

Final

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

2 2001

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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 Jane Ross Reeves Octagon House

other names/site number 059-502-00025

2. Location

street & number 400 South Railroad Street N/A not for publication

city or town Shirley vicinity

state Indiana code IN county Hancock code 059 zip code 47384

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.)

Jon C. SA D-SAPO
Signature of certifying official/Title

4-30-01
Date

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

_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

Jane Ross Reeves Octagon House
Name of Property

Hancock IN
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	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)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION/CULTURE: Museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

MID-19th c.: Octagon Mode

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls WOOD: Weatherboard

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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1879

Significant Dates

1879

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Trehr & Brewster (builder)

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:

Jane Ross Reeves Octagon House Foundation

Jane Ross Reeves Octagon House
Name of Property

Hancock IN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 4 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	16	621467	4416557	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				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 John Warner
organization _____ date 11-28-2000
street & number 5018 Broadway Street telephone 317-283-5450
city or town Indianapolis state IN zip code 46205

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 Jane Ross Reeves Octagon House Foundation, Inc.
street & number 400 South Railroad Street telephone 765-737-6736
city or town Shirley state IN zip code 47384

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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Continuation Sheet – Reeves Octagon House

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Section 7 Description

The Jane Ross Reeves Octagon House, built in 1879, is located on Railroad Street in the town of Shirley, Hancock County, Indiana. The building is a two-story octagon residence constructed in the traditional style advocated by Orson S. Fowler. Fowler, author of the 1853 best seller *A Home for All or the Gravel Wall and Octagon Mode of Building*, was a practitioner of the "science" of phrenology - defined as "a study of the shape and protuberances of the skull, based on a now discredited belief that they reveal character and mental capacity." More practical in his views on architecture, Fowler stressed "modernity" in his architectural pursuits: that is, including in a residence such conveniences as ventilation in every room, the use of hot water and hot-air furnaces, and an indoor water closet.

The present site of the house is not its original location. The current site is in the southwest corner of the town, immediately adjacent to an old railroad depot location. The house is oriented on the ground with its main door facing north. Located just west of the intersection of the two railroad lines that passed through Shirley, the new site is centered in what was Illinois Street, north of Railroad Street. To the north, west, and south are private residences, and east is an open area that will be further developed as part of the community's developing historical park which will include the Jane Ross Reeves Octagon House, a railroad depot building, and other historic resources that highlight important times or elements from the community's past. A sketch plan of the new site accompanies this nomination.

For the first 119 years of its life, the house stood on a small rise surrounded by fields as part of a larger farmstead near Wilkinson, Indiana, approximately 10 miles west-southwest of Shirley. The original farmstead consisted of the residence, a summer kitchen, a well house, a milk barn, and a few utility buildings. Photograph 1 shows the house in its original site and its physical condition prior to the move. Photographs 2, 3, and 4 show views from the rise on which the house was built looking northeast, from the house site to the north, and from the well location looking west from the rear of the house site, respectively. The views to the south and east of the original house location are open fields and unremarkable. The site plan in Drawing 1 shows the placement of the house, the well, and the summer kitchen at the original location (ca 1879).

EXTERIOR

When built in 1879, the eight-sided, two-story house was framed and sheathed in poplar and oak woods harvested on the farm. The timbers were transported to Knightstown, Indiana, where they were sawn into lumber and milled to the required shapes and sizes. The house rested on a stone foundation. The foundation at the new house site is cement block that will be faced with stone. The original exterior included small porches on two of the four entrances to the house, the south and west facades

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(photocopy 1). These porches were removed circa 1930 and replaced by a second wrap porch with a simple shed roof that encompassed three of the eight facades (photograph 1). This wrap porch spanned the west-northwest-north facades. Attached to the porch and incorporated into this roof was a covered walkway that extended north from the house and provided all-weather access to the summer kitchen and the well house.

