

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

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Downs, Thomas, House

and/or common

2. Location

street & number 1045 Main Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Charlestown

N/A vicinity of

state Indiana

code 018

county Clark

code 019

3. Classification

Category

- district
- building(s)
- structure
- site
- object

Ownership

- public
- private
- both
- Public Acquisition**
- in process
- being considered
- N/A

Status

- occupied
- unoccupied
- work in progress
- Accessible**
- yes: restricted
- yes: unrestricted
- no

Present Use

- agriculture
- commercial
- educational
- entertainment
- government
- industrial
- military
- museum
- park
- private residence
- religious
- scientific
- transportation
- other:

4. Owner of Property

name VFW, Attention: Bill Cheesman

street & number 350 Harrison Street

city, town Charlestown

N/A vicinity of

state Indiana 47111

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Clark County Courthouse

street & number Court Avenue

city, town Jeffersonville

state Indiana 47130

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Indiana Historic Sites
and Structures Inventory

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date August, 1979

federal state county local

depository for survey records Indiana Department of Natural Resources

city, town Indianapolis

state Indiana

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Thomas Downs House is a fine example of early Indiana Federal architecture. Built about 1809, a year after the platting of Charlestown, it is one of the earliest brick houses remaining in the town.

The two story, brick, gabled roof house (Photo 1) is built on a raised stone basement. The exterior masonry walls are four bricks thick, while the interior walls are three. The main (southeast) facade is four bays wide. A one story entrance porch with turned posts is approached by steps on either side. Opening onto the porch are two doors, reflecting a common, 19th century Hoosier vernacular detail—that of two front doors. The shuttered windows, of typical Federal proportions, are six-over-six with stone sills and radiating brick voussoirs above. A boxed cornice underscores the roof's edge. Interior end chimneys pierce the gable roof at the ridge.

A one story brick ell (Photos 2, 3) is attached to the north corner at the rear, and is thought to be original. A frame, shed-roof addition runs the length of the ell. Part of the frame addition was once a screened porch with Victorian detailing; its date of construction is unknown.

The interior of the house is typical of the Federal style. The woodwork and floors are original. The mantels, door frames, presses and chair railings are all finely reeded. (Photos 5, 6 and 7). Original flooring, which appears to be oak or ash, is in place under the present covering. Floor joists are 18" poplar logs (Photo 8). The only major changes to the interior have been the removal of an enclosed staircase at the front of the house and a fireplace in the ell. Four original fireplace mantels remain, and an original stair in the rear ell.

The floor plan features two rooms of unequal size on each level of the main house. There is no central hallway, but rather two central entrances on the ground floor. The house sits over a cellar that is deep enough for most people to stand erect.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400–1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500–1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700–1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates c. 1809 **Builder Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Thomas Downs home is significant for its federal style architecture as well as for being one of the earliest remaining homes in Charlestown. It is believed to be the oldest home in Charlestown. Thomas Downs purchased lots 89 and 90 in 1809, just one year after Charlestown was platted. It is thought that he began work on his brick home immediately. The home remained in the Downs family until 1832 when it was sold by his heirs.

The little that is known about Downs comes from Baird's History of Clark County. In this work, Thomas Downs is mentioned as an original member of the Court of General Quarter Sessions of the Peace, created by Territorial Governor William Henry Harrison. The first Court session was held on April 7, 1801, in Springville. Baird goes on to say, "The men composing this court were the leading citizens of the county at the time and nearly all have left their mark upon some phase of our early history."

Between the years 1832 and 1901 the house changed hands several times. In 1901 it was purchased by James and Jennie Van Hook. The Van Hooks were instrumental in establishing and operating the Keeley Institute, a place for alcohol and drug abusers to "take the cure." As the widow Jennie Bean, Mrs. Van Hook was one of the major benefactors of the Institute. Mr. Van Hook, a home town boy who fought to preserve the Union in the Civil War and lived in the South for many years, came home to Charlestown as an abuser of alcohol, and entered the Keeley Institute. He later assisted in operating the Institute until it burned down in 1907.

The Van Hooks resided in the Downs House until 1913, when they sold it to Kate Brayfield, widow of Carl Brayfield, who was the owner and editor of the Brayfield's Weekly Citizen, a local newspaper from the early 1890's to 1913. The Citizen once reported, "No sketch of Charlestown would be complete without reference to the Keeley Institute, which was founded here in February, 1893, and which has made the name of Charlestown familiar to the people of every town in Southern Indiana and Northern Kentucky."

Mrs. Brayfield sold the house a few months later. From then on, the house was occupied by elderly women who made few changes, until about 1969 when it became a beauty shop.

Architecturally, the house is a very early example of the Federal style. There are several early homes of this style remaining in the town; however, the other two-story residences have only one entrance and a hallway. The only other residence with two entrances is one-story. Also, it is one of few brick houses that have not been painted. Like many of the other Federal style homes in Charlestown, the house sits right on the sidewalk but, unlike most of the others, its entrance is elevated from the street level. The nearly unaltered condition of the Downs house, both inside and out, is especially unusual.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Baird's History of Clark County
Brayfields Weekly Citizen (date approximately 1899)
Clark County Courthouse Records
Old Newspapers
Interview with immediate past owner (Mrs. Bonnie Cillian)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Less than one acre

Quadrangle name Charlestown

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	6	6	1	6	9	7	5	4	2	5	5	7	7	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification Lots 89 and 90 in the Town of Charlestown, except 60 feet off the west side of said Lot No. 89. Said tract fronting 100 feet on Main Street and extending back 200 feet to an alley.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Bonny Wise, President

organization Charlestown Architectural Preservation Society

date July, 1984

street & number 673 High Street

telephone 812/256-6651

city or town Charlestown

state Indiana 47111

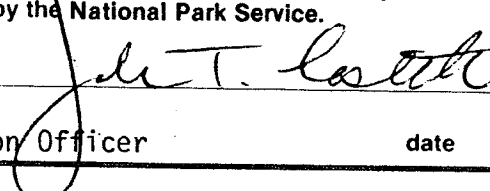
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer

date 10-12-84

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration