

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED
DATE ENTERED

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

Octagon House

AND/OR COMMON

Hawley House, Octagon House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

223 West Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Barrington

NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

12

STATE

Illinois

VICINITY OF

CODE

012

COUNTY

Cook

CODE

031

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE <input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL <input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Mrs. Floyd Hawley

STREET & NUMBER

223 West Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Barrington

VICINITY OF

STATE

Illinois

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Cook County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

118 N. Clark Street

CITY, TOWN

Chicago

STATE

Illinois

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Illinois Historic Sites Survey

DATE

June 12, 1975

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Illinois Department of Conservation--Division of Historic Sites

CITY, TOWN

Springfield

STATE

Illinois

74 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input 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 Octagon House is an eight-sided residential structure having two stories. The house is entirely wood-framed and covered with clapboards. The Octagon House's most notable features are the beautifully carved and jig-sawed brackets supporting the roof of the porch which encloses the house, and the similarly detailed screens that cover the foundation from view. These screens, the porch floor and roof, and the elegantly scrolled porch supports are also all wood, and like the house, painted white. The structural members are fastened by hand-forged flat nails and glue. No machined nails were used in the original structure.

The brackets supporting the porch roof, and the decorative screens, were cut on a foot-pedal powered jigsaw and then hand finished. The brackets, which resemble quarter sections of scalloped wagon wheels, are attached to posts that have been cut out of flat board lumber, and paired. Four brackets are used per paired poles; two lying in the vertical plane and two in the horizontal. The number of poles and brackets per side varies, some sides have three such arrangements, some have four. At the corners, the builder chose to show the greater stresses on the roof by using three of the flat posts, and trebeling the vertical brackets as well. The decoration is in the best style of Andrew Jackson Downing's 1850 Architecture of Country Houses. The unusual shape of the house shows the builder to have been quite innovative, but his familiarity with the "cottage style" decorative elements popularized by Downing is indisputable.

The interior is quite conventional, and the rooms are divided so no octagonal corner is visible from the inside. The small spaces that develop from fitting a rectilinear floorplan into an octagonal space are used as coat nooks, and on the west side of the house, as a stair closet. The door frames and mouldings are hand carved in a simple medallion pattern. The doors are hung on wrought iron hinges and have retained their original porcelain doorknobs.

Two small additions to the structure have fortunately not violated the Octagon House's integrity as a notable building. Sometime before 1920 the porch at the rear was removed and a kitchen addition added to the southwest corner of the rear of the house. When the Hawley family purchased the house in 1951, the small bedroom extension at the rear southeast corner was added.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION		
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)		
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION				

SPECIFIC DATES c. 1860

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Mr. Brown, builder

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The design of the Octagon House represents the synthesis of two important events in American architectural history. In 1850, Andrew Jackson Downing published The Architecture of Country Houses, a book giving detailed drawings and plans for "simple country cottages".¹ In fact, Downing's houses were far from simple, making full use of the mid-nineteenth century carpenter's skill in cutting attenuated decorative members, bargeboards, screens, and mouldings. The richly shaped and scrolled detailing of the Octagon House reflects the influence of Downing's writings. The second event also was a publication: Orson S. Fowler's 1853 The Octagon House, A Home for All. Fowler, a writer on such diverse topics as temperance, phrenology, and the abolition of slavery, championed the advantages of octagonal homes over conventional frame structures. The octagonal plan, Fowler believed, was "cheap, convenient, and superior" and his book supplied numerous drawings and detailed plans to let the carpenter or handyman prove these assertions himself.²

While there is no proof that Mr. Brown (some newspaper sources give the first name Joseph, but there is no verification) was acquainted with either Downing or Fowler, it seems unlikely that neither book made an impression on him. Coming from New England sometime near 1860, Brown most certainly saw homes patterned after Downing's cottages en route to the Middle West. His decision to build his house octagonally may have been inspired by Fowler's eloquence. At least one other notable Illinois structure, the Charter Oak School in Sparta, derives its octagonal shape from A Home for All. But perhaps, as the Octagon House's current owner has suggested, Brown's reasons were simpler. Mrs. Hawley has said that Mr. Brown's answer, delivered, one assumes, with typical New England asperity, to neighbors enquiring as to the strange shape of the house was "I'm building mine round because everyone else's is square."³