Each of the eight facades is delineated by corner boards that extend the full height of the exterior wall and also serve as butt joint surfaces for the lapped wood siding that covers the exterior of the house. The top of the paired corner boards consists of a small plain cornice-like detail that visually resembles the capital of a column. Italianate architectural influences are visible in the wide frieze board, the dentil detail, and ornate brackets that support the wide eaves overhang (photograph 5). These same architectural influences are seen in the low pitch of the hipped roof. The four brick chimneys visible in photograph 1 were dismantled to expedite the relocation of the house but they are being replicated from the roofline upward as part of the restoration of the house (photograph 6).

The fenestration of the house is typical of other Fowler-inspired octagon houses. On the first floor of the house, each facade contains either a window and an entry door or a single window in alternating fashion around the full perimeter of the house. On the second floor, a window replaces the entry door to increase the light available to the interior space of the largest rooms (photograph 7). The window openings are rectangular with plain surrounds. The sills, sides, and lintels of dimension lumber are topped with a cornice-detail drip cap (photograph 8). The windows are double hung sashes with two over two glazing.

The exterior door openings have plain surrounds with standard transoms. The exterior doors are wood paneled with single glazing in the upper half (photograph 9).

INTERIOR

The interior arrangement of the octagon house is similar to others of this style. Traditionally, Fowler's design concept resulted in two basic variations on the octagon theme; two large square rooms with an assortment of smaller triangular spaces of different size and a stairwell positioned on the perimeter of the interior space or four large square rooms, with equally sized triangular spaces in a regular pattern around the perimeter of the interior space and a central stairwell. The Reeves Octagon House approximates the second design; the spatial arrangement of the first and second floors is identical as shown in Drawings 2 and 3. The Reeves Octagon reflects what Fowler, and later scholars, referred to as "the best plan." Contrary to other configurations, the Reeves Octagon House has eight rooms on each floor and a triangular closet for each room, positioned in the angle of and against the exterior wall, as part of the interior scheme (photographs 10 and 11). The dimensions of the various rooms are shown on

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the drawings. The chimney chases are visible in the four smaller rooms on each floor (photograph 12).

The interior of the house reflects only one major change from the original plans. At some time in the past additional doorways were created in two interior walls, probably to allow direct access between the kitchen area and the dining room and from the dining room into the main parlor without having to enter the central hallway. The doorways are visible in the right half of photograph 13 and in photograph 14.

With the exception of the central staircase, the interior woodwork and hardware are distinctly simple in design. Door and window casings are fabricated from plain dimension lumber capped with crown moldings in the two rooms that would have been most seen by visitors, the main parlor and the family parlor. This detail is one of only two such attempts at interior ornamentation (photograph 10). One unusual aspect of the interior finishing is the false transom detail over the closet doorways in each room (photograph 10). Although the interior has suffered from repeated attacks of vandalism, some of the original hardware such as door locks and knobs, closet clothes hooks, and inter-floor heat and ventilation grilles remain (photographs 15, 16, and 17).

The walnut central staircase was the other attempt at interior ornamentation. Sadly, vandals in the past removed the balustrade and the newel post. The scrollwork on the stringer was a significant adornment to an otherwise severe interior (photographs 18 and 19).

The interior of the house has been badly misused over the last 50 years, but the residence retains all the significant elements of the original interior spatial arrangement and some evidence of the utilitarian nature of the sparsely ornamented rooms that housed the Reeves family. Clearly, Jane Reeves sought the Fowler-touted benefits of octagonal construction rather than the architectural excesses of the Victorian era so evident in many of the Italianate and Queen Anne homes of the period.

The renovation of the Reeves Octagon House continues as a work in progress. The house rests on a new cement block foundation that has allowed wooden components of the frame, which became out of plumb and square over time, to return to their original positions. The windows and sashes are being returned to near original condition with the exception that sashes are being glazed with panes of modern reflective glass. The clarity of the replacement panes is demonstrated in photographs 19A, and 19B. While the new porch visible in many of the photographs is not original to the house, it is in keeping with other examples of this octagon style and does not detract from the historical visual image.

