

POPPIE-HICKMAN HOUSE
816-818 North California Street
Indianapolis
Marion County
Indiana

HABS No. IN-292

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49-IND,
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
Great Lakes Support Office
National Park Service
1709 Jackson Street
Omaha, Nebraska 68102

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

POPPIE-HICKMAN HOUSE

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Location: 816-818 North California Street
Indianapolis, Marion County, Indiana

USGS Indianapolis West, Indiana Quadrangle

Significance: Built in 1873 the Poppie-Hickman House is a typical house in the Ranson Place Historic District, listed in the National Register of Historic Places on December 10, 1992. This area developed after the Civil War as an area home to white, both native and foreign born and to blacks and mulattos. Typical of houses of the district this wood frame house grew from a one-story cottage to a two-story house containing multiple residential units early in the twentieth century. The neighborhood changed from a racially integrated one to one that was solidly black by 1930, a core of the historic black west side of Indianapolis.

Description: The Poppie-Hickman House is a two-story wood-frame house located on and facing North California Street. The wooden frame construction is covered with beveled wooden clapboards resting on a brick foundation containing a basement and is capped by a cross plan gable and hip roof covered with asphalt shingles. The main body of the house is two stories in height, approximately thirty feet wide and fifty feet long. Attached to the west wall is an "L" shaped gable-roofed wing approximately twenty two feet in length.

The front of the house is composed of a concrete porch slab resting on a rock-faced concrete block foundation. The porch, dated to 1914, was originally two stories in height. The porch posts, roof, and second-story flooring were removed sometime between 1969 and 1983. The main feature of the front of the house is the gable roof over the northern half of the wall. The gable has retained three of its original five Italianate styled wooden eaves brackets. In the center of the gable pediment is a circular opening which originally was an attic vent with a now-missing decoratively sawn wooden screen. Below the gable are two symmetrically spaced double-hung windows with wooden sashes. The first floor openings were reconfigured, probably in the mid 1920s when the first floor was sub-divided into two units.

The two openings, a door and paired windows are symmetrically placed. The southern half of the front wall is slightly recessed from the face of the gabled portion. The northern half has a door and a window at the first story level and a

window where a door had been at the second story level. The southern half is the front face of a portion of the "L" shaped veranda enclosed and incorporated into the house at an unknown date. It has a low pitched (nearly flat) sloped roof and rests on the rock-faced concrete block foundation found on the porch.

The south wall of the house is symmetrical in design with the gable centrally located on the roofline. Similar to the front gable, the south gable originally had five brackets, but only the apex bracket has survived and the vent screen has also disappeared. The eastern third of the south wall is the south face of the enclosed porch area mentioned above. It is pierced by paired double-hung windows at the second story level and a pair of square casement windows. The windows immediately below the gable show evidence of being replacements. The tripartite windows (double hung) date from the 1914 remodeling as they replaced the original single, long and narrow window evidenced by patched siding. The paired windows on the second level are smaller than the originals which dated from 1914. The western-most windows at the first story level are tripartite replacing a long, narrow nineteenth century window. The second level has a single window dating from 1914.

The west side of the main body is pierced by a door and a half-size window at the second-story level. The "L" plan wing is one story with a gable and shed roof. Three windows pierce the south wall of the wing. Doors pierce the gable end and the interior corner of the "L" serving as back doors for the two first floor apartments.

The main feature of the north wall is the centered gable similar to that found on the south wall, with missing brackets and roundel vent screen. The wall is pierced by paired and tripartite windows and four small square casement windows, some of recent vintage, others are 1914 replacements of original nineteenth century windows.

The main roof form is a cross gable forming an "L" plan. The corner of the "L" is a rear flat roof. Behind the cross plan form is a hipped roof. The rear "L" wing has a gable and shed roof. The roof is pierced by five brick chimneys coated with stucco.

The interior of the Poppie-Hickman House was not accessible to documentation because of the structural deterioration and instability of the foundation. Portions of the building had been open to the weather for years. Many clapboards are missing or loose exposing the wall structure to the elements.

