

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received MAR 12 1984  
date entered

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

1. Name

historic Abner Martin House

and or common The Pat Murphy Place

2. Location

S of Mount Zion off 2A1

street & number T69N R9W Van Buren Twp. Section 18 not for publication

city, town Mount Zion vic. vicinity of

state Iowa code 019 county Van Buren code 177

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	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<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
	<u>n/a</u>	<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 Mr. and Mrs. Richard Fisher

street & number R.R.#2

city, town Keosauqua vicinity of state Iowa 52565

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number Van Buren County Courthouse

city, town Keosauqua state Iowa 52565

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

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**

Abner & Louisa Martin had this country residence build in 1858. The name of the builder is unknown; but Bethel Campbell, a local carpenter, constructed the interior cabinet-work and staircase. Some of the Martins' ten children probably helped in construction.

The house is a two-story rectangle, the length forming the facade. The building measures 40' 2½" x 27' 2". Brick is used extensively, including walls, water table (which surrounds house), foundation, and non-extant privy. Brick is laid in American bond, seven stretcher courses for one header course. The foundation corbels downward both inside and outside the house so as to provide great strength at the base.

The roof is gabled and rises 2' in 12'. "Russian iron" plates originally covered the roof (with tabs nailed in place then soldered). A new metal roof was installed during renovation of the building in 1975. Two inside chimneys are situated symmetrically on either side of the building. The northwest chimney is false; top covers of the chimneys are new.

A cornice decorates facade and rear elevation. The facade is symmetrical, 5-bay. Windows have double-hung sash, 6/6. Lintels are wood; sills are stone. The front entry has a transom and two sidelights. The stone stoop is original and the Martin boys have carved graffiti on it.

The floor plan is central hall, two rooms deep. There is a full basement. Woodwork is plain and slightly pedimented. Woodwork in parlor, front hall, and parlor bedroom is rather fancier and probably imported by rail. Wood is pine and one bedroom survives with false grained paint. The floor plan remains basically unaltered.

When Abner Martin built this house, his farm comprised 160 acres. House and farm are now separately owned, but the 13 acres attached to the house provide protection against intrusion. The surrounding countryside is hilly and the Des Moines River is about one mile southeast.

The Abner Martin House stood vacant and delapidated for some years. The present owners have rehabilitated the house in a manner sensitive to historic preservation. Visitors note that "the house smiles again."

## 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 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** 1850's **Builder/Architect** Unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Abner Martin House is a fine example of vernacular architecture. Martin (1814–1890) was an early settler in Van Buren County and farmed. The merit of the house derives from its architectural rather than historical significance.

The building is a working out of one family's quest for permanent shelter, convenience, and beauty. The strength of the brick foundation is remarkable. A tally brick survives from the non-extant privy incised "2118" and confirms oral tradition that brick was made on the property. The extensive use of brick in the foundation is interesting as stone was widely available in the county at the time. Perhaps the builder was more competent using this material or Mr. Martin considered it economical to make brick.

The floor plan shows careful regard to the needs of a large family. Each major bedroom on the second floor has access to an ancillary bedroom from which no other exit is possible. The pattern seems to indicate a concern for the care of children. The oldest of Martins' ten children, Sylvester, suffered a mental handicap. The luxury of a full basement (with fireplace in west room) adds welcome floor space. The house has an unusually long kitchen. Without a service wing, the first floor plan presented the Martins the constraints of space and a choice between parlor bedroom and separate living and dining rooms. They doubled up the latter in deference to the practicality of the former. Seven of the ten rooms are bedrooms.

The Abner Martin House shows attention to beauty as well as to utility. The building enjoys good proportions. Outside dimensions conform to 2 x 3, one of the fundamental units behind so much of what we prize as beautiful. The parlor and southwest bedroom (14' x 14' x 6") utilize the square. Livingroom and parents' bedroom (12' 8" x 14') follow similar dimensions. Together with regard for symmetry (fenestration and placement of chimneys), this planning imparts to interior and exterior a sense of size belying the measurements. Purely decorative elements such as the saw-tooth design cornice are kept at a minimum.

Some early vernacular architecture in Van Buren County shows influence from the Federal style, some from the Greek Revival style. The Federal style influenced the Abner Martin House as evident in choice of the long wall for facade (as opposed to gable end) and in cornices without cornice returns (the returns are a hallmark of the vernacular, Greek Revival style in the county).

The river villages of Van Buren County experienced a building boom in the late 1850s and 1860s. Fewer country residences, particularly of brick, were built. In this total context, the Abner Martin House shows careful consideration for strength, convenience, and beauty. The low-pitched roof is exceedingly rare in Van Buren County.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Refer to Continuation Sheets 9-2, 9-3.

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property less than one acre

Quadrangle name Mt. Zion

Quadrangle scale 1/24,000

### UTM References

A 

1	5	5	9	0	5	5	0	4	5	1	5	1	6	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

Refer to continuation sheet 10-2

### 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

Text, William Page

name/title Form, James E. Jacobsen, National Register Coordinator

organization Iowa SHPO date 14 February 1984

Historical Building

street & number E. 12th & 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



title Executive Director Iowa State Historical Department

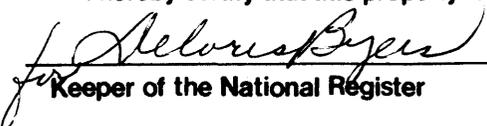
date 5 March 1984

### For NPS use only

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

Entered in the  
National Register

date 4/12/84

for   
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 Bibliography

Item number 9

Page 2

P R I M A R Y

- Abstract of Title; Property Mr & Mrs Richard Fisher.
- # Federal Census; 1860. Van Buren County, IA; p 607. Bureau of Census; Iowa State Historical Dept; Des Moines, IA.
- "New Lumber Yard;" advertizement of J Walker; Keosauqua Republican; 15 May 1858; p 3, c 4.
- "Lumber! Lumber!;" advertizement of B F Pierson; Keosauqua Republican; 8 May 1858; p 3, c 4.
- \* "Vermont & Keosauqua/Stone Works;" advertizement of M B Root; The Valley Weekly News; 22 Jan 1858; p 4, c 6. "Building stone, etc. Stone for Washington Monument taken from this quarry." (Each state contributed stone for the structure in the District of Columbia).
- Gravestones; Forbes Cemetery; T69N, R10W, Sec 18; Van Buren County, IA. Abner Martin (1814-1890); Louisa White Martin (1815-1892); Sylvester Martin (1837-1872).
- Photographic Image; circa 1910. Property Mr & Mrs Richard Fisher. Earliest known image of house pictures "1858" painted under cornice at right and left on facade and dates construction of the building.
- Photographic Image; circa 1940. Property Mr & Mrs Richard Fisher. Pictures facade & non-extant iron fence which defined dooryard.
- Photographic Image; circa 1925. Property Mr & Mrs Richard Fisher. Pictures non-extant brick privy with trellis & "Bordie" Sherod.
- Post Card Correspondence; Margaret Price née Sherod to Oneita Fisher; 20 April 1983. Mrs Price grew up in the house during the 1920s.
- Andreas, A T; Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Iowa; Chicago; 1875; p 85.

S E C O N D A R Y

- "Sturdy Homes/Iowa Pioneers Built for Generations Yet to Come;" photofeature; Wallaces' Farmer and Iowa Homestead; 12 July 1941.
- "A New Life for an Old House;" color photofeature. Text Carol McGarvey, photos Harry Baumert; Picture Magazine; Des Moines Sunday Register; 7 Feb 1982; front cover, pp 4-5, 7. "Because this family has breathed life back into the beautiful home, it will likely be around for many more birthdays."
- Telephone Conversation; Molly Myers Naumann (Ottumwa, IA) & W C Page; July 1983.