Section 8 Statement of Significance

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Jane Ross Reeves Octagon House, Shirley, Hancock County, Indiana

The Jane Ross Reeves Octagon House is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for its distinctive and unusual architectural characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction: to wit, octagon buildings of the mid to late nineteenth century. Although moved to save it from demolition, the house retains its eligibility under the exceptions policy stated in Section 60.4, Part 36 of the Code of Federal Regulations as, "a building removed from its original location but which is significant primarily for architectural value..." and as one of nine octagonal residences extant in Indiana. In terms of the building's historic integrity, the relocation obviously affected the elements of location and setting but a predominance of the other elements remain. Design, workmanship, materials, feeling, and association are apparent in the property irrespective of its location.

Several other aspects of the Reeves Octagon House contribute to its significance. First, the floor plan of the house provides for four entry points around the perimeter of the building, a feature not in evidence in other floor plans that were reviewed, nor did any of these floor plans incorporate a closet in each of the rooms on both floors. Secondly, it is a singular example of Fowler's "best plan" and may be the only one built in Indiana, well after the peak of the style's popularity. Thirdly, unlike well-preserved and high-end examples of the style such as Longwood in Natchez, Mississippi, or the Langworthy House in Dubuque, Iowa, the Reeves Octagon House serves as an example of the very essence of the style in an agrarian home that emphasized functionality over the ostentation prevalent in many large Victorian homes in Indiana in the 1870s.

Orson S. Fowler, a phrenologist and prolific writer on health and happiness, dedicated an entire book to the virtues of the octagon style of architectural design. In his most famous work he championed the style for "reducing both building costs and heat loss through the walls," and "increasing sunlight and ventilation" while at the same time "eliminating dark and useless corners." Of the estimated 2,000 built during the heyday of the style in the 1850s and 60s, only a few hundred remain. Rated "Outstanding" in the most recent Indiana Historic Sites & Structures Inventory *Interim Report* published for Hancock County, the house is an example of an architectural style that is rapidly disappearing in Indiana, throughout the Midwest, and the nation. In fact, in the neighboring states of Ohio, Illinois, Michigan, and Kentucky a sum total of 10 octagon houses are listed in the National Register of Historic Places

Hancock County, named for John Hancock a signer of the Declaration of Independence, was created on 1 March 1828 and consisted of three townships. Common to other settlement patterns in the region the first settlers established homesteads along the primary watercourses in the area such as the Blue River and along Brandywine, Sugar, and Buck Creeks but none navigable which limited

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commercial development during the county's earliest years. In fact, the presence of a large number of streams and other low marshy areas required significant ditching to transform the land to useable farms by the early pioneers.

In the mid-1850s increasing traffic on the improved National Road brought some commercial growth to the southern part of the county but until railroads began crisscrossing the state and the county in last half of the nineteenth century local farmers had to depend on an underdeveloped road system to move their products to market.

The real economic growth came in the late nineteenth century when natural gas was discovered. The presence of this natural resource initiated an influx of industries dependent on large amounts of inexpensive energy. Of particular note were factories dedicated to the production of glass and all its many consumer products such as bottles, general use jars, and canning jars. Small towns like Shirley, the new home of the Reeves Octagon House, benefited from this economic largesse and provided the work forces for varied industries that included sorghum and chemical production, creosoting (wood preservation) facilities, and cheese making. The end of the gas boom that occurred in the 1910s ended much of the industry in the county so dependent on this energy source.

In the mid-1850s Elijah and Jane Reeves settled on land between Wilkinson and Willow Branch in Brown Township, Hancock County, Indiana. Their first home was a log cabin built on the same site that later was graced by the octagon house. The Reeves family farm prospered, with varying amounts of land under cultivation at different times, until the death of Elijah in August 1876. Undaunted by his death, Jane assumed the role as the head of family and with her twelve children continued to work the farm.

According to family oral history Jane discovered a floor plan for an octagon house in a magazine (or by some accounts in a newspaper) along with a narrative extolling the virtues of this style ala Orson Fowler. Evidently struck by the uniqueness and utility of the design Jane was reported to have made a declaration of her intent "to have one."

Trehr & Brewster, a firm from Fortville, Indiana, built the house using locally milled lumber of poplar and oak. The house was started in June and completed sometime in September 1879 for between \$2,200 and \$2,500. The house was paid off before the last nail was set. There is no evidence of other octagon houses being constructed in Hancock County.

