

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Hirt, Alfred, House other names/site number

2. Location

street & number West Walnut Street Road city, town Greencastle state Indiana code IN county Putnam code 133 zip code 46135

3. Classification

Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, and Number of Resources within Property. Includes checkboxes for private/public ownership and building/site/structure/object categories.

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of certifying official: [Signature] Date: 1-25-91 State or Federal agency and bureau: Indiana Department of Natural Resources

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official: Date: State or Federal agency and bureau:

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- Entered in the National Register.
determined eligible for the National Register.
determined not eligible for the National Register.
removed from the National Register.
other, (explain:)

Entered in the National Register 3/14/91 Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**6. Function or Use**

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Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

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Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

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**7. Description**

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Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN: ItalianateLATE VICTORIAN: Second Empire

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Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONEwalls BRICKroof ASPHALTother \_\_\_\_\_

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**Describe present and historic physical appearance.**Introduction

The Hirt House is located in Greencastle Township, Putnam County, on the western edge of the City of Greencastle (population 7,780). Although it is not within the incorporated limits of the city, the house is closer to the Courthouse Square than most residences in the city's Eastern Enlargement. When specifications were written for the house, presumably in 1880, the location was cited as "the suburbs of Greencastle;" therefore, the property was considered to be a suburban estate rather than a rural or country estate. Because Greencastle's growth did not move westwards, the property has retained much of its early character as a suburban estate with considerable amounts of surrounding open space (Photo 1). The survival of the carriage barn to the southwest of the residence (to be described following the house) adds greatly to the property's perception as an estate.

The brick residence faces north towards Columbia Street, known as the old Gravel Road when Hirt purchased the land in 1878. This orientation owes to the fact that the original entrance road to the estate led south from Columbia Street. Because the house is sited on a rise of land above a small creek, it was prominently visible from the main road into Greencastle. (Likewise, from certain vantage points along West Walnut Street Road to the south, it is still prominent.) The entrance road crossed the creek on a bridge with stone abutments; the remains of this bridge are still visible on land that is now owned by the City of Greencastle as part of its sewage treatment plant. (See *Boundary Justification*.) At the northwest corner of the nominated property, the line of the original entrance road can still be easily discerned amidst extensive tree planting begun in the 1970s. Because of the road's compacted soils, the line was left unplanted and is now a path in the woods rising from the creek bed.

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Architecture  
Commerce  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Period of Significance

1881-1928  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Dates

1880-81  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Cultural Affiliation

N/A  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Significant Person

Hirt, Alfred  
\_\_\_\_\_

Architect/Builder

Muller, P. William  
\_\_\_\_\_

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Hirt House possesses local significance in the area of architecture and meets Criterion C: embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type and period, possessing high artistic values, and representing a significant and distinguishable entity. The house's interior woodwork is outstanding in the quality of its design, materials and craftsmanship; since it is in pristine, original condition, its high degree of integrity distinguishes it among houses of its period in the area.

The Hirt House also possesses local significance in relation to Criterion B, being associated with the life of a person significant in Greencastle's past, namely Alfred Hirt. In true Horatio Alger style, Hirt rose from penniless immigrant to wealthy manufacturer and bank president. His biography in the 1910 history of Putnam County stated that he had risen "from a comparatively humble origin to a position of usefulness and affluence." Hirt typified Greencastle's late-19th-century era of prosperity, which was derived from its small manufacturing interests more than from the local agricultural products of an earlier era. He lived at his suburban estate continually from the house's completion of construction in 1881 until his death in 1928.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of property approximately 4 acres

UTM References

A 

1	6	5	1	0	8	0	0	4	3	8	8	1	4	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Mary Ellen Gadski, Architectural Historian  
organization \_\_\_\_\_ date June 5, 1990  
street & number 4431 N. Illinois Street telephone 317 283 5668  
city or town Indianapolis state IN zip code 46208

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Eastern and western exposures were maximized in the house plan, which extends longitudinally south from a comparatively narrow main facade. The east/west gabled extensions from the two-story main block give it a cruciform footprint. What at ground level appears to be a straight-forward, crossed gable roof is actually a combination of three gables intersecting with a decked roof over the front portion (Photo 1).

A Mansard roof tower rises at the northeast corner. To the south of the main block is a one-story wing with gabled roof. Because this wing was not clearly mentioned in the original specifications, it may not have been part of the architect's original plans. However, a one-story wing at the south is clearly visible in the 1886 birds' eye view of Green-castle, so if it was not planned at the same time as the main block, it was certainly constructed within five years' time of the house's completion in 1881. (This wing will be described following the main block.)

