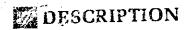
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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DATE 7974; 1	973	FEDERAL	X-STATE _COUNTY _LOCA	L
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CONDITION

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DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

Menard County is one of several agricultural counties in central Illinois characterized by gentle terrain, rich soil, and underlying beds of bituminous coal. Roughly 90% of the land is under cultivation, the remainder consisting of deciduous timber along the county's waterways. Petersburg, the county seat, is located near the center of the county on the western bank of the Sangamon River, approximately 23 miles northerst of Springfield, the state capital. Its topography varies considerably from that of the county as a whole, the town rising sharply as it extends back from the river onto the bluffs between 50 and 100 feet above the water level. The steepest ascent is toward the western edge of town, though a significant albeit gentler incline is encountered to the south. Immediately south of the city limits, the land again sinks markedly into an unspoilt ravine.

The Petersburg Historic District includes most of the town. The boundaries have been determined primarily from visual impact: areas whose character is governed by outstanding individual structures or by a series of lesser, yet still significant buildings are included; areas overwhelmed by intrusions and inconsequential architecture are excluded. The District's northern limit follows Stephenson from 4th to 7th, the interior property lines north of Rutledge from 7th to the interior property line west of 8th, the interior property lines north of Taylor to those west of the line of 10th, the line of Sangamon west to 13th, south on 13th and then west along the interior property lines north of Menard to the G.M.& O. RR right-of-way. From this point, the western boundary follows the G.M.& O. right-of-way south to the city limits, the city limits south to the interior property line south of the line of Jackson, the interior property lines south of Jackson east to the interior property lines west of 10th, south along those lines to Adams, further south along 11th, west on the city limits to Oakland and then south on Oakland to the north line of Oakland Cemetery. This cemetery is included in the district (v.item 25 under Significance). The southern boundary of the district is the south line of Oakland Cemetery extended east to its point of intersection with the southern extension of the interior property lines east of 7th, thus including the important open space traditionally associated with the houses on the south side of Washington. The eastern boundary generally follows the interior property lines east of 7th north to Jackson, occasionally dipping east to 6th in order to include individual structures of merit. From Jackson, the eastern boundary follows 6th north to the interior property lines south of Sangamon, east along this line to the first property line east of 5th, north on the first and/or second property line east of 5th to the interior property lines south of STephenson, east on these lines to 4th and then north to Stephenson.

Land use within the district conforms to the norm of small Illinois county seats, with commercial usage concentrated around the public square and its courthouse, and religious structures scattered throughout a predominantly residential area. There are no industrial establishments within the district, what little industry there is in Petersburg being located to the north and east. Transportation depends on the private automobile and the main east-west arteries are Sangamon and Sheridan,

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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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while north-south traffic is concentrated on 7th and 6th (Ill.Rte.97). The street pattern is a pure rectangular grid, with the exception of Sheridan winding up the hill west of 10th. Other streets make absolutely no adjustment to the terrain, proceeding straight up and down the steep grade of the slopes.

The density is extremely low except in the immediate proximity of the public square with its relatively dense commercial exploitation. Single family detached residences, often widely scattered and only loosely related to one another, are the most common building type in the district. The residential structures are mostly of one or two-story frame construction, with masonry preponderant in religious and commercial buildings. With three full stories and a dome, the courthouse is the tallest building in the district, balanced by three-story business establishments on the west side of the square and two-story ones on the north. Most residences in the district are of modest size, but there are a number of large, palatial dwellings to the west and south, particularly along Sheridan, backson, and Washington. Several very small, early houses are located throughout the district.

The earliest houses date from 1826 to the mid-1840's and are cast in a highly simplified Federal style. There is some Greek Revival from mid-century and a concentration of Queen Anne dating to the 1880's and '90's. In terms of quality and sheer physical bulk, however, the district is dominated by a number of substantial Italianate houses - some turreted - built about 1865-1876. Styles popular after the turn of the century are scarcely present.

