

Canal House  
111 East Fourth Street  
Connersville  
Fayette County  
Indiana

HABS No. IN-107

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PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA  
REDUCED COPIES OF MEASURED DRAWINGS

Historic American Buildings Survey  
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS No. IN-107

CANAL HOUSE

Location: 111 East Fourth Street, southeast corner, Connersville, Fayette County, Indiana.

USGS Connersville Quadrangle; Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates: 16.60850.4389150.

Present Owner: Historic Connersville, Inc.

Present Use: Historic House museum.

Statement of Significance:

Canal House was built in 1843 for the Whitewater Valley Canal Company as an office building while the Canal Company completed construction of Indiana's Whitewater Canal. The structure has subsequently served as a bank, veterinary hospital, and the private residence of one of Connersville's mayors. The structure was acquired by Historic Connersville, Inc. in 1971; this preservation group restored the structure for use as a museum.

PART I. HISTORICAL INFORMATION

A. Physical History:

1. Date of erection: 1843. The deed records indicate that the Whitewater Canal Company built the structure at this time. The company purchased lot 53 in 1843 for \$7000, which also included the large hotel, Huston House. In 1846, it sold the portion of lot 53 upon which the hotel stood for consideration of \$6495, only \$505 less than the sum at which the company bought the entire lot three years before. The Canal Company sold the remaining land and Canal House in 1848 for \$4000, suggesting that a structure had been erected upon the property.
2. Architect: No information available.
3. Original and subsequent owners: The legal description of the land upon which Canal House stands is the northeast corner of Lot 53 in Connor's Original Plot of the Town. The following references to the chain of title are in the Office of the Recorder, Fayette County Courthouse, Connersville, Indiana.

- 1825 Deed, June 1825, recorded November 5, 1825 in Book B, page 379. John Connor and his wife sold the property to Alexander Hamilton Dill for \$500.
- 1827 Deed, December 7, 1827, recorded March 18, 1828 in Book C, page 429. A.H. Dill and his wife sold the property to Meredith Helm, for \$200.
- 1839 Deed, January 21, 1839, recorded June 23, 1839 in Book J, page 406. Meredith Helm to Daniel Hankins, whole of Lot 53 for \$12,000.
- 1843 Deed, June 25, 1843, recorded June 25, 1843, in Book L, page 281. Daniel Hankins sold the whole of Lot 53 to Whitewater Valley Canal Company for \$7000.
- 1846 Deed, April 3, 1846, recorded in Book N, page 206. Whitewater Valley Canal Company sold to Hutchinson and William Lindall all of Lot 53 except the forty feet wide northeast strip, for \$6495.
- 1848 Deed, January 11, 1848, recorded February 16, 1848 in Book O, page 197. Whitewater Valley Canal Company sold the northeast corner of Lot 53 to Samuel W. Parker for \$4000.
- 1853 Deed, May 30, 1853, recorded May 31, 1853 in Book R, page 581. S.W. Parker sold to Thomas Henderson the property for \$3250.
- 1855 Deed, January 17, 1855, recorded February 23, 1855, Book S, page 92. Thomas Henderson and wife to Savings Bank of Indiana for consideration of \$3500.
- 1857 Deed, January 23, 1857, recorded February 18, 1857, Book T, page 209. Savings Bank of Indiana to Albert Honeywell for consideration of \$4000.
- 1857 Deed, February 17, 1857, recorded February 18, 1857, Book T, page 210. Albert Honeywell and wife to Elisha Vance for consideration of \$4000.
- 1868 Deed, May 26, 1868, recorded May 26, 1868, Book 3, page 74. Robert Vance to Mary Vance.
- 1868 Deed, August 31, 1868, recorded August 31, 1868, Book 3, page 100. Mary Vance to Samuel Vance.
- 1897 Deed, March 2, 1897, recorded March 3, 1897, Book 10, page 306. Samuel W. Vance to Adaline Vance et al.

- 1925 Deed, January 12, 1925, recorded January 26, 1925, Adaline Vance to Portia Hanson.
- 1936 Deed, June 27, 1936, recorded June 27, 1936, Book 23, page 88. Portia Hanson to Carl R. Fisher and wife.
- 1936 Deed, November 25, 1936, recorded November 25, 1936, Book 23, page 152-53. Carl R. Fisher and Letha L. Fisher to Alice (Mrs. Finly) Gray.
- 1948 Deed, June 30, 1948, recorded August 12, 1948, Book 29, page 16. Alice Gray to Veterans of Foreign Wars, Glen Sample Post #571, for consideration of \$9300.
- 1971 Deed, May 22, 1971, recorded May 26, 1971, Book 59, page 104-05. Veterans of Foreign Wars of the U.S. to Historic Connersville, Inc. "Part of lot 53...as first laid off by John Connor in Fayette County, State of Indiana."