History:

The Poppie-Hickman House was constructed in 1873. It appears that John Benjamin and Mary Poppie purchased the property with the one-story cottage already on site. The Poppies purchased the property on May 29, 1873, from Louisa Wright who had purchased a number of lots that February from Elizabeth Wiley, widow of William Y. Wiley, subdivision plat. Wiley platted the subdivision in 1871 in an area then on the northwestern edge of the city. John Benjamin Poppie was a tailor and a native of the north German seaport of Bremen. He and his wife raised five children in their one-story frame cottage. The 1887 Sanborn map records a one-story, frame, cross gable cottage with no front porch, a back porch and a two-story barn at the rear of the lot. By 1898, the only change recorded is the addition of a small front corner porch.

The Poppies were owner-occupants of the cottage from 1873 until 1900, when they sold the cottage that year to Baltzer and Laura Lytle. Mr. Lytle was a bookbinder and they made their residence here until Gertrude Cox purchased it in 1910. Cox married Julius Hickman and the couple resided here after substantially re-modeling the cottage in 1914. The renovation resulted in doubling the size of the dwelling with the addition of the second floor and the two-story front porch, creating two apartment units. In 1917 the Hickmans sold the house to Florence Jones, who operated it as a rental property. Jones sold the house to Olive Day in 1923 and it continued as a rental property. In the mid 1920s a third apartment was carved out of the duplex. Jones reclaimed the house in 1931. Celtic Savings and Loan foreclosed on Jones' property in 1937 and sold it in 1939 to Emma Baker, who operated it as rental property until selling it in 1956 to Cora Willis, a non-resident owner, followed by Zenobia Fisher in 1961. Sometime between 1914 and 1949 the two-story barn was reduced to one story and functioned as a garage. Fisher sold the property to Cecile Fields and Roberta Irvin in 1974. Fields was an occupant from 1940 until 1983. Irvin occupied one unit from 1964 until the early 1990s. She acquired full ownership in 1983. The barn-garage was removed sometime between 1969 and 1992; Business Opportunities Systems (BOS) purchased the house in 1992, since that time the house has been vacant. The front porch was removed after 1992.

The Poppie-Hickman House is typical for the neighborhood now known as the Ransom Place Historic District. This six blocks of residential buildings is an island surrounded by new development or vacant land waiting to be redeveloped. Most of the surviving houses in the neighborhood date from the late 1870s to the turn-of-the century. Built as one story cottages, many of these single-family cottages grew into two-story buildings with multiple dwelling units. This historic district

represents an early intact collection of buildings associated with Indianapolis' black community. The near west side had long been the city's black residential area. As evidenced by the Poppie family's owner occupancy in the late nineteenth century, the neighborhood was home to European immigrant families from Germany and Ireland as well as native-born whites, blacks and mulattos.

The Poppie-Hickman House is located in Ward 5 which was 16% black in 1910 and 16.9% black in 1920. The property's census tract (22) was 97% black in 1930, reflecting the demographic change brought about by the great migration of blacks from the rural South to the cities of the North. By 1940 the tract's population was 99.2% black. Urban renewal, the construction of the nearby Indiana University-Purdue University at Indianapolis Campus, and the easing of racial restrictions on housing resulted in the decline of the neighborhood which was the core of the black community.

Sources:

Department of Commerce, Bureau of the Census. Tenth Census of the United States. 1880, Marion County, Indiana. Original returns, microfilm.

