UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK 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
Felix Grimes House

AND/OR COMMON
Felix Grimes House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
1301 Leitchfield Road

CITY, TOWN
Owensboro

STATE
Kentucky

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY
X BUILDING(S)
STRUCTURE

OWNERHIP
PUBLIC
PRIVATE

STATUS
X OCCUPIED

PRESENT USE
_ AGRICULTURE
COMMERCIAL
EDUCATIONAL
ENTERTAINMENT
GOVERNMENT
INDUSTRIAL
MILITARY
PRIVATE RESIDENCE
RECREATIONAL
RELIGIOUS
SCIENTIFIC
TRANSPORTATION
OTHER

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Mr. and Mrs. Jerome Conrey, Sr.

STREET & NUMBER
1301 Leitchfield Road

CITY, TOWN
Owensboro

STATE
Kentucky

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE, REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Daviess County Courthouse, Deed Book 30, p. 107; Deed Book Y, p. 634

STREET & NUMBER
Second and Frederica Streets

CITY, TOWN
Owensboro

STATE
Kentucky

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
Survey of Historic Sites in Kentucky

DATE
1970

DEPOSITORY FOR SURVEY RECORDS
Kentucky Heritage Commission

CITY, TOWN
Frankfort

STATE
Kentucky
The Grimes House is located on the Leitchfield Road. It faces southwest. The structure is a two-story, white frame house with a central doorway. There are five shuttered windows on the front of the second story and four shuttered windows on the first story. There are no windows on either end of the house. A two-room wing is connected to the house at right angles in the rear. These rooms were used as an early school room (1884-1890) by Sarah Grimes, daughter of Felix Grimes.

The house has two bedrooms and bath upstairs; four rooms downstairs. The entrance hall has fifteen steps leading to the second floor representing Kentucky, the fifteenth State admitted to the Union. The floors are white ash, and the stair rails, posts and wainscoting in the living room and dining room are cherry. The sills are dove-tailed oak put together without nails. The weatherboard is yellow poplar.

There was some bric-a-brac on the face of the house but it was removed circa 1930 and the shutters added. No other changes have been made.

The house was a duplicate of the one Felix Grimes lived in Pennsylvania. The house originally stood on five acres, but now the Conrey family owns one acre.

Felix Grimes mined coal in several mines located slightly south of his house. The mines remain today but are sealed off. On top of one is an old Negro cemetery. This cemetery is not owned by the Grimes family.
Although no direct proof has yet been found, it may be possible to link Felix Grimes with one of the most interesting historical and architectural episodes of the lower Ohio River, between Kentucky and Indiana. According to family tradition, Grimes was born in Ireland, and educated for the priesthood, but was not ordained. Instead he became a geologist. At an unknown date he emigrated to the United States, where he found employment in the coal industry in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. It is believed that he was sent West to locate minerals for a Pittsburgh firm. Apparently he recognized the potential for development of both coal and the native yellow limestone on both banks of the Ohio in the neighborhood of Hawesville, Hancock County, Kentucky, and what was to become Cannelton in Perry County, Indiana. Grimes is said to have led forty coal miners into Kentucky by barge down the Ohio River, first to Cannelton and then to Hawesville.

It is also the family tradition that Felix Grimes and his cousin Patrick Grimes were responsible for the construction of the Indiana Cotton Mill in Cannelton, as well as the Roman Catholic Church erected on the hill overlooking the factory. Both, along with a number of surviving residences and shops in Cannelton, are built of the fine local stone.

Grimes' second wife was Catherine Murphy. Her family came west from Providence, Rhode Island, to Hawesville, where they were identified with the Immaculate Conception Roman Catholic Church (now seriously deteriorated but also being nominated to the National Register).

On the basis of these family traditions--tenuous, but accurate as far as it has been possible to corroborate them with other sources--it may be justifiable to connect Grimes with one of the most interesting and potentially significant efforts to develop an industry west of the Alleghenies prior to the Civil War. Barbara Wriston in 1965 described this project and identified the designer of the mill with Providence architect Thomas Tefft (1826-1859), one of the most precocious and talented architects of the mid-19th century in America: "The Indiana Cotton Mill, a landmark on the north bank of the Ohio River in Cannelton, Indiana, was one of the few mills built in that area before the Civil War. The town of Cannelton had been laid out in 1835 under the supervision of Rhodes and McLane, who opened coal mines and brought colliers, after a group of Massachusetts capitalists, Hobart, Williams, and Russell, purchased about 7,000 acres of land. The American Cannel Coal Company was formed to exploit the area" (p. 171). About 1848 a number of entrepreneurs became interested in developing the manufacture of cotton in the West in order to overcome the
MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES
Grimes-Conrey family traditions and records.
An Illustrated Historical Atlas Map of Daviess County, Kentucky. "Carefully Compiled From Personal Examinations and Surveys. Published by Leo McDonough & Co. 1876."
M. Joblin & Co., Louisville Past and Present: Its Industrial History as Exhibited in the Life-Labors of Its Leading Men (Louisville: Printed by John P. Morton & Co., 1875,

