

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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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

CYRUS FELT HOUSE

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

3 Miles north of the Hamilton "Y" NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Illinois 96.

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Hamilton

VICINITY OF

Hancock

19

STATE

CODE

COUNTY

CODE

Illinois

62331

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	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT <input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY <input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Nancy E. O'Harra and Mary O'Harra Smith

STREET & NUMBER

229 S. Madison

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Carthage

VICINITY OF

Illinois 62331

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Hancock County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Carthage,

Illinois 62331

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Illinois Historic Structures Survey

DATE

1972

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Illinois Department of Conservation

CITY, TOWN

STATE

Springfield

Illinois 62706

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input 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 best evidence points to a date of construction in 1834 although no conclusive facts exist to positively date the building. It is conceivable that the building was earlier than 1834 and of French origin, but much more research would have to be done to establish this. An 1829 Corps of Engineers map shows other houses on the east bank of the Mississippi, but not the Felt house.

The house is a two story plus walk-out basement structure on the east bank of the river about 200 feet from the water and 30 feet above it, on a steeply sloping site. It is of heavy timber construction with hewn oak timbers possibly with knee braces and mortise and tenon joints, walls infilled with brick nogging. The basement walls are rough ashlar native stone. The original basement wood floor was removed and concrete installed some years ago. The floor joists are full 2" x 10" with straight saw marks and rough holes reportedly to allow transportation on the river when tied together. Cut nails are found throughout the house whether in finish work, flooring, trim or whatever, except for areas of modernization. Roof framing is non-uniform but generally full 2" boards some hewn, some straight and some circular sawn. Roof decking is circular sawn rough boards of uneven width and spacing for wood shingles. Roof framing for curved eaves, gable overhangs, etc., is all one period, probably original. Present roofing is asphalt shingles. Trim throughout is full 1" thick and shows pre-1850's methods, i.e. plaster goes to trim and not underneath, etc. Lath is circular sawn in second floor and basement. Windows display older construction as do doors (pinned at junction of stiles and rails). Thin mullions with a Greek ovolo shape which is repeated at windows, doors, and french doors. All glass is very old and no larger than around 12" x 20". Wood flooring throughout is pine circular sawn in uniform widths, these being full 6" at the west room towards the river and 5 1/4" at the east room (1st fl.), except where replacements have been made. This would indicate that the east room with the fireplace was the principal room and that the south door in this room was the major entrance. Flooring displays great wear in traffic areas to about half its original thickness. Hinges on French doors and interior and exterior doors are all two-piece although no blunt screws were found. Exterior siding is sawn and hand planed lapped presenting a smooth face in a plane with very small horizontal joints. Exterior corners are 1" x 3 1/2" boards with a routed bead about 5/8" round at the corner. Roof edge at gable end displays a 1" thick Greek ovolo moulding. Exterior railings, balusters, decking and covering on columns is not original although paint outline of original handrail exists. Soffit material is original 4" boards with a single bead. Brick fireplace at first floor sits on stone foundation walls and appears to be original. A very large stone hearth is present and configuration of masonry, throat, splayed sides, and flues is of very early style. A smoke shelf is present. Wood mantel is original but not as finely done as might have been expected from the balance of the house. Exterior and interior door and window heads as well as the back piece of the mantel

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are Greek revival shape with a bead and are original. The one over the French doors in the second floor river elevation has a curved top to reflect the curve of the roof.

Original shutters have been removed from French doors but are still extant. An offset in the pilasters supporting the stone hearth in the basement is explained by the discovery of an old flue in the north end of the stone masonry going around the stone, thus allowing a stove in the basement.

ALTERATIONS:

An additional toilet and a kitchen were added to the back (east) end of the building in recent times as well as interior stairs to the basement and some rearranging of a north-south partition on the first floor to allow a kitchen in the northwest corner. Otherwise the building contains extensive original fabric. The retaining wall on the southeast corner supporting the porch has been rebuilt with a different stone. This could be expected considering the problems of drainage from the slopes behind the house. Some portion of the foundations supporting porch columns has been rebuilt with concrete block.

No fire damage was visible in the framing of the first floor or attic but the building does display anomalies from an 1834 construction date (circular sawn roof boards, floorboards, and circular sawn lath) which leads one to speculate that the building either suffered from damage by a tornado (roofing blown off, plaster water damaged, etc.) or that materials were brought up river from an urban area with more advanced technology. The first steamboat up river was circa 1826. Cyrus Felt was an active merchant and it would not be surprising to find that he had imported many building materials. Gordon Diary cited in the Statement of Significance (1) refers to the Gordon house having "an Alleghany pine floor, first in the township, ordered from St. Louis" in 1833. Water and rust marks around vertical lath nails (square) in bottom of original floor joists would tend to support the storm damage theory. These anomalies are not sufficient to cause serious problems with an 1834 date of original construction. The building hangs together too well on its site not to be an original conception rather than an extensive remodeling.