The house passed through several owners after Jane's death in 1907. There is evidence that the family maintained ownership of parts of the farm for a few years but eventually her children dispersed to found their own families. For a time the house served as a home for farm workers or tenant farmers. From the 1970s until it was

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moved, the house provided shelter for various types of farm animals, mainly cows, and any other wild creature that sought protection from the weather.

The Jane Ross Reeves Octagon House Foundation moved the house from its rural setting to Shirley to save it; the owner did not want it on his property any longer. The owner of the house, after using it for an animal shelter for years, decided to let the local fire fighters set the house on fire, burn it down, to practice their firefighting techniques. The house was moved in 1998 to its new location on South Railroad Street in Shirley, Indiana (photographs 20, 21, and 22). The new home of the Jane Ross Reeves Octagon House is a former railroad yard that is being adapted into a historical park by a dedicated group of Shirley residents.

The significance of the Jane Ross Reeves Octagon House, while primarily architectural in nature, also stems from its close association with the history of Brown Township and the pioneer settlers who wrested a living from the soil. Jane's single-minded desire "to have one" has left the community with an example of an architectural style that is truly unusual. Although fleeting in its importance and questionable in fulfillment of Fowler's claims, the style captured the imagination of a group of nineteenth century homeowners that sought something different from the function and efficiency of their domiciles.

Section 9 Bibliography

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Walker, Marjorie, ed. *A Glimpse of the Past of Hancock County Indiana*. (Greenfield, IN: Hancock County Historical Society, 1968)

Section 10 Geographical Data

Boundary Description

From the start point at the east edge of the intersection of North Railroad Street and Meridian Street proceed east approximately 150 feet; turn north and proceed 150 feet; turn west and proceed 150 feet to the east edge of Meridian Street; turn south and proceed 150 feet and close on the start point.

Boundary Justification

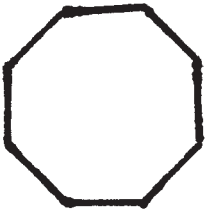
The boundary as described incorporates all the land that will serve as the new home for the Reeves Octagon House and provides for a sensitively designed landscape surrounding the house, at a distance of 50 feet around the house, that will enhance the presentation and usefulness of this historic resource.



Main Street

Abandoned Railroad Right of Way

Meridian Street



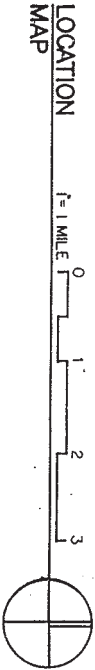
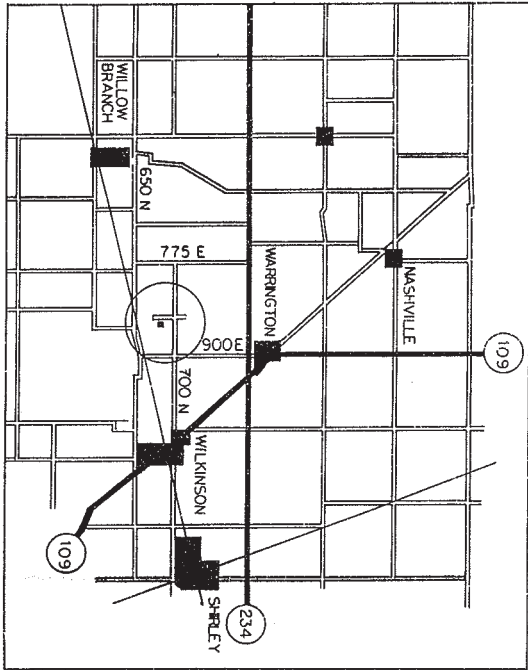
North Railroad Street