The intrusions in the Petersburg Historic District are less the result of accretions than of deletions. Of the many small, mid-19th century houses that could constitute a valuable building stock, great numbers are sided and otherwise unsuitably alterred. The penchant for siding materials inconsistent with a building's appearance is so pervasive as to constitute the major intrusion. "Modernization" of the commercial structures around the public square has effectively eliminated their ground stories and, at least in the case of the National Bank on the square's west side, the entire facade. Intrusions issuing from completely new construction include house trailers at various locations and the new building of the National Bank of Petersburg on the southwest corner of 6th and Taylor.

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1900-	COMMUNICATIONS	INDUSTRY	POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	OTHER (SPECIFY)
- -		INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Petersburg's significance begins virtually at its inception, it being the only town known to have been surveyed and platted by Abraham Lincoln. Beyond this, there are several other strong ties between Petersburg, New Salem, and Lincoln. During its period of greatest flowering - the mid-19th century - the town numbered several men prominent in state politics, and one - Major B.F. Stephenson - of national significance among its residents.

Architecturally, Petersburg presents a fascinating picture of late 19th century small town Mid-America. The overall building is very old for central Illinois, with many of the town's original structures still extant, and individual structures (e.g. Nos.1,3,5-8, & 11 below) of a quality rarely encountered in the state. Their grace and opulence preserve a rich aspect unusual in such a small town, while the series of older structures testify to the town's pioneer beginnings. Although the town has been in a stagnant state for decades, it is relatively intact, having weathered the vicissitudes of times it helped create.

Combining with historical and architectural prominence, the town's river site contributes much to its aura. A hill town in the midst of the prairie, Petersburg offers pleasing vistas for those who care to pause and look.

HISTORY

Little is known of the aboriginal history of the town-site of Petersburg. Burial mounds were known to have existed along the Sangamon River bluffs and habitation by the Mound Builders seems to have been relatively intense. In historic times, the site lay within the territory of the Illini, but nearly all Indian's had been removed from the area before 1819, the year the county's first white settler arrived.

The initial land claim on the site of Petersburg was made in the early 1820's by James Estep, who was quickly followed by his father, Elijah, and his brother, Enoch. Elijah Estep built the first permanent structures on the future site of the town - a small mill and a house - in 1826, and one, the house, still survives. Other settlers, mainly from Tennesee, Kentucky, Virginia and the Carolinas began to locate in the area in increasing numbers, prompting the foundation of Salem two miles south of present Petersburg, 13 October 1829 (vide Lincoln's New Salem Village, National Register of Historic Places, Supplement 1974, p.148). The history of Salem is closely tied to that of Petersburg, many of the former's early settlers having moved there as the town declined and

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HISTORY (Cont.)

finally failed in 1842-43. A number of structures were physically removed from Salem to Petersburg during the 1830's - e.g. No.19 below and the Onstot Cooper shop, now again at Salem - lending weight to the argument that Petersburg is a relocation of the earlier settlement.

Petersburg was originally laid out by George Warburton and Peter Leukins (or Lukins) in 1832-33 on 160 acres of land they owned jointly, the entire tract being divided into blocks and town lots at that time. Though the first store was opened in 1833, a post office established in 1834, and church services held in 1835, the town proved a failure and Leukins and Warburton sold it to Hezekiah King and John Taylor, who employed Abraham Lincoln, then Deputy County Surveyor of Sangamon County, to survey and re-plat the town. The town was named for Peter Leukins and the plat filed for record on 22 February 1836. The re-foundation of the town seems to have enjoyed an immediate upswing, as indicated by the opening of the first school that same year.

