

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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

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

**1. Name**

historic  C. S. Bell Thematic Group Resources

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number	See Continuation Sheet			<input type="checkbox"/> not for publication	
city, town	Hillsboro	vicinity of	congressional district	6th	
state	Ohio	code 039	county	Highland	code 071

**3. Classification**

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
X building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name	See Continuation Sheet		
street & number			
city, town	vicinity of	state	

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Highland County Recorder's Office, County Courthouse

street & number Courthouse Square

city, town Hillsboro state Ohio 45133

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Ohio Historic Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 4/80 federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Ohio Historical Society

city, town Columbus state Ohio 43211

## 7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" 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 C.S. Bell Thematic Group consists of the following four buildings, all of which are located within the City of Hillsboro:  
(Buildings keyed to Sketch Map.)

A. Bell Mansion. 1883. Architect: Henry Bevis, Cincinnati. The Bell Mansion is a large brick dwelling that sets back from the street on a large lot shaded by many tall old trees. The 3-story Chateauesque building is laid in common bond and has a steeply pitched hipped roof rising to a ridge, which is topped by metal cresting. The current owners recently replaced the original slate roof with composition shingles; however they did retain the original decorative color pattern of the slate.

Exterior is marked by 3 small porches at the front, rear, and south side, plus 3 covered balconies (2 at 3rd floor dormers, the 3rd over the side porch). All are wood and their posts, spindles, and pendants are in the Eastlake style. A variety of windows are on the exterior. Some are paired, some are single, but all are topped by stone lintels and have 1/1 double hung sash windows. The windows of the first 2 stories of the projecting bay at the facade are in groups of 3 and elaborately trimmed; above those first floor windows is a stone dateplate ("1883") topped by iron cresting. The front entrance is composed of double wooden doors, above which is a stained glass transom. Three corbelled chimneys and a number of gabled dormers add to the liveliness of the exterior.

Significant interior features include the original woodwork and wainscoting, hardwood floors, and an imposing open central staircase with quarter-turns and landings, executed in richly-carved-walnut. It rises 3 stories and is lit from above by a large skylight decorated with colored glass panels.

B. Bell's First Home. ca. 1854-58. C.S. Bell's first home is a 2-story, 3-bay frame house near downtown Hillsboro. The neighborhood is mixed residential/commercial/industrial; the house appears to be one of the oldest structures in the immediate vicinity. Original clapboard siding was covered in the 1940's with asbestos shingles and the wrought-iron porch posts were covered halfway up by squat brick pillars. Other than those alterations--which are both reversible since no original fabric was destroyed--the house has retained its integrity. The roof is a gently-pitched gable covered in standing seam metal. The house is irregular in shape: the front section is 2-rooms deep; the 2-story middle portion, to the rear and off to the east side of the front, is box-like and has a shed roof; and the rear portion, again set off to the east side of the middle section, is only one story and has a gable roof. It is not known precisely when these additions were made but the middle section appears to be nearly as old as the front, and the current owner added the rear portion after she acquired the house in 1944.

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The windows of the front portion are 4/4 double hung sash with plain sills and frames; windows of the middle section are smaller, with 6/6 lights. A one-story bay window is attached to the east side of the front portion, also. There is a central chimney on each section. The front entrance is composed of an old wooden screen door with turned frame and a paneled wooden door. On the interior, the central hall retains the original stairway with turned balusters, wide handrail and newel post. Other notable interior features include wide plank floors and marblized Victorian fireplaces. On the whole, the interior has been left intact.

Included on the house lot is a privy with unpainted board and batten siding and small central gable over the door. Also there is a small unpainted frame shed and a cistern located directly behind the house.

- C. C.S. Bell Foundry and Showroom. 1866;1892. The C.S. Bell Foundry and Showroom is a rectangular brick 2½ story commercial/industrial building located in the central business district of Hillsboro, one block west of the Highland County Courthouse. The facade has 5 bays and the west side has 14. It is divided into 2 sections: the rear portion (ca. 1866) and the facade (1892).

