

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED JUL 17 1978

DATE ENTERED DEC 22 1978

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC Louis Levey Mansion

AND/OR COMMON
Pilgrim Life Insurance Company Building**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER 2902 North Meridian Street

— NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN Indianapolis

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

— VICINITY OF

STATE Indiana

CODE
018COUNTY
MarionCODE
097 ✓**CLASSIFICATION****CATEGORY**

—DISTRICT

 BUILDING(S)

—STRUCTURE

—SITE

—OBJECT

OWNERSHIP

—PUBLIC

 PRIVATE

—BOTH

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

—IN PROCESS

—BEING CONSIDERED

STATUS OCCUPIED

—UNOCCUPIED

—WORK IN PROGRESS

ACCESSIBLE YES: RESTRICTED

—YES: UNRESTRICTED

—NO

PRESENT USE

—AGRICULTURE

 COMMERCIAL

—EDUCATIONAL

—ENTERTAINMENT

—GOVERNMENT

—INDUSTRIAL

—MILITARY

—MUSEUM

—PARK

—PRIVATE RESIDENCE

—RELIGIOUS

—SCIENTIFIC

—TRANSPORTATION

—OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Pilgrim Life Insurance Company

STREET & NUMBER 3660 Washington Boulevard

CITY, TOWN Indianapolis

— VICINITY OF

STATE
Indiana**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC. City-County Building

STREET & NUMBER Market Street

CITY, TOWN Indianapolis

STATE
Indiana**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE Indianapolis-Marion County Survey

DATE 1977

—FEDERAL —STATE COUNTY —LOCALDEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS Indianapolis Preservation Commission

CITY, TOWN Indianapolis

STATE
Indiana

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION

CHECK ONE

CHECK ONE

EXCELLENT

DETERIORATED

UNALTERED

ORIGINAL SITE

GOOD

RUINS

ALTERED

MOVED DATE _____

FAIR

UNEXPOSED

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Louis Levey Mansion stands at the prestigious intersection of 29th and Meridain Streets in Indianapolis. Until the development of the area to the south, the property was extensively wooded with formal gardens and terraces.

The Italian Renaissance design consists of two cubical masses, a main one three bays wide and four bays deep, and a shorter rear one bay wide and two bays deep, which has a semi-circular bay centered on its south side. Both masses are two stories tall. A chimney on the end (east) bay of the south elevation projects slightly from the wall surface and is capped to match the dados of the balustrade. The mansion is constructed of ashlar limestone walls set on a rusticated base, which extends on the south and east to form a broad terrace. On the main (east) elevation, broad steps approach the round-arched doorway, which has flanking pilasters and broken segmental pediment. The symmetrically placed windows are surrounded by broad, smooth facings with simple mouldings and croisettes. Emphasis is given to the first floor windows and the second floor window above the entrance by the addition of a cyma recta to crown the lintels; garlands are also on the lintels of windows flanking the entrance. Directly above the windows, openings filled with metal grillwork are let into the frieze of the Composite entablature; above the cornice a stone balustrade double-hung sash; those located along the south terrace extend from floor to ceiling and can serve as doorways. The rounded bay on the west end of the south facade has a half-story podium beneath large windows separated by Tuscan pilasters, and is crowned by a simple entablature with a frieze of laurel wreaths. The north elevation has a one story porte-cochere which is supported by square pillars. On the west facade two unadorned window openings punctuate the wall of the rear wing adjacent to the large bay window.

Although the house is no longer used as a residence, the interior of the Levey home has undergone only minor changes since its completion in 1905. The first floor plan has a central hall with two rooms on either side; these are the principal spaces described below.

The central hall with its beamed ceiling (photo 3) is intact. The mahogany enframements of doors and windows form pilasters with recessed panels and a simplified entablature with egg and dart mouldings; this design is used throughout the house. At one time the walls in the hall, as well as the entire house, were covered with brocaded velvet panels stretched on frames (photo 4). The varied fabric designs were in slightly different shades of green, to make movement from room to room seem continuous and flowing.

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The northeast room of the first floor is a Louis XV style drawing room. On the walls, plaster mouldings form decorative panels. The delicate cornice is also plaster; the cover ceiling is highlighted with plaster mouldings and hand-painted designs. In the southeast corner of the mansion is the library (photo 5). The east and north walls are lined with mahogany bookcases with leaded glass doors. The south and west walls have a mahogany wainscot; the onyx and ormolu mantle was taken from a European palace. To the southwest is the dining room (photo 6). whose walls are canvas-covered and painted with a grape-and vine motif. The ceiling, also covered in canvas, is broken into coffers by wood mouldings. The grape motif was also expressed in a Tiffany grape-cluster chandelier and matching sconces, now removed.

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 type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" 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 1905

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Levey Mansion is significant as an example of the Beaux-Arts manner applied to a residence, rather than a major institutional building as is the case with most other local structures of similar style. It is also meaningful in that although the crisp detailing and substantial materials are those of a palatial estate of the turn of the century, there is much in the form that provided continuity with earlier Indiana houses. The simple cubical mass emulates the same Italian models which inspired one variety of Italianate villas of three decades before, and can also be likened to some Greek Revival examples of still earlier times. Common features include the prominent round arch of the doorway and the grilled openings let into the frieze of the entablature. The difference lies in the accuracy of details, such as the sculpture around the entrance, design of the terrace and balustrade, and overall attention to proportion. These, as well as its ostentatious contents, make the Levey Mansion a Fine example of its period.

Built in 1905 the mansion may have been designed by the Indianapolis firm of Rubush and Hunter, who designed the Levey Brothers Printing Plant, which was also occupied in 1905, and still stands on the north side of the Statehouse. The architects use the same style on the Masonic Temple, the former First Church of Christ Scientist, Old City Hall (now the Indiana State Museum), and the American Central Life Insurance Company Building.

The Levey Mansion is also significant for commercial reasons. The origins of the structure, its early connections with the elite of Indianapolis after the turn of the century, and its transition from residence to commercial building make it an extraordinary representative of the confluence of several broad historical trends.

The construction of the mansion and the choice of its location were the concrete expression of the commercial success of the second generation of a family of printers. Louis H. Levey, the owner, was born in Madison, Indiana, to William P. Levey, who had engaged in binding, printing, and book-selling since 1848. By the time that Louis was 21 years old, he was a principal in the firm. In partnership with an older brother, he moved the business, renamed Levey Brothers & Co., to Indianapolis in 1883. The brothers located their operations on South Meridian Street until a building was constructed for them in 1890 at 15-19 West Maryland Street. Despite the depression of the 1890s, the company, which was one of the

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

see attached

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY one acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Indianapolis west

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

UTM REFERENCES

A 16 572180 4406630

B

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Indianapolis AIA Guidebook Committee (Wayne Schmidt)

ORGANIZATION

American Institute of Architects, Indiana Chapter

DATE

8-8-75

STREET & NUMBER

1319 North Pennsylvania Street

TELEPHONE

632 6550

CITY OR TOWN

Indianapolis

STATE

Indiana

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL X

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

[Signature] June 30th 1978

DATE

TITLE Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 12-22-78

ATTEST:

[Signature]
KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 12-19-78

[Signature]
CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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nation's leading bank supply printers and which conducted its entire business by mail order catalog, expanded its facilities in 1900 and built a new plant, occupied in 1905. The growth of the company coincided with the heyday of the mail-order business, including Sears and Montgomery Wards.

Louis Levey exemplified the merger of commercial and social leadership roles in American society of his day. He was president of the firm during 25 years of its greatest era of growth; when he retired from active management in 1915, after 40 years, he retained a "business home" in the plant. Levey's organizational affiliations marked him as a prominent local figure. He was on the board of trustees of the Indianapolis Foundation, was a director of the Union Traction Company of Indiana and a member of the Indianapolis Board of Trade and the Chamber of Commerce. Levey made his mansion, with its onyx and ormulu fireplace ^{and} organ, a common gathering place for prominent local people.

By the 1950s the mansion and its once prestigious neighbors suffered the fate of successive predecessors from the Civil War years onward in Indianapolis. As its size, opulence, and location lost favor with people of sufficient wealth to sustain its use as a residence, the mansion was abandoned, and the area passed into commercial use. Today, however, restoration by the Pilgrim Life Insurance Company, is transforming the structure and bringing it once more into the mainstream of Indianapolis commercial life.

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Brown, Paul Donald, ed. Indianapolis Men of Affairs, 1923 (Indianapolis: American Biographical Society, 1923). Biographical sketch of Louis H. Levey, p. 383. Photograph, p. 382.

Indianapolis Architecture. (NP: Indiana Architectural Foundation, 1975), pp. 100-101. Photos and discussion.