

FINAL

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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, John Fitch, House

other names/site number _____ 098-396-01854

2. Location

street & number 1523 Southeastern Avenue _____ N/A not for publication

city or town Indianapolis _____ N/A vicinity

state Indiana code IN county Marion code 097 zip code 46201

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 of certifying official/Title

Date

Indiana Department of Natural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building
- district
- site
- structure
- object
- landscape

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

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

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other

Narrative Description

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

Hill, John Fitch, House
Name of Property

Marion 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
- landscape

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

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

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

N/A

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

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

c1852-c1883

Significant Dates

c1852

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Hill, John Fitch

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Indiana State Library

Hill, John Fitch, House
Name of Property

Marion IN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than 1 acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

16	574300	4401930
Zone	Easting	Northing

2

Zone	Easting	Northing

3

Zone	Easting	Northing

4

Zone	Easting	Northing

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

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

Boundary Justification

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Glory-June Greiff
organization _____ date 01-16-2004
street & number 1753 South Talbott Street telephone 317/ 637-6163
city or town Indianapolis state IN zip code 46225

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

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

Photographs

Representative **black and white** photographs of the property.

Additional items

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

Property Owner

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

name J. Scott Keller
street & number 1523 Southeastern Avenue telephone 317/ 637-1829
city or town Indianapolis state IN zip code 46201

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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John Fitch Hill House

Marion County IN

NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION

The John Fitch Hill house on the near east side of Indianapolis stands proudly amidst mixed industry and a residential neighborhood that developed some forty-odd years after the Hill house was built. Across the street to the north is an expanse of vacant land where various railroad-related industries once stood. What today is Southeastern Avenue started out as the the Michigan Road, constructed in the 1830s to link Madison on the Ohio River via Indianapolis to Michigan City on the Great Lake of the same name. As the city grew outward, the road was called Michigan Avenue, then became Southeastern Avenue about one hundred years ago. When the house was built in the 1850s, it was well east of town on a large tract of land that in a few years became the site of a thriving nursery business started by John Fitch Hill. The city grew and surrounded the property, which was subdivided for residential development starting in the 1890s. The dwellings constructed, chiefly vernacular workers' cottages, were considerably smaller than the Hill house. While many survive, others gave way over the decades to various industries, many of which themselves have been altered, vacated, or demolished.

The John Fitch Hill house sits on the southeast corner of Detroit Street and Southeastern Avenue (see photos 1,2). Along (and outside of) the east edge of the property, marking its boundary, is a one-story postwar industrial building of concrete block. On the southeast corner of the property along the east-west alley is a one-story frame garage with a hipped roof and exposed rafter ends (see photos 3,4), probably built in the 1930s or a bit later. The long side (south) facing the alley once had three more garage bays, which are now enclosed and covered with asphalt siding; one bay remains at the east end. The rest of the garage still sports the original lap siding. A dressed stone retaining wall (see photo 2), higher at the south end than the north, runs nearly the full length of the west side of the yard, marking the boundary of

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John Fitch Hill House

Marion County IN

the property. The house sits square with the city's grid pattern, despite the fact that it was built long before the street grid existed around it.

The John Fitch Hill house was built in the popular Italianate style, two stories high with an attic beneath the low-pitched hipped roof. Typical of many Italianate houses, the apex of the roof is flat. Originally of wood shakes, it is now covered with asphalt shingles. There once were five chimneys, but none survive. The entablature is plain; double brackets support the cornice (photos 1,2). The original brackets had been removed at some point; the placement of the present ones was based on physical evidence and information passed on from previous owners. A gabled wall dormer in the attic story, containing a triangular-topped window, is centrally placed above the main entrance (photo 1). Across the main (north) facade on Southeastern Avenue is a porch, probably added in the 1880s, supported by six chamfered posts with ornamental brackets. A gable marks the entrance and echoes the attic gable. The north facade contains five bays. Consistent on this and each of the other elevations, the window openings (photo 5) are topped with segmental arches, and have stone sills; many still contain the original glass in the one-over-one wooden double hung sashes. At the top of the sashes the space within the arch is filled with a curved board with tracery cutouts. The west elevation (photo 2) along Detroit Street contains four asymmetrically placed windows on the second story, each with a corresponding first-story window beneath. In addition, there is a tiny arched window between the first and third window from the south on the first story. The rear (south) elevation has two arched windows on the second story, roughly centered, with corresponding windows beneath on the first floor. To the east of the first floor windows is an arched entrance door with a transom. Around the corner on the east there are two windows in the first story and one in the second; the rear section of the house has an inset corner on the southeast. On the

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John Fitch Hill House

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remaining south elevation there is one window on the second story and one below, which is bricked in. The east elevation, which faces the concrete wall of the adjacent industrial building, contains four windows in the second story and four corresponding windows in the first. The house is solidly brick inside and out.

