

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 **Askren, Thomas, House**

other names/site number _____ 097-295-65088

2. Location

street & number 6550 East 16th Street N/A not for publication
city or town Indianapolis N/A vicinity
state Indiana code IN county Marion code 097 zip code 46219

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 1.30.06
Indiana Department of Natural Resources
State of 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 _____

Askren, Thomas, 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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	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)

VACANT

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER: I-House

EARLY REPUBLIC: Federal

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

EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT

Period of Significance

c.1828-c.1850

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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:

Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Less than 1 acre

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

1	16	581040	4405030	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 Todd Ravesloot

organization Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana date 04-06-2005

street & number 1028 N. Delaware St. telephone 317/ 639-4534

city or town Indianapolis state IN zip code 46202

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 Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana

street & number 340 W. Michigan St. telephone 317/ 639-4534

city or town Indianapolis state IN zip code 46202

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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Thomas Askren House, Marion County, Indiana

Narrative Description

Summary

The Thomas Askren House, constructed ca. 1828-1833, is located at 6550 E 16th Street, in Warren Township, Indianapolis, Marion County, Indiana. It is located on a small wooded parcel just to the west of Pleasant Run Creek, and is all that remains of a larger farm. The house is a simple 2 – story brick I-House with a brick rear addition. A small frame outbuilding exists to the west of the house.

Site/Setting

The Askren House is sited on a 0.6 acre lot approximately 400 yards north of 16th Street. The 0.6 acre lot was until recently a portion of a larger, 9.4 acre parcel. This parcel is almost entirely wooded and it is all that remains of what once was a large family farm. The 0.6 acre lot terrain is level, but there are various topography changes on the surrounding land due to the presence of Pleasant Run Creek and its various watersheds. The house is accessed by a 10' wide, built-up earth driveway which extends north from 16th Street and terminates at the south-east corner of the house. Remnants of a brick sidewalk exist next to the house in various locations.

Exterior

The Askren House is currently comprised of two parts: The original 60 foot by 14 foot 2-story brick building and a 14 foot by 14 foot 2-story brick wing, which extends north from the rear of the house

The main 2 story building is load bearing brick construction with a side gabled roof. The building is constructed of red brick, laid in a common bond pattern, which has been painted. It is a typical I-House being five bays wide at the main (south) elevation with a center entrance, five windows evenly spaced on the second floor, and four windows on the first floor – 2 evenly spaced on either side of the entrance. The north elevation is the same layout with regards to window and door placement, but the western portion of this elevation is covered by the rear brick ell. The door on this side is a simple opening with no transom or sidelights (door is missing). Both the east and west elevations of the main building are blank brick walls with no windows, doors, or other embellishments. All window openings are uniform in size but all windows are missing. However, a ca. 1983 photograph of the house indicates that all windows were wood double hung in a 2 divided lite over 2 divided lite pattern. There are also fragments remaining of aluminum storm windows (hidden behind plywood window coverings) which were likely installed in the mid-20th century. In addition, the front door and sidelights, shown in a ca. 1983 photograph, are missing but the 2 divided lite original transom remains. Window and door headers are constructed of gauged flat brick arches. The roof is covered in dimensional asphalt shingles. Simple wood trim exists at the gable ends, and there are decorative rafter tails at the roof overhangs. Gutters and downspouts are aluminum, installed in 2005.

The brick ell extends north and is attached to the main building on the west end of the north elevation. It is also

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two stories, although it is shorter in height than the main house. The construction type and materials are the same as that of the main building. The east and west elevations each have the remains of one 2 over 2 window on each level, slightly smaller than the main house windows. These openings, like the main building's, are unaltered, with the exception of the second story window on the east side which was shortened to accommodate the construction of a porch (now destroyed but evidenced by the holes in the brick wall where the rafters were set). Its original sill, however, remains in place. In addition, a door exists on the south end of the east elevation of the rear wing. This door, like the door in the center of the main house north elevation, is a single door with no transoms or sidelights. Two doors also exist on the west end of the north elevation, one on the first and second level respectively. These formerly provided access to a wood frame rear addition which was demolished in 2005. It is unclear whether or not the brick ell was constructed at the same time as the main house or if it was a later addition. If the latter, the similar construction and materials would indicate its vintage is close to that of the main house. The ell has had significant deterioration which was repaired in 2005, mainly a five foot wide hole, from grade to roof level, which was repaired with brick salvaged from the site.