Petersburg was selected as county seat of Menard County in the spring of 1839, shortly after the legislative session which struck the county off from Sangamon. It was then - and still is - the only substantial town in the county. In 1839, Petersburg numbered about 300 inhabitants and its subsequent growth was a direct result of its selection as seat of government. That growth was never rapid, but was steady for about 75 years, peaking around 1900 with a population of 3400. A steady stream of German immigration that began in mid-century helped sustain that growth. Petersburg was incorporated as a town by Act of Legislature in 1841 and organized as a city under Illinois law in 1882.

From 1839 until 1843, county business was transacted in an old storehouse moved from Salem and belonging to John Bennett. The first courthouse was readied for use in 1843 and was replaced by the second - and present - building in 1897. A jail was also built by 1843, the present structure at Monroe and Sixth superceding it in 1870. Although government has traditionally been the major industry in Petersburg -- there were 13 lawyers practicing there in 1904 -- other ventures have, from time to time, flourished.

Woolen mills played an early role, the major establishment having been started by Hardin Bale at Salem in 1837. The mill removed to Petersburg in 1840 and, surviving fires in 1865 and 1869, operated until the end of the century. Grist and saw mills were also significant. The first was that of Elijah Estep, followed by establishments run by a Mr.Dorrell, a Mr.Sanford, the Eagle Mills (1867), and Aaron Hatfield's mill (ca.1882). A canning factory was opened in 1901 and operated for several years; a bed-spring and excelsior factory proved successful until it was destroyed by fire. Coal mines were opened within the town limits in 1865-66 and 1872, but are no longer in production. Two railroads, the Chicago, Alton and St.Louis

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HISTORY (Cont.)

(now Gulf, Mobile and Ohio) and Chicago, Peoria and St.Louis (now Chicago and Illinois Midlands) located through Petersburg, but, although they cross in the northern part of town, had little lasting effect.

Petersburg was not destined to become a manufacturing center despite several local efforts. Farming and commerce have proven more successful over the long haul. Grain elevators have been in operation at least since the last decade of the 19th century; commercial activity, though apparently declining, is still extensive. In 1904, Petersburg counted over 55 business establishments, including three banks, three hotels, and four barber shops.

Educational institutions and social and religious organizations were established in the town at a relatively early date. The first churches were built in 1842 and 1848; the Freemasons established a lodge in 1842, and the I.O.O.F. in 1848. The first free (public) school was held during the winter or 1855-56; and the Petersburg Seminary, a private enterprise, was established in 1870, but proved short-lived.

Civic improvements were begun with the installation of a system of waterworks in 1888 and the sinking of a large supply well during 1893-94. The first sanitary sewer was laid in 1892 and a drainage sewer added in 1904. Electrification was begun in the 1890's. Streets, however, were not paved until the first decade of this century.

There has been very little real growth in Petersburg over the past 50-60 years; in fact, population at the last census was but 2,632, well below that of 1900. With the ever-improving private transportation provided by the automobile during that period -- and its accessibility to greater numbers of people -- the town seems to have declined steadily on all fronts, less competitive for new industry and commerce than SPringfield, 23 miles distant.

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SITES AND STRUCTURES OF SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE Numbers refer to map

1. T.W.McNEELY HOME ("EDGEWOOD")

316 W.Washington

Built in 1876 by T.W.McNeely; John Carver, contractor
Thompson Ware McNeely was a noted lawyer and legislator, serving
two terms in Congress (1868-72). We was a close friend of William
Jennings Bryan, who was a frequent guest at Edgewood. The 30 acres
of land immediately south of the house were originally part of the

Architectural and Historical Significance

2. ISAAC WHITE HOUSE

521 W.Jackson

Built in room by Tsaac white

Isaac White (1819-1896) was an entrepeneur whose exploits included more than two years in the California gold fields. In Petersburg he was in the merchandising business and once owned the entire east side of the public square. As a young man, he assisted Abraham Lincoln in the 1836 survey of the town.

