

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received 6/11/84
date entered JUL 12 1984

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

1. Name

historic James Norman Hall House

and or common

2. Location

street & number 416 E. Howard St, not for publication

city, town Colfax vicinity of

state IA code 019 county Jasper code 099

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 type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name John W. and Nancy A. McKinstry

street & number 81 High Street

city, town Colfax vicinity of state IA 50054

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Jasper County Clerk's Office

street & number Jasper County Courthouse

city, town Newton state IA

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title CIRALG HISTORIC SITES SURVEY has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1978 federal state county local

depository for survey records Iowa SHPO

city, town Des Moines state IA

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 _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The James Normal Hall House (c. 1879-82) was the home of that noted Iowa author in his early productive life. While Hall, like many midwestern authors, was to spend much of his creative life outside of the state, and his case even outside the country. Hall's first book was written in this house. The house figured prominently in Hall's writings, especially in his 1946 work Oh Millersburg! Hall is best known as a co-author of the novel Mutiny On The Bounty.

The Hall house is an ell plan (40' x 37') two story frame house with limestone foundation and originally a clapboard exterior. The house is sited with its long side to the south, and a single story wrap around porch encircles the west, south and half of the southeast sides. A south facing gabled wing extends what would otherwise be a "T" gable roof plan on a rectangular base to constitute the ell.

The house is prominently sited on an elevated large lot (115' x 164') on Howard Street just east of Colfax's small business district. It is surrounded by homes of similar age and style. The site is called "standpipe hill" due to the location to the north of the city water tower.

Fenestration on the front and rear gable sides was and remains symmetrical with two (6/6 double hung sash) windows per floor. Undated alterations to the window pattern on the west and south sides resulted in the addition of 2, 3 and four window groupings above and below the porch roof.

The original first floor consisted of four rooms, with a placement of kitchen and dining room on the west end. A brick flue serviced the kitchen (flue extant). A sitting room and parlor occupied the east end. About 1890 a single story gabled bedroom and a north rear pantry and open porch (off of the kitchen) additions were built. In the 1950's the house was divided into two living areas and the north porch was enclosed as a bath. The current owner plans to return the interior plan to that of a single family residence. On the second floor a southwest corner sleeping porch, two large and three smaller bedrooms were originally found. A rear chimney, suspended halfway up the second story wall was centered on the east side of the house (no longer extant). The sleeping porch was built in and constitutes another large bedroom. Interior woodwork, floor surfaces, and a pass-through service cupboard between kitchen and dining room remain. French doors shut off the side addition.

Alterations include the removal of the east internal flue, the addition c. 1949 of exterior asphalt composition "random ashlar" siding below the gable lines, the window alterations, the substitution of ashlar limestone foundation stones beneath the porch with cinder block, the loss of the original porch bannister, and the addition of several square-cut porch posts. The gable ends retain their clapboard exteriors and their plain wooden friezes.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600–1699	<input 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 type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" 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 1887–1915 **Builder/Architect** unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The James Norman Hall House (c. 1879–82) was the home of that noted Iowa author during his early productive years. Hall was to write his first book in this house. While Hall, like many midwestern authors, was to spend much of his creative life outside the state, and in Hall's case even outside of the country, this house was to figure prominently in his published works, most notably in his 1946 work Oh Millersburg! Hall is best known as co-author of the novel Mutiny On The Bounty.

In a recent issue of The Palimpsest, Historian Raymond A. Smith, Jr. says that although James Norman Hall preferred to live in the south seas during his later years he was still "a perceptive, sensitive, and very passionate Iowan." James Norman Hall lived in the family home in Colfax until after his graduation from high school in 1904 when, in 1906, he left Colfax to attend Grinnell College. During the summers, Hall returned to Colfax from college. In 1908, Hall went to Boston to be "on his own" for the first time. Leaving his job as a social worker in Boston, Hall went to England to pursue a literary career; he ended up enlisting in Lord Kitchener's volunteer army and fighting against the Germans in the trenches of the Great War. Discharged by a fluke in 1915, Hall returned to Colfax to live at home during the winter of 1915–16 writing his first book, Kitchener's Mob. This book established Hall as a professional writer and gave him the contacts and recognition needed to pursue a career as a writer.

James Norman Hall called himself a "past-minded" man, saying of himself:

"I am one of those men who think "yesterday" a beautiful word; who love change only in its aspect of slow, imperceptible decay. To me, the present is but raw material for the making of the past, and I measure experience largely in terms of its value as stuff for memories."

