

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

PHO 676560

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED APR 4 1979

DATE ENTERED 4

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Stewart-Studebaker House

AND/OR COMMON John Studebaker Residence

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER 420 West Market Street

CITY, TOWN Bluffton VICINITY OF _____ CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT 10

STATE Indiana CODE 018 COUNTY Wells CODE 179

CLASSIFICATION

| CATEGORY | OWNERSHIP | STATUS | PRESENT USE |
|---|---|---|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT | <input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED | <input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S) | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE | <input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM |
| <input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE | <input type="checkbox"/> BOTH | <input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS | <input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SITE | PUBLIC ACQUISITION | ACCESSIBLE | <input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL |
| <input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT | <input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED | <input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED | <input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> NO | <input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> PARK |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER: |

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Wells County Historical Society

STREET & NUMBER 420 W. Market

CITY, TOWN Bluffton VICINITY OF _____ STATE Indiana

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. Wells County Recorder's Office

STREET & NUMBER Wells County Courthouse

CITY, TOWN Bluffton STATE Indiana

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE None

DATE _____ FEDERAL _____ STATE _____ COUNTY _____ LOCAL _____

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS

CITY, TOWN _____ STATE _____

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

EXCELLENT
 GOOD
 FAIR

DETERIORATED
 RUINS
 UNEXPOSED

CHECK ONE

UNALTERED
 ALTERED

CHECK ONE

ORIGINAL SITE
 MOVED DATE _____

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Stewart-Studebaker House is located two blocks west of downtown Bluffton on the south side of Market, the principal east-west street. The immediate neighborhood was the prime upper class residential area in the late nineteenth century, and the Stewart-Studebaker House is one of the most prominent residences. The houses along either side of the tree-lined street stand on lawns slightly above the level of the sidewalks; the visual effect is further enhanced by the fact that most of the houses stand on raised basements, as does the Studebaker House.

The Stewart-Studebaker House is a two-story French Second Empire style structure capped with a tall, concave Mansard roof (photo 1). The red brick walls are laid in common bond on a fieldstone foundation which is topped with a cut sandstone water-table; the pressed brick is laid with thin buttered joints of white mortar. Sandstone is also used for the sills and lintels of the windows. The elaborate forms of the bracketed cornice and the dormers and roof curbs above are of galvanized iron. The lower rake of the Mansard roof is covered with patterned grey slates; the edges of the flat tin roof above are punctuated by cast iron crestings. Originally, the roof had two short corbel-topped chimneys irregularly placed on its flat deck; one of these and a similarly capped slender stack on the lower rake of the rear roof still remain.

In plan, the house is an irregular form which is approximately square. The main (north) elevation is divided into three parts of two bays each; the slightly recessed central bay contains the main entrance, and is crowned with a Mansard tower whose walls extend only slightly above the roof of the main mass. The three-part division of the facade corresponds to the three bays which divide each level of the interior into rooms on either side of a central stairhall. Emphasis is given to the front half of the house by the placement of a polygonal bay projection on the north end of the east elevation and by a slight recessing of the south end of the west elevation in order to emphasize the two northernmost bays. The windows on the two north bays of the west elevation have shaped lintels incised with floral patterns; on the north and west facades similar lintels are used over paired windows and the double doors of the entrance (photo 2). On these parts of the exterior, first floor openings have flat tops with rounded corners and second floor windows have segmental arched openings. The three windows of the tower are linked by a stone surround of pilasters beneath the 3 orders of molding of three intersecting round arches. An elaboration of the same design is used for the hood molds of the round-arched dormer windows. The windows on the remainder of the elevations are capped by segmental arches of header coursing with plain sandstone impost blocks. All windows have the original one-over-one double-hung sash.

The west interior bay extends one bay south of the rest of the main block, and is further emphasized by a diagonal projection two bays wide on its southwest corner (photo 3). Slightly projecting from the ell thus formed in the rear of the main mass is a one story wing two bays square, whose mansard roof has a straight rake. This kitchen wing was originally wrapped on the south and east by a flat-roofed one story porch which

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

| |
|--------------------------|
| FOR NPS USE ONLY |
| RECEIVED APR 4 1979 |
| DATE ENTERED MAY 14 1979 |

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

sheltered a basement entrance on the east, and possibly a back door from the main wing as well. On the south the porch provided a covered walkway from the kitchen door to a small building attached to the east side of the southeast corner of the porch.

