

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

RECEIVED

MAY 18 2000

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
& EDUCATION

Sub
Rev.
678

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 68). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Porter Town Hall
other names/site number 127-108-06022

2. Location

street & number 303 Franklin Street N/A not for publication
city or town Porter N/A vicinity
state Indiana code IN county Porter code 127 zip code 46750

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 36CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 5/4/00
Signature of certifying official/Title Date
Indiana Department of Natural Resources
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper Patrick Andrews Date of Action 6/28/00

Porter Town Hall

Porter IN

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property (Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

- private, public-local, public-State, public-Federal

- building, district, site, structure, object

Table with 2 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing and 4 rows: buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT: City Hall

GOVERNMENT: City Hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

19th & 20th c. AMER.: Craftsman

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK

roof ASPHALT

other STONE

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F** a commemorative property.
- G** less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE _____
 POLITICS/GOVERNMENT _____

Period of Significance

1913-1950 _____

Significant Dates

1913 _____

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A _____

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Furst, Charles J. _____
 Weber, Alfred P. _____

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository: _____

Porter Town Hall _____
Name of Property

Porter _____ IN _____
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

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

3

Zone	Easting						Northing							

2

Zone	Easting						Northing							

4

Zone	Easting						Northing							

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Pat Volkman, Jennifer Granat, Adrian Scott Fine

organization Friends of Porter, Inc. date 10/18/99

street & number P. O. Box 2042 telephone 219-926-5402

city or town Chesterton state IN zip code 46304

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white** photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Town of Porter

street & number 303 Franklin Street telephone 219-826-2771

city or town Porter state IN zip code 46750

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Porter Town Hall, Porter County, Indiana

Section number 7 Page 1

Narrative Description

The Porter Town Hall is the premier historic landmark within the town of Porter, located at the corner of Franklin and Francis streets on a half-acre site within downtown Porter (photos 1, 2). The site is flat and originally featured a green area surrounding the Town Hall on all sides. When constructed in 1913 for an estimated cost of \$12,000, the Town Hall was touted as "...the finest municipal building in Porter County, and one of the 'handsomest' in the state of Indiana..." (*The Chesterton Tribune*, December 18, 1913). The Town Hall was designed to serve the community for years. Reportedly, Chicago architects Furst and Weber identified methods for adding onto the building at a future date to accommodate anticipated community growth. The carved limestone name plate above the main entrance, stating "City Hall," also suggests a prediction for the future growth; today the community is still classified as a "town" rather than a "city." A "one-stop" local government center, the Town Hall was designed in the Craftsman architectural style. Some primary features of the Town Hall's exterior include the decorative brick pattern work, exposed rafter ends, eyebrow windows, and belfry. The dark red brick masonry was produced locally by the Chicago Hydraulic Plan in Porter; the company remained in business until 1925 after local clay deposits ran low. Notable interior features include Arts and Crafts style oak woodwork, tin ceilings, decorative staircase balustrade and carved newel posts. The basic form of the original Town Hall section is square (46' by 46') with a large hipped-style roof. Located atop the roof at a small flat platform is a belfry structure, more representative of the Italianate architectural style. A small pyramid-shaped roof tops this structure.

North (Front) Facade

The front or north façade of the Porter Town Hall is symmetrical and divided into three bays with a central, recessed entrance. The building is elevated slightly (approximately 4 steps) by a raised concrete block (rusticated) foundation and limestone water table. Two concrete knee walls flank each side of the front steps. At the entrance are double glazed doors; each with a recessed lower panel (photo 3). Two light fixtures flank each side of the entrance, although originals no longer remain. Providing an unusual sense of scale, windows at the first story are smaller than those at the second story (photo 4). This arrangement partly denotes the original interior uses (jail). At the first story, two windows flank each side of the entrance and are located high off the ground. Windows are two-over-one double-hung sashes. Each window shares a common limestone sill and is separated slightly by a brick divider. At the second story, windows are considerably larger and, although double-hung sashes, feature a three-over-one vertical muntin pattern. Two units are grouped at the center above the entrance and feature a shared sill and brick divider. Single units are located toward each side.