The fact that his time in Colfax and the old family home continued to be important to him is illustrated by the publication in 1946 of a tongue-in-cheek commentary on life in a small town (Colfax) called Oh, Millersville! The book was reprinted by the Midwest Heritage Publishing Company of Iowa City, Iowa in 1981. The poem inscribed on Hall's tombstone is the same one he inscribed on the woodshed at his home on Howard Street in Colfax. It became a kind of theme for both his wanderings and his continued attachment to the home of his youth;

Look to the Northward, stranger
Just over the hillside, there
Have you in your travels seen
A land more passing fair?

After re-enlisting in the armed services and becoming a decorated hero of the United States Flying Service (having downed five German planes), Hall returned once again to Colfax.

Hall did not like the accelerated pace of American life following the Great War and it was his attachment to his memories of a slower time that made the south sea islands so attractive to him as a place to live. Ironically, it was his attachment to the home of his youth that lead him to seek the similar pace and mood of the south seas as his residence for his later years.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Refer to Continuation Sheet 9-2

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Colfax

Quadrangle scale 1/24,000

UTM References

A

1	5	4	8	0	1	4	0	4	6	1	3	9	0	0
Zone			Easting				Northing							

B

Zone			Easting				Northing							

C

Zone			Easting				Northing							

D

Zone			Easting				Northing							

E

Zone			Easting				Northing							

F

Zone			Easting				Northing							

G

Zone			Easting				Northing							

H

Zone			Easting				Northing							

Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot 17 in G. B. Wood's Addition to the Town of Colfax, being 164½' North and South and 115½' East and West.

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 Historical significance statement, John McKinstry
Architecture and form by James E. Jacobsen, National Register Coordinator

organization Iowa SHPO date 23 May 1984

street & number Historical Building
E. 12th and Grand Ave. telephone 515-281-4137

city or town Des Moines state Iowa 50319

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 Adrian A. Anderson

title Executive Director Iowa State Historical Department date May 29, 1984

For NPS use only

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

for Belorus Byers Entered in the National Register date 7/12/84
Keeper of the National Register

Attest: _____ date _____

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

date entered

Continuation sheet Significance

Item number 8

Page 2

Hall's autobiography begins and ends in Colfax. As a fitting end for his book about himself, Hall chose a poem he had written about a squeaky door in the Hall house and the memories it stirred up in him:

It shrieked "Sweet dreams!" when they went to bed
(the Hall's should know what their hall door said)
It moaned "Oh, ow!" when they went away;
"Gee Weetchy!" it cried on the happy day
when one of them came from far or near...

Being a man for whom the past held such meaning, Hall was concerned about how the rapid pace of travel and the emerging society of mass consumption was reducing the character of each little place and blending them all into one amorphous whole. Writing about the loss of the "spirits of place" in America, James Norman Hall revealed his hope that someday Americans would awaken to their loss and, before it was too late, make an effort to preserve the old places and the "spirits" who live there:

I look longingly and somewhat hopefully to the day when, matters of trade and finance having been satisfactorily adjusted, public attention may be turned to the welfare of our spirits of place. Should they be destroyed during the next generation as rapidly as they were in that just past, we shall have none left. A land without them, however rich it may be in cities, towns, factories, filling stations and power stations, is no more than a waste and a desolation.

James Norman Hall the famous author and war hero was also James Norman Hall, the preservationist.

Footnotes:

1. Smith, Raymond A., Jr., James Norman Hall's My Island Home, an Overdue Review, The Palimpsest, Vol. 64, no. 5, Iowa City, Iowa State Historical Society, 1983, p. 184.
2. Hall, James Norman, My Island Home, Boston, Little, Brown and Company, 1952, p. 55.
3. Ibid., p. 342.
4. Hall, James Norman, "The Still Small Voice", Atlantic Magazine, Boston, Atlantic Press, vol. 146, no. 6, December 1930, p. 714.
5. Hall, James Norman, Oh Millersville!, Boston, Atlantic Monthly Press, 1946, p. 111.
6. Op. Cit., Hall, Island Home, p. 360.
7. Ibid., p. 236.
8. Ibid., p. 343.
9. Hall, James Norman, "The Spirit of Place", Atlantic Magazine, Boston, Atlantic Press, vol. 152, no. 4, October, 1933, p. 483.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Bibliography

Item number 9

Page 2

Bibliography

Hall, James Norman. My Island Home. Boston; Little, Brown and Company, 1952.

Smith, Raymond A., Jr. "James Norman Hall's My Island Home, an Overdue Review,"
The Palimpsest, Vol. 64, No. 5, Iowa City; Iowa State Historical Society,
1983.

Hall, James Norman. Oh, Millersville. Boston; Atlantic Monthly Press, 1946.

Hall, James Norman. "The Spirit of Place," Atlantic Magazine. Vol. 152, No. 4,
1933, Boston; Atlantic Press.