survived for fifty years, well beyond the period of immigration.

The dynamic Reverend Papa, who had begun the educational work of the Hill Crest Community Center, retired to assume another post after three years. He was replaced by Miss Della Brown of Indianapolis, who shortly enlisted her brother, the Rev. L. O Brown to help with the rapidly expanding activities. Eventually, the Rev. Brown and his wife became superintendents, serving for 17 years. In 1919 they were joined by Miss Elizabeth Pfander, who would serve the center over a long period of time, returning in the 1930s after a long absence to

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Divita, "Italians", p. 288.

¹⁷ Divita, "Hill Crest Mission", in *Trailmarker*, February 1985, p.3

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 10

Hill Crest Community Center
Clinton, Vermillion Co., Indiana

serve as superintendent until 1943. Although not Italian-speakers, these dedicated people were warmly remembered by local immigrants.¹⁸

In 1922, it became obvious that Hill Crest's activities had outgrown the small original quarters. A wing had been built to the north by 1920 but the increased attendance and activities of the center required much more space. A statewide fund drive was conducted and the gymnasium and living quarters were added to the site, which then incorporated two city lots. The cost of these buildings was \$32,000. Large and small gifts had come from all over the state, children saved their pennies for the center and personal subscriptions were generous. The new facilities provided additional classrooms, a gymnasium with a stage and backstage area, domestic science room, club rooms, bowling alley, office and living quarters. At this time, boy scouts and girl scouts were organized at the center, along with extensive athletic activities.¹⁹

English and citizenship classes had long been an important part of the services of the center. These continued through the 1920s. Clinton's Italian immigrants were anxious to become full citizens of their new country. One of the goals of the Hill Crest Community Center was to help them become fully a part of the American community.

With the extensive additions to the site, the Community Center came under the management of the Hillcrest Governing Committee. Within a few years, the Governing Committee and the Presbytery approved plans for the organization of a church, to be called Hillcrest Community Center Church.²⁰

With the establishment of an immigration quota system in 1924, the number of Italian-born in Indiana began to decline. Hill Crest however, continued to serve this population in Clinton for many years, training the children of the original immigrants as well as new arrivals. Clinton suffered greatly during the depression. In addition to the national economic disaster, mining operations in the community had declined during the late 1920s, leaving many in dire economic

¹⁸ *Daily Clintonian*, August 4, 1947.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*

²⁰ *Ibid.*

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 11

Hill Crest Community Center
Clinton, Vermillion Co., Indiana

circumstances.²¹ Soup kitchens were set up and clothing distributed to those in need. The center was a neighbor and friend in need to many north side Italians during this time.²²

Hill Crest continued to play an active role in the life of Clinton's north side neighborhood throughout the 1940s. By 1947, nearly 15 basketball teams made use of the gymnasium, crafts training was conducted in the winter and the library contained over 250 books for children. The directors during these years were Reverend and Mrs. R. C. Linberg, who had previously served at Howell House, a Presbyterian settlement house in Chicago. Reverend Linberg also served as past of the older First Presbyterian Church in Clinton. During these years, the philosophy of the center was to provide a place " ... where people can practice the spirit of a Good Neighbor and share with each other..." The Hill Crest Community Center would, " ... through social, recreational and education activities under competent Christian leadership, ... help young as well as old to achieve a well rounded life program." And finally, "... It aims to cooperate with all other civic and social agencies working for the welfare of the community."²³

As the mining interests of Clinton continued to decline and with the immigration era long since over, Hill Crest also faced changes in the 1950s. In 1957 the board of managers was dissolved and the Center became a full church with its own officers and financial responsibilities (although some aid from the National Missions board was still available). Reverend Linberg was the pastor of this new entity which was called the Hill Crest Presbyterian Church. Over the course of the next few years aid from the Mission Board was reduced until 1960, when it stopped. Hill Crest continued to operate, providing a voting place for one precinct each election, offices for Unemployment Compensation officials from Terre Haute each Thursday and many other services.²⁴

By 1962, Hill Crest was closed, having served the community for over 50 years. To many it seemed foolish to maintain two churches for

²¹ Divita, "Italians", p. 292; Turner, p. 110-111.

²² *The Clintonian* August 4, 1947.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ "Hillcrest - 1911 - 1961", Unpublished MSS in the Vermillion County Public Library, p. 2.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 12

**Hill Crest Community Center
Clinton, Vermillion Co., Indiana**

300 believers in a town which had dwindled to 5,000 people, less than half its former size during the peak years. Two years later, in 1964, the last deep shaft mine in the area, the Black Diamond Mine, was shut down. Hill Crest Presbyterian Church was united with the First Presbyterian Church to become the United Presbyterian Church of Clinton and the north side property was later sold to private owners.²⁵

For more than fifty years, Hill Crest Community Center served the Italian and other immigrant populations in Clinton, Indiana. The memory of its influence on the lives of citizens is still fresh in the minds of the children and grandchildren of the original immigrants. Today, the local community theatre performs on the stage where many local citizens received their diplomas as graduates of English or citizenship classes. Actors relax in a green room where young people once learned skills or enjoyed recreation. In the former chapel, patrons dine graciously in the room where services were once presided over by the Reverend Papa and his successors. It still retains the significance of its early associations and the memory of the many lives it enhanced.

²⁵ Divita, *Trailmarker*; Turner, p. 111.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 13

Hill Crest Community Center
Clinton, Vermillion Co. Indiana

9. Bibliography

Booth, Louise. Clinton on the Wabash, Revised Edition . D.R. Booth Associates: Villa Park, California, 1994.

Bowen, B. F. & Co. *History of Park & Vermillion Counties*. B. F. Bowen & Co: Indianapolis, Indiana, 1913.

Divita, Dr. James J. "Hill Crest Mission", *Trailmarker*. February 1985

Divita, Dr. James J. "Italians", in Taylor, Robert & McBirney, Connie, Eds., *Peopling Indiana*. Indiana Historical Society: Indianapolis, Indiana, 1996.

Falls, Louise Robertson. "Hillcrest Community Center", Unpublished transcript of interview, c. 1950. In Vermillion County Public Library, Clinton, Indiana.

Fenoglio, Margo, Ed. "HillCrest Community Center", compiled from *The Daily Clintonian*, Monday, August 4, 1947, reprinted in the *Daily Clintonian*, August 4, 1977. MSS in the Vermillion County Public Library, Clinton, Indiana.

"Hillcrest - 1911-1961", c. 1961. Unpublished MSS in the Vermillion County Public Library, Clinton, Indiana.

Turner Publishing Co. **Vermillion County, Indiana History and Families**. Turner Publishing Co: Paducah, Kentucky, c.1988.

Vermillion County Historical Society. *Historic Scenes, Past and Present in Vermillion County, Indiana*. Vermillion County Historical Society: 1974.

Newspaper References

"Dedication Oct, 29th", *The Clintonian*. Tuesday, October 24, 1911.

"Italian Presbyterian Church Dedication", *The Clintonian*. Friday, October 27, 1911.

"Mission Church Dedication in Clinton", *The Clintonian* . Tuesday, October 31, 1911.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 14

Hill Crest Community Center
Clinton, Vermillion Co. Indiana

Maps

Sanborn Insurance Maps, Clinton Indiana, 1910, 1915, 1921. In the collection of the Geography Library, Indiana University, Bloomington, Indiana.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 15

Hill Crest Community Center
Clinton, Vermillion Co., Indiana

10. Verbal Boundary Description

The property includes all of lots 33 and 40 in Knowles Heights Addition, Clinton, Indiana.