4. Original plan and construction: As constructed in 1843, Canal House consisted of the main two-story rectangular brick section. The two-story front portico, supported by four wooden fluted Greek Doric columns, was without a second-story balcony, and the steps fronting the portico extended across the full width. Leading into the front entry vestibule, the main doorway was fitted with heavy double doors with nine-light panels over recessed molded panels on the lower half. On the east and west (side) elevations, four brick pilasters are arranged so as to define the end bays of each facade.

The double doors open into the main vestibule, which extends beyond to the side stairhall with a hardwood stairway on the west wall leading to the second floor. The front room, to the left of the hall, has a fireplace on the east wall, and one of the two steel vaults originally installed by the Canal Company, on the south wall. The back room, also to the left of the stairway, has the second vault on the north wall. The second floor consisted of one large room.

5. Alterations and additions: Initially, Canal House was used by the Whitewater Valley Canal Company as its offices and clearing house. When the property was acquired in 1848 by the company's president, Samuel W. Parker, the structure was converted into a residence. In 1855 it was purchased by the Savings Bank of Indiana and adopted for use as a commercial bank. Shortly thereafter, in 1857, the building was reconverted into a private residence. Subsequently at some point during the early 20th century, Canal House served as a small veterinary hospital.

The one-story rear ell is believed to have been constructed when the building was converted from a commercial to a residential building. This later construction date is indicated by differences in the sections' structural systems: the foundation of the main section is a soft limestone, quarried in Longwood, Indiana; the ell section's foundation is a hard limestone, quarried in Laurel, Indiana. Beyond this, the ell is not bonded into the main block, and the cornices of the sections intersect awkwardly.

In 1936, Finly and Alice Gray acquired the structure and restored both the interior and exterior, added the front second-story balcony, and the chimney on the exterior east wall. This chimney served fireplaces in the basement and the first floor's front room. The Veterans of Foreign Wars acquired the property in 1948, and they bricked the east window in the first floor's back room, added bathrooms to this room, and removed all closets on the second floor.

Since 1971 Historic Connersville, Inc. has been involved in an extensive restoration of the structure. The major portion of the restoration was completed in 1973-76, which included the installation of a fire escape at the rear of the building, the replacement of all windows with double hung sash, six-over-six lights, relaying all floors with oak hardwood, removing the front second-story balcony, and replacing the east, first-story window. Today Canal House is used as a meeting hall by civic organizations and sororities.

B. Historic Events and Persons Connected with the Structure:

The Whitewater Valley Canal Company was chartered in 1842 to complete the construction of the Whitewater Canal, begun in 1825 by the State Internal Improvement Program. The Improvement Program involved building railway, turnpike and canal arteries. Because priority was given to this project, twenty of the Whitewater Canal's thirty-five miles, between Cambridge City, Indiana and the Ohio River, had been completed by December 1838. Unfortunately, the program was bankrupt at this time. All work stopped on the canal until the Whitewater Valley Canal Company was organized in 1842. By 1845 the canal had opened to Connersville, and by 1847, to Hagerstown, Indiana. Damaging floods in January 1847, however, brought an end to the project. Subsequent flooding ended the use of the canal as a means of transportation, and the Whitewater Valley Canal Company dissolved in 1848.

Samuel W. Parker, president of the Whitewater Valley Canal Company, bought Canal House after the company dissolved in 1848. A native of Jefferson County, New York, he moved to Cincinnati, Ohio in 1815. He entered Miami University of Oxford, Ohio in 1825 and graduated from that school in 1829. Coming to Connersville, Indiana after his graduation from Miami, Parker simultaneously opened a private school and commenced upon the study of law. He was admitted to the Bar in 1831. In his capacity as a lawyer, Parker served as Fayette County's prosecuting attorney, 1836-38. He was elected by the Whig Party to the House in the state legislature in 1839, and to the state Senate in 1841. After his involvement with commerce, Parker returned to politics and was elected to the U.S. Congress in 1849 and again in 1851. He retained his seat in the House until his death in 1859.

Finly Gray was a prominent Indiana politician. He was a lawyer by training, and was elected mayor of Connersville in 1904 and re-elected in 1909. From 1911 to 1917 and 1933 to 1939, Gray served six terms as a Representative in the U.S. Congress.

C. Sources of Information:

1. Old views:

Canal House, view from northeast, 1925, Indiana State Library.

Canal House, interior views, 1930s, Historic Connersville, Inc.

2. Bibliography:

a. Primary and unpublished sources:

Fayette County Deed Records, Office of the Recorder, Fayette County Courthouse.

Interview with Robert Gray, Historic Connersville, Inc., June 1974.

b. Published and secondary sources:

Barrows, Frederic Irving. History of Fayette County. Indianapolis, 1917.