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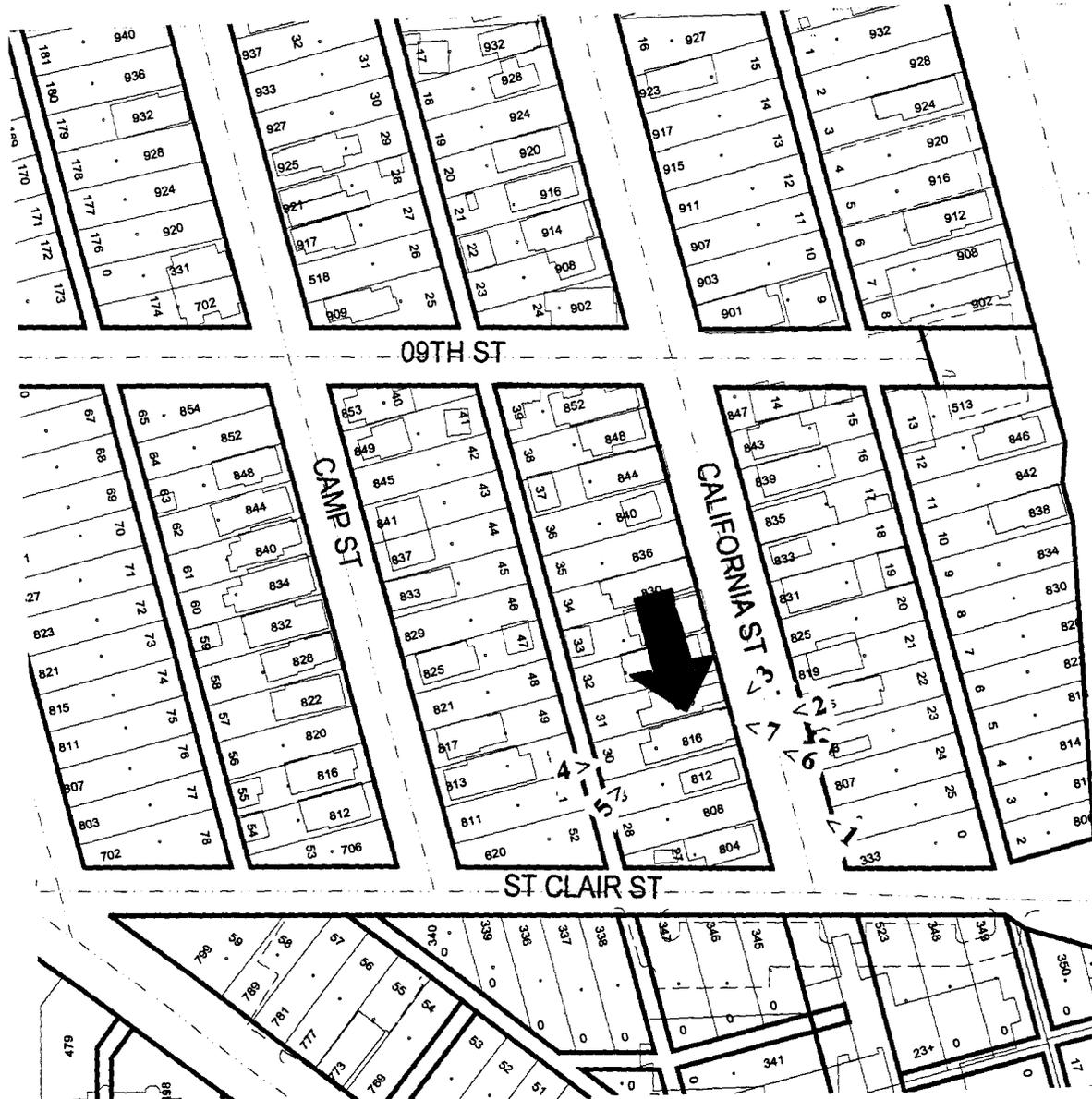
Polk, R.L. Indianapolis City Directories. Indianapolis: R.L. Polk & Company, 1873-1990 inclusive.

Ransom Place Historic District. National Register of Historic Places, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, December 10, 1992.

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Sanborn-Perris Map Company. Insurance Maps of Indianapolis, Indiana. New York: Sanborn-Perris Map Company, 1898 and 1898 corrected to 1913.