South Railroad Street

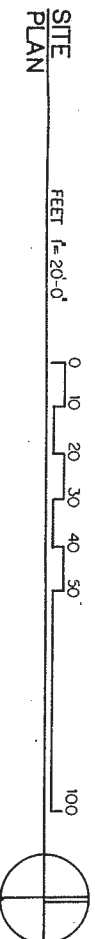
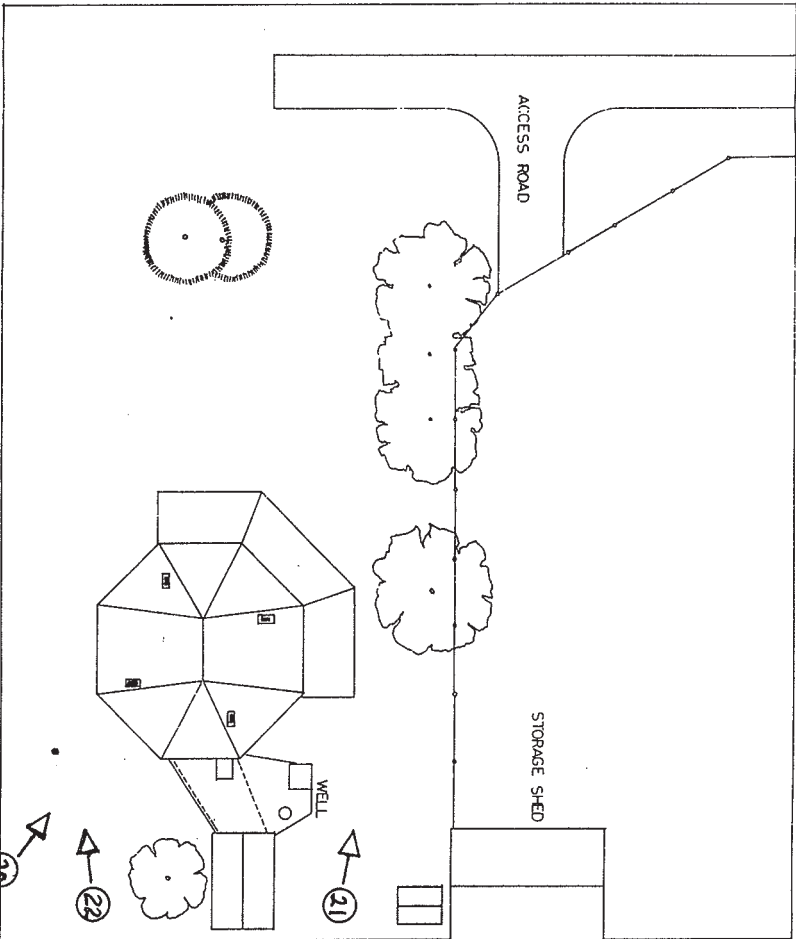
REEVES OCTAGON HOUSE
Shirley, Indiana

Not To Scale

THIS OCTAGON HOUSE IN HANCOCK COUNTY, INDIANA BUILT IN 1871, WAS NOT KNOWN TO EXIST UNTIL RECENTLY. IT CAN THEREFORE BE ADDED TO THE LIST OF OTHER OCTAGON HOUSES IN INDIANA. SINCE SO FEW APPROXIMATELY 7, OCTAGONS ARE KNOWN TO EXIST IN INDIANA THE HOUSE MERITS DOCUMENTATION.