The exterior, load-bearing brick walls are 15 inches thick laid in a modified Flemish bond of two stretchers to one header. Before the exterior was given a uniform coat of paint approximately 20 years ago, the diapered pattern of the brickwork could be easily seen. This gave the exterior walls a more distinctive character than the American common bond most often used. The walls sit on a stone watertable above a foundation of rough-faced stone blocks, only two courses of which appear above grade level (Photo 2). The roof was originally covered with white pine sawn shingles with a four-and-a-half-inch exposure. The current roof of asphalt shingles was installed in 1986.

The house's windows vary at each level. The architect defined the first-story windows as "ellipse head" (Photo 5) and the second-story windows as "circle corner" style (Photo 9); both are double-hung units with "double-strength, New Albany made" glass. (This glass may be one of the early varieties of plate glass.) At attic level, there are small, horseshoe arch windows of fixed sash in the gable ends. All windows feature galvanized iron sills and lintels, which were originally painted with a sand paint to imitate Ellettsville sandstone. With the original contrasting red brick color, these window elements were originally more prominent in the house's overall design. As the window form varied at each floor level, so too did the style of the window trim. The lintels are all ornamented by a false keystone with a cut-out design simulating incised, carved stone detailing (Photo 5).

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Another feature common to all four elevations of the main block is the elaborate cornice, also of galvanized iron (Photos 2, 9). Paired, decorative brackets support the wide, projecting eaves. A line of large dentils, echoed by a frieze defined by raised moldings, follows the gabled roof line. Another raised molding serves as a stringcourse between attic and second floor level. As with the window trim, all of these elements were finished in sand paint that simulated stone and contrasted well with the brick walls.

The main (north) elevation of the house presents the most interesting composition in which the tower pavilion is recessed slightly behind the two-bay-wide gabled section (Photo 2). The projecting front porch is a wood structure but was also originally finished in sand paint to appear as stone (Photo 6). It rests on a stone foundation whose side walls are finished with smooth margins and tooled panels. One of the original three stone steps leading to the porch is now missing. The four wooden porch columns (two of which are engaged) are ornamented by applied geometric designs. The connecting elliptical arches feature drip carvings. Unusual arches occur in the porch's roof gutter above the corner brackets. The gable end features incised carving typical of Eastlake design. Within a horseshoe arched enframingent with paneled reveals is the double-leaf front door of solid walnut, now painted white like all other exterior elements. The door's elliptical arch form skews the glazed panels at the top from being true quarter-round windows. The doors have banded, raised moldings with corner blocks dividing the doors into panels.

The second-story window above the porch is set back within a recessed frame to accent the tower that rises above it. Hexagonal Pennsylvania blue slates, now painted white, cover the convex curb of the Mansard that rises from a paneled base (Photo 7). An unusual cross-gabled roof with standing seam tin sheathing sits atop the tower. From its center rises a finial that might once have held a lightning rod. The gable pediments are carved with incised, flowing lines. All four sides of the tower have a double-hung dormer window of round-arch form set within a Renaissance style surround.

The long east elevation is distinguished by the gabled wing that projects to the east, which is identical to its counterpart on the main facade (Photo 3). At the north end of the east elevation, the tower bay projects slightly forward from the main wall while the windows are set back within a recessed frame (Photo 8). The first floor window here is blind because of the juncture of the interior vestibule and stairhall at this point. To the south of the east wing is a side porch, referred to as the rear porch in the original specifications. It has lost many of its original members, including its original columns. The porch frieze

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is composed of dog-tooth wood slats. The door that leads to the kitchen features an elliptical arch transom and a glazed panel. Its wood screen door is not original but was made by the present owner in a sympathetic style.

The long west elevation is distinguished by the two-story, three-sided bay that projects from the west wing (Photo 4). Interestingly the first floor bay extends forward of the second story bay. Special molded brick were used in the construction of the bay's angles. Originally standing-seam tin covered the concave roofs over the bay projections; now they are covered with the same shingles as the roof. To the north of the bay is a side porch very similar to the front porch, though it lacks a gable. The porch columns, connecting elliptical arches with drip ornament, and corner brackets surmounted by gutter arches are identical to those of the front porch. The side porch is differentiated by its low railing of turned balusters. A glazed, walnut door leads from this side porch into the sitting room. At second floor level to the north of the porch, there is a blind window where an interior stair rises from the second floor to the attic. One missing, original feature of the house known from a circa 1940 photograph is a tall, distinctive brick chimney that rose from the roof line in alignment with the blind window. The chimney of patterned brickwork was characteristic of those found on high-style Queen Anne homes. Presumably similar chimneys originally rose from the roof at the two present chimney locations.