Interior

The interior of the structure is in a severely deteriorated state but exhibits enough intact features to contribute to the significance of the property.

The main 2 story building's interior features 2 rooms on each floor, believed to be parlors and bedrooms respectively, divided by a central hallway. Interior partition walls are brick, and all interior walls are finished with plaster applied directly to the brick. Ceilings are also finished with plaster with the original hand-split lath visible in some places (some plaster has been removed). Although the mantels are missing, each room features a fireplace with brick hearths and fireboxes generally intact. In each room, built in cabinets flank each fireplace. The central hall features a wood staircase, with bull-nosed treads, which is intact (except for the handrails), with a full landing halfway up to the second floor, which turns the stair from a north-facing direction to a south-facing direction to complete its rise to the second floor. A bathroom (ca.1950) exists underneath the staircase on the first floor. The central hall on the second floor is open to the stairwell. Flooring in the main building is wide wood planks which are covered with carpeting in some rooms. The maple window and door trim features decorative "rosette" corner blocks and a decorative ribbed pattern. Approximately 80% of this trim remains intact, but all interior doors are missing from the structure.

The brick ell contains one room on each floor, accessed on both levels through cased openings from the western room in the main house respectively. The floor level on the first floor is the same as the main house, while the second floor is a lower elevation than the main house, accessed by three wood steps now covered in carpeting. All of the walls, which are load bearing masonry construction, are finished with plaster directly applied to the brick. A chimney exists at the north end of the ell, with remnants of a fireplace in each room. The flooring in these rooms is wide plank that matches the front building, but the wood trim is plain with no ornamentation. The ceilings are finished in plaster applied to hand split lath similar to the front building. Due to removal of some plaster ceiling surfaces, the roof system and floor joists in the ell are

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visible, and are hand-hewn wood beams. Bark still exists on the logs which comprise the roof rafters. It is believed that the first floor room was a kitchen, while the second floor room appears to most recently have been used as a bathroom, evidenced by a modern shower enclosure in one corner.

Outbuilding

To the west of the house stands a small wood frame outbuilding which was believed to be a smokehouse. It is believed that the smokehouse was constructed sometime in the 19th century but the exact date is unclear. The smokehouse is constructed of a simple wood frame with clapboard siding on the exterior. The gabled roof, covered in asphalt shingles, extends past the east wall of the smokehouse to form a canopy. One door, currently boarded, provides an entrance to the building at the east elevation underneath the canopy.

Integrity

The Thomas Askren House remains as an unaltered Midwest I-House with its original floor plan, window/door trim, and most plaster wall and ceiling surfaces. The only distinct alterations to the building include the installation of a modern roof and gutters, and the installation of bathrooms on the first and second floor. Unlike most former farmhouses in urban areas, the Askren House also retains its rural setting due to the surrounding 9 acre wooded parcel. This parcel is currently undeveloped and is not foreseen to be developed in the future due to its floodplain status caused by Pleasant Run Creek following the east boundary of the property.

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Thomas Askren House, Marion County, Indiana

Statement of Significance

Summary Paragraph

The Thomas Askren House, constructed ca. 1828-1833, is a rare and intact example of an original farmstead within Marion County. The Askren House meets Criterion A for exploration and settlement in that it was constructed by and occupied by one of Marion County's earliest settlers, and it meets Criterion C for architecture in that it is an intact and generally unaltered example of an early Midwest I-House, very few of which remain in Marion County. It is believed to be the second oldest surviving building in Marion County and the oldest surviving building in Warren Township.