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

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

For NPS use only  
received  
date entered

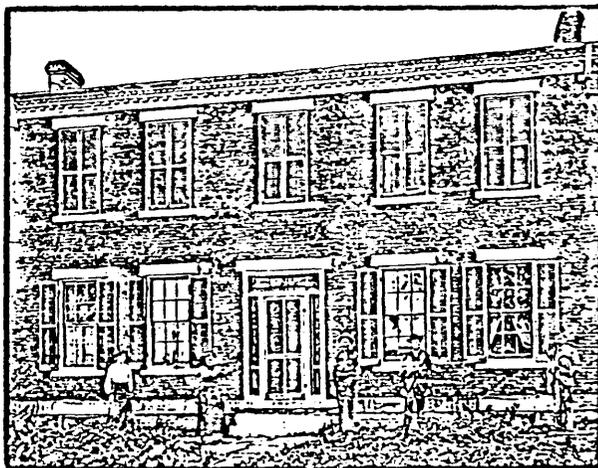
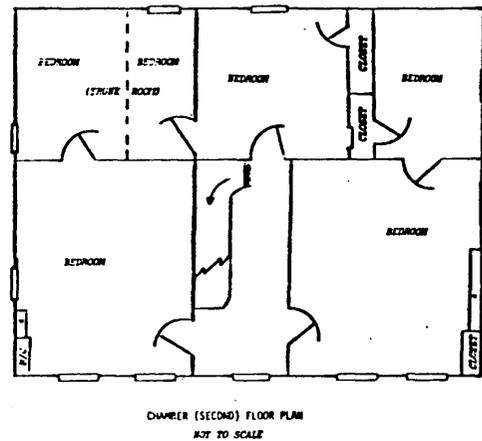
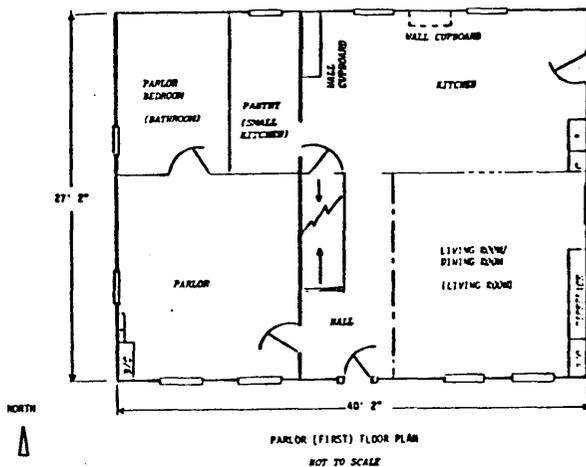
Continuation sheet Bibliography

Item number 9

Page 3

Informant Interview; Robert Campbell (descendant Bethel Campbell)  
with Oneita Fisher. 1970s.

Van Buren County Inventory of Historical Places; Van Buren County Bi-  
centennial Committee; Keosauqua, IA; 1977. Abner Martin House  
has inventory #149. Inventory is extensive but facts unreliable.  
The History of Van Buren County, Iowa; Van Buren County American Revolu-  
tion Bicentennial Committee; Marceline, MO; Walsworth Publishing  
Co, Inc; 1976, p 234.



Photographic image circa 1910. This earliest known image pictures "1858" painted under cornice at right and left on facade and dates construction of the building.

The image also pictures tuck-pointing and members of the Walden Family.

Property Mr & Mrs Richard Fisher.

**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

Geographical Data

Item number 10

Page 2

Verbal Boundary Description:

The starting point for the VBD is defined as follows;

A point in the middle of a gravel road which is located 656'6" east of the west boundary line of Section 17 (Van Buren Twp, T69N R9W), the gravel road being the same which passes along the southern edge of the subject property.

The VBD itself is defined as follows;

Beginning at the defined point, thence east 96', north 160', west 96', and south 160' to place of beginning. The resulting rectangle encloses only the main house and excludes later-date outbuildings.

The northern and western boundaries are marked by tree lines.