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 checked="" 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 1834 and after BUILDER/ARCHITECT unknown

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Cyrus Felt immigrated to Illinois in 1831 from Petersboro, N.H., with a large party of the Gordon family.⁽¹⁾ This was two years after the organization of Hancock County. In 1832, Cyrus returned to New Hampshire to return by way of New Orleans with his brother Oliver and a new bride as well as goods with which to start a store.⁽²⁾

In 1833 Cyrus Felt purchased the 5-acre tract upon which the building sits from a Squire Endsley for \$100.00.⁽³⁾ In 1834, Cyrus' brother Oliver died thus requiring the dissolution of a partnership of the two brothers with a Wm. Smith. The inventory of Oliver's estate shows the following entry: "Improvements where Mr. Felt now lives including cultivated lands, house, and other buildings. \$850.00."⁽⁴⁾ Cyrus paid the other party, Smith, \$700 for the land and buildings.

The next reference to the building is a map of the Des Moines rapids on the Mississippi river from the Corps of Engineers, surveyed by Lt. Robert E. Lee in 1837.⁽⁵⁾ This shows a building designated "Mr. Phelits store." The location on this map scaled from the mouth of Wagonners Creek very closely follows the location of the building shown on a present day USGS map scaled from the same location. The building on the Lee map is shown as part of the town of Montebello.

Montebello was the earliest settlement other than Ft. Edwards (later Warsaw) in Hancock County and was the seat of justice until 1833. Lt. Lee makes several references to staying in places on the Illinois side during the years 1836-1840 while he was surveying and blasting a channel in the rapids. He stayed at Dr. Allen's the first trip, the top part of a sunken steamboat the second, and at an unnamed hostelry in Montebello, possibly the Felts.⁽⁶⁾

Stylistically, the house is a problem. Viewed from the south where the town of Montebello was situated, it presents a rather French character with stone basement set back from the roof, porch, and roof columns. The nice proportions formed by roofline, bannisters, porch and columns along with the steepness and curve of the roof and the chimneys present a very French feeling. All histories allude to the number of Frenchmen in this area and the second and third marriage licenses in the county were taken out by Frenchmen. Similar gallery porches are found on Accadian houses near New Orleans, with the curved roofline. The Greek detail over windows and doors relates the building to Illinois vernacular of the period.

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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE: (cont'd)

The river elevation with its second floor balcony and first floor porch with the deep overhang of the steep roof is surely the result of the owner-builder's desire to take advantage of the site and the views of the river as well as to make a statement that all passing riverboats could see. The building's major purpose was after all as a store for the river trade. The river elevation does evoke an immediate stereotypical response in the viewer, but after researching the building itself one is impressed by the wealth of architectural and stylistic integrity present.

The last reference I shall cite is in the diary of one of the younger Gordons who lived approximately at the present location of Hamilton, Illinois. On the 13th of February, 1845, he attended a ball at the Felt's at which he danced from 6 p.m. to 6 a.m. (This may explain the rough condition of the fireplace.)⁽¹⁾

Cyrus Felt prospered and built a much larger stone house 6 miles inland from this location which may still contain the mail slot cabinet he used when postmaster at Montebello, presumably handling the mail of Lt. Robert E. Lee, prior to 1840.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- (1) Diary of Samuel Gordon, 1845, possession Donald Gordon, Hamilton.
- (2) W. K. Githens Scrapbook, Hamilton, Illinois Library.
- (3) p. 3 Abstract of title, possession of Ms. Nancy O'Hara.
- (4) Inventory, Willboxes 1 and 2, Hancock County Courthouse.
- (5) Map of the Des Moines Rapids, U.S. Corps of Engineers, surveyed 1837-1
- (6) Robert E. Lee, A Portrait, Margaret Sanborn, Lippincott Co, Phila. 1966

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY LESS THAN ONE

QUADRANGLE NAME HAMILTON

UTM REFERENCES

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24000

A	1,5	6,3,8	2,3,0	4,1,7,6	9,4,0
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		
C					
E					
G					

B					
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		
D					
F					
H					

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Township 5 N, 9W of the 4th principal meridian. Lot L of a subdivision of the fractional S. E. 1/4 of Section 12 and lot L of the subdivision of the fractional N. E. 1/4 of Section 1

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

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Wm. B. Coney

ORGANIZATION

123 S. Sq.

STREET & NUMBER

Macomb,

CITY OR TOWN

15 Oct 1979

DATE

309 8372017

TELEPHONE

Illinois 61455

STATE

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

Dail Kenny

TITLE

Dir., Ill. Dept. of Conservation

DATE

1/7/80

FOR NPS USE ONLY

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

ATTEST: KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

CHIEF OF REGISTRATION

DATE