The rear portion is laid in common bond with "star" tie-rods; has a gable roof; and 6/6 double-hung sash windows with arched brick lintels and stone lugsills. The interior has changed little. The large open areas with wood flooring, braced vertical support beams, and exposed rafters, purlins, and floor joists are now used for storage.

The front portion of the Foundry and Showroom underwent a major alteration in 1892. The original (ca. 1866) facade was a handsome Federal style, 3 bays across, a gable roof, and simple storefront. The 1892 alteration created the built-up pent roof and a completely new facade. The facade, now 5 bays, is glazed brick laid in stretcher bond and the storefronts have cast-iron columns. Second story windows are round-arched and mullioned. Cornice is corbelled, and topped by finials and a central pediment with the date "1892" in it. A row of decorative ceramic tiles, painted red, highlights the cornice, also. A modern aluminum "skin" has been added to the top portion of one of the storefronts; the other storefront is unchanged.

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D. Bell's Opera House. 1894. Bell's Opera House is an imposing 3-story brick structure in downtown Hillsboro, one block south of the County Courthouse and the City Hall. Nearby structures date from mid to late nineteenth century, forming an intact and cohesive streetscape. [Note: A survey of the downtown is being undertaken, with the intent of placing it on the Register as an historic district; however, it will not be completed for at least another year.] The Opera House contains retail shops on its first floor and the theater occupies the top 2 floors. The gabled roof is slate, as are the gables on both ends of the building. A square tower is located at the NE corner of the building, and its roof is pyramidal with bell-cast slopes. The first floor of the 6-bay facade is done in heavy, rock-faced ashlar; ashlar columns divide the various storefronts, while entrance to the theater lobby is made through a Richardsonian arch, above which is a small balcony with iron railing. Brick wall buttresses, corbeling, and smooth stone lintels and belt courses contract nicely with the stone of the first floor. Two Palladian windows are balanced by single 1/1 windows. A stone frontspiece ("Bell's Opera House") is above the lobby entrance between the 2nd and 3rd story windows. Two fire escapes, 2 roof dormers and 3 chimneys are on the back wall and roof.

The interior of the Opera House has changed only slightly. One alteration was made recently when the area which contained the stairway up to the lobby was remodeled for retail use, eliminating entry to the theater from the street. The lobby, located on the second floor landing of the stairway, is unchanged. The theater has a pressed tin ceiling, sloping floors (from which the seats have been removed) and a balcony. On either side of the stage is a set of box seats, each topped by a pediment and trimmed in classical details. The lighting fixtures are intact; however the woodwork and the walls, which originally were plastered, were covered in the 1920's with an asbestos material to make them fireproof. Backstage, the dressing rooms, posters, backdrops, and stage machinery are intact, even though the theater has not held live performances since the mid-1920's and stopped showing movies after WWII.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below						
prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion			
1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science			
1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture			
1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/			
1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian			
X 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater			
1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation			
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)			

Specific dates	See item #7	Builder/Architect	See item #7
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### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The C.S. Bell Thematic Group is significant for its direct association with the life of Charles Singleton Bell, a man who had an important influence on the nineteenth century industrial growth of the community of Hillsboro, and who made a significant contribution to the technology of bell manufacturing.

