

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 Harris, Bright B., House  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_ 031-252-22118

2. Location

street & number 413 North Franklin Street N/A  not for publication  
city or town Greensburg N/A  vicinity  
state Indiana code IN county Decatur code 031 zip code 47240

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

11/3/00  
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

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

Harris, Bright B., House

Decatur IN

Name of Property

County and State

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 3 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing, and Resource Type (buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total). Values range from 0 to 2.

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)

LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

foundation STONE: Limestone

walls BRICK

STONE: limestone

roof ASPHALT

other METAL

Narrative Description

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

Harris, Bright B., House  
Name of Property

Decatur, IN.  
County and State

**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)

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1871

**Significant Dates**

N/A

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Unknown

**Primary location of additional data:**

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

Name of repository:



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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1 *Harris, Bright B., House Decatur Co., IN*

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***Section 7 - Description***

The B. B. Harris Mansion, 1871, is a massive, brick and stone, two-and-one-half story Italianate style house. It stands toward the crest of a hill as Franklin Street rises above the courthouse square just a few blocks due north in downtown Greensburg, Indiana. A fence of limestone piers and cast iron defines the front yard (one contributing structure.)

The house has a complex and eclectic plan and elevations. It does not conform to any traditional vernacular type or any typical builder's plan. The house is asymmetrical; its massing projects, pinwheel-fashion, with an offset gable on the front and side elevations and a low-pitched hip roof on the rear elevation. The house stands on a high, rock-faced coursed ashlar limestone foundation with a dressed water table. Brick walls with limestone belt coursings and wood details rise a full two stories above the tall foundation. The low-pitched interlocking gable and hip roof is covered with asphalt shingles.

The front elevation (photo 1) is impressive. Two distinct sections, divided vertically, form it: a slightly projecting gabled area and on the north half, a side gabled section with bay window. The south section has the main entrance, which is roughly in the center of the house. A run of brick stairs ascends to it, beside it is what could be called a patio, despite the 1950s connotation of the word. The patio is a projecting section of the basement, with two four-pane windows. Two massive limestone slabs with beveled edges make the floor of this patio, and a cast iron rail closes it off. The two floor to ceiling height windows beside the door lead to this patio area.

These two windows have typical detail for the first floor front of the house: a double stone stringcourse of stone separated by header brick runs across at springer level between them, and limestone round arched hoods with a drip mold top each window. The round-topped sash themselves are two-over-two, but the panes are divided *horizontally*. It is not known if perhaps these and other windows on the house of this type were originally four-over-four, like the rear south elevation windows. The main entrance is recessed behind a tall round arch with keystone, flanked by "Roman Doric" pilasters, and it is surmounted by a full classical pediment. The entire entrance surround was executed in cast iron. The front doors are double leaf, two-thirds light entrance doors with semi-circular transom.

The second story of this section has three windows aligned over the first floor openings. These, however, are segmental arched, with a stone continuous sill. The classical proportions of the gable end give the house a Classical Revival feeling. The use of bracket work is confined to the returns projecting from the corners, while a full proper entablature with paneled frieze and dentil mold closes off the gable

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 2 *Harris, Bright B., House Decatur Co., IN*

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into a pediment. This wooden entablature runs around the entire roofline of the house. The matching raking entablature encloses a brick tympanum, with a highly original stone surrounded lozenge window centered in it, with stone courses running horizontally to the window from side to side and from the gable apex.

The north front section of the house has a first floor semi-hexagonal bay. The windows are stilted arches, and the basement level has a four-pane window in each bay facet. A narrow dentiled cornice and wood balustrade masking its roofline. A pseudo-Palladian window grouping is centered over the bay on the second floor: two rectangular one-over-one windows flanking a narrow segmental arched window. A side gable roof covers this section of the house.

The south elevation is an unusual composition of two asymmetrical, pedimented, projecting sections forming a shallow "U" shape (photo 7.) The narrower section is to the front (east), with two closely spaced window openings on the south face of the projecting gabled bay, narrow windows on the flanks, and windows on the main block of the house beside the bay. Basement windows align with those on upper floors. The recessed area has two window openings per floor, and the wider back gabled projection has two openings per floor, but more widely spaced apart than the center or east gabled projection. The builder sustained the same level of detail and finish on this elevation as on the front, but the stone stringcourses and window arch treatment ceases at the west edge of the south elevation.

The north elevation of the house has a single gabled section to the east and a series of recessed sections extending far to the west. The projecting pedimented section has two windows like the other side's gabled sections.