This one story outbuilding two bays wide and three bays long extends beyond the porch to the south, and is topped with a straight-raked Mansard roof identical to that of the kitchen wing. A chimney centrally placed on the north elevation is intact except for its corbelled smoke-bell. The original purpose of this building is unknown; it may have been a washhouse or summer kitchen. After 1892, John Studebaker used it as an office, and received visitors at the door on the north side.

The west end of the back porch has been enclosed with wood framing; a frame addition also fills the angle between the back porch and the rear of the west wing of the house. Another frame addition within the east corner of the porch provides a kitchen for the outbuilding, which has been used as an apartment for approximately forty years; this addition fills the entire east side of the original porch area, and on the north it projects from the angle between the house and apartment with brick walls whose window treatment matches that of the rear elevations of the house. A brick-clad addition also extends across the south end of the apartment. Contiguous with this addition along the east side of the property are two frame garage buildings.

The larger of the two is a square hip-roofed building which stands on the southeast corner of the site. The structure has a few irregularly placed windows and three bays of panelled overhead doors which face the alley on the south. Directly to the north the area behind the apartment is filled by a one story structure whose hipped roof is intersected at the ridge by the north wall of the large garage. The two-bay overhead door of this structure faces west.

The back yard originally contained the privy, a barn, and a chicken pen. The locations and appearance of these structures is unknown. Apparently these buildings stood until after the late 1920's, when they were cleared to make way for the garages and parking lot associated with the property's use as a funeral parlor. Although the additions to the porch and outbuilding were made at this time, the enclosure of the porch directly behind the kitchen apparently predates 1928.

The other major addition to the house is the large porch which extends completely across the front (photo 4). This addition greatly changed the character of the front of the house, since it provides an intermediate mass between the ground and the outline of the roof. As originally constructed the house had a much more severe character, since the height of the facade was relieved only by the bracketed canopies over the openings in the recessed central bay (photo 5). Fortunately, the design of the porch cornice exactly matches that of the house, even though it was added approximately forty years after the original construction; the shallow Mansard roof also matches the

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

| | |
|------------------|-------------|
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| RECEIVED | APR 4 1979 |
| DATE ENTERED | MAY 14 1979 |

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

7

PAGE

3

curbing and patterned slate of the roof above (photo 6). Later influences can be seen, however, in the treatment of the porch columns and base, which although constructed of masonry that matches the original walls, is nonetheless in the massive plain style associated with the Arts and Crafts mode of the early twentieth century. At that time the original horseshoe-shaped walk was replaced by a central set of steps and a walk directly to the street; this change may have also led to the demise of the iron fence which originally enclosed the front yard.

Since that time, the porch has been enclosed with plate glass across the front and jalousie windows on the sides; a fully glazed anodized aluminum door flanked by translucent patterned glass fills the central bay. The west bay of the porch is partitioned from the rest by a wall of glass block, and the pair of windows on the original facade within have been replaced by an open portal with a pocketed accordion door. Although the ceiling of the porch has been obscured by acoustical tile, and the masonry inside the porch has been painted, the other original windows of the house are intact. The alterations described above were made during the building's use as a funeral home.

Also intact are the original entrance doors, which are paneled with heavy incised moldings to form pedimented surrounds for their round-arched panels of acid-etched glass, whose floral patterns are both etched and embossed (photo 7). Through the doors one enters the stairhall, which is connected to the adjacent rooms on either side by round-arched openings located just within the entry (photo 8).

Through the opening on the left is a music room with a library beyond, through another round-arched opening. To the right of the hall one originally entered a parlor that was separated from the dining room beyond by a wall. This partition and its centrally located fireplaces in each room were removed in order to provide a large enough space for funerals (photo 9). Similarly, the door between the dining room and kitchen was widened to accommodate caskets, and an accordion door was pocketed into the walls. In the kitchen ceiling just beyond this door a dumbwaiter hatch was used to raise caskets for storage on the second floor.

The area between the back of the stairhall and the kitchen contains a hall closet and two narrow quarter-turn stairways with winders. One staircase leads to the basement; the other lands in the maid's quarters above the kitchen. Remodelling of the hall closet into a small restroom was accomplished by reversing the run of the basement stair and placing the winders at the base.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

| | |
|---------------------|-------------|
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| RECEIVED APR 4 1979 | |
| DATE ENTERED | MAY 14 1979 |

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 4

The original kitchen was partitioned down the center to create a north-south corridor from the original back door to the front of the house via an arched opening broken through the wall which originally separated the library from the pantry in the south end of the east bay. At the same time the window in the west bay of the south wall of the kitchen was turned into a door in order to provide access to the frame additions on the rear of the house; these rooms were used as the mortuary laboratory. In the frame room which is within the original back porch, the intact ceiling and architrave of the porch are visible. These alterations thus provided a rear entrance for mourners which was separated from the funeral home's work areas.