A dominant feature of this façade and the overall building is the massive roof structure (photo 5). This is emphasized by wide overhangs and exposed rafter ends. The hipped roof features asphalt shingles. Original roof specifications called for "sea-green, non-fadable" slate shingles. It is unknown if these were removed or simply covered over. At the center of the roof is a decorative eyebrow window with glazing divided into four sections. At the roof's peak and flat platform is a belfry structure (photo 6). A decorative wrought-iron railing encloses the platform (photo 7). The belfry is square, made of sheet metal, and features colonnaded arches (photo 8). Raised, triangular-shaped panels flank each arch opening. The belfry's roof is a pyramid-shaped and also features exposed rafter ends. As the belfry departs from the Craftsman architectural style, it apparently was a functional design element. Originally located at the center of the belfry was a 1,000-pound bell used for fire alarm purposes and a signal for the opening of Town Hall meetings. Reportedly, the bell could be heard as far away as South Chesterton. It was operated from the engine room. At a later, undetermined date, the bell was replaced with an emergency response horn that still remains (photo 9). A metal

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Porter Town Hall, Porter County, Indiana

Section number 7 Page 2

weathervane was also originally attached at the peak of the belfry. In a circa 1940s photo showing storm damage, the weathervane is missing from the Town Hall.

Additional details on the front façade are the "City Hall" limestone name plate located above the entrance and a limestone cornerstone which lists the town council members and date of construction: "R. Huff, E.F. Brody, F. E. Peterson, E. N. Yost, A.D. 1913" (photo 10). As a Craftsman style building, ornamental details are minimal. In between the first and second stories are two parallel, brick stringcourses that wrap around all sides of the Town Hall. The upper course outlines door and window openings. An additional brick corbelling detail is located in between each window bay on the second story of the front façade. Raised bricks outline two rectangular panels and are "stepped" at the top and bottom. A square-shaped brick motif is located at the panel's center (photo 11). The neon "POLICE" sign above the front entrance is one additional element on this façade and likely dates to the 1940s; with the "P" and "O" now missing, the inoperable sign now reads "LICE."

West Facade

The side or west façade of the Town Hall has always been more of a service entrance for municipal operations, including police and fire departments (photo 12). Like the front façade, windows at the second story are larger than those on the first story and all feature limestone sills. Unlike the front facade, the arrangement of windows and doors are not symmetrical. The first story is now divided into four separate bays. From left to right, this includes a single door entrance with boarded-over transom; boarded-over window opening; blind, bricked window opening; and garage door. Originally the first story was divided into five bays and included, from left to right: single door entrance with transom; two-over-one double-hung sash window; blind, bricked window opening; carriage style garage door opening; and two-over-one double-hung sash window. The bricked, blind window is original to when the building was constructed. The remaining window openings, now boarded over, may still have the original windows located underneath (photo 13). Originally the transom and window to the right of it had iron bars as a portion of this interior space contained jail cells. The original door was a batten design with three oversized braces; a metal goose neck light was located directly above. The conversion and enlargement of the garage space is the most obvious alteration. The original door was divided into three horizontal and vertical bays with each upper window divided into two lights. At the center of the garage door was a single door opening. By 1947, the original garage door had been replaced. As a new, wider door was installed, the small two-over-one, double-hung sash window to the right was also removed along with some brick masonry (photo 14). As the new garage door had a lower height, brick masonry was infilled at the top of the door opening. The second story of the west façade is divided into six window bays. Two bays are blind, bricked window openings that are original to the building's construction. Going left to right, two blind bays flank a single three-over-one double-hung sash window. The remaining three bays are identical windows and denote the interior assembly room. Located in between the first and second stories, and centered underneath each upper-story window bay, are six raised-brick cross motifs. Two additional features of this façade include a centered, decorative eyebrow window with glazing divided into four sections and two round downspouts along each end. In 1964, a one-story addition was added to the rear (south) and east sides of the Town Hall. The portion of this addition facing west includes an additional garage bay with slightly larger garage door opening.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Porter Town Hall, Porter County, Indiana

Section number 7 Page 3

South Façade

The rear of south façade has always been the least decorative façade of the Town Hall (photo 15). Originally it was divided into four equal window bays in a symmetrical arrangement. The first story had small two-over-one, double-hung sash windows with large three-over-one double-hung sash windows at the second story. A chimney stack was located at the center and pierced the roof with a continuous overhanging eave. In 1948, a tornado swept through Porter, demolishing the chimney stack and weathervane of the Town Hall, as well as damaging 140 houses in town. The Town rebuilt part of the chimney stack to its original appearance shortly thereafter. When the building was added onto in 1964, the lower story of the Town Hall became obscured. The one-story, red brick addition that has a flat roof with short parapet and limestone capping. The original one-story façade remains intact, although painted white, on the interior. The addition is divided into six bays, including two single doors on the ends and four windows equally spaced in between. Windows are industrial-style, metal casements with fixed, center sections. Each window is divided into nine lights and includes limestone sills. The rear façade is the only façade that does not feature a decorative eyebrow window, partly because it would be blocked by the chimney stack.