The rest of the house has a markedly lower level of finish than the front. The stonework, save for the foundation and water table, cease at the edge of this gable, and the windows are simple single course header arches and single stone rather than the stonework headers and stringcourses. The flank of the north gable has a single plain window on the second floor. The first floor has a wood shingled, wood frame, shed roofed structure with four-light door and small window that shelter a basement entrance (added 1960.) A corner of the main block of the house protrudes and forms the corner the basement entrance abuts. On its west face is a now boarded-shut round arch back doorway with stone steps. A hip roof caps this section. Abutting west of this is rear wing with two round arch windows flanking a high placed oculus on the first floor. Above it are two segmental arched windows that align over the round arch first floor units. The wood entablature carries across all these various sections. The roof over the westernmost section is a partial hip, being a corner of one of the south gables. The westernmost wall of the house is obscured by a wood frame addition on the first floor, which extends into a two car garage

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7&8 Page 3 *Harris, Bright B., House Decatur Co., IN*

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(built sometime between 1958-1980.) The sunroom area nearest the brick house may have been a porch originally; it does have the same cut stone foundation as the house. The second story of the brick house overlooking the garage has a single boarded-up window opening.

The interior of the house (photo 10) is centered around the stair hall. The open-tread, winding stairs built of black walnut begin close to the front doors and spiral up to the second floor. The typical Italianate newel is paneled, tapered, and capped by an urn-like heavy finial. The balusters that link the molded handrail are also faceted and have bobbin turnings toward the top and bottom. The stair hall passes straight through the building; the round arched door blocked off on the exterior west elevation faces into the back of the hall. The spacious stair hall sets the tone for the well-detailed interior, with its thirteen and one-half foot tall ceiling. The other rooms of the house have the same height of ceiling.

Left (south) of the hall is a parlor, believed to have been a drawing room (photo 16.) This parlor has typical finishes for the ground floor: tall plaster ceilings, plaster walls, high, molded baseboards, and molded and shouldered window surrounds. A rectangular bay off of the south end of the room opens via a tall segmental plaster arch with bobbin-turned corner guards. Two east windows are tall enough to allow access to the open porch or patio-like area. The west wall has an original Italian marble mantelpiece (photo 14.) The mantle has a round arched opening, cartouche keystone, and curvilinear mantle shelf; the firebox has a part of the coal burning insert.

The north parlor opens off of the central hall. It has a full bay window framed by a plaster arch; each face of the bay has floor-to-ceiling windows with original shutter blinds (photo 13). This room also has an Italian marble mantelpiece, very similar to that of the other room (photo 11). The plaster ceiling has a plaster cornice molding, and centered in the ceiling remains an early electrical crystal chandelier (photo 12.)

***Section 8: Statement of Significance***

The B.B. Harris mansion is a large brick residence located a few blocks north of the county square in Greensburg, Indiana. It was built in 1871 for Bright B. Harris, a prominent Greensburg resident who owned a limestone quarry southeast of town. The house is significant under Criterion "C" as an outstanding local example of Italianate residential architecture. It retains a number of original, significant architectural and decorative details which represent both the prosperity of Harris and the fine craftsmanship of the late 19th century.

The Italianate style was very popular in Indiana from the 1860s to the 1880s. America's interest in

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   8   Page   4   *Harris, Bright B., House Decatur Co., IN*

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Romantic Revival styles began in the 1850s, when architects and landscapers first published home building guides such as A.J. Downing's *Architecture of Country Houses*. Samuel Sloan, Downing and Vaux described some of these pre-Civil War designs as "Italian" in spirit. Hoosiers in town and farm began to use the style for house and commercial buildings by the 1860s. However, it was after the Civil War that Italianate became the style of choice for newly wealthy families in Indiana. Whether builders incorporated Italianate elements into vernacular house types, or, constructed homes like those in the pattern books, the characteristics of the style are unmistakable. Most often, massing was artfully asymmetrical, though some chose formal "Italian Villas." Towers, bay windows, and porches broke up the exterior massing. Moderately pitched roofs, edged with heavy bracketed cornice lines, were common. Windows were often round-arched, and many builders accented them with hood molds or stone detailing. Almost always, windows were tall and narrow in proportion.

The Bright B. Harris House exhibits all of the characteristics of the popular Italianate style, to a degree matched by a handful of houses in Greensburg, Indiana. It is one of five large scale, highly ornamented examples of Italianate residential design in town. All five are somewhat similar in feeling, though they span the years from 1862 (Forsythe House, 130 E. North) to the 1871 Harris Mansion. The Levi Lathrop House, 230 N. Franklin, is most comparable to the Harris House. Built in 1868, the Levi Lathrop place has a similar facade, with the three principle features seen in the Harris House; an offset gable, bay window topped by a window group, and a recessed wall to the side of the gable. However, the unknown builders of each house differed them through art arrangement of these principle features. For example, the bay window group on the Harris House is part of the recessed wall area, but on the Lathrop House, the bay window is under the offset gable. Not only is the Harris House larger than the Lathrop House, but it is more intact than the Lathrop House. The Lathrop House was converted to a funeral home in the 1900s. All five homes were given the highest rating in the Decatur County Interim Report.