The butler's pantry in the rear of the east bay of the first floor contains an original built-in cabinet in a niche of its northwest corner; directly beneath this cabinet is a built-in wall safe. The east end of the pantry has been partitioned off to provide a small restroom. In the south pantry wall, a door which may have originally opened onto the back porch now gives access to a small library in the north end of the brick-clad addition between the house and outbuilding. The remainder of the addition contains a kitchen for the apartment in the outbuilding.

The second floor is virtually identical in plan to the first floor. In the east bay, the master bedroom and sitting room were separated by a large round arch, which has been closed. On the other side of the stairhall, two bedrooms occupy the west bay. In the hallway the quarter turn at the head of the stair leaves room behind (south) the stair for a door to the rear bedroom of the west bay. Behind the back walls of the stairhall, the back stair lands in a maid's room directly above the kitchen.

The third floor is located within the mansard, and served as servant's quarters and storage. Access to this level is via an open stair directly above the main staircase. The ceiling of the third floor is supported by wooden posts with stop-chamfered edges. The plank partitions which run between the posts do not extend to the ceiling; this may have been done to improve ventilation.

At the front of the central bay a steep stair lands in the base of the tower, just inside the triple window of the facade. This stair leads to a platform within the elliptical oculi of the tower's dormer windows.

The interior of the outbuilding is one large room with a quarter-turn stair on the west wall; the upstairs is a single loft area with a dormer window on each side. The basement of both the outbuilding and house have limestone rubble in irregular courses; the original plastered ceilings have been removed to install wiring and ductwork. The floors of the basements have modern concrete slabs. The central bay of the house basement contains a large furnace which originally heated the house by gravity convection; the coal

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

| |
|-------------------------|
| FOR NPS USE ONLY |
| RECEIVED APR 4 1979 |
| DATE ENTERED MAY 1 1979 |

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 5

stoker has been converted to a gas burner. This furnace is apparently original, though the present ductwork is not. The furnace was originally supplemented by fireplaces in the music room, parlor, and dining room. The existence of fireplaces on the upper floor is possible, but unproven.

The only original fireplace which survives is on the west wall of the music room, in the east side of the first floor. The size of the flue suggests that it was intended to burn coal rather than wood. The mantle is black marbled slate, with a simple shell supported at either end by heavy brackets (photo 10). The areas beneath the brackets are treated as pilasters with recessed panels whose tops are quirked segmental curves. The centers of the panels are naturalistically painted with bouquets of wildflowers on a gray-green background. The face of the fillet around the square fire opening is incised with gold-filled geometric patterns, as is the area directly above on the face of the mantel. The tiled hearth is done in a red and black diamond pattern with a line border in the same colors.

The grandest features of the interior of the house, however, are its staircase and other woodwork.

The main stair is a flying staircase attached to the west wall of the central bay on each floor (photo 8). On the first floor, the stair is splayed at its foot, where the heavy rail curves outward to meet a massive polygonal newel whose reeded shaft is ringed with concave and convex moldings and capped with a large ball finial. The tapered shafts of the banisters are ringed with turned beadwork; the spandrel of the stair is ornamented with scrollwork beneath the ends of the treads. The head of the stair makes a quarter turn with winders; the sides of the stair and the stairwell opening are curved. The hand rail bends in a tight curve at the head of the stair and is continuous throughout the stairwell; a second rail is mounted on the outer radius of the head of the stair, and is terminated by newels.

The grandeur of the staircase is matched by the massive oak woodwork which is used throughout the principal rooms of the house (photo 11). Baseboards are eight-inch sections of oak capped with an inclined beaded molding. The facing around windows and doors has equal widths of smooth surface along the edges and down the center separated by two bands of three reedings each; the smooth center strip is nearly covered by smooth half-round cherry molding. Cherry is also used for the blockings at the base, midpoint, and top corners of the enframements. The base block is a smooth die topped by a quirked cyma reversa profile. The rectangular blocks at mid-length of the door enframements have quirked, fluted inclines above and below square projecting surfaces whose side