The present owner acquired the house in 1996 with the goal of restoring it. The only changes he has made to the interior are the removal of the floor in the room east opposite the dining room to create a two-story library rising from the basement, and the removal of a plaster and lath partition wall in the kitchen. The interior of the house has a center hall plan with two rooms on either side and a large rectangular room at the rear (south) of the house. The main (north) entrance (photo 6) is a wooden double door with beveled glass windows, surmounted by a transom fitted with restored stained glass, the designs based on descriptions given by descendants of previous owners. Along the east wall of the entrance hall is an ornate staircase with a massive carved newel post (photo 7). The white ash staircase features elaborately turned ballusters, beaded trim, and walnut scrollwork decorating the side of each riser (photo 8). The bannister and newel cap are also of walnut. The original wood floor in the hall is maple, as is the floor in the dining room; the remaining floors throughout the house are mostly either heart pine or white pine; the floor of the east parlor was originally unfinished and intended to be carpeted. The floor of the west parlor (the northwest corner room on the first floor) has a center of heart pine surrounded by red oak. With the exception of the staircase, the wood trim throughout the house is substantial but plain, typical of houses in this early period (see photo 9). The baseboards, window surrounds, and door casings are pine and are either painted or stained. The door surrounds are tulip poplar. The window and door surrounds are chamfered but otherwise unornamented.

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John Fitch Hill House

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Ceilings on the first floor are close to twelve feet high. Eight-foot doors, without transoms, divide each room from the center hall, and the north and south rooms on the east side have double doors between them; on the west side--that is, between the dining room and west parlor--there is a single door (photo 9). Each of these rooms (except the one with the floor removed) has a slate fireplace mantel (photos 10,11), each with a different incised design in an Eastlake-style pattern. The first floor room across the rear of the house is the kitchen; at its west end is a pantry. The original butler's pantry, which opens into the dining room, has been converted into a bathroom.

The upstairs ceilings are almost eleven feet high and the doors off the center hall all have transoms. The four bedrooms are each entered from the hall and each has a slate fireplace mantel. The one in the southwest bedroom at present is disassembled and awaiting installation. The rear of the house upstairs contains a master bath and large storage closets; the space likely was used as a nursery or servant's quarters in earlier years.

Since the interior walls of the house are brick and extend upwards from the full basement, it has the same floor plan as the rest of the house. Each room off the center hall has an arched entrance (photo 12); the brick has been left exposed, clearly showing the solid construction. A stairway leads down from the kitchen to the basement below; there is also a ground level entrance on the west end of the south elevation.

The attic beneath the hipped roof was never finished, leaving the massive roughcut tulip poplar rafters and joists exposed.

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John Fitch Hill House

Marion County IN

NARRATIVE STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The John Fitch Hill House, a rural remnant from the days of the old Michigan Road passing through Indianapolis, is a very fine representative of the Italianate style, and one of the earliest examples remaining in the county. As such, it is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for its architecture. While Indianapolis and Marion County are blessed with a number of surviving Italianate houses, most were built much later and have varying degrees of integrity. The John Fitch Hill house, rated as "Outstanding" in the Center Township, Marion County Interim Report, is one of the oldest and most solidly constructed, and certainly has a greater degree of integrity than most. Indeed, a search of the Interim Reports of the Marion County Sites and Structures Inventory indicates the Hill house is among the oldest extant houses of any style, and likely the earliest surviving example of the Italianate.¹

Ohio-born John Fitch Hill (1812-1889), the builder of the house, was a solid citizen of Indianapolis, sufficiently so as to warrant a mention in John H. B. Nowland's biographical sketches of the 1870s, although his wealth and prominence was considerably less than that of his brother-in-law Calvin Fletcher or of his sometime business partner Daniel Yandes. Hill acquired the acreage along

¹A search through the Interim Reports reveals that there are but a handful of extant dwellings in Marion County built prior to 1850; most of a vernacular style. The term "Italianate" has been applied to several houses in the county that have those stylistic elements applied to other forms, such as I-houses or front-gabled dwellings. The majority of existing true Italianate dwellings in Marion County were constructed in the 1870s. Some were built as early as the 1860s and as late as the 1890s. A very few are relatively near in age and comparable in significance; these include the Chase-King House at 423 St. Peter Street and the house at 601 Fletcher Avenue, both built in 1866 and rated "Outstanding." Listed in the National Register, the Hannah-Oehler-Elder House at 3801 South Madison, built in 1859 and enlarged in 1872, appears to be the closest in age of the same type dwelling. There do not appear to be any other Italianate dwellings built in the 1850s that survive.