The present one-story rear wing is a reconstruction of the early (possibly original) south wing introduced earlier in this text. Sometime during the 1940s, it was converted to a garage. By the 1970s, this back portion of the house had fallen into such a state of deterioration that its removal was necessary. In rebuilding the brick wing under guidance of a consultant in historic preservation, the exact dimensions of the building footprint, wall height, and the slope of the gabled roof were followed to produce a massing as close to the original as possible. However, liberty was taken with the placement and type of new windows. The original windows were long, four-over-four, double-hung units while the current ones are shorter, single-pane, fixed sash units: three on the east elevation, and two on the west (Photos 3, 4, and 10). The rear (south) elevation is a blank wall. Nineteenth-century, glazed, double-leaf doors were incorporated into the west elevation to provide access to a new side porch. Built on a concrete block foundation masked by wooden latticework, the shed roof porch rests on a concrete slab. All wood members of the porch -- the turned columns, jigsawn brackets, spindle frieze, and railing of turned balusters between the columns-- were fabricated by the current owner in a sympathetic, 19th-century style. Similarly the decorative gable screen at the south end was made by the current owner. Of note are the three antique, terra-cotta

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chimney pots that rise from the end wall chimney. A circa 1940 photo shows a chimney to have existed in this same location of the wing.

Interior

The interior of the Hirt House is notable for its high degree of preservation of original architectural elements, its retention of the original floor plan, and its outstanding woodwork. As is true for the exterior, the architect's original specifications provide many details of the interior finish. For example, the exact formulation for the three coats of plaster over the brick walls is given: one cask of Huntington lime to one of sand to one bushel of the "best fresh, long cattle or goat hair." Because so many of the finish materials were specified in writing, a description of the interior's materials can be relatively free of guesswork. The exceptions to this are the items that were supplied by the owner, such as the hardware and first floor mantels. There were also occasional oversights in the specifications, such as for the front vestibule. Its floor has geometric floor tiles (possibly manufactured by Minton in England) that appear to be original.

Upon entering the house through the double doors from the front vestibule, one comes into the long stairhall. The staircase to the second floor (Photo 11) rises along the west wall and curves around to the second floor landing. These stairs are known to have been built in the carpenter shop and erected on the site. While the massive newel post and carved string brackets are of note, they are typical of the period; the stair balusters, however, are outstanding in their design and craftsmanship. The continuation of the hall leads to a door to the dining room, while on the right, a wide open archway with pocket doors gives access to the parlor.

The woodwork of the parlor is representative of the two other primary rooms of the first floor (the dining room and the sitting room). Ash and walnut elements are skillfully combined and contrasted, resulting in a richness of effect. The double pocket doors to the sitting room and their elaborate, arched enframement serve to illustrate this point (Photo 12). The doors are two-inch-thick ash with walnut raised panels and moldings. The reeded pilasters that flank the doors are divided into stages corresponding to the door panels. The most elaborate ornamentation and carving occurs at the top of the enframement. A line of castellated ornament, highlighted by delicate walnut moldings, spans the top, connecting the pilasters (Photo 13). At the spandrels of the arch, incised floral ornament is carved.

At the opposite (south) end of the parlor, the two windows occur within an even more elaborate enframement which repeats the same themes. Below

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the window sills are paneled bases. All windows of the primary rooms on the first and second floor retain their original "inside blinds" or bifolds. Those of the parlor, dining room and sitting room are all of ash and walnut divided into 16 sections: 12 perimeter panels and four interior louvers. These same bifolds fit into blind side pockets when not in use (whereas those on the second floor of pine and poplar swing over the side casings). One other element of note in the parlor is its fireplace mantel -- the only original mantel to survive on the first floor (Photo 14). The slate mantel and the cast-iron columns that support it are ornamented by intricate, incised designs (now difficult to see due to successive over-layers of paint). The cast-iron firebox cover is more distinctive than the mantel itself. Very few of the hearth's original, glazed ceramic tiles remain.

The most significant feature of the sitting room is the woodwork of its three-sided west bay (Photo 15). Similar in most respects to the window enframingent of the parlor, the sitting room's pilaster caps and line of castellated ornament are somewhat simplified. The composition of this bay is perhaps the most successful of the interior's woodwork. A paneled wood dado surrounds the room in contrast to the parlor's walls, which have only a tall baseboard. Because of the deteriorated condition of the original mantelpiece in this room, it was recently replaced by another mantel of the same period. At the west end of the sitting room, a wide arch with pocket doors connects with the dining room. Its enframingent is similar to that of the archway connecting the parlor and sitting room, except that its woodwork matches the west bay's simplified styling.

Like the sitting room, the dining room is surrounded by a paneled dado. Its woodwork exactly matches that of the sitting room, as can easily be seen by a comparison of the window treatments (Photos 15 and 16). A unique feature of the dining room is its built-in china cupboard on the south wall (Photo 17), executed in ash and walnut to match the rest of the interior's woodwork. This cupboard has a pass-through feature to allow the exchange of dishes from the dining room to the kitchen to the south. The door adjacent to the cupboard in Photo 17 provides conventional access to the room that is still today used as the kitchen. Its proportionally tall transom light is typical of the doors throughout the house.