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

| | |
|------------------|-------------|
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| RECEIVED | APR 4 1979 |
| DATE ENTERED | MAY 14 1979 |

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 6

edges are bevelled and stop-chamfered; at the centers of each block a round recess is filled with a conical projection. The corner block design has a square surface set above a quirked, fluted incline. The sides of the block are bevelled and stop-chamfered in the same manner as the median blocks; a circular recess in the center of the block is filled with a concave rosette with a projecting conical center. The smooth surface around the rosette extends upward, and is narrowed by squared cuts into either side; the top edge of the block is chamfered in four semi-circular scallops to produce a saw-toothed profile. Doors are made entirely of oak, and are designed with four panels outlined by heavy moldings similar in profile to those which cap the baseboards.

A simpler facing is used in the kitchen, the servant's quarters, and in the outbuilding. This facing is slightly narrower with a reeded center and smooth edges, and is used with the sides extended above the top of the cap facing. One curious feature is the joint between the side and cap facings around openings: the ends of the cap facing are cut on a miter top and bottom to fit into a vee-cut in the edge of the side facing, so that the reedings of the two pieces are butted to form a continuous pattern. The archways which are used in the entrance hall and between the music room and library are treated in a still simpler manner. Along the edges of the opening, a three-quarter round oak molding covers the edge of the plaster, and is punctuated by turned shoes on the corners of the baseboard and turned beading at the springline of the arch proper. The archways which connected the stairhall with the rooms on either side have been filled with pairs of swinging doors beneath semi-circular fixed transoms; all are glazed with central lights surrounded by muntins and narrow sidelights. The glass is bevelled plate. These additions were apparently made in the 1920's (photo 12).

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 checked="" 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 1882

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Stewart-Studebaker House is one of very few Wells County examples of the French Second Empire style, and is one of the few such structures which has not been greatly altered or demolished. As locally used, the French Second Empire style was seldom seen in its pure form; rather, it was combined with features of the earlier Italianate or the late Queen Anne styles. Examples of the former are the third Ossian school (1898, demolished c. 1920), and County Infirmary (1875, demolished c. 1935). The latter trend was illustrated by the County Jail (1880) whose red brick facade had a slightly projecting central bay topped by a pyramidal-roofed tower whose walls did not extend above the curb of the building's straight-raked Mansard roof, a treatment much like that of the tower on the Studebaker House. A Queen Anne or Ruskinian Gothic influence was apparent, however, in the jail's continuous stringcourses of limestone which included the flat window lintels; only this feature of the building survived a 1961 "remodelling". A belfry with a concave Mansard graced the hip-roofed Queen Anne structure erected as the Salem Church (c. 1895) in Nottingham Township; this too has been removed during later alterations. Use of the Mansard form to enclose an upper story survived as a feature of Bluffton's Richardsonian Romanesque-styled Opera House (1903); a fire later caused removal of this upper floor.

Another example of the French Empire style in Wells County is the Hitchcock House (c. 1875) at 315 West Central Avenue in Bluffton. This structure has its original concave Mansard, whose dormers and roof cresting are very similar in design to those of the Studebaker House; it also has a double entrance with glazed panels, but these are sheltered by a porch which wraps around one corner of the house and is supported by square chamfered posts with bracketed tops and a crested roofline. Although these features survive, the fenestration has been greatly altered and the clapboard covered with asbestos shingles.

The other example of the "pure" Second Empire style which survives is the Liby Residence, (c. 1870) which is next door to the Studebaker House on the west. This is also a frame structure, with a short, straight-raked Mansard roof and a double entrance sheltered by non-original porch. The panelled frieze and widely spaced pairs of cornice brackets are much like those of the Hitchcock House; with the exception of the roofline, the detailing matches earlier Italianate structures in the area. The Liby House has had only minor exterior alterations.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Joyce Buckner and Dorothy Rose, History of Wells County, Indiana 1776-1976, Wells County Bicentennial Historical Publication Committee, 1976.
 June Grove, "Old Stewart-Studebaker House," Bluffton News-Banner, October 6, 1976, p. 9.
 O. E. Lesh and John Tundall, Standard History of Adams and Wells Counties, Indiana, Lewis Publishing Co., Chicago, 1918.