East Façade

The east façade is dominated by the one-story addition that wraps around from the rear (photo 16). The design of the first story of the original façade is unknown. The structure remains on the interior, although it is unknown if materials and details are intact underneath fired-out interior walls. The second story is divided into four bays. Going left to right, three large windows are grouped together, denoting the interior assembly room. The remainder of the wall is blank with the exception of a small two-over-one double-hung sash window. This window denotes the interior staircase to the Town Hall's attic. This façade also features an identical decorative eyebrow window. At the center of the addition is a continuous, limestone band wrapping around the window openings, somewhat characteristic of the International style. Within the band are seven openings. Five openings have glass block with central, operable hopper sashes. Another opening has an oversized vent. The last opening is a later alteration involving the installation of a single door. A short chimney stack is visible above the parapet roof at the southeast corner. The front of the addition faces north and now is the primary entrance for the portion of the Town Hall still in use. The façade is divided into two sections, with a large plate glass window (divided into two sections) and a recessed entrance. The entrance door is aluminum with a modern sidelight and transom.

Interior

The interior of the Porter Town Hall is organized around a central staircase located in the front half of the original portion of the building. The Craftsman and Arts and Crafts styles are used throughout. A detailed description of many of the interior appointments were included in a December 18, 1913 article published in the *Chesterton Tribune*. Original materials include terrazzo and hardwood flooring, plaster walls, tin ceilings, and oak woodwork. Structurally, floors on the first floor are cement and wood on the second floor.

Upon entering through the front double doors is a small lobby space. Flooring is terrazzo. Facing south, doors are to the left and right, leading respectfully to an office and the original jail area. The open staircase is the primary focal point of the lobby. The staircase arrangement is "dog-legged" with a half-landing. Underneath the staircase are a couple of steps down, leading to the back half of the first floor. To the left of the lobby is an office space (16' by 11' 2"). This space housed the original Porter public library. The library remained in this location until 1964, when the building was expanded with a new addition. After its use as a library, it became the office of the town marshal. It is carpeted and has a dropped, acoustical tile ceiling (plaster still intact) and

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Porter Town Hall, Porter County, Indiana

Section number 7 Page 4

there are no decorative features. The former jail area is located on grade and accessed by several concrete steps. Originally in this space there was a cell room with two cages with room for a third. Each cell had a toilet and there was a separate room for the marshal's office. The cells and plumbing fixtures no longer remain. The back half of the first floor originally housed the building's mechanical systems and garage space for the town's fire engine. When installed, the Kewanee boiler system was described as "the last word in heating" (*The Chesterton Tribune*, December 18, 1913). A large fireproof vault is also located in this area. The ceiling of the garage area still retains the ornamental tin panels.

The highly-decorative, Arts and Crafts-style staircase and balustrade leads to the second floor (photo 17). A series of newel posts are incorporated into the design; most are independent however two are engaged. Each newel post is square with a simple base and bordered shaft. At the top of the shaft, on two and three sides (depending on the newel location) is a carved cross motif or pattern, similar to the raised brick design on the exterior. In two sections, the motif features four squares arranged within a larger square and linked, by a tail, to another square arranged within another larger square. At the top of the newel post are dome-shaped finials, pierced by a central pendant. The balusters are square and, with alternating and uneven lengths, form a square pattern at the top of the balustrade (see photocopy attachments). The U-shaped second floor landing and hall has hardwood floors and wide corridors. When first constructed, this area of the Town Hall was described as, "...large and capable of handling large crowds" (*The Chesterton Tribune*). The space has oak woodwork characteristic of the Arts and Crafts, including wide base molding and base shoe, door and window surrounds with cornice entablature, and skeleton wainscot with midpoint railing. The south wall of the hall has two, wide vertical panel strips. Crown molding may be present but currently is concealed by a dropped, acoustical tile ceiling. Six separate doorways are accessed from the hall. Two-panel doors feature solid panels and one door has an upper light. The upper panel is square while the lower panel is rectangular (photo 18). All doors have original hardware and brass escutcheon plates. At the north end, flanking each side, are separate bathrooms for men and women. Each bathroom is small with approximately 54 square feet. No decorative elements or important fixtures are apparent. Another doorway along the east side leads to a winder staircase and attic. A small two-over-one, double-hung window provides natural light for the staircase. A single door with upper, opaque light originally accessed the clerk-treasurer's office. This room features woodwork similar to the hall. At the ends of the U-shaped hall are two, double-door entrances to the assembly room. Each entrance has an upper transom divided centrally into two lights (photo 19).