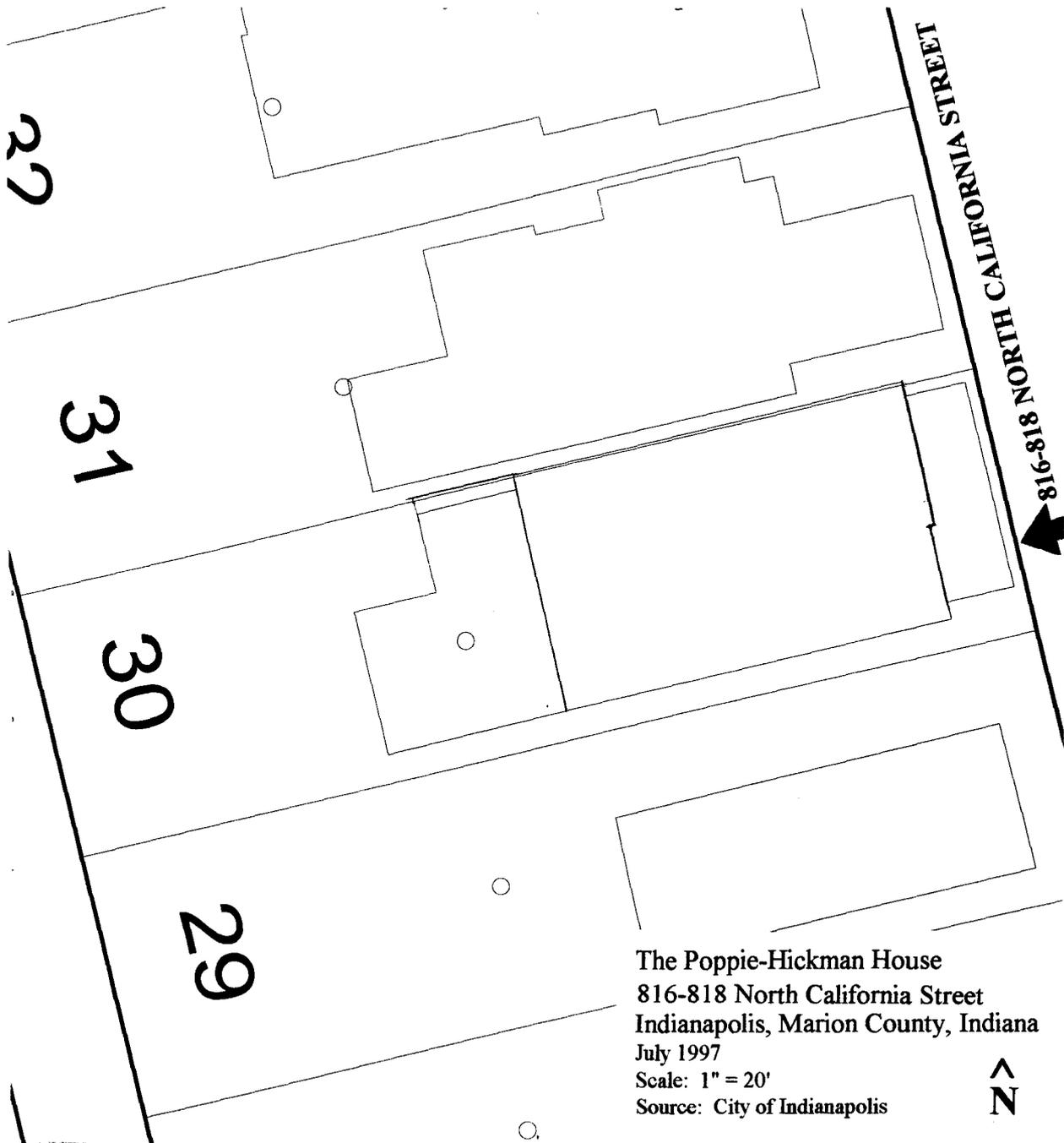
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Key to Photographs
 < 1 Camera Direction & Photo Number

The Poppie-Hickman House
 816-818 North California Street
 Indianapolis, Marion County, Indiana
 July 1997
 Scale: 11" = 150'
 Source: City of Indianapolis





The Poppie-Hickman House
816-818 North California Street
Indianapolis, Marion County, Indiana
July 1997
Scale: 1" = 20'
Source: City of Indianapolis