Both the dining room and kitchen have floors of white ash while all other floors in the house are either pine or poplar. Because of the food-related functions of these two rooms, the higher quality flooring indicates that they were probably not intended to be carpeted. The kitchen retains almost all of its original door and window trim in ash, executed in a much more simplified style that echoes other first floor

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woodwork. The four-panel doors lack the raised moldings and walnut elements found in the three primary rooms. Adjoining the kitchen on the west and the sitting room on the south is a room originally used as a bedroom. This room has undergone various 20th-century changes and is now used as a bathroom. Accessible through the south door of the kitchen is the one-story reconstructed wing, which will not be described here since it lacks original fabric.

On the second floor are the three main bedrooms and two rooms at the south end that the architect referred to as "the rear department." One is now used as a bathroom. Access to the rear rooms is gained by a separate staircase, which is wainscoted. Perhaps the single most interesting feature of the second floor is its grained woodwork. Photo 18 illustrates a raised-panel pine door grained to simulate oak; it is representative of all the doors on this floor. While the door style is the same as those of the kitchen, it lacks the more elaborate surrounds with staged enframements and caps. The three poplar fireplace mantels of the bedrooms were made by the contractor following the architect's design (Photo 19). They feature carved, foliate designs over the arched openings, most of which have been closed. The stairway from the second floor to the attic is also known to have been made in a local carpentry shop and erected at the site. Its graceful, ascending curve and elegant balustrade set it apart from the usual attic access.

Outbuildings and Landscaping

The carriage barn to the southwest of the house (Photos 1 and 20) is not in its original location. It is believed to have been sited to the southeast of the house and may possibly be the small outbuilding visible in the 1886 birds' eye view. When it was moved circa 1930, a new concrete block foundation was built for it. The original wood structure consists of a tall, one-and-a-half-story section with jerkin-head roof from which a one-story, gabled roof section extends to the east (Photos 21 and 22). After the barn's relocation, an addition with a long, sloping shed roof was built at its west end (Photos 21 and 22).

The original portions of the carriage barn are distinguished by vertical board-and-batten siding. Carriages entered by means of the double door in the east end of the gabled section (Photo 20). The current shingled awning over these doors masks the original, angled enframement. The gable end still retains its carved screen typical of Eastlake design. The central section of the barn is distinguished by a square cupola at the apex of the jerkin-head roof. The cupola retains most of its original elements, including the carved finial atop the pyramidal, hipped roof, the louvers of its arched openings, and the small, carved

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brackets supporting the roof overhang. The north elevation of the original section of the barn was generously fenestrated with four tall windows surmounted by decorative pediments. (The somewhat crude shutters now present were added at a much later date.) The original door in the center bay of the central section has not survived, although portions of the pediment remain. Above this door, the upper window of the half story gave access to the hayloft. A matching window in the same location survives on the south elevation. At the ground floor level of the south side are four porthole windows (now missing their molded trim) which denote the original location of horse stalls. The low, shed roof addition at the west end covers an original door. Plans for the future restoration of the barn call for the removal of this architecturally undistinguished addition built after the Hirt family's occupancy.

The frame building located between the house and the carriage barn was originally a chicken house (Photos 1 and 23). Its date of construction is unknown but is presumed to be around 1940; therefore, it is counted as a non-contributing building. It is rectangular in plan with a low gable roof and small, double-hung windows of six-over-six lights on the north and south sides. Recently the outbuilding was converted to a garage. At the east end, a large new overhead door was installed and a new gable screen made by the owner was inserted in the gable end. The building was also re-sided and re-roofed at this time.

While there is no documentation of Hirt's original landscaping of the house site, it is apparent that three pear trees that he planted still survive on the site. These 100+-year-old trees occur in a well-spaced line to the north of the house, down the hill and close to the edge of the native growth that extends from the creek bed. No other landscaping features coincident with the house's construction are evident today.