DRAWING 1



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FIRST FLOOR PLAN

DRAWN BY: RICH ENGELHARDT

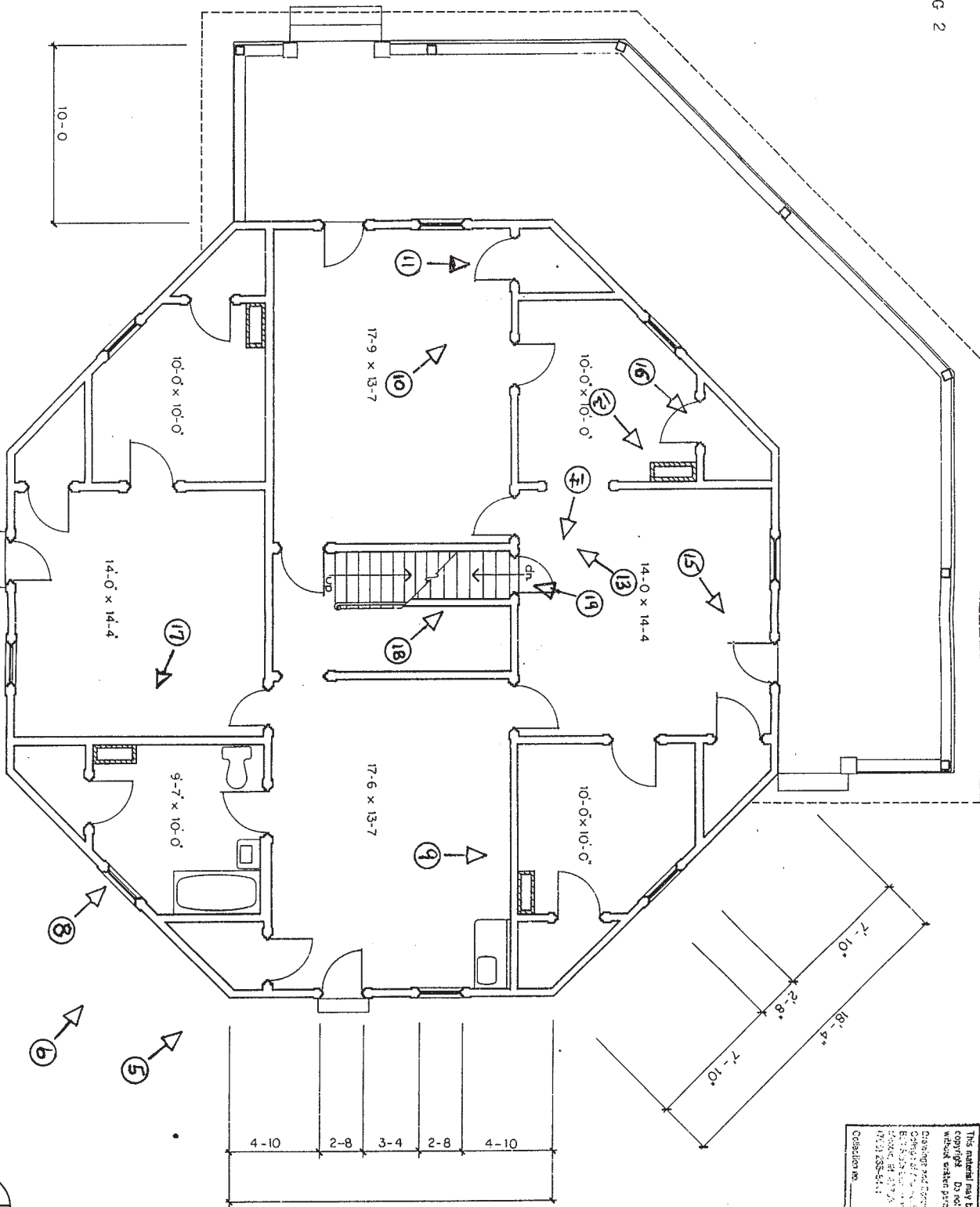
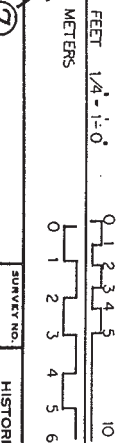
OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
 UNDER DIRECTION OF THE NATIONAL PARK SERVICE
 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