C.S. BELL, (1829-1905), a native of Cumberland, Maryland, was indentured to a founder in Pittsburgh, Pa. in 1844. It is not known why or exactly when he migrated to Hillsboro, but by 1858 his name appears on the county tax rolls as the owner of the Speedwell Foundry (no longer there) on West Beech Street. The business began with the manufacturing of cooking stoves and plows. By 1865 Bell had acquired additional property, a partner, James K. Marley, and the lot on which his second foundry and showroom were to be constructed. Erected in 1866, this structure housed the manufacturing and sale of cane mills, evaporators, sugar (sorghum) mills, steam generators, plows and other agricultural machinery. Marley's interest in the business was bought out by Bell in 1869, and the business continued to expand. By the 1880's Bell's agricultural items were sold all over the U.S. and in Latin America and Asia. The development of a steel alloy bell in the late 1860's and early 1870's however, provided the company with its greatest fame. Bell happened upon the formula for the steel alloy bell by accident while working on metal formulas for his farm items. This particular alloy could be produced cheaper than tin, copper, or brass, and soon found a ready market. In 1875 over 5,000 bells were sold; by 1889, sales were over 20,000. The greatest demand was for a small bell suitable for farms and schools, although the company made all sizes. The sale of bells was erratic throughout the company's history, however and farm equipment absorbed the bulk of the foundry business. The steel alloy formula for bells was carefully guarded by the Bell family, who continued to own and operate the business. The last heyday of bell manufacturing occurred when C.S. Bell's granddaughter Virginia Bell (general manager of the plant from 1934-1969) obtained defense contracts from the navies of the U.S., Great Britain and Russia to provide ships' bells during the Second World War. A shortage of brass and copper traditionally used for ships' bells caused the U.S. Defense Department to seek out a different bell. Local folklore has it that upon learning this, Virginia Bell loaded one of the company's bells into her car, drove to Washington and personally obtained the contract. More than 26,000 bells were produced for the U.S. Navy. During the War dignitaries from all three navies visited the factory in Hillsboro. The production of bells slowed drastically after the war. After Virginia Bell's retirement the company headquarters were moved to another town. However the foundry continues to operate, and the last bells were cast in commemoration of the Bicentennial.

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The four properties in the C.S. Bell Thematic Group are being nominated because they are the only remaining structures within Hillsboro that have direct ties to C.S. Bell and have retained their basic integrity. [Note: The 1892 foundry was not included in the nomination because it no longer illustrates or characterizes the activities that took place in it. Its integrity has been severely damaged by alterations, additions and the loss of buildings with the complex.] Building A, the Bell Mansion, is the house C.S. Bell had built for himself in 1883 with the profits the business had made for him. Building B, Bell's First Home, is the house Bell occupied during the early formative years of the business and during the time he developed his formula for the steel alloy bell. Building C, the C.S. Bell Foundry and Showroom, is where the bells were first manufactured and sold, and where the business experienced its greatest period of growth. Finally, Building D, Bell's Opera House, is significant because it demonstrates the success of the business and Bell's personal concern for the welfare to the town. The land for the Opera House was donated by the City, a row of butcher shops and "eyesores" known locally as Rat's Row were torn down, and C.S. Bell erected the building in nine months.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

UTM NOT VERIFIED

## 10. Geographical Data

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Acreage of nominated property each property less than one

Quadrangle name Hillsboro

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A	1 7	2 7 3 6 3 0	4 3 4 2 1 6 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C	1 7	2 7 4 2 9 0	4 3 4 2 3 0 0
E			
G			

B	1 7	2 7 4 2 2 0	4 3 4 2 4 8 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
D	1 7	2 7 4 4 5 0	4 3 4 2 2 0 0
F			
H			

Verbal boundary description and justification

See Continuation Sheet

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 Lois J. Rock, Regional Preservation Officer

Portsmouth Regional Historic

organization Preservation Office

date February 22, 1980

street & number 940 Second Street

telephone (614) 353-7157

city or town Portsmouth

state Ohio 45662

## 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Acting SHPO

date 8/27/80

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

date

Attest:

Chief of Registration

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

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1. Ayres, Mrs. Edwin, Jr. The Hillsboro Story: 150 Years of Progress 1807-1957. Springfield, Ohio: H.K. Skinner & Son, 1957.
2. Ayres, Elsie Johnson. Highland Pioneer Sketches and Family Genealogies. Springfield, Ohio: H.K. Skinner, 1971.
3. Ayres, Elsie Johnson. Hills of Highland. Springfield, Ohio: H.K. Skinner & Son, 1971.
4. Interviews with Mrs. Nellie Finley and Mrs. Nettie Perrin, 11/16/79.
5. Tax Records, Highland County Auditor's Office, Highland County Courthouse, Hillsboro, Ohio.
6. Williams, W.W. History of Ross and Highland Counties, Ohio. Cleveland: W.W. Williams, 1880.

C .S.BELL  
THEMATIC GROUP  
HILLSBORO , OHIO

