

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received MAY 18 1983
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Sharp, Mathias, House
and/or common Eigenmann-Posey-Wilkinson House

2. Location

street & number 319 South Second N/A not for publication
319 S. 2nd St
city, town Rockport N/A vicinity of
state Indiana code 018 county Spencer code 147

3. 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 type="checkbox"/> commercial |
| <input type="checkbox"/> structure | <input type="checkbox"/> both | <input type="checkbox"/> work in progress | <input type="checkbox"/> educational |
| <input type="checkbox"/> site | Public Acquisition | Accessible | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence |
| <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 |
| | N/A | <input type="checkbox"/> no | <input type="checkbox"/> industrial |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> military |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> museum |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> park |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> religious |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> scientific |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | | <input type="checkbox"/> other: |

4. Owner of Property

name Garrett and Cheryl Wilkinson
street & number 319 S. Second Street
city, town Rockport N/A vicinity of state Indiana 47635

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Spencer County Courthouse
street & number Main Street
city, town Rockport state Indiana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes no
date ___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local
depository for survey records N/A
city, town state

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> good | <input type="checkbox"/> ruins | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered | <input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>N/A</u> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> fair | <input type="checkbox"/> unexposed | | |

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Mathias Sharp House is dramatically sited on a bluff overlooking the Ohio River (see Photo #3). The Italianate residence is said to have been designed by a Cincinnati architect, although his name is not recorded. The house has brick bearing walls throughout, and is generally cross-shaped with the west arm of the cross being one story, and the other three being two stories high. In order to take advantage of its superb site, the main facade of the house faces the bluff to the east (Photo #1); the main entrance, however, faces the street to the west (Photo #2).

The main entrance is located in the one-story portion of the house, and is sheltered by a small, ornate porch. The door itself is surrounded by sidelights and a transom. Single windows flank the entrance; a short window is centered over the porch, just beneath the jerkinhead roof. Flanking this wing are porches, the one on the left, or north, an open porch with detailing like that of the main entrance, and the one on the south having been enclosed some time ago to make a bathroom.

The riverside facade features a two-story central pavilion in advance of the two longer wings. All three sections have jerkinhead gables. The central pavilion features a projecting bay window on the ground floor. Ornate porches fill the intersections of the central pavilion with the rest of the house. The longer wings have two bays each; the central pavilion has one.

Detailing on the house includes, in addition to the porches, simple entablatures over the windows, stone sills, and an ornate cornice with brackets spaced intermittently among recessed panels. Windows are new, and duplicate the original six-over-six or six-over-nine configurations.

Inside the main entrance, a walnut staircase rises to the second floor. The ceiling of the second floor hall is vaulted. Each major room has a fireplace (eight in all) with iron mantels in the main rooms, and wooden in the secondary rooms. One iron mantel was replaced by a golden oak mantel in the living room, following a fire. Between the living room and the parlour, elaborate golden oak fretwork was installed to match the oak mantel. Window and door frames, baseboards, and doors are heavily molded and of poplar.

A new garage also stands on the property.

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/ |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799 | <input type="checkbox"/> art | <input type="checkbox"/> engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> music | <input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899 | <input type="checkbox"/> commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement | <input type="checkbox"/> philosophy | <input type="checkbox"/> theater |
| <input type="checkbox"/> 1900- | <input type="checkbox"/> communications | <input type="checkbox"/> industry | <input type="checkbox"/> politics/government | <input type="checkbox"/> transportation |
| | | <input type="checkbox"/> invention | | <input type="checkbox"/> other (specify) |

| | | | |
|-----------------------|------|--------------------------|---------|
| Specific dates | 1867 | Builder/Architect | Unknown |
|-----------------------|------|--------------------------|---------|

Statement of Significance ~~(XXXXXXXXXXXX)~~

The Mathias Sharp House is a finely proportioned and well-preserved example of the Italianate style. Its prominent siting on a bluff overlooking the Ohio River makes it a well-recognized landmark.

The early history of Spencer County is poorly documented so that Mathias Sharp, builder of the house, remains a somewhat shadowy figure. Originally from New Jersey, Sharp probably emigrated to this area early enough—probably soon after the War of 1812—to secure a large tract of bottom land along the Ohio River. He successfully farmed his holdings, and probably speculated in land, becoming, by 1842, "a prominent citizen of the county."¹ He was wealthy enough to invest in a private academy and to import a painter from Cincinnati, who rendered portraits of him and his wife, Mary, in 1852.