Architectural and Historical Significance

3. DAVID FRACKELTON HOUSE

527 W.Jackson

Built in 1868 by David Frackelton

David Frackelton was an Irish immigrant who, together with his brother Robert, was a leading merchant and banker in the town. They opened the second bank in Petersburg in 1865.

Architectural and Historical Significance

4. ROBERT FRACKELTON HOUSE

ca.203 S.Twelfth

Built before 1874 by Robert Frackelton

Soo No 3

Architectural and Historical Significance

5. EDWARD LANING HOUSE ("THE OAKS")

S. Side Sheridan, W. of Tenth

Built in 1875 by Edward Laning; John Carver, contractot The Laning family were among the first settlers in Petersburg, arriving in 1836. Edward was a prominent lawyer who served two years in the State Legislature (1868-70) and six in the State Senate (1870-76).

Architectural and Historical Significance

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6-7. ELIJAH GAULT HOUSE AND GAZEBO

ca.319 S.Ninth

Built in 1865 by Elijah Gault

Elijah Gault was in the flour milling business in partnership with Diedrich Fisher.

Architectural Significance

8. C.B.LANING HOUSE ("THORN PLACE")

717 S.Tenth

Built in 1875 by C.B.Laning

Caleb Laning was president of the First National Bank. His wife, Mary, was first president of the Petersburg Woman's Club and their son, Harris Laning, became Admiral of the U.S.Fleet.

Architectural and Historical Significance

9. MASTERS HOUSE

NW Corner Eighth and Jackson

The Masters family moved into this house in the early 1870's and Edgar Lee Masters spent his childhood and early youth here, moving to Lewistown with his family in 1882. Petersburg provided the memories and settings for some of Masters' finest verse. He is buried in Oakland Cemetery, south of town (v.No.25). The house was moved to its present site in 1960 and is now a municipally-owned memorial to the poet.

Historical Significance

10. ST. PAUL UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST

Built in 1888; Diedrich Fischer, contractor

NW Corner Douglas and Eighth

The congregation was founded in 1860 and first met in the old Menard County courthouse and then in a carpenter shop on the site of the present church.

Architectural Significance

11. HAMILTON HOUSE

404 W.Washington

Built ca.1872 by Hobart Hamilton; Robert Carver, contractor
Hobart Hamilton was a civil engineer on several Illinois railroads.
He was also involved in early newspaper ventures in Petersburg and served as county clerk, county surveyor and master in chancery.
Architectural and Historical Significance

12. COMMERCIAL HQTEL 113 N.Main (Seventh)

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12.Cont.

Built before 1875

The Commercial remained in use as a hotel until at least 1907. It was later a bakery and now serves general commercial uses. Architectural Significance

13. JOHN BENNETT HOUSE

313 N.Ninth

Built before 1858; alterred

John Bennett was one of early Petersburg's most prominent citizens. He purchased a dry goods establishment in 1836, remaining in that line of business until retirement. He was the first representative from Menard county in the State Legislature (1840-41) and was also very active in social affairs. County business was conducted in his store house from 1839 until 1843.

Historical Significance

14. DR.RICHARD BENNETT HOUSE

106 E.Madison

Built ca. 1845 by Dr. Bennett; porch added later Richard Bennett settled first in New Salem, moving to Petersburg in 1836. He was the town's first resident physician and also took

over operation of the town's first inn just east of the house.

Historical Significance

15. ROBERT BISHOP HOUSE

217 W.Sheridan

Built in 1845-49 by Robert Bishop

Robert Bishop was an early gunsmith in the town who pioneered in the use of the revolving cylinder. His first gunshop was the New Salem store of Abraham Lincoln which Lincoln and Bishop moved to Petersburg in 1836.

Historical Significance

16. NATHANIEL BRANSON HOUSE

S.Side Jackson at Tenth

Built before 1876 by Nathaniel Branson

Nathaniel Branson was a noted lawyer who served two terms in the State Legislature. He was also a delegate to the 1876 Republican National Convention in Cincinnati.