Bright B. Harris first came to Greensburg as an advance scout for Confederate General John Morgan, during the latter's July 1863 raid in southern Indiana and Ohio. While passing to the south of Greensburg, he noted the extensive outcroppings of blue limestone, recording the information in the same notebooks he used for Morgan's reconnaissance. A few weeks later, when the Morgan campaign disintegrated, Harris deserted and slipped back across enemy lines. After the war's end Harris tried his hand at several businesses. By 1868 he had raised enough money to return to Indiana and the limestone outcropping. By early 1869 the new quarry was open for business, and was incorporated (with \$100,000 in capital) as the *Greensburg Stone Company* in 1873.

Greensburg was prospering during the years Harris began his business. Col. Thomas Hendricks had platted the town some fourty odd years before, in 1827. Greensburg became the county seat soon



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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number   8   Page   5   *Harris, Bright B., House Decatur Co., IN*

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thereafter. Transportation improvements gave Greensburg a lead on other southern Indiana towns. The Indiana General Assembly funded the Michigan Road and workers had reached town in 1837. The road connected Greensburg to Madison and the Ohio River, as well eventually to Indianapolis and beyond. The Cincinnati, Indianapolis, and St. Louis Railroad built a line through Greensburg in 1853. The railroad also built a roundhouse on the south side of town. Furniture, lumber, pork packing, flour mills, and other agriculture or extractive based industries also assisted the economy in Greensburg in the 19th century.

The 1870s brought prosperity to Harris and his company. At first, success was hampered by the location of the quarry; stone had to be hauled by wagon to Greensburg, six miles distant, for shipping. In 1875, the company received its largest and most important contract to date: to supply building stone for the new Indiana State Capitol building in Indianapolis. This contract both necessitated and supplied money for a rail spur between the quarry and Greensburg. When completed in 1876, the \$50,000 "Greensburg Lateral Railroad" allowed the company to fill many more orders than before.

Other major contracts included the U.S. Customs House in Cincinnati, the Proctor and Gamble soap factory in Ivorydale, Ohio (a suburb of Cincinnati), stone abutments for many bridges, and the Mansfield Reformatory in Ohio. Harris' stone was especially suitable for prisons, as it was very hard.

By the 1880s the Harris City Stone Company, as it became known, employed more than 300 workers. The quarry had its own Post Office, thirty-seven houses and a three-story boarding house. The later years of the 19th century was not as kind to the company, however. Recessions and poor fiscal management by Harris resulted in the company's bankruptcy in 1897. It was reorganized in 1898 under W.C. Patton and again in 1904 under S.B. Edward. It closed for good in 1914. The Harris Stone Company re-opened the quarry in 1947 and sold crushed and powdered stone for many years.

In 1879, Harris was forced to give up his home due to damages awarded to Traveler's Insurance Company. The firm filed suit against Mr. and Mrs. Harris and several other men, apparently business associates and extended family members, for \$7449.41. It appears that the insurance firm foreclosed the Harris' mortgage. The Decatur County Sheriff confiscated the home and ownership passed to Traveler's. Within a year, Lafayette Freeman was the owner. Following Freeman's death in 1898, his widow, Sarah E. Freeman, lived in the house until her passing in 1910. The mansion very shortly ended up in the hands of John C. and Katherine Huber. John Huber was a successful local merchant. In 1907, Huber purchased Silverberg's men's clothing store on the southeast corner of the courthouse square in Greensburg. Huber eventually bought the building in 1934. Huber's store offered everything from "socks to top hats" according to advertisements. John C. Huber continued to operate the store until his death in 1951. The family then carried on until 1974 at the same location. In 1957, however, Katherine sold the family home of almost fifty years. The Hermann family purchased the mansion, and resided there until 1996. In that year, the Schmalenbergs bought the house and began to restore the property.

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

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8,9,10 Page 6 *Harris, Bright B., House Decatur Co., IN*

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Harris' early success in the mining industry is best represented by the fine brick residence he had built in 1871. Located just a few blocks north of the courthouse, it includes many decorative elements carved from Harris City limestone. The use of limestone as a building material extends to the winding limestone sidewalk which runs from house to street. The house is rated as "Outstanding" in the *Decatur County Interim Report* (1998), and is called "one of the most prominent homes in Greensburg" by the same.

***Section 9 - Bibliography***

Abstract of Title, 413 N. Franklin, Greensburg. Collection of the owner.

Deed Records. Decatur County Recorder's Office, Greensburg.

Harding, Lewis. *History of Decatur County, Indiana*. Chicago: B.F. Bowen, 1915.

Gordon, Murray C. "Forum." *Indianapolis Sunday Star* (7 December 1975), p. 66, col. 2.

Gordon, Murray C. "Rebel's Stone Netted Him Fortune." *Indianapolis News* (24 June 1953), p. 11, col. 1.