The assembly room is the largest space in the building with a total of 1,056 square feet (24' by 44'). The room has hardwood floors and large window openings on three sides (total of ten windows). This space has similar base molding and skeleton wainscot with midpoint railing (photo 20, 21). The plaster ceiling is concealed by a dropped, acoustical tile ceiling. The room was designed to be divided into two equal spaces if needed. A 1,600 pound rolling partition can create two, 528 square foot rooms (24' by 22)'. The partition is contained within an oak trimmed box with central beam including the upper track. At each end of the north wall of the assembly room are two single doors. The northwest door with glazed upper panel provides a secondary point of access to the original clerk-treasurer's office space. The northeast door leads to a small room where another fireproof vault is held. The assembly room is now used for storage and as a fitness room for the local police officers. The attic space is floored and has been used for the storage of records. Natural light is provided by the three eyebrow roof dormers. Access to the belfry is also through this space, via a fixed wood ladder leading to a square opening in the belfry's floor.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Porter Town Hall, Porter County, Indiana

Section number 7 Page 5

The 1964 L-shaped addition is non-historic and contains no significant features. To the south of the main building at the rear is additional garage space with a concrete floor. The original exterior wall (since painted white) and window openings are visible from this location. The eastern section of the addition originally housed the Porter public library and later the police. This includes a series of small rooms with partition walls. The space has a dropped ceiling with acoustical tile. Where this addition abuts the east wall of the original building is a single door opening, accessed by several steps up.

The Porter Town Hall has endured some changes and lack of maintenance over the years but still retains a high level of integrity to portray its architectural significance. It remains the center of the community and position as premier historic landmark of Porter, Indiana.

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service****National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet****Porter Town Hall, Porter County, Indiana**Section number 8 Page 6 **Statement of Signific**

The Porter Town Hall, located at 303 Franklin Street in downtown Porter, Indiana, is a significant example of an early 20th century government, "one-stop" facility. The building was designed to house all public functions, including police, fire, clerk-treasurer, town council, and public library. Until 1964, the public library was housed in one room of the building (later expanded into the addition). It is important to the citizens of Porter as the seat of local government since 1913. The architectural design is significant as well, using the Craftsman architectural style. Designed by architects Furst and Weber using local materials, and built by area craftsmen, the Town Hall represents the need in the early 1910s for a premier town hall in Porter.

The Porter Town Hall is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. Many of Porter's most distinguished early residents and entrepreneurs supported and encouraged the building of the Town Hall. Since it was constructed in 1913, the Town Hall has remained an anchor and most prominent building of downtown Porter. Today, it represents a building type that has increasingly become threatened with demolition. The Town Hall is one of a few multi-purpose municipal buildings remaining that was built during the early 1900s. The town forefathers' optimism for the growth of Porter is indicated by the words "City Hall" inscribed on the limestone name plate above the front door of the building. This feeling was attested to by local newspaper editor Arthur Bowser, who founded the local paper, *The Chesterton Tribune*, one of the most prominent weeklies in Indiana during the forty years he was editor. He visualized Porter, as did many others, as the future city of Westchester Township. The building was designed by architects Chas. J. Furst and Alfred P. Weber of the Chicago firm of Furst and Weber. Unfortunately very little information is known or has been uncovered about the architects. In the 1991 *Porter County Historic Sites and Structures Inventory*, the Town Hall was rated as a Notable resource (127-108-06022). On June 29, 1998, the Porter Town Hall was determined eligible and listed in the Indiana Register of Historic Places.

