

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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JAN 25 1980

**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

Charles Walter Hart House

AND/OR COMMON

**LOCATION**

STREET & NUMBER

800 Third Avenue

\_\_NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Charles City

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

\_\_ VICINITY OF

3

STATE

Iowa

CODE

COUNTY

Floyd County

CODE

**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
- COMMERICAL
- EDUCATIONAL
- ENTERTAINMENT
- GOVERNMENT
- INDUSTRIAL
- MILITARY
- MUSEUM
- PARK
- PRIVATE RESIDENCE
- RELIGIOUS
- SCIENTIFIC
- TRANSPORTATION
- OTHER:

**OWNER OF PROPERTY**

NAME

Roger Dean Ott

STREET & NUMBER

800 Third Avenue

CITY, TOWN

Charles City

\_\_ VICINITY OF

STATE

Iowa 50616

**LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION**

COURTHOUSE,  
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Floyd County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

Charles City

STATE

Iowa

**6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS**

TITLE

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 \_\_\_\_\_

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### DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Hart House was built in 1913-14. Exterior walls are of hollow clay tile, faced variously with rockfaced granite (basement), brick (first story), stucco-half-timberwork (gable ends), with water table and window sills of concrete. The broad main roof, with ridge perpendicular to the main facade and projecting rafter ends, features a gablet toward the front, and is finished with a small jerkinhead at the rear. The north side features a projecting rectangular bay of two stories, with two wide garage doors at ground level. The bay is covered with a broad jerkinhead roof with projecting purlins, as is a large wall dormer on the south side. Also on the south side is a first floor polygonal bay, finished in wood and stucco; and a tall exterior chimney that pierces the roof and is constructed of rockfaced granite. The main entrance is set beneath a broad front gable, asymmetrically placed with relation to the main gable, and slightly flared at the eaves. It covers an enclosed porch with square brick piers ending in geometric "capitals".

Window openings are rectilinear, and of varying size. Some original windows have been replaced with thermal panes, most notably the large window at the front, although the sidelights remain. A group of three round-arched louvred openings is set into the front porch gable end. In the north gable end (above the garge) is a single large round-arched window.

The interior structural system is wood, set on a reinforced concrete slab covered with hardwood flooring. The interior has been remodelled, with various arched doorways added, two bedrooms made into one, and the exposed beams (false) originally in the dining room, removed. The exterior, however, is extremely well preserved, the only alteration of note being the covering of the original wood shingled roof with asbestos.

# 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

1913-14

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

This house is principally significant as the home of Charles Walter Hart (1872-1937), co-founder with Charles H. Parr of the Hart-Parr Co. in Charles City, a firm that pioneered the development of gasoline tractors during the first decades of the 20th century. The house is also of local significance as a well-preserved and interesting example of Craftsman style architecture, utilizing the rich, naturalistic textures and materials associated with this style, and with Frank Lloyd Wright's prairie houses of this same period. It is one of two houses in Charles City associated with Hart, who lived here from 1914 to 1918. The other, at 609 N. Iowa Avenue, has been extensively altered and thus, on grounds of integrity, was not considered appropriate for nomination to the National Register.

The Hart-Parr Co. was "the first business in the U.S. devoted exclusively to the manufacture of tractors."<sup>1</sup> It is also credited with producing the "first successful production farm tractor engine" in 1902,<sup>2</sup> a two-cylinder horizontal, four-cycle engine capable of drawing a four or five bottom plow. Hart-Parr tractors (the firm is also credited with the introduction of this term<sup>3</sup>) contributed to a revolution in midwest agriculture as they replaced the much larger, heavier, and more awkward steam engines. The gas engines, noted for the "ruggedness" of their transmissions were designed for "drawbar work" (pulling, plowing) as well as "beltwork" (threshing, etc.), and as the various models developed over the years, they helped move American agriculture from a small-scale, labor-intensive industry toward the large scale, heavily mechanized enterprise of today.

Charles Hart met Charles Parr at the University of Wisconsin (Madison), where both were students in the late 1890's. Their first collaboration was a thesis on gas engines, and they built several models to illustrate this work. After graduation, Hart and Parr opened a small shop in Madison, but in 1900 decided to relocate in Charles City, which appeared to be more centrally located with respect to their prospective customers.