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Born in 1841 in Biel, Switzerland, Alfred Hirt came to the United States in 1852 with his widowed father and first settled in Trumbull County, Ohio. Young Alfred's first job was as a water boy for the local railroad. During his teens while employed as a farm hand, he fell seriously ill and was obliged to take refuge in the county poor house, his family being too impoverished to care for him. Upon recovering he decided to learn a trade and became a carpenter's apprentice. The Civil War interrupted his training, for in November 1861, he enlisted in the 51st Regiment Ohio Volunteer Infantry. During his three and a half years of service, he participated in a number of the most hotly contested battles of the war, including Lookout Mountain, Missionary Ridge, and Chickamauga.<sup>1</sup>

After the completion of his military service, Hirt moved to Clay County, Indiana, where his father had relocated. He took up his trade as carpenter and soon began trading in staves, an important commodity in the 19th century when the barrel was supreme as packing container. For about 10 years, he purchased lumber, made his own staves and sold these on contract to a local stave manufacturer. In 1876 Hirt acquired control of this stave business and thereafter operated it under his own name. In 1877 he moved to Putnam County and established a mill in Madison Township.<sup>2</sup> The business grew to employ between 50 and 100 men and soon became the principal source of supply for the Eastern stave market. Hirt became known for the superior quality of his staves, and

<sup>1</sup>Information on Alfred Hirt's early life was derived mostly from: Jesse W. Weik, History of Putnam County (Indianapolis, IN: B. F. Bowen, 1910), pp. 413-414. This biography was later used as the basis for Hirt's obituaries in the Greencastle newspapers. Interestingly it was the only county history to include a biography of Hirt, who was conspicuously absent from the Biographical and Historical Record of Putnam County published in 1887. The fact that Hirt was a relative newcomer to the county may have played some part in his lack of inclusion; so too may have the fact that he was married seven times and therefore may have been socially ostracized. Weik's biography no doubt greatly helped to overcome initial slights, for the opening sentence of the concluding paragraph stated: "In the largest sense of the word, Mr. Hirt has been successful, having not only gained pecuniary independence, but, what is of greater value, the confidence and esteem of the community in which he lives."

<sup>2</sup> See "A Journey through Putnam County History, " comp. by Putnam County Sesquicentennial Committee. [Greencastle, IN: 1966], p. 261. Hirt is mentioned among Madison Township proprietors of mills as "a large producer of staves;" however, the exact location of his factory is unknown.

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~~much of his product was exported abroad to Europe. Here he established his "claim to fame" as a stovemaker by building the largest cask ever made: 33 feet in diameter at its widest part. This cask, commissioned by Adolph Fruensholz & Company of Nancy in 1886, was on exhibit at the Paris Exposition, where 140 men (Hirt among them) dined inside it at the same time.~~

Within 10 years of moving to Putnam County, Hirt became the president of the Central National Bank in Greencastle, which had opened in April 1883.<sup>3</sup> He held this position for three years, retiring to continue building his stave business. In 1903 he accepted the presidency of the First National Bank of Greencastle and soon acquired a controlling interest of its stock. (This latter bank, established under the national banking act of 1863, later merged with the Citizens Trust Company and continues to this day as the First Citizens Bank and Trust Company.) As the bank's second president, Hirt served for 15 years until retiring in 1918. During these years, his interests turned from the stave business, which he turned over to one of his sons, to investments in banks, Mexican mines, and real estate.

At the time wrote his will in January 1924; he owned over 1,100 acres of timberland in Yazoo County, Mississippi, in addition to his local land holdings, which included farm land and business property on the courthouse square.<sup>4</sup> He also then held \$65,000 in government bonds, which in itself was a sizeable fortune. His obituary in the Greencastle Herald stated: "That he was among the few really wealthy men of Putnam county is well known."<sup>5</sup> The Indianapolis News also carried an obituary (which is an indication of Hirt's regional stature) and called him: "one of the most widely known citizens of Putnam county."<sup>6</sup> The Daily Banner claimed that Hirt "was known throughout the state."<sup>7</sup> Despite his poverty and

<sup>3</sup>The exact years of Hirt's years as president of the Central National Bank are unknown. However, the date of the bank's opening is known, as well as its first president, Dewitt C. Bridges. (See "A Journey through Putnam County History," p. 173, and Weik, History of Putnam County, p. 132.) From city directory references, it appears that Hirt was president of this bank in the mid-to-late 1880s.

<sup>4</sup>Will of Alfred Hirt, January 24, 1924. Putnam County Will Record 5: 370-75. Because there was no summary of Hirt's legacies, figures for his real estate and bond holdings were totalled from individual bequests.

<sup>5</sup>Greencastle Herald, Wednesday, May 16, 1928, p. 1, c. 5 and p. 3, c.4.

<sup>6</sup>Indianapolis News, Friday, May 18, 1928, sec. 1, p. 22, c. 3 & 4.

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lack of educational opportunities in his youth, Hirt overcame his humble origins and became one of the most financially successful, self-made men to have lived in Greencastle in the late 19th/early 20th century.