Historical Background and Significance

The significance of the establishment of a permanent location for the government of Porter is best understood within the context and development of the community. Porter is situated on the shores of Lake Michigan 50 miles east of Chicago, Illinois and 50 miles west of South Bend, Indiana. With the arrival of the railroad in 1851 a community gradually developed at a spot where goods were first delivered by rail. The Michigan Central Railroad named the station "Porter" for its location within Porter County. In 1853 the station was moved to Hageman, a settlement less than a half mile away. Things became a little confusing as traffic and travel increased; people know they were to debark in Porter and when they did, instead found themselves in Hageman. The towns' fathers agreed to change the town name to Porter in 1858, but continued as an unincorporated area. In 1871 John Gondring introduced commercial brickmaking to Porter and by 1884, there were eight brickyards in operation. Brick from Porter was used throughout the Midwest and is credited as being one of the main sources for brick that was used to rebuild Chicago after the 1871 fire. However, by the early 1900s, only the Chicago Hydraulic Pressed Brick Factory was operating in Porter. At around this same time, on September 23, 1907, the Porter Riverside Land Company purchased a considerable tract of land from the Chicago Hydraulic Pressed Brick Factory on the edge of town, and turned the old clay banks into well-graded streets. The streets were gradually macadamized and concrete walks were built.

On March 31, 1908, the town of Porter was officially incorporated. The first trustees were John P. Carlson, Frank E. Peterson, Ezra J. Brody, and clerk treasurer Frank A. Dabbert. At this time, Porter's population was estimated to be between 500 and 600 people. Lacking adequate facilities, the Town approved the purchase of land for the eventual construction of a new town hall on August 29, 1910. Three lots (16, 17 & 18, blk. 3) were included

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Porter Town Hall, Porter County, Indiana

Section number 8 Page 7

as part of the purchase agreement; the lots faced the railroad tracks on Lincoln Street, Porter's main street. As the community began to grow and prosper, the Town secured two franchise agreements for electrical lights (1910) and water (1912). Planning for a new town hall began during this time, especially following the closing of Seivert's Hall late in 1912; at the time, this was the only place large enough for public gatherings.

In February 1913, it was decided to reconsider the location of the future town hall. The Town of Porter requested a release from two of the three lots (16 & 17 blk. 3), which were purchased in exchange for a more desirable location to just a few feet from the original site (lots 13 & 14 blk. 3). The deal was officially accepted and the trade of land was granted. Aggressive yet thoughtful planning was then diligently pursued by the new trustees Frank E. Peterson, Ezra J. Brody, Roscoe Huff, and clerk treasurer Edgar N. Yost for the construction of the town hall. The new site would now face away from the railroad tracks on Franklin Street and look forward to the north for further growth of the town. The architectural firm of Furst and Weber of Chicago, Illinois were consulted after the trustees made a number of visits to surrounding towns to inspect public buildings. After several months of investigation, the board deemed it best to construct a building that would be adequate for the town's needs for a long time. On March 17, 1913, the trustees, through correspondence, authorized architects Furst and Weber "to proceed with plans for the proposed town hall." On April 1, 1913, Mr. Alfred P. Weber acknowledged receipt of the letter to proceed and wrote back that they were "now preparing plans for the town hall," and a meeting was scheduled to discuss "several points of inquires" that needed to be finalized. It was decided that various departments of the Town's organizations would be safely housed in the building. Other considerations for the new building included a desire for the latest modern conveniences; a large assembly hall, suitable for public gatherings; and an overall building design that could accommodate future growth and expansion. In correspondence from the period, the architects were apparently compelled to change their preliminary sketches many times. Reportedly, the architects designed the building for later growth and expansions so that additions could easily be attached.

Proceeding at a rapid pace, bids for the general contractor were received by May 31, 1913. All bids were to be opened on June 12, 1913 by the Board of Trustees, but the meeting was cancelled to allow additional local contractors to bid. It was rescheduled for June 17, 1913 at which time it was announced that three bids were received from Alfred J. Hess of Gary for \$11,200; Ingwald Moe of Gary (then-owner of recently discovered (1997) Frank Lloyd Wright-designed house in Gary) for \$10,500; and Joseph Ameling of Chesterton for \$9,990. The general contract was awarded to Joseph Ameling that evening and within 48 hours ground was broken. Other names on the contractor's bond were August Harbrecht and Theo. Schimier. Charles Nickel of Chesterton did the plumbing work and steam fitting; Ed Isby of Chesterton did plastering; the Carlson Brothers of Porter were the masons and also did the cement work; Nels Miller of Porter did the painting; L. Gannon of Valparaiso did roofing and sheet metal work; C.H. Harvil of Chesterton did the electrical work. The cost for the electrical work and fixtures, the bell and operating device, the vault, architect's fees and other expenses brought the building cost to about \$12,000. Helping to finance the Town Hall construction were various railroad corporations that ran railways through Porter. Reportedly, the cost burden upon the average taxpayer was very minimal, with the railroads paying two out of every three dollars needed for construction.