Historic Context

The Askren House meets Criterion A for Exploration / Settlement in that it is the oldest remaining building in Warren Township and dates from the earliest days of the settlement of present day Indianapolis. Whites began moving into what is now known as Marion County in 1818, after the Treaty of St. Mary's was formed with the Delaware Indians, who agreed to move off of lands near the White River to points west of the Mississippi River, and the Indiana legislature established Indianapolis as their new capitol in 1821. Settlers began moving into central Indiana from Tennessee, Kentucky, and Eastern states in these decades. Thomas Askren settled on this property in 1825, in the earliest days of Indianapolis, and this house was constructed not long after that date. During the earliest years of Askren's homestead in Warren Township, Indianapolis grew slowly, as it was difficult to reach the area. The arrival of the National Road in 1837 and the railroad in 1847 enabled Indianapolis to grow from a population of 2,700 in 1840 to 8,100 in 1850.¹ Future decades would see much more growth. As the city grew around it, the Askren House remained, occupied by five generations of the family. Furthermore, it still retains its rural setting which provides a visual depiction of how Marion County looked in the days of its earliest settlement.

The Askren House was constructed ca. 1828-1833² by one of the earliest settlers on today's eastside of Indianapolis. Thomas Askren, a Pennsylvania native and a veteran of the War of 1812, arrived in Indiana in 1825 from Hamilton County, Ohio and homesteaded on approximately 1,000 acres of land, on today's eastside of Indianapolis.³ He began construction of the house in 1828 with bricks that were fired on the property and hand-made the doors, windows, and woodwork out of maple. A frame rear addition was constructed around the 1850's to house hired hands for the farm. The farm maintained twelve hired hands year round, and as many as twenty-four in the summer months.⁴

¹ David J. Bodenhamer and Robert G. Barrows, eds. *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994, 51-52.

² Letter from Thomas Askren (great-great grandson of builder) to J. Lauritz Larson, Senior Historian of Conner Prairie, which was forwarded to James Glass of the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission on August 20, 1981.

³ Herbert M. Korra and Wendy W. Paige, eds. *History of Warren Township, Second Edition*. Indianapolis, IN, 1991.

⁴ Thomas Askren letter.

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Life on the Askren Farm was completely self-sufficient. The family performed all of its own canning, threshing, butchering, blacksmithing, and other farm activities and needs. Many other structures were a part of the farmstead, including a barn, ice house, blacksmith shop, corn crib, bank barn, and smokehouse(still extant). In addition to growing crops, the Askrens raised cattle including pigs, cows, and chickens. Horses were also stabled on the property well into the twentieth century.⁵

The original Askren farm was subdivided into many smaller farms as the family grew. Eventually, these farms were sold for development, and all of it with the exception of the 9.42 acres near the Askren House have been developed into residential, commercial, and industrial areas due to the expansion of the city of Indianapolis. Benjamin Franklin Askren, Thomas' son, received the house as an inheritance after his father's death in 1864. Benjamin Franklin Askren's youngest son, Benjamin Harrison Askren, inherited the house after his father died, and passed it on to his wife after his death in 1956. The house remained in the family until 1989, when members of the Askren family sold it to developers.⁶ The land was never developed, and the house changed hands again in 1992.⁷ Since that time it was abandoned and had suffered excessive deterioration, including the partial collapse of the now demolished frame addition. To prevent its demolition, the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission designated the house a local historic landmark on an emergency basis in September 2004, and Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana acquired the house in February of 2005. HLFH completed structural stabilization of the house, which included demolition of the frame addition to the rear, in October of 2005.

Criterion C

The Askren House is a significant example of the I-House style that was constructed all over the Midwest in the days before the Civil War. The house was rated "Outstanding" in the Warren Township, Marion County Historic Sites and Structures Inventory completed in 1993. This "outstanding" rating signifies that the property has enough significance to be listed in the National Register of Historic Places on its own merit.⁸ The house still exhibits many intact architectural features such as its woodwork and built in cabinets. In addition, the house still retains its historic, wooded rural setting which is extremely rare for a farmstead in a developed portion of Marion County.

The I-House was a common housing type in the Midwest prior to the construction of the railroads. Its basic footprint consisted of 2 stories, 2 rooms wide and 1 room deep. Often these houses had a rear addition or other extension to increase their size. Although a vernacular, rural housing type, they frequently had stylistic embellishments to keep up with the fashions of the day, whether they be Greek Revival, Italianate, or another style.⁹

⁵ "The Past in Our Present," Lynn Curry Schill, 1960.

⁶ Beth L. Rosenberg, "After 163 Years in Askren Family, farmstead is sold," *Indianapolis Star*, 26 June 1989.

