

THEME: LITERATURE, DRAMA, MUSIC

Form 10-300
(Dec. 1968)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

(Type all entries - complete applicable sections)

STATE:	Illinois
COUNTY:	Sangamon
FOR NPS USE ONLY	
ENTRY NUMBER	DATE

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

1. NAME

COMMON: Vachel Lindsay Museum

AND/OR HISTORIC: Vachel Lindsay House

2. LOCATION

STREET AND NUMBER: 603 South Fifth Street (S.W. corner Fifth & Edwards)

CITY OR TOWN: Springfield

STATE: Illinois CODE: COUNTY: Sangamon CODE:

3. CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY (Check One)	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	ACCESSIBLE TO THE PUBLIC
District <input type="checkbox"/> Building <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Public <input type="checkbox"/>	Occupied <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Yes: <input type="checkbox"/>
Site <input type="checkbox"/> Structure <input type="checkbox"/>	Private <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Unoccupied <input type="checkbox"/>	Restricted <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>
Object <input type="checkbox"/>	Both <input type="checkbox"/>	Preservation work in progress <input type="checkbox"/>	Unrestricted <input type="checkbox"/>
PRESENT USE (Check One or More as Appropriate)			
Agricultural <input type="checkbox"/>	Government <input type="checkbox"/>	Park <input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation <input type="checkbox"/> Comments <input type="checkbox"/>
Commercial <input type="checkbox"/>	Industrial <input type="checkbox"/>	Private Residence <input type="checkbox"/>	Other (Specify) <input type="checkbox"/>
Educational <input type="checkbox"/>	Military <input type="checkbox"/>	Religious <input type="checkbox"/>	
Entertainment <input type="checkbox"/>	Museum <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Scientific <input type="checkbox"/>	

4. OWNER OF PROPERTY

OWNERS NAME: Vachel Lindsay House Fund, Inc.

STREET AND NUMBER: c/o 603 South Fifth Street

CITY OR TOWN: Springfield STATE: Illinois CODE:

5. LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.: Office of Deeds

STREET AND NUMBER: Springfield City Hall

CITY OR TOWN: Springfield STATE: Illinois CODE:

6. REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE OF SURVEY:

DATE OF SURVEY: Federal State County Local

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS:

STREET AND NUMBER:

CITY OR TOWN: STATE: CODE:

STATE: Illinois

COUNTY: Sangamon

ENTRY NUMBER

DATE

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7. DESCRIPTION

CONDITION	(Check One)					
	Excellent <input type="checkbox"/>	Good <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Fair <input type="checkbox"/>	Deteriorated <input type="checkbox"/>	Ruins <input type="checkbox"/>	Unexposed <input type="checkbox"/>
INTEGRITY	(Check One)			(Check One)		
	Altered <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>		Unaltered <input type="checkbox"/>		Moved <input type="checkbox"/>	
					Original Site <input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (if known) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Vachel Lindsay House is a two-story, frame structure built in 1848. Vachel Lindsay's father purchased it from Mrs. Mary Jane Caldwell in 1878, and the poet was born there the following year. At some time later in the nineteenth century, the Lindsays substantially remodelled the house. Despite this, its exterior scale and proportion bear a marked similarity to the nearby Abraham Lincoln Home, designed by the same architect-builder.

In plan, the house is basically L-shaped, with a two-story rear wing extending to the west along Edwards Street. The house faces east toward South Fifth Street, and is situated upon a rather high embankment. A single-story porch extends across the three middle bays of the five-bay facade, supporting a low-pitched hip roof, with a dentiled cornice, on four attenuated square wooden posts. The wooden porch floor, painted a dull gray, is largely a replacement of recent years, since the original wood was deteriorated. The concrete steps and sidewalk, bordered by iron guard rails, date from 1961. Green louvered shutters flank the upper windows and the tall, floor-length windows of the first story. A simple, dentiled cornice, broken in the middle by a low, bracketed cornice over the three middle bays, surmounts the upper tier of windows. From each end of the transverse gable roof rises an enclosed chimney.

The centrally-placed doorway, with narrow sidelights and a transom, is framed by a Greek Revival architrave which is undoubtedly original. The golden oak doorway itself, however, dates from the Lindsay period. The cut glass pannel in the doorway, and those in the sidelights and transom, were designed by the poet's mother.

A hallway bisects the front portion of the house and is flanked by parlors on either side. A mid-Victorian, golden oak, straight-run staircase, with heavy square newels, is situated on the north side of the hall. In the north parlor, which for a time served as a bedroom, Vachel Lindsay was born. Subsequently, the chamber was connected with a parlor, and the furnishings found there today date from this period. Several of Lindsay's drawings hang on the wall.

The south parlor, like the north, contains an ornate wooden Victorian mantle. A wide doorway connects it with a back sitting room, which contains two windows on the south and a window and a door on the west (rear) side. The door opens directly into the backyard. Another double doorway leads from this sitting room into the long dining room on the north, which extends across the house directly behind the entrance hall and north parlor. A doorway to the right opens into the front hall, and a large fixed, six-pane window at the north end of the dining room overlooks Edwards Street. On the west side of the window, another exterior door opens onto a small, shed roofed side porch, from which a short side walk and concrete steps with an iron railing descend the embankment to street level.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

8. SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Pre-Columbian 16th Century 18th Century 20th Century
 15th Century 17th Century 19th Century

SPECIFIC DATE(S) (If Applicable and Known)

1879-1931

AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE (Check One or More as Appropriate)

Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/>	Education	<input type="checkbox"/>	Political	<input type="checkbox"/>	Urban Planning	<input type="checkbox"/>
Prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/>	Engineering	<input type="checkbox"/>	Religion/Phi-		Other (Specify)	<input type="checkbox"/>
Historic	<input type="checkbox"/>	Industry	<input type="checkbox"/>	losophy	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	
Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/>	Invention	<input type="checkbox"/>	Science	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	
Art	<input type="checkbox"/>	Landscape		Sculpture	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	
Commerce	<input type="checkbox"/>	Architecture	<input type="checkbox"/>	Social/Human-		_____	
Communications	<input type="checkbox"/>	Literature	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	itarian	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	
Conservation	<input type="checkbox"/>	Military	<input type="checkbox"/>	Theater	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	
		Music	<input type="checkbox"/>	Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	_____	

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE (Include Personages, Dates, Events, Etc.)

When his work became known in the second decade of the twentieth century, Vachel Lindsay became one of the major figures of America's poetic renaissance. Using evangelical rhythms to express his dream-like conceptions, he created a style which was at once popular and unique. Lindsay was deeply influenced by his Mid-western origins, but there is "a strangeness in his poetry that lifts it above provincialism."¹ The ecstatic visions of his best work have an enduring appeal, and such poems as "Bryan, Bryan, Bryan" and "Santa Fe' Trail" have become a permanent part of our national literature.

Throughout his life, Lindsay was devoted to Springfield, which he was able to conceive as a "mystic city." The poet was born in the house at 603 South Fifth Street, and lived there until his departure for college in 1897. He returned there in 1908, and it remained his home, between frequent wanderings, until his mother's death in 1922. Lindsay then lost occupancy, and did not return until 1929. He died in the house in 1931.² The house is virtually unchanged since that time, and contains many of the poet's drawings, writings, and possessions.

1
Granville Hicks, quoted in Nyren, p. 293.

2
For Lindsay's associations with the house, see Masters, particularly pp. 335, 340, and 344.

SEE INSTRUCTIONS

9. MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Masters, Edgar Lee, Vachel Lindsay, A Poet in America, N.Y.: Charles Scribners Sons, 1935

Malone, Dumas, ed., Dictionary of American Biography, N.Y.: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1933, Volume XI, pp. 276-277.

Nyren, Dorothy, ed., A Library of Literary Criticism, N.Y.: Frederick Ungar Co., 1960.

Spiller, Robert E., et. al., Literary History of the United States, N.Y.: The Macmillan Company, 1960.

10. GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING A RECTANGLE LOCATING THE PROPERTY			O R	LATITUDE AND LONGITUDE COORDINATES DEFINING THE CENTER POINT OF A PROPERTY OF LESS THAN ONE ACRE		
CORNER	LATITUDE	LONGITUDE		LATITUDE	LONGITUDE	
	Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds		Degrees Minutes Seconds	Degrees Minutes Seconds	
NW	° ' "	° ' "		39° 47' 45"	89° 38' 59"	
NE	° ' "	° ' "				
SE	° ' "	° ' "				
SW	° ' "	° ' "				

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

STATE:	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11. FORM PREPARED BY

NAME AND TITLE:
Robert S. Gamble and Edmund Preston, Historians

ORGANIZATION: National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings DATE: 7/20/71

STREET AND NUMBER:
801 - 19th Street N.W.