Construction of the Hirt Residence

A year after moving to Greencastle, on October 1, 1878, Alfred Hirt purchased a 12.62-acre parcel of land from the Phoenix Mutual Life Insurance Company.<sup>8</sup> The land was located mostly in Section 20 of Greencastle Township between the Gravel Road on the north (later known as West Columbia Street) and Walnut Street on the south. On the west, the land was bounded by the Indianapolis & St. Louis Railroad, which had been completed through Greencastle in July 1870;<sup>9</sup> on the east was the line dividing the west and east halves of the northeast quarter section of Section 20. It was only a few months before that this land had been subdivided from the entire west half of the northeast quarter section, which had been owned by pioneer settlers Alexander and Martha Black since 1843. Hirt chose this large parcel as the site to build his new home, locating the house at the approximate mid point between the Gravel Road and West Walnut Street. The first paragraph of the original specifications for the house make it clear that the house location was "in the Suburbs of Greencastle."<sup>10</sup>

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<sup>7</sup> [Greencastle] Daily Banner, Wednesday, May 16, 1928, p. 1, c. 1.

<sup>8</sup> Putnam County Deed Record 20: 441. Aaron C. & Annie M. Goodman quitclaimed this property to the Phoenix Mutual Life Insurance Company (of which Aaron Goodman was president) on the same day in Hartford, Connecticut. The Goodmans, who only owned it for about six weeks, has purchased it on August 12, 1878 from the Blacks.

Hirt added two small, additional parcels adjacent to the 12.62-acre main parcel: 1) a .13-acre strip of land in the east half of the southeast quarter section of Section 17, south of the Gravel Road, and 2) a .85-acre strip in the east half of the northeast quarter section of Section 20. Both parcels were 50 chains (33 feet) wide. The first was purchased from Edwin and Ruth Black on September 26, 1878 (Deed Record 20: 436); the second from Thomas and Betsey Gillespy on October 13, 1884 (Deed Record 28: 67). Thus, the assembly of the whole estate can not be considered as complete until October 1884. The second 1,124-foot-long strip was probably purchased to provide a south access road to the house, which is the same access road that survives today.

<sup>9</sup> Biographical and Historical Record of Putnam County. (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1887), p. 311. This railroad was later known as the New York Central, the Big Four, and the Penn Central.

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Because the original specifications were not dated and no other construction documentation survives (such as the architect's drawings), the construction date of the house must be assumed from a combination of sources. The map of Greencastle Township in the 1879 county atlas identified Hirt's parcel, but there clearly was no house (designated by a black square) on the property. The 1880 Census of Greencastle, enumerated on June 3, 1880, gave Alfred Hirt's address as being on Washington Street.<sup>11</sup> Hirt, then age 39, was living in town with his 36-year-old wife Nancy, his five children ranging in age from one to 11 years, his 75-year-old mother-in-law, and one female servant. (These are the family members who are presumed to be the first people to occupy the new house.)

The house is assumed to have been under construction in June 1880 because of another clue presented in the census records regarding the house's architect. The original specifications clearly document the architect's name on the first and last pages of the manuscript. The first page cites "a set of plans furnished by P. W. Muller Archt. Greencastle In.;" the last page states that the "work [is] to be under the superintendence of P. W. Muller Architect." Muller was not a local Greencastle architect; in fact, despite extensive research efforts, nothing more of his life and work is known aside from the meager mention in the specifications and his appearance in the 1880 census.<sup>12</sup> According to the census, "William Mueller" was a 25-year-old, Pennsylvania-

<sup>10</sup> "Specifications of Residence for A. Hirt Esq." 21-page original manuscript survives in the possession of Dan and Jennifer Rattray, current owners of the Hirt House.

<sup>11</sup> 1880 Census, Second Ward, Greencastle, Indiana, District No. 4, Enumeration District 158, p. 10.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid., p. 11. William Mueller, a 25-year-old white male, was a boarder in the home of Alpheus and Belle Hibben. He and both of his parents were born in Pennsylvania. While it is not unusual for 19th-century architects to fade into obscurity, Muller is more of a mystery than most. He is not known to have designed any other buildings in Greencastle and is absent from all standard sources on Putnam County history: city directories, genealogical records, county atlases and histories, biographical and newspaper indices, etc. He probably did not remain long in Greencastle.

A sampling of some standard sources on architects that have been checked in search of Muller include: Withey, Biographical Dictionary of American Architects (Deceased), 1955; the Avery Obituary Index, 1980; Wodehouse, American Architects from the Civil War to the First World War, 1976; Moss and Tatman, Biographical

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born architect who was a boarder in another house on Washington Street, a few blocks away from Hirt. It appears very likely that Hirt encountered Muller on one of his many trips to the East and brought him to Greencastle for the express purpose of designing his house and supervising its construction.

Assuming the house was under construction in June 1880 while its out-of-town architect was briefly living in Greencastle, the normal construction span of one building season would have been sufficient to have completed the exterior of the house. Notations in a county transfer book, in which the value of land and improvements were entered each year according to owner and parcel, provide another clue as to the house's completion. On June 1, 1880, the value of the improvements on the land Hirt had purchased in 1878 was only \$50.<sup>13</sup> Added to the record the following year was the entry "\$5,000 imp," presumably noted on June 1, 1881. These entries provided the basis for the 1880-81 construction date noted in "Significant Dates" above.