Historical Significance

17. GEORGE DAVIDSON HOUSE

112 E.Lincoln

Built in 1837 by George Davidson

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17.Cont.

George and Ishom Davidson were among the earliest settlers in Petersburg, operating one of the town's first stores. Ishom located his house directly west of George, but it has been alterred beyond recognition.

Historical and Architectural Significance

18. MILTON HARRISON ROOMING HOUSE

NE Cor. Jackson and Eighth

Built by Milton Harrison in 1836

This very early rooming house originally stood on the west side of the public square and was moved in the late 19th century. Its many residents included Mentor Graham, Abraham Lincoln's tutor, and his daughter, Elizabeth Bell, Petersburg's temperance leader. Historical SIgnificance

19. WILLIAM WHITE HOUSE

209 S.Eighth

Built in 1850

The White family were among Menard county's earliest and most active settlers, establishing themselves at various locations throughout the area. William White was a contractor and many of Petersburg's buildings have been attributed to him. The house incorporates a log cabin moved from New Salem in the early 1840's. Historical and Architectural Significance

20. ELIJAH ESTEP HOUSE

NE Corner Rutledge and Fifth

Built in 1826 by Elijah Estep

The Esteps were the first settlers on the site of Petersburg and this is the town's first and oldest house. It is of sawn lumber and not logs because Estep operated a small saw-mill.

Historical Significance

21. DIEDRICH FISHER HOUSE

503 W.Sheridan

Built in 1863 by Diedrich Fisher

Diedrich Fisher was a prominent contractor active in bridge and public building construction in Illinois, Texas, and Colorado. The second owner was Henry Schirding, a prominent businessman and founder of Schirding's bank in 1904.

Historical and Architectural Significance

22. SAMUEL HILL HOUSE

211 W.Sangamon

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22. Cont.

Built in 1839 by Samuel Hill; radically alterred Samuel Hill was one of the original settlers of New Salem, where he was the storekeeper. He moved to Petersburg in 1839 and entered into partnership with Hardin Bale in a woolen mill. He also ran a general store.

Historical Significance

23. JOSEPH PILLSBURY HOUSE

120 W.Jefferson

Built in 1872 by Joseph Pillsbury

Joseph Pillsbury was a teacher and lawyer. He taught in the county's first free school. served two terms as county judge, and also served as police magistrate, county commissioner and master in chancery.

Historical Significance

24. B.F.STEPHENSON HOUSE

Built ca. 1871 by the G.A.R.

714 S.Seventh

Major Benjamin Franklin Stephenson served as surgeon of the 14th Illinois Infantry Volunteers during the Civil War. After the war, he conceived and founded the Grand Army of the Republic. The house was presented as a gift to his widow by the G.A.R., Major Stephenson having died before its completion.

Historical Significance

25. OAKLAND CEMETERY

Incorporated in 1878

S.of City Limits on County Hwy.9 (Oakland)

Many of the town's leading citizens were interred here. Noted burials include Ann Rutledge, Lincoln's legendary first love; Edgar Lee Masters; Hannah Armstrong; Bowling and Nancy Green; and Mitch Miller, the title figure of one of Masters' most famous works. Historical Significance

26. LINCOLN SURVEY MARKER

SE Cor. Jackson and Seventh

The small marker set in the sidewalk near the corner marks the spot where Abraham Lincoln began his survey of the town. The original plat was bounded by Fourth and the River on the east, Douglas on the north, Oakland Road on the west and the present city limits on the south.

Historical Significance

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Plews, Matilda Johnson, Some Interesting Menard County Homes,
Petersburg, 1967

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ENTRIES IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

STATE

ILLINOIS

Date Entered

JUN 17 1976

Name

Location

Petersburg Historic District

Petersburg Menard County

Also Notified

Hon. Charles H. Percy Hon. Adlai E. Stevenson Hon. Edward R. Madigan