The architectural significance of the house remains intact and unique. The decorative scrollwork has not been harmed either by time or the additions to the house. The visibility of the octagonal plan has fared equally well. The house's exterior, from

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CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 1

continuation of statement of significance:

all sides except the southernmost still appears to be a regular octagon. Ultimately, the uniqueness of the Octagon House is the most important factor in its nomination. There are only a handful of octagonal buildings remaining in the Midwest, and of those, very few are in as good shape as the Octagon House. As a uniquely shaped representative of a period of American building when craftsmen built buildings without architects, calling on previous work and pattern-books instead, and as an example of the type of woodwork nearly impossible to find in structures build after 1900, the Octagon House is unsurpassed.

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- ¹ Andrew Jackson Downing, The Architecture of Country Houses (New York: Dover Press, 1969, a reissue of the 1850 edition), p. 3
 - ² Orson S. Fowler, The Octagon House: A Home for All (New York: Dover Press, 1973, a reissue of the 1850 edition), p. 1
 - ³ Reported in a phone conversation with Mrs. Hawley, Barrington, Illinois, June 17, 1978

ILLINOIS HISTORIC SITES SURVEY INVENTORY

1. Name of Site:

Common

Historic Octagon House

20010

2. Location:

Street and Number

Harrison & Main
City or Town

Zip Code

Township

Range

Section

1/2 Section

Barrington
County

Cook

3. Classification:

Category (check one)

- District
- Building
- Site
- Structure

Integrity (check one)

- Altered
- Moved
- Unaltered
- Original Site

4. Ownership:

- Private
- Public

Status (check one)

- Occupied
- Unoccupied
- Preservation work in progress

Access to Public

- Yes
- Restricted
- Unrestricted
- No

Present Use (check one or more)

- Agricultural
- Commercial
- Educational
- Entertainment
- Government
- Industrial
- Military
- Museum
- Park
- Private Residence
- Religious
- Scientific
- Transportation
- Other

5. Ownership of Property:

Owner's Name

Phone Number

Street and Number

City or Town

State

County

Zip Code

6. Description: White, Italianate detail.

- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Deteriorated
- Ruins
- Unexposed

Is there a program of preservation underway?

- Yes
- No

?

ARCHITECTURE

7. Historical Themes: (check one or more of the following)

- | | |
|---|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archeological Site | (Pre-Columbian) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Archeological Site | (Post-Columbian to 1673) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> French Influence | (1673-1780) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Illinois Frontier | (1780-1818) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Illinois Early | (1818-1850) |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Illinois Middle | (1850-1900) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Illinois Late | (1900-present) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Famous People | (give names & dates) |

8. Specific Date: 1850's or 1870's

Areas of significance (check one or more of the following)

- | | |
|--|--|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal (historic) | <input type="checkbox"/> Literature |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal (pre-historic) | <input type="checkbox"/> Military |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Agriculture | <input type="checkbox"/> Music |
| <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture | <input type="checkbox"/> Political |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Art | <input type="checkbox"/> Religion/Philosophy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Commerce | <input type="checkbox"/> Science |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Communication | <input type="checkbox"/> Sculpture |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Conservation | <input type="checkbox"/> Social/Humanitarian |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Education | <input type="checkbox"/> Theater |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Engineering | <input type="checkbox"/> Transportation |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Industry | <input type="checkbox"/> Urban Planning |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Invention | <input type="checkbox"/> Other (specify) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture | |

Brief statement of significance: (include all names and dates)

Use additional sheets if necessary. Octagon House. Not known of this is an original 1850/s house.

9. Form prepared by:

Name and Title: _____ Date: June 12, 19__

Organization: _____ Phone: _____

Street and Number: _____

City or Town: _____ County: _____ Zip Code _____

During the course of the Survey we often find it necessary to search for a particular site. When filling out the Survey form, please list according to the following example, published references to the site for which forms are being completed. If a bibliography can be compiled, it will greatly deduct from the Survey's task.

Bibliography

Robertson, Robert, Of Whales and Men. New York, Alfred K. Knopf, Inc., 1954.

Windshield.