CITY OR TOWN: Washington STATE: D.C. CODE: _____

12. STATE LIAISON OFFICER CERTIFICATION NATIONAL REGISTER VERIFICATION

<p>As the designated State Liaison 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. The recommended level of significance of this nomination is:</p> <p>National <input type="checkbox"/> State <input type="checkbox"/> Local <input type="checkbox"/></p> <p>Name _____</p> <p>Title _____</p> <p>Date _____</p>	<p>I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.</p> <p>_____ <i>Chief, Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation</i></p> <p>Date _____</p> <p>ATTEST:</p> <p>_____ <i>Keeper of The National Register</i></p> <p>Date _____</p>
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(Number all entries)

7. Description (1)

Vachel Lindsay Museum
(Vachel Lindsay House)

The dining table displays, under a large glass plate, several of Lindsay's picture poems. Display cases along the walls contain additional examples of Lindsay's work.

Behind the dining room, to the west, a corridor connects the kitchen, and a back stairway located in the ell, with the main portion of the house. Across the rear of the ell is a back porch screened from Edwards Street by a wooden lattice.

The front (east) part of the second floor contains the central stairhall with two bedrooms to either side. A bath installed at the front (east) end of the hall in the 1960's constitutes the only interior structural change since the Lindsay period. The southwest bedroom is pointed out as the one to which Lindsay constantly returned between his peregrinations, and contains the bed in which he was born, a desk which he himself made, a table at which he wrote many of his poems, as well as several items of Lindsay memorabilia.

From the rear of the stair hall, a narrow back passage extends into the ell, containing a small servant's room, a store room, and the secondary stairway. The store room at the end of the passage bears on its walls pencilled notes written by Lindsay's mother to the housekeeper between 1899 and 1906.

The interior of the house appears to have been gutted by Lindsay's parents during the late nineteenth century. Consequently, all of the golden oak interior woodwork dates from this period. Many of the original Lindsay furnishings and memorabilia remain, either given or loaned by the heirs. These have been supplemented by the Lindsay collections of Miss Susan Wilcox, the poet's lifelong teacher and friend, and of Miss Elizabeth Graham.

Except for exterior painting and a mural in the basement dating from 1963 and executed by a local youth to visually express Lindsay's poem, "The Congo", the residence appears unchanged.

In 1958, the house was purchased from the Lindsay heirs by the Vachel Lindsay House Fund, Inc., who lease it to the Vachel Lindsay Association. Since 1960, it has been open to the public as a house museum.

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8 Significance (1)

Vachel Lindsay Museum
(Vachel Lindsay House)

Nicholas Vachel Lindsay was born in 1879 in Springfield, Illinois. He graduated from high school there in 1897, and then attended Hiram College for three years. Lindsay had intended to enter the ministry, but instead decided to study art. Despite his lack of funds, he pursued this plan in Chicago and later New York. In 1906, he made a walking tour of the South, distributing a poem, "The Tree of Laughing Bells", in exchange for food and lodging. He returned to New York and then, in 1908, to Illinois, where he became a campaigner for the Anti-Saloon League. In 1913, Lindsay published his first volume of poetry, General William Booth Enters into Heaven... He did not become widely known, however, until The Congo... appeared the following year. This volume, and especially its title poem, achieved tremendous popularity. Using an emphatic rhythm and colloquial vocabulary, Lindsay was able to create strikingly original verse which captivated both sophisticated and non-literary readers. The poet made frequent lecture tours, during which he chanted his poems in a distinctive and memorable style.

Of the major figures who participated in the American poetic awakening of the early twentieth century, Lindsay was the first to achieve fame. His powers soon declined, however, and his later verse did not project the hypnotic visions of his finest works. In 1923, Lindsay went to Gulf Park College in Mississippi as a resident poet. The following year he moved to Spokane, Washington, where he married Elizabeth Conner in 1925. Despite his failing health, the poet continued to rely on the strenuous lecture tours for most of his livelihood. In 1929, he returned to his old home in Springfield, and died there in 1931.