Biographical and Geneological History of Wayne, Fayette, Union and Franklin Counties. Chicago, 1899.

Connersville "New Examiner," June 15, 1968.

Connersville Sesquicentennial. Connersville, 1946.

Fatout, Paul. Indiana Canals. West Lafayette, Indiana, 1972.

History of Fayette County, Indiana. Chicago, 1885.

Peat, Wilbur. Indiana Houses of the Nineteenth Century. Indianapolis, 1912.

Work Projects Administration. Indiana: A Guide to the Hoosier State. New York, 1941.

Prepared by Robert Bruegmann  
Team Historian  
Historic American  
Buildings Survey  
Summer 1974

## PART II. ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION

### A. General Statement:

1. Architectural character: Canal House is a good example of an early nineteenth-century structure designed on the Greek Revival temple plan. It is fronted by a two-story tetrastyle portico supported by fluted Greek Doric columns.
2. Condition of Fabric: Good. Historic Connersville, Inc. has been involved in an extensive renovation of the structure since 1971 to restore Canal House to its original state.

### B. Description of Interior:

1. Overall dimensions: The two-story rectangular section measures 30'-11" (three-bay front) x 39'-7", with a one-story rear ell (16'-0" x 17'-10").
2. Foundations: Rough coursed limestone with ashlar bond and thick mortar joints.
3. Wall construction, finish and color: Brick with common header bond coursing.
4. Structural system, framing: Brick bearing wall construction with wooden joists and rafters. Two rudimentary roof trusses run longitudinally. Four brick pilasters are placed in pairs so as to define the end bays on the east and west (side) facades.

5. Porches, stoops: The two-story front (north) portico is supported by four wooden fluted Greek Doric columns. A second-story balcony has been recently removed. Front and back steps are concrete. A recently installed steel fire escape is at the rear.
6. Chimneys: An exterior chimney on the east wall serves stone fireplaces in the basement and first floor front room.
7. Openings:
  - a. Doorways and doors: Each of the wooden double entrance doors has a nine-light panel over the molded wooden panels below. Frames, mullions and trim are wooden. Lintels are flush stone. A pair of round-arched doors at the south (rear) open from the hallway out to the exterior. A pair of wooden paneled doors with a fixed transom opens at the second story onto the steel fire escape. Doors, frames and trim are wooden; all are painted white.
  - b. Windows and shutter: The window openings on the north (front) facade are six-over-six light double-hung sash framed by louvred shutters. Frames are wooden, sills and lintel are of stone.
8. Roof:
  - a. Shape, covering: The main rectangular section and rear ell have pedimented gable roofs, with the ridges parallel to each other. The main section is covered with asphalt shingles; the rear section has standing seam metal sheathing.
  - b. Cornice, eaves: The wooden entablature on the north, east and west facades is appointed with a stuccoed pediment, plain architrave, plain frieze and a box cornice.

#### C. Description of Interior

1. Floor plans:
  - a. Basement: A full basement extends under the full area of the main section, and is laid out in a similar arrangement as the first floor.
  - b. First floor: Side hall plan, with an added rear ell.

- c. Second floor: The second floor is one large room with a bathroom and kitchen above the lower stair hall.
  2. Stairways: The main double-run staircase in the entry hall is trimmed with turned cherry wooden balusters and an oval rail. The treads are white oak, risers and nosing are of poplar, and brackets at the turn are leather with lead molding.
  3. Flooring: Basement has concrete flooring; random width oak boards cover the first and second floor.
  4. Wall and ceiling finish: Basement walls are exposed brick with stone foundations; the ceilings' joist system is partially exposed, and covered with painted plaster.
  5. Doorways and doors: All doors are wooden with four molded panels.
  6. Notable hardware: Iron plate doors are on the vaults.
- D. Site: The building is on the south side of Main Street, facing north. It is in an area which is partially residential and partially commercial.

Prepared by Mort Karp  
Project Supervisor  
Historic American  
Buildings Survey  
Summer 1974

### PART III. PROJECT INFORMATION

This project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey in cooperation with the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana. The project was completed in the summer of 1974 under the direction of John Poppeliers, Chief of HABS; and Associate Professor Mort Karp of the University of Arkansas, Project Supervisor; the Architect Harry Hunderman (University of Michigan); and student assistant architects Scott Barnard (University of Pennsylvania), Mark Hall (Pennsylvania State University), and Richard Perlmutter (Yale University); and architectural historian Robert Bruegmann (University of Pennsylvania) at the HABS Field Office, Earlham College in Richmond, Indiana. Photographs were taken by HABS staff photographer Jack E. Boucher in January 1975. The written historical and architectural data was edited, and in some cases expanded upon, in the HABS Washington office in April 1979 by staff historian, Jan E. Cigliano.