Mary Sharp died on February 9, 1854. Sharp, on December 22, 1855, married Catherine Shumaker, a girl some 44 years his junior. Catherine was the daughter of a nearby farmer, who had helped nurse Mary Sharp during her last illness. Family tradition holds that Sharp built the house for Catherine, although construction did not take place until 1867. Sharp died mysteriously in 1869. Sometime between July and December, 1870, Catherine married Samuel T. Batchelor, who worked in a general merchandise store in Rockport. On April 12, 1871, however, he too died under suspicious circumstances, suggesting poisoning. Catherine was arrested, tried for the crime, and acquitted of the charges. The trial was possibly the most sensational event in southern Indiana during the period.

Needing money for her defense, Catherine turned to John Eigenmann, who paid for the defense but in exchange took possession of the house. Born in 1837 in Germany, Eigenmann settled among Rockport's large German-born population in 1857. He entered the Union Army at the outbreak of the Civil War. After suffering injury and captivity, he returned to Rockport in 1863-64 and resumed his business as a contractor and builder. He also owned Pearl Mills in Rockport, which dealt in grain, flour, and feed. He was one of Rockport's most important and substantial late 19th century citizens. Eigenmann, then his son, occupied the house until 1900. Thereafter, it was rented to various individuals until sold in 1913 to Francis Blackburn Posey. Although he lived there for only two years, Posey's descendants owned the house until it was purchased by the Wilkinsons in 1981.

¹ Weston A. Goodspeed, comp. History of Warrick, Spencer and Perry Counties, Indiana (Chicago, 1885), p. 460.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Please see continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .9 Acres

Quadrangle name Rockport, Ind.-Kentucky

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

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| Zone | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | | |

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| Zone | | Easting | | | | Northing | | | | | | | | |

Verbal boundary description and justification

Please see continuation sheet

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Garrett and Cheryl Wilkinson

organization N/A

date 11-10-74

street & number 319 S. Spencer Street

telephone

city or town Rockport

state Indiana 47635

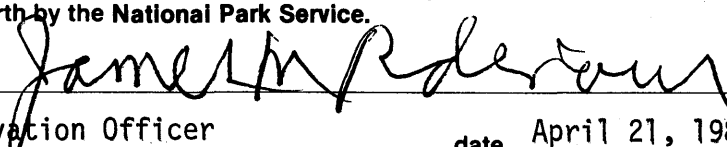
12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

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 April 21, 1983

For NPS use only

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

Entered in the National Register

date 6/16/83

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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

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Continuation sheet Mathias Sharp House

Item number 9

Page 1

Anonymous, "History of the Posey House," (Unpublished, hand-written document, copy in possession of Rockport-Ohio Township Public Library, Rockport, Indiana).

Evansville Daily Journal.

Evansville Weekly Democrat.

United States Census Schedules, Spencer County, Indiana, 1840, 1850, 1860, 1870,
(microfilm).

An Illustrated Historical Atlas of Spencer County, Indiana (Philadelphia, D. J. Lake & Company, 1879).

Biographical Directory of the American Congress, 1774-1971 (Washington U.S. Government Printing Office, 1971).

Goodspeed, Weston A. Comp., History of Warrick, Spencer, and Perry Counties, Indiana (Chicago, Goodspeed Brothers & Company, 1885).

Horrall, S. F. History of the Forty-Second Indiana Volunteer Infantry (Chicago, Donohue and Henneberry, 1892).

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Continuation sheet Mathias Sharp House

Item number 10, Verb. Bdry. Desc. Page 2

A part of Fractional Section 26, Township 7 South, Range 6 West, in the City of Rockport, better described as follows: Beginning on a line dividing two pieces of land sold by William R. Hynes to Amanda Pitcher and Benjamin Romine, on the East side of the road leading from Seminary Street to the lower landing in Romine's Addition to the Town (now City) of Rockport; thence North 85 feet; thence East to a perpendicular bluff of rock; thence South 125 feet; thence West to the East side of the above mentioned road; thence North 40 feet to the place of beginning.