On December 11, 1913, the new Town Hall was formally dedicated. A large gathering of people from throughout the region were in attendance in the second floor assembly hall. The December 18, 1913 issue of the *Chesterton Tribune* published New Town Hall Is Dedicated, an extensive feature story detailing the dedication ceremonies and building features. The article described the new Town Hall as "...probably the finest

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Porter Town Hall, Porter County, Indiana

Section number 8 Page 8

structure of its kind in a town the size of Porter in the whole state. In fact there are not many counties in the state that have a handsomer or better equipped town hall within their borders." Distinguished visitors were present from Chicago, Illinois and Indiana towns of Gary, LaPorte, Michigan City, and Valparaiso. The Honorable Harry B. Darling of LaPorte gave the dedication address. Every part of the building was open for inspection and the members of the Fire Department in uniform acting as ushers took great interest and pride in showing off the beauties and conveniences of the structure. A performance by the Buerhring Orchestra of Michigan City opened the dedication ceremonies. Raymond Brockmiller provided another musical performance with his violin solo of "Angels Serenade."

In the following years, the Town Hall was not only the center for municipal business, but it was used by various community groups. The second story, assembly hall has taken on various uses. It served as a temporary school in the early 1940s. Dances and parties were also held in the space from the time it was built until the 1960s. In the late 1950s, the ladies church auxiliary met there, as did the Scouts and Brownies. The Daughters of the American Revolution had an office. A local old timer recalls an accordion teacher and a traveling medicine man using the room. Until recently, the space has continually been in use for Town Council meetings. The Fraternal Order of Police currently use a portion of this space for their exercise room. In addition to other town functions, the building housed a nursery school and a public library within a 15X15 room in the building. As the town began to grow, the building was expanded in 1964 to meet the increasing needs of the public library, police and fire departments. The one-story additions with flat roofs were built along the north and west elevations of the original Town Hall. In recent years, both police and fire departments and the public library have vacated the Town Hall. Only offices of the Clerk-Treasurer occupy the building today, with offices in the 1964 addition, originally built for the Porter public library.

Architectural Significance

The Porter Town Hall represents an unusual and increasingly threatened building type. It was designed to accommodate all municipal functions under one roof. As a "one-stop" facility with offices for the clerk-treasurer, police and fire departments, the Porter Town Hall was also designed with a large assembly hall, used for numerous community functions and activities, including town council meetings. The building also originally housed jail space and a small community library. This type of building type was common in many small communities, for greater efficiency and consolidation of resources. As communities have grown, these "one-stop" facilities have fallen victim to irreversible alterations, massive additions, and demolition.

Several examples of historic town and city halls can be found throughout Indiana. Many are located within downtown commercial areas and have since been listed in the National Register as part of historic districts. One example is the Auburn City Hall (DeKalb County), listed in the Downtown Auburn Historic District. It dates from the same period as the Porter Town Hall and is also designed in the Craftsman style. The Kendallville City Hall (Noble County) was built in 1914 and is designed in the Neo-Classical style. Although similar in overall layout, this building has replacement windows and a large, unsympathetic two-story addition. In recent years, the Kendallville town council has proposed vacating this structure and building a new city hall. One example of a city or town hall listed individually in the National Register of Historic Places is the 1882 Aurora City Hall (Dearborn County), listed on March 14, 1996. This example is much earlier and again part of a downtown commercial area. The Long Beach Town Centre (LaPorte County) is a good comparison to the Porter Town Hall in regards to being an independent structure surrounded by a lawn area. This structure was built in 1931, is

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Porter Town Hall, Porter County, Indiana

Section number 8 Page 9

designed in the Art Deco style, and therefore reflects a different design approach. Currently the Long Beach Town Center is threatened with an unsympathetic renovation.