Guthrie, Wayne. "Ringside in Hoosierland." *Indianapolis News* (8 December 1947), pt. 2, p. 1, col. 1.

Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory: Decatur County Interim Report. Indianapolis: Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, 1998.

"Vanished Quarrying Town Lives Again." *Indianapolis News* (15 November 1950), p. 12, col. 2.

***Section 10 - Geographical Data - Verbal Boundary Description***

Lot number twenty-seven (27) in block number four (4) in Abram Hendricks Addition to the Town (now City) of Greensburg, also, thirty-five (35) feet off the North side of lot number twenty-eight (28) in block number four (4) in Abram Hendricks Addition to the Town (now City) of Greensburg.

***Boundary Justification***

This is the historic property boundary.

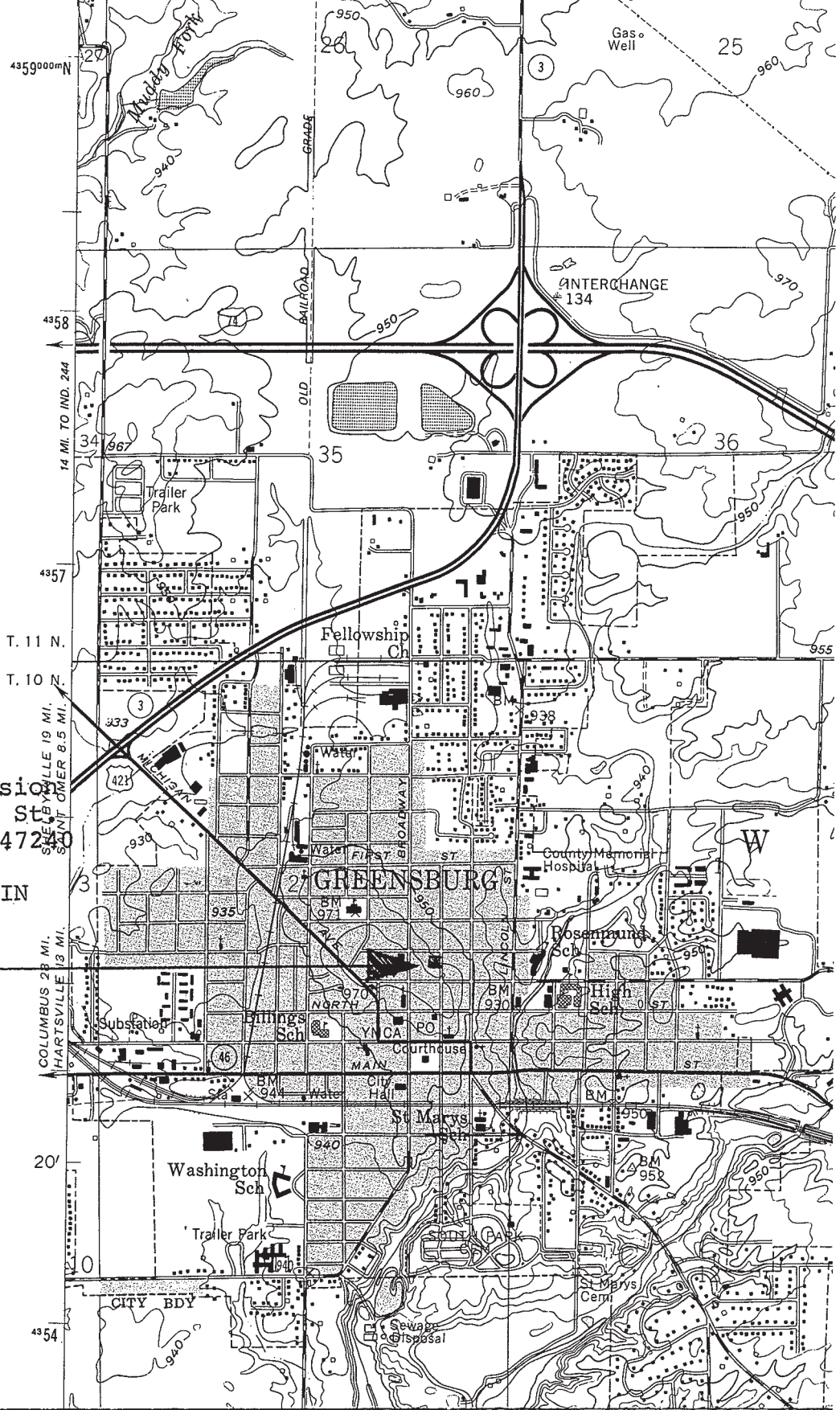
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UNITED STATES  
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

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(ADAMS)

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B.B. Harris Mansion  
413 N. Franklin St.  
Greensburg, IN 47240  
Decatur County, IN



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