WILKINSON

NAME AND LOCATION OF STRUCTURE
OCTAGON HOUSE
 HANCOCK COUNTY INDIANA

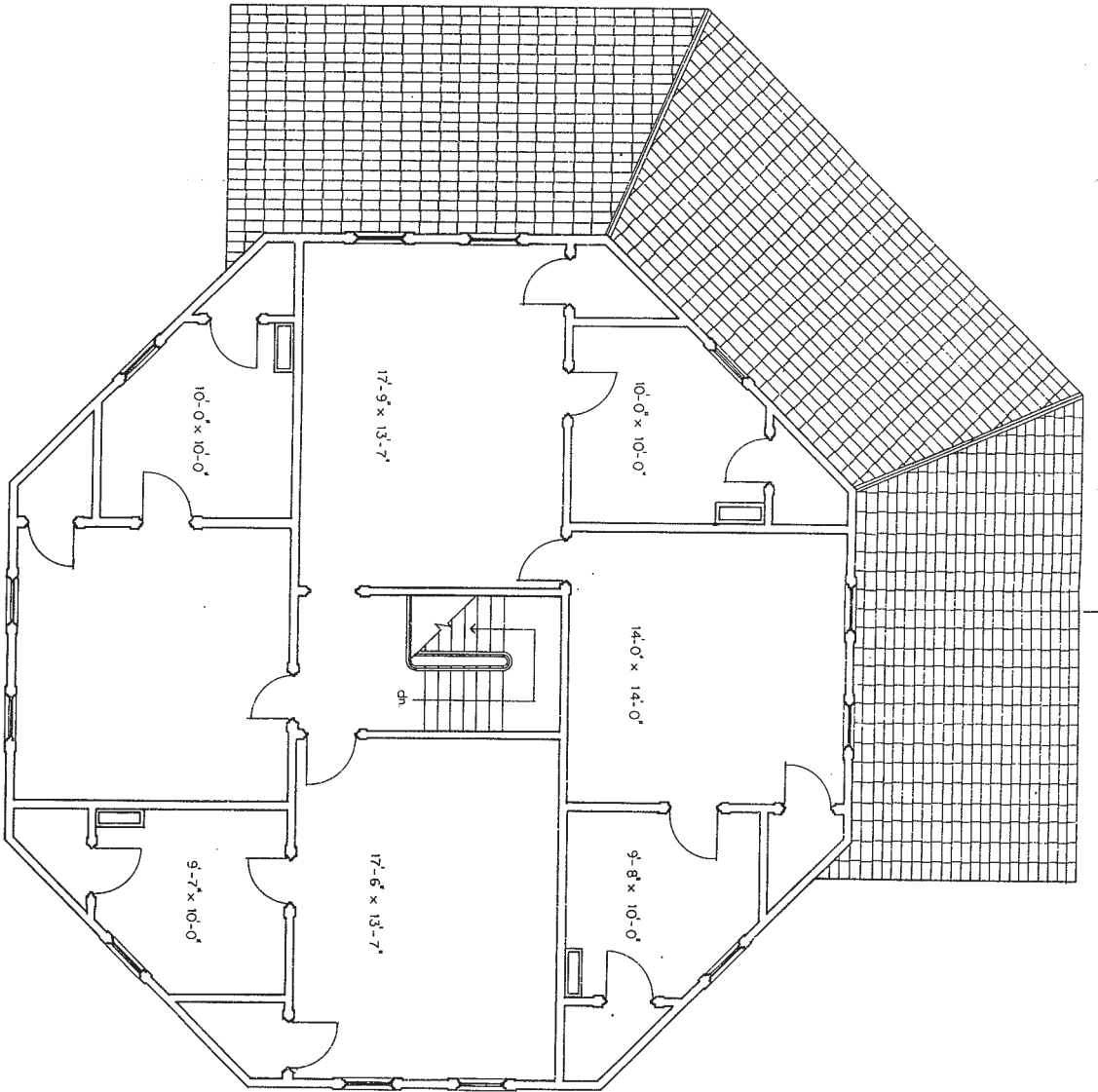
INDIANA

SURVEY NO. HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY SHEET 2 OF 8 SHEETS



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DRAWING 3

SECOND FLOOR PLAN

DRAWN BY: RICH ENGELHART

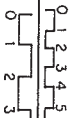
OFFICE OF ARCHITECTURE AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION
 UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR

WILKINSON

OCTAGON HOUSE
 HANCOCK COUNTY

INDIANA

FEET 1/4" = 1'-0"
 METERS



SURVEY NO.