#### Architectural Significance

Because nothing is known of the life work of architect P. William Muller, the Hirt House can not be considered in the context of other buildings that he designed. He had probably received professional training, since he listed his profession as 'architect' in the census and wrote a detailed and competent set of specifications to accompany his drawings. Because he was only 25 years old at the time, it can be assumed that this house was an important work in his early career. Lacking information on the architect's total oeuvre, the house must be evaluated within the context of local homes of the era, many of which reflected Greencastle's relative prosperity in the late 19th century.

The Putnam County Interim Report: Indiana Historic Sites & Structures Inventory, published in 1982, was used as a basis for comparison. While many homes constructed in Greencastle between 1875 and 1900 received an outstanding rating, few retain interior woodwork that is comparable in

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Dictionary of Philadelphia Architects: 1700-1930, 1985; Bryan, Directory of Architects, 1890; and ARCHIE, Indiana Historical Society's computerized data base of its architectural records.

<sup>13</sup> Putnam County Courthouse, Assessor's Office, Transfer Book 1880-1885, Greencastle Township. The notation for \$5,000 was added in a different color ink at a later time over the original June 1, 1880 record.

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quality of design, craftsmanship and materials to that found in the Hirt House. Over the years, the house's present owner, an antiquarian by avocation and current profession, has conducted his own survey of the Greencastle area's late-19th-century homes. His personal observations, combined with the author's general knowledge of historic resources in Indiana, support the conclusions on the Hirt House's architecturally significant interiors. The high degree of integrity found in the principal rooms -- the stairhall, the parlor, the sitting room, and the dining room -- alone distinguishes the Hirt House. The high quality materials used in the woodwork -- ash and walnut, skillfully combined in decorative motifs-- is also rare. Alfred Hirt's background as a carpenter, as well as his daily contacts in the lumber business, no doubt contributed to the outstanding end-product of the house's interiors. In this way, the house is truly reflective of his own personal prosperity as well as the late-19th-century prosperity of Greencastle.

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Beginning at a point on the east line of the west half of the northeast quarter of Section 20, Township 14 North, Range 4 West which point is 162 feet south of the northeast corner of said west half; thence south 60 degrees 30 minutes east 37 feet; thence south 395 feet parallel to said east line; thence west 480 feet to the east right-of-way line of the Penn Central Railroad spur to the Ohio & Indiana Stone Company (originally the line of the Indianapolis & St. Louis Railroad); thence northeasterly approximately 600 feet with said east right-of-way line; thence south 60 degrees 30 minutes east 268 feet to the point of beginning, containing approximately four acres.

Boundary Justification

The four-acre property being nominated represents the core of the suburban estate of Alfred Hirt, which originally comprised nearly 14 acres when assembled in three parcels. It contains the two primary historic resources: the house and the carriage barn. The original estate remained intact for nearly 50 years; in 1926 Alfred Hirt sold off a small, 1.63-acre plot on West Walnut Street Road at the southwest corner of his land. His estate was then conveyed intact through five successive owners (including descendants of the family) until 1948, when Lawrence and Opal Reed sold off some acreage to the south of the house. In July 1951, the next owners of the house, Julian and Lois Steele, sold the City of Greencastle a 3.87-acre tract of land on the north side of the estate. This land adjoined Columbia Street (the old Gravel Road mentioned in the first 1878 deed), from which the original entrance road led to the house. When the City purchased this land to build a new sewage treatment plant, the primary access was thereby cut off. The stone bridge abutments of the entrance road that crossed the small creek are now on city property. However, the continuation of the road up the hill and through the woods can still be easily discerned because of the compaction of the soils.

When the current owner, Dan Rattray, purchased the property in 1972, the house's acreage had been further whittled down to 6.08 acres. Soon thereafter he purchased a triangular, 1.22-acre tract of land adjoining his east property line. This subsequent purchase was not considered in determining the boundary of the historic property to be nominated, since it had never belonged to the Hirt family.