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John Fitch Hill House

Marion County IN

the Michigan Road southeast of the burgeoning capital in 1851, at which time he was engaged in the manufacture of brick. In this endeavor Hill was first in partnership with S.V.B. Noel, then with Levi Moore. The house is solid brick throughout and was, in all probability, constructed at this time, around 1852.

John Fitch Hill left brick manufacturing about 1855, entering into a wholesale grocery partnership with his brother-in-law James J. Drum (or Drumm). By the 1860s he was established as a nurseryman and proprietor (apparently along with his son James) of the Beech (sometimes recorded as "Beach") Wood Nursery on Michigan Road, on property that included the house. For a time in the 1870s, John Fitch Hill and Frank Neal (his widower son-in-law) were partners in a drugstore on Central Avenue. Hill had his finger in many pies.

John Fitch Hill deeded the property on which the house sits to his son James Boone Hill (1840-1908) in 1867. The younger Hill lived in the house with his growing family in the 1860s; he had married young and already had one child by 1862. While James Boone Hill did reside there, he did not do so continuously. He became engaged in the railroad freight business, working mostly for the Pennsylvania Railroad and its allied lines. Intermittently he lived in Indianapolis in the Hill house and ultimately had three children. At the time of his father's death in 1889, the younger Hill was living in Chicago.

John Fitch Hill apparently preferred to live in town, in a house, also brick, on Alabama Street north of Market where the present City Market (built 1886) now stands. It remained his residence from at least the 1860s until he and his wife Susan Grant Hill, with their daughter Mary Hill Culbertson (1846-1913), finally moved into the house on the Michigan Road, by that time called Michigan Avenue, about 1883. This likely coincides with the addition of the large front porch and some interior improvements,

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John Fitch Hill House

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chiefly the Eastlake-style slate mantels that still survive in most of the rooms. The staircase, being so much more ornate than all the other woodwork in the house, may date to this period as well. Mary Hill Culbertson had been widowed early on and never remarried, but she pursued a successful career as a landscape artist and teacher. As was typical of the time, she lived with her parents until their deaths and afterward lived with a nephew.

Susan Grant Hill died in 1888; John Fitch Hill lived in the house until his death from pneumonia in April of the following year. The house left the possession of the family soon after; James Boone Hill sold the house and land in 1891 to developers Charles Robbins and Willard W. Hubbard, who subdivided the property for modest workingclass dwellings. After the house passed out of the Hill family, its fortunes shifted downward. For a time in the early twentieth century, the Hill house served as a rescue mission called the Faith Home; later it served as a boarding house for several decades, serving railroad workers from the nearby yards.

Built as a rural dwelling on the old Michigan Road outside Indianapolis, the John Fitch Hill House is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion C for its architecture. It is a fine example of the Italianate style and may be the earliest of its type extant in Marion County; indeed, the house is among the oldest of any style remaining in the county.

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHIC SOURCES

Abstract of Title. 1523 Southeastern Avenue.

Dunn, Jacob Piatt. *Greater Indianapolis*. Chicago 1910.

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John Fitch Hill House

Marion County IN

Failey, Agnes Alig. Interview. (Mrs. Failey is a direct descendant of John Fitch Hill through his son James Boone Hill and the latter's daughter Maud Hill Stalnaker, her grandmother, who grew up in the house.)

Hanna, Agnes McCulloch. "Home on Southeastern Avenue One of Earliest Cultural Centers," *Indianapolis Star* 8 November 1931.

Indianapolis City Directories, 1858-1966.

Lane, Betty. "From Another Day . . . The Hill Home," *Indianapolis Star* 28 November 1971.

Marion County Interim Reports, Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory, 1991-1999.

Nowland, John H.B. *Early Reminiscences of Indianapolis, with Short Biographical Sketches of Its Early Citizens*. Indianapolis 1870.

Sulgrove, B[erry] R[obinson]. *History of Indianapolis and Marion County, Indiana*. Philadelphia 1884.

Thornborough, Gayle, ed. *The Diary of Calvin Fletcher, Vol I-IV (1817-1852)*. 1972.

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John Fitch Hill House

Marion County IN

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Bounded on the west by the property line along Detroit Street, on the north by Southeastern Avenue, on the east by the east property line and on the south by the alley paralleling Bates Street (that is to say, the alley runs east-west). Put another way, the property comprises Lots 42 and 43 in Robbins & Hubbard Hill Place Addition.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

Encompasses the two city lots upon which the John Fitch Hill House sits.



401
N

JOHN FITZ HILL HOUSE
INDIANAPOLIS,
MARION COUNTY,
INDIANA
16 574 300
44101930

402

403

404
T 15 N
T 16 N

4730'