History After Period of Significance

In 1998, the Porter town council announced plans to demolish the Town Hall and build a new structure at the same location. In response to this threat, the Friends of the Town Hall (now Friends of Porter, Inc.) formed and organized a campaign to retain and reuse the Town Hall for its original function. Through considerable efforts, the group has been successful in having the town council reconsider their plans for demolition – at least until a new town council is elected and more information is provided to the townspeople. Therefore the Town Hall remains threatened and essentially vacant with only a small section (newer, 1964 addition) occupied. Both the fire and police departments have relocated to independent facilities. Despite some deferred maintenance and a building addition in 1964 (for estimated \$50,000 cost), the Town Hall retains in good, structural condition with a majority of its original features intact. The interior still features Craftsman style mouldings and highly-decorative stair balustrade. The Town Hall retains the integrity necessary to convey its historical and architectural significance as a unique building type and its role as an important historic resource of Porter, Indiana.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Porter Town Hall, Porter County, Indiana

Section number 9 Page 10

Bibliographical References

Black, Harry G. Historic Trails and Tales of Northwest Indiana. Hammond, Indiana, HMB Publications. 1985.

Cannon, Thomas Harvey, editor and chief, compiled by Loring, H. H. and Robb, J. History of the Lake and Calumet Region of Indiana, embracing the counties of Lake, Porter, and LaPorte. Volumn 1 and 2. Indianapolis, Historians Association. 1927.

The Chesterton Tribune. December 18, 1913.

Combined Atlases of Porter County, Indiana: 1876, 1895, 1906, 1921. Evansville, Indiana: Reproduction by Unigraphic. 1979.

Dunn, Dorothy, comiler. Dorothy Dunn Local History Scrapbook.

Gary Post Tribune. July 25, 1958.

Goodspeed, Weston Arthur. Counties of Porter and Lake, Indiana: historical and biographical. Chicago, F.A. Bailey & Company. 1882.

Porter County Interim Report. Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory, Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana. 1991.

Porter County Sesquicentennial. Porter County, Indiana. 1986.

Porter on Parade. Porter, Indiana, Porter Centennial, Inc. 1958.

Riverside Land Company records. 1908-1913.

Town of Porter. Records and Correspondence. June 5, 17; August 28; February 19, 1913.

Oral Histories, June 27, 1999.

Boehm, Johanna.

Griffin, Robert and Teresa.

Hokenson, Nancy.

Janowski, Adeline.

Sexton, Bill and Millie.

Slater, Ken and Delores.

Walstra, Robert.

Wiseman, Ray.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Porter Town Hall, Porter County, Indiana

Section number 10 Page 11

Verbal Boundary Description

See attached USGS map. The address for the Porter Town Hall is 303 Franklin Street, Porter, Indiana. The legal description for the Town Hall is more particularly described as:

Porter Riverside Land Company, 1st Addition, Block 3, Lots 12, 13, and 14.

Boundary Justification

The nominated property includes the entire parcel historically associated with the original boundaries of the Porter Town Hall.

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

**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Porter Town Hall, Porter County, Indiana

Section number Photographs Page 12

Photographs

The following information is the same for all of the photographs:

Porter Town Hall, Porter, Porter County, Indiana
Adrian Scott Fine, photographer
Summer 1998: period of photographs

1. Front façade; camera facing southeast.
2. West façade; camera facing east.
3. Front entrance; camera facing southeast.
4. Front façade; camera facing southwest.
5. Detail of west façade; camera facing east.
6. Belfry and roof; camera facing north.
7. Detail of iron railing; camera facing west.
8. Detail of belfry; camera facing west.
9. Belfry horn; camera facing north.
10. Cornerstone; camera facing southeast.
11. Brick motif on front façade; camera facing south.
12. West façade; camera facing east.
13. West façade detail; camera facing northeast.
14. West façade; camera facing northeast.
15. South façade; camera facing north.
16. East façade; camera facing northwest.
17. Detail of newel post; camera facing southwest.
18. Door in Assembly Room; camera facing north.
19. Assembly Room doors; camera facing south.
20. Assembly Room; camera facing north.
21. Assembly Room; camera facing southwest.

Photocopies

1. Porter Town Hall under construction, 1913.
2. Porter Town Hall, shortly after construction completed, 1913.
3. South façade, 1948.
4. Second floor staircase balustrade, 1998.
5. Second floor staircase balustrade, 1998.
6. Second floor staircase balustrade, 1998.
7. Second floor staircase balustrade, 1998.
8. Tin ceiling of first floor garage, 1998.