(See Continuation Sheet)

**9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES** (See Continuation Sheet)

Parr, C.H. "History of the Hart-Parr Co.," typescript, N.D., Charles City Public Library.  
 "Iowa's Great Tractor Factory," Iowa Factories 1:5 (May 1912), pp.10-17.  
 White Motor Corporation, "Progress . . . in Tractor Power from 1898" (March, 1975) (historical and promotional brochure).

**10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA**

**UTM NOT VERIFIED ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY Less than one  
 QUADRANGLE NAME Charles City, Iowa QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES		
ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
A <u>15</u>	<u>527720</u>	<u>4766860</u>
B		
C		
E		
G		

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Lot 37, Sunrise Hill Subdivision, Charles City, Iowa

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

**11 FORM PREPARED BY**

NAME / TITLE M.H. Bowers, Historian  
 ORGANIZATION Division of Historic Preservation DATE September, 1979  
 STREET & NUMBER 26 East Market Street TELEPHONE 319-353-6949  
 CITY OR TOWN Iowa City STATE Iowa 52240

**12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION**

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL  STATE  LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE Adrian D. Anderson  
 TITLE Director, Division of Historic Preservation DATE December 3, 1979

**FOR NPS USE ONLY**

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

Adrian D. Anderson DATE 1-25-80  
 KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

ATTEST: William H. Brachman DATE 1-24-80  
 CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

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Their plant opened in 1901, and tractor #1 (Hart-Parr 17-30) appeared that same year. The firm was eventually to employ nearly 1,000 men, and produce new models every few years. Later models, beginning with #40-80 (1908-14) burned either gas or kerosene. Their largest, a four-cylinder vertical engine, was the 60-100 of 1911-12. Hart-Parr also produced stationary engines, and engines for road work. An unusual model was the "Little Red Devil" (1914-16), a two-cylinder, two-cycle thermosyphon water-cooled engine unique in its lack of valves, transmission and differential (the latter possible because the tractor had but one rear wheel).

In the partnership, Parr appears to have been the inventor, while Hart's strength lay in management, and the latter's talents for organization and good business practice were noted in publications of the time.<sup>4</sup> World War I, however, put a strain on both the business and the partnership. The market for agricultural engines plummeted, and the firm re-tooled for production of war materiel, principally shells. A 1915 contract with the British government fell through, but the firm was "saved" by the US entry into the war, and federal contracts for shells, casings for gun mounts, truck wheels, steering engines for ships, and tank parts. After the war, the partnership was dissolved. Hart sold out and moved to Montana, where he went into wheat farming and small-scale oil refining. Parr went to Wisconsin for a few years, and worked with Conrad Frudden (later associated with the Allis-Chalmers Co., also a tractor manufacturer) before returning to Charles City. Parr retained his connections with the company (working as an engineer for the firm), which had been purchased by the Ellis family, until his death in 1941.

The Hart-Parr Co. was merged with three other local companies in 1929, to form the Oliver Corporation, with headquarters in Chicago. Between 1929 and 1960, Oliver acquired many other companies specializing in a wide variety of agricultural equipment. The White Motor Co. of Cleveland, manufacturer of heavy-duty trucks, took over Oliver as a wholly-owned subsidiary in 1960. The Charles City plant, with almost nothing left of the old Hart-Parr factory, is now operated as the White Farm Equipment Co. tractor plant.

Footnotes:

<sup>1</sup> "Our Heritage," p.42.

<sup>2</sup> Gray, R.B., Development of the Agricultural Tractor in the United States (St Joseph: American Society of Agricultural Engineers, 1956), p.16, quoted in White Motor Corporation, "Progress . . . in Tractor Power from 1898," March, 1975, p.2.

<sup>3</sup> White Motor Corporation, "Progress" , p.4.

<sup>4</sup> Wooley, Edward Mott, "Secrets . . .", World's Work, 27 (1914), 346-352.

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Woolley, Edward Mott, "Secrets of Business Success,"  
World's Work, 27 (1914), pp.346-352.

"Our Heritage: Bicentennial Review of Floyd County",  
1976.