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA
ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY: one acre

UTM REFERENCES
A | B
ZONE | EASTING | NORTHING
1 | 6 | 4 | 9 | 2 | 1| 4 | 1 | 7 | 9 | 5 | 4 | 0

ZONE EASTING NORTHING
C | D
1 | 1 | 7 | 9 | 4 | 1 | 5 | 9 | 4 | 0

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

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

STATE CODE COUNTY CODE

FORM PREPARED BY
NAME / TITLE
Mrs. M. David Orrahood, Daviess Co. Representative (WEL)

ORGANIZATION
Kentucky Heritage Commission

STREET & NUMBER
2725 Frederica Street

CITY OR TOWN
Owensboro

STATE
Kentucky

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.

SIGNED
Cedred W. Melton

TITLE
State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 6/3/75

FOR NPS USE ONLY
I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

DATE 6/18/75

ATTEST:

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE JUN 17 1975
South's dependence on New England for processing the raw material, easily transportable on the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers. These businessmen included Colonel, later General, Charles T. James of Providence, Rhode Island, who according to an 1876 source "had then put in successful operation similar mills in Massachusetts and Rhode Island, and was putting up others in Pennsylvania and South Carolina" (Joblin, p. 73); Hamilton Smith and James C. Ford of Louisville. The last also hoped to avert the impending Civil War by providing an alternative economic base to agriculture and slaves for the South. According to Wriston, "Alexander McGregor of Newport, Rhode Island, was hired as superintending architect and found that excellent stone was available in the neighborhood. On 14 May 1850 he endorsed the stone: 'for durability and cheapness, the Cannelton Quarries offer the best building stone I have ever seen west of the mountains.' His foreman, who was described as being familiar with the best quarries in the United States and Great Britain, agreed.

"In 1849 Colonel James /a director of the company, engaged to organize the mill and procure the necessary materials, machinery, and engineers/ published in Providence a pamphlet called, 'Practical Hints on the Comparative Costs and Productiveness of the Culture of Cotton and the Cost and Productiveness of Its Manufacture . . . Addressed to the Cotton Planters and Capitalists of the South.' In it he mentions the mill at Cannelton and describes in glowing terms the advantages of the site, the availability of coal, the well developed town, and the provisions of the charter given by the State of Indiana. Although the pamphlet was intended to encourage the South to enter the manufacturing business and is filled with elaborate statistics, it was really propaganda for Cannelton, which could be the 'great manufacturing city of the world.' In addition to the cheapness of coal and the excellence of the local stone, James said, 'Cannelton is situated in the midst of a vast fertile region, yielding in great abundance all the usual products of the farm and dairy, including large supplies of corn and wheat, which are sold in markets at prices much lower than similar articles in the markets of New England'" (ibid.).**

Although the enterprise was ultimately unsuccessful, not only in its own terms, but of course in terms of Colonel Ford's farsighted vision as well, the magnificent mill building, several boarding houses, and a Roman Catholic Church (perhaps the precursor of the present stone edifice) were erected prior to the Civil War in Cannelton. Mrs. Wriston has definitely identified the architect of at least the mill as Tefft, then working for the Providence firm of Tallman and Bucklin.

**Unfortunately, the New England manufacturers realized in time the threat that such Western development would present to their mainstay, and withdrew both expertise and capital before the Indiana mill was fully established.
It seems possible that Felix Grimes may have played a small but crucial role in making this ambitious enterprise possible, by opening up the necessary resources for the erection and support of the mill in Southern Indiana, if he indeed he and his cousin were not actually responsible for the construction of what is still, although unused, one of the most impressive (and uncharacteristically ornamental) factories in the country.

The Grimeses lost two infants during a small-pox epidemic; they are buried in the cemetery of the Catholic church in Cannelton.

The family moved to Owensboro in nearby Daviess County in 1867, according to An Illustrated Historical Atlas Map of Daviess County, Kentucky, published in 1876. Grimes was listed at that time as "Farmer & Pro. of Coal Min." He mined coal in several mines located near his house on the Leitchfield Road, which was presumably built between 1867 and 1876 (although possibly earlier). The mines remain in the area today, but have been sealed off.

The house itself is of interest as one of the older and more prominent buildings in a relatively modest area of Owensboro, situated as it is on the junction of two much-used roads. In spite of its simplicity, it retains in its attractive setting a sense of substance and integrity no doubt reflective of its owners' character.