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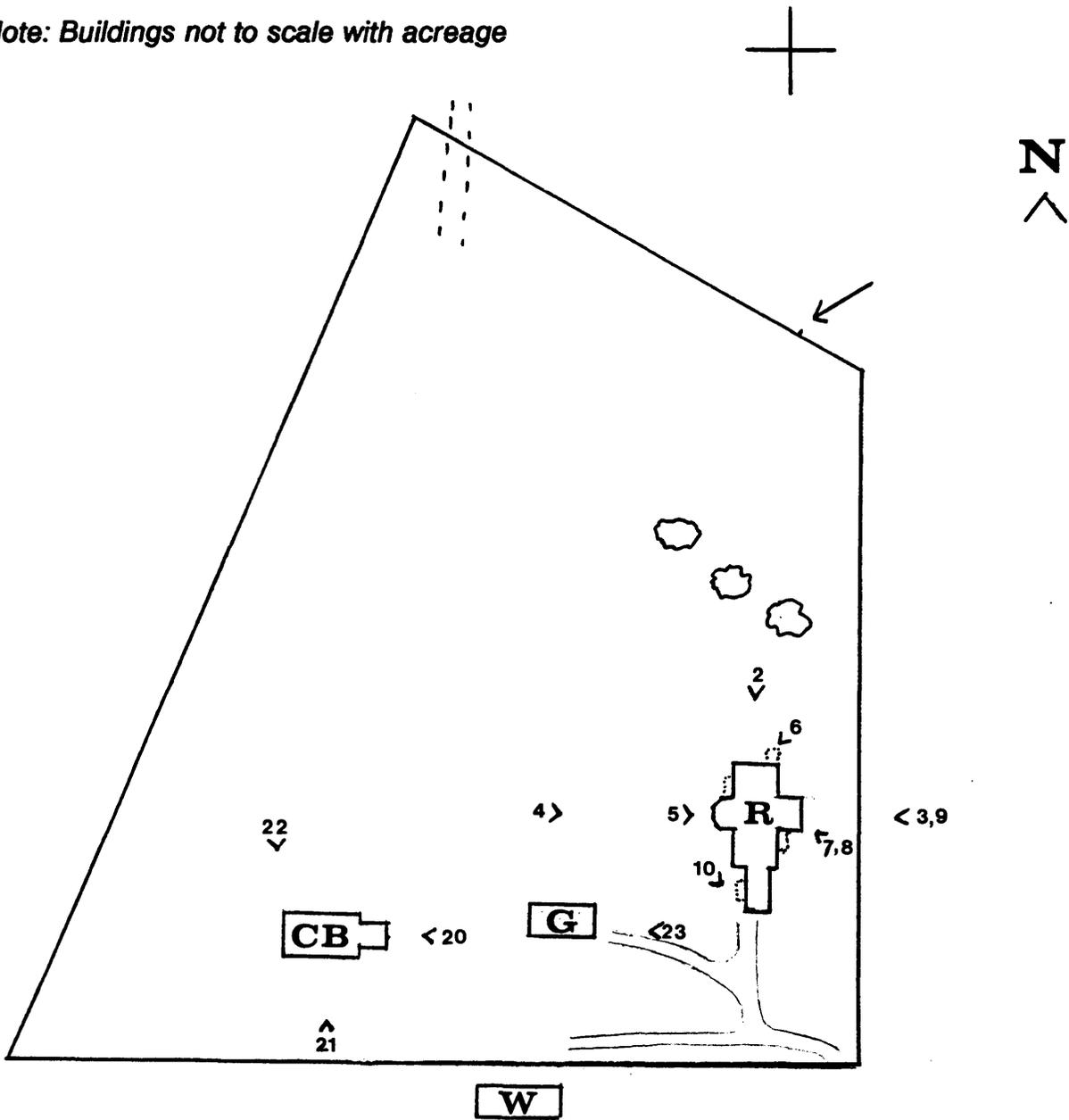
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To define a boundary that best describes the area of historic significance, two portions of land were exempted from the 6.08-acre property: 1) a two-acre portion at the south, basically rectangular in shape, 250 by 310 feet, and 2) the 20-foot-wide, 550-foot-long current access road that leads from West Walnut Street Road to the back of the house. By eliminating the portion to the south, the newest building on the property -- a 1970s concrete block structure used as a workroom/storage area-- is excluded from the property being nominated. (In Photo 1, this building appears at the left margin, south of the east/west line of the driveway from the access road. The south line of the driveway and its extension westwards corresponds to the south line of the nominated property.)

The east and west boundaries of the nominated area correspond to the historic boundaries: on the west, the east right-of-way line of the railroad, and on the east, the line parallel to the north/south dividing line of the northeast quarter section. The north line, marking the boundary with city land, parallels the old Gravel Road (Columbia Street). At the northwest corner of the property are the remains of the original access road. For this reason, it was considered important to include this area within the nominated area.

# Sketch Map of the Hirt House, Greencastle, Indiana

Note: Buildings not to scale with acreage



## KEY

Boundary of Nominated Property —————

Point of Beginning ———>

Remains of Entrance Road - - - - -

Photograph > 6

Historic Pear Trees 

Residence = R

Carriage Barn = C B

Garage = G

Workroom = W

Section Lines = +

1876 Birds' Eye View of Greencastle

HIRT  
HSE