⁷ Source: Warren Township, Marion County Assessor's Office.

⁸Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, Inc., *Warren Township, Marion County Interim Report: Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory*, Pierson Printing, Indianapolis, IN, 1993, 21.

⁹ Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses*, Alfred A. Knopf: New York, NY, 1997, 96.

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The Askren House is almost completely vernacular, devoid of any stylistic embellishments, with the exception of the now-destroyed Greek Revival style front entrance. This differs from other I-Houses in Marion County, such as the ca. 1840 Toll-Kennedy House at 6358 N Michigan Road (Greek Revival corner pilasters), and the Moore-Christian House at 4200 Brookville Road (Italianate brackets and window decorations). Other I-Houses, such as the Hollingsworth House at 6054 Hollingsworth Road and the Hartman House at 5802 E Brookville Road, exhibit full-height front porches likely added at a date after their construction. Similar in vintage to the Askren House is the ca. 1836 Shimer House at 4905 Brookville Road. It unfortunately has been altered. Probably the example closest to the Askren House is the ca. 1845 Springer House located at 8390 E 21st Street, also in Warren Township. It features the same balanced five bay façade, and a rear wing. Its front entrance, however, has been modified into a double door, and the house has lost its rural context, being surrounded by suburban development. The Askren House may well be the best, unaltered example of a rural, vernacular I-House constructed in Marion County.

Furthermore, it is believed to be the second oldest building in Marion County. The reputed oldest house in Marion County is the central passage, 1 ½ story Sanders-Childers House located at 1020 E Palmer Street, built ca. 1820. Therefore, it is likely that the Askren House is the oldest house of its type in Marion County.

The house has had few alterations over the years. A modern asphalt shingle roof and aluminum gutters have been installed in recent years, in addition to indoor plumbing and bathrooms, but these do not have a significant impact on the integrity of the building. Although the house had suffered from extensive deterioration in recent years, it was stabilized without a significant amount of change in the building fabric, therefore retaining its historic character.

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Bibliography

Bodenhamer, David J. and Robert G. Barrows. *The Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*. Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, 1994.

Korra, Herbert M. and Wendy W. Paige. *History of Warren Township, Second Edition*. Indianapolis, IN, 1991.

Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory. *Warren Township, Marion County Interim Report*. Indianapolis: Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, 1993.

Letter written by Thomas Askren to J. Lauritz Larson, Senior Historian of Conner Prairie, which was forwarded to James Glass of the IHPC on August 20, 1981.

McAlester, Virginia and Lee. *A Field Guide to American Houses*. Alfred A. Knopf: New York, NY. 1997.

Rosenberg, Beth L. "After 163 Years in Askren family, farmstead is sold," *Indianapolis Star*, 26 June 1989.

"The Past in Our Present," Lynn Curry Schill, 1960.

Boundary Description

A part of the West Half of the Northeast Quarter of Section 35, Township 16 North, Range 4 East in Marion County, Indiana and also a part of the real estate described in that certain Warranty Deed recorded as Instrument Number 9200160452 in the Office of the Recorder of Marion County, being further described as follows:

Commencing at the Southwest corner of Lot 151 in Beth Addition, as per plat there of, recorded in Plat Book 29, Page 226 in said Recorders Office; Thence South 00 degrees 08 minutes 04 seconds West along the East line of Lot 154 and 155 in said Beth Addition a distance of 55.00 feet to the POINT OF BEGINNING of this description; Thence continuing South 00 degrees 08 minutes 04 seconds West along the East line of Lot 155, 156, 157, and 158 a distance of 133.50 feet; Thence South 89 degrees 51 minutes 56 seconds East perpendicular to said East line a distance of 193.50 feet; Thence North 00 degrees 08 minutes 04 seconds East parallel with said East line a distance of 133.50 feet; Thence North 89 degrees 51 minutes 56 seconds West perpendicular to said East line a distance of 193.50 to the POINT OF BEGINNING of this description. Containing 0.60 acres, more or less.

Boundary Justification

This is the property currently under the same ownership along with the historic house. It does not include the surrounding wooded acreage, however, the boundary includes the 2 remaining historic structures of the farmstead.



403

T 15 N

T 16 N

405

47 30"

406

THOMAS ANDERSON
 581040 4405030