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than 1 acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Bluffton

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 1, 6 6, 5, 4, 0, 3, 0 4, 5, 1, 1, 2, 3, 0

B

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The property lines of Lot 45 of Studebaker's First Addition to the town of Bluffton, measuring 70' by 140'.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |
|-------|------|--------|------|
| STATE | CODE | COUNTY | CODE |

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Craig Leonard

ORGANIZATION

Wells County Historical Society

DATE

August, 1978

STREET & NUMBER

420 W. Market Street

TELEPHONE

824-9956

CITY OR TOWN

Bluffton,

STATE

Indiana

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

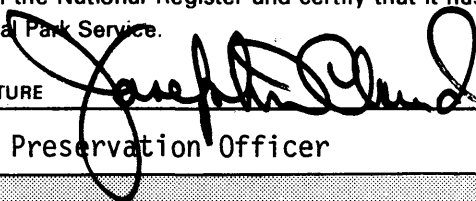
NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL X

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

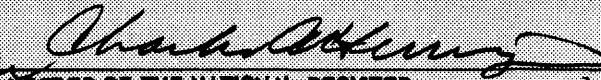


TITLE Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 3-29-79

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER



DATE 5-14-79

ATTEST: **KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER**



DATE 5-11-79

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

| | |
|------------------|-------------|
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| RECEIVED | APR 4 1979 |
| DATE ENTERED | MAY 14 1979 |

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 2

It is evident from the examples cited above that this style was more popular locally for use on major institutional structures; the social prominence attached to its domestic use can be aptly illustrated by the owners of the Stewart-Studebaker House.

Little is known of Alvin J. Stewart beside the fact that he came to Bluffton in connection with the building of the Fort Wayne, Cincinnati, and Louisville Railroad, and that he liked the town and decided to stay. In 1882 he built this home on West Market Street. The names of any builders or architects he employed are forgotten.

In 1892 Stewart sold the house to one of the railroad's local backers, John Studebaker, who lived there until 1912. Studebaker was a member of one of the town's oldest families, who had arrived in the 1830's.

John Studebaker was chiefly remembered for his role as a financier. The bicentennial history of Wells County notes that:

"In 1856 John Studabaker began lending money and selling New York exchange stock. In 1863 he, with George Arnold, Jeffrey Bliss, Amos Townsend and James Van Eman, formed the First National Bank with a capital of \$50,000. In 1868 it closed, but in 1869 the Exchange Bank was formed by John and Peter Studabaker and Hugh Dougherty. The banks made money available to the men who wanted to go into business in the county. It has been recorded that not all such businessmen were successful and the bank, at times had to foreclose. Many of the various business ventures changed hands several times, indicating change of interest or difficult times."

Studebaker's influence is also seen in the physical planning of the town:

"According to descendants of C.G. Quick, this period of industrial advancement caused Charles Quick and John Studabaker to exchange words once more in disagreement. Quick, interested in platting the city with beautification in mind, wanted the residential section of the little city along the banks of the river and suggested that the main street follow the river to enhance the beauty of the citizens' homes. Studabaker, on the other hand, insisted that the mills and similar businesses needed the use of the river, so the residential section must begin on Wabash Street.

"When it was time to plan and build the water works, Charles Quick became concerned for its placement in the city. John Studabaker thought it wise to locate the water works near the Clover Leaf Railroad, for the works would need soft coal and such a location would make transportation of the coal no problem. Quick

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

| | |
|------------------|-------------|
| FOR NPS USE ONLY | |
| RECEIVED | APR 4 1979 |
| DATE ENTERED | MAY 14 1979 |

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

argued that the burning of the soft coal would cause the smoke stack to belch out black smoke which would be carried by the southwest wind over the residential section. Quick got support for his plan that the water works be built on the east edge of the city, and railroad tracks were laid, leading from the Cloverleaf to the building, providing coal delivery."

In 1880, Studebaker led a group of local investors to finance the Fort Wayne, Cincinnati, and Louisville's 24.95 miles of track through the county. By 1914 the Exchange Bank had become the Studebaker Bank, and was housed in a new neo-classical structure on Market Street opposite the courthouse. After reorganization in 1929 as the Old First National Bank, it continued to operate at this location until 1965, when a new headquarters was built two blocks west. After he had officially retired, Studebaker continued to do business by receiving visitors in an office adjacent to his house.

By 1920, his nieces had converted the property into a boarding house; during this time they added the front porch. In 1928 the house was purchased by Ralph Jahn, who converted it into a funeral home. The outbuilding was converted into an apartment, which was later occupied by the family of Carl Goodwin, who joined the firm in 1953. In 1974 the Goodwin Funeral Home moved to a new suburban location, and Mr. Jahn sold the house to the Wells County Historical Society, its present owner.