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
 SHEET 3 OF 8 SHEETS

HO-0118 B

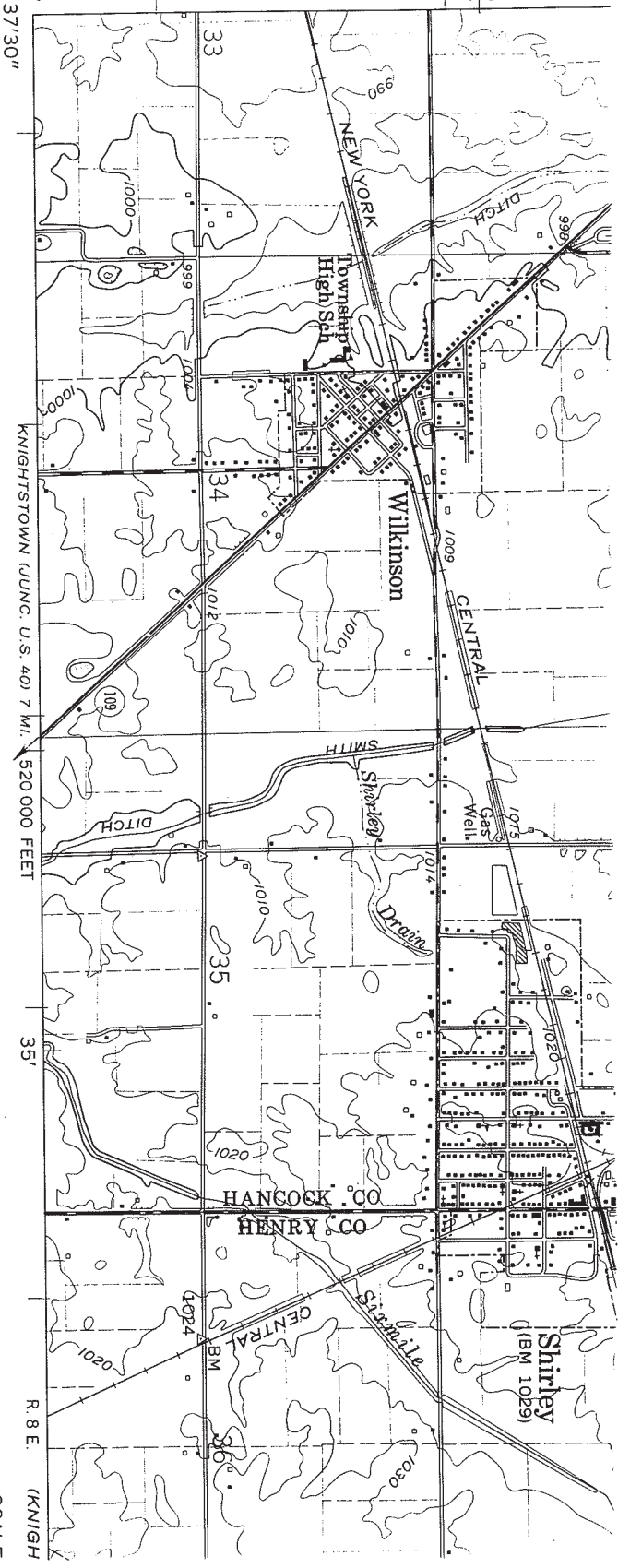
Jane Ross Reeves
 Detachment Head
 W 62 1467
 4211657

870 000
 FEET

EMPORI

39° 52' 30"
 85° 37' 30"

(CLEVELAND)



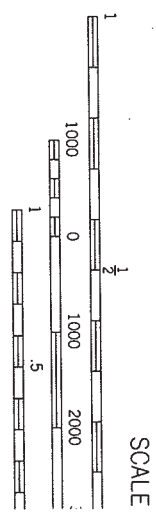
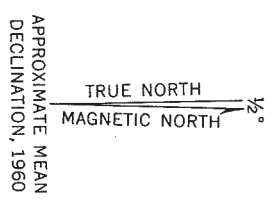
KNIGHTSTOWN (JUNC. U.S. 401) 7 MI. 520 000 FEET

35'

R. 8 E. (KNIGH

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
 Control by USGS and USC&GS

Topography from aerial photographs by photogrammetric methods
 Aerial photographs taken 1958. Field check 1960
 Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
 10,000-foot grid based on Indiana coordinate system,
 east zone
 1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
 zone 16, shown in blue
 Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where
 generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NAT
 FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICA
 AND INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF CC
 A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAP