

D.C 1-4-91

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Streibich Blacksmith Shop

other names/site number Tucker Building

### 2. Location

street & number 1 North Howard Street

not for publication

city, town Newman

vicinity

state Illinois code IL

county Douglas

code 041

zip code 61942

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
	<u>0</u> sites
	<u>0</u> structures
	<u>0</u> objects
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

William C. Adams

Date

1-2-91

Illinois Historic Preservation Agency

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade      Specialty Store  
Industry              Energy Facility

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce/Trade      Specialty Store

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
(enter categories from instructions)

Other: Commercial Vernacular

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation      Brick  
walls             Brick  
roof              Metal/Tin  
other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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Streibich Blacksmith Shop

Located in Newman, Illinois, the Streibich blacksmith shop is a free standing two story vernacular brick building with a one story brick addition of the same style, to which a metal covered frame shed is attached. Modifications have been minor and the main part of the building continues to be used as blacksmith shop.

The Streibich building stands at the intersection of Yates and Howard streets opposite the northeast corner of Newman's square. This location is adjacent to the park; near the center of the town's business district; and in the 19th century, across the street from a livery stable.

Ignatius Streibich was the first owner and operated the blacksmith shop until 1912. He sold the building to his son Fred who continued the business until his death in 1932. The building was vacant until 1938 when K.O. Tucker purchased it from Fred's surviving sister Lena. Mr. Tucker operated a machine shop on the premises until 1969. Several Newman residents bought the building and operated a craft shop/wood stove store there in the 1970's. Since the early 1980's parts of the building have been used as a metalworking studio and a blacksmith/knife maker's shop. At the present time the Ignatius Streibich shop is being used as a blacksmith shop.

Built in the 1870's the building is a two story undecorated brick structure, 42 feet long and 24 feet wide. The blacksmith shop is located on the lower floor and the second story was used for storage. A large door, flanked by four over four sash windows, serves as the main entrance to the shop and is located on the west side of the building which faces the square. Three similar windows are located directly above the entrance in the second story. There are five matching windows in the south wall of the first floor, with spaces between them for the two interior brick forges. In the center of the east facade there is a rear entrance door and one small window which was bricked up at an unknown time. Two four over four sash windows are located in the east wall of the second story. A small door is the only opening in the north wall. The roof is single pitch which slopes to the east and is covered with squares of tin which have been coated with tar.

The building includes several features which reflect its intended use as a blacksmith shop. Two brick forges were located along the south wall and there were no windows on the north wall. This arrangement insured that the blacksmith could turn away from his forge and be able to judge the color of a piece of hot iron against the dark background of the windowless north wall. Rings for securing horses are stapled to a plank built into the north wall which suggests that shoeing activities took place in that area. Light fixtures set low in the wall below the hitching rings provided light underneath the horse's belly. Small ports

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in the south wall adjacent to each forge allowed long pieces of stock to be heated by allowing them to extend through the wall to the outside. Oak planks were inserted in the south and west walls in place of a portion of one course of bricks in order to accommodate tool racks. The dirt floor reduced the chance of fire, and is easy on the feet of both smiths and horses. The second floor was apparently intended for storage since it was accessible only through a 4 foot by 7 foot trap in the ceiling near the rear of the building. Large doors in the front and back walls allowed access by horses or, if necessary, small wagons, and provided ventilation. The interior walls of the shop are brick. Traditionally the interior walls of blacksmith shops were whitewashed to enhance the lighting, but only a small remnant of this finish is preserved in a protected area near one of the forges.<sup>1</sup>

The original structure has a brick chimney for each of the two forges, one of which has been converted for use by a wood heating stove. A third chimney was the flue for a small steam engine located inside the shop which drove a line shaft which remains suspended from the ceiling. Power was transferred by belts from the line shaft to equipment such as a grinder, trip hammer, drill press, and a machine for screwing iron tires to wooden wagon wheels. Much of the large equipment was removed from the shop in 1969 when K.O. Tucker retired but many small tools such as tongs, anvil tools, a tire bender, taps and screw plates and a leather apron remain.

In 1891 Ignatius Streibich established Douglas County's first power plant by installing an electric generator powered by a steam engine in the south-east corner of the building.<sup>2</sup> The engine was mounted on a concrete slab which remains and had its own flue which was removed between c. 1916 and 1938. A brick lined subfloor ash pit was constructed adjacent to the slab and it also remains. The power plant supplied electricity to the business district and Mr. Streibich's residence in the early 1890's and was supplanted by a larger installation located elsewhere in the town later in the decade.

Between 1893 and c. 1916 a 24 x 20 foot one story addition was attached to the north wall of the original building with the front walls flush. The addition initially had small doors in the west, north, and east walls, with one four over four sash window in the east and west walls respectively. One small window is located high in the north wall. Between c. 1916 and 1932 a second four over four sash window was added restoring the symmetry of the west facade. At about the same time a wood framed corrugated iron covered shed was added to the north with a communicating door in the north wall of the addition.

After 1938 a door was added in the south wall at the rear of the building. This door leads to an internal stair way to the second floor

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which was constructed at the same time. The second floor was converted to living quarters and used for that purpose for a short time following the purchase of the building by K.O. Tucker in 1938.

A small shed which served as a coal bin was located at the east end of the building. The shed was removed in the 1970's when the building was used as a wood stove salesroom. At the same time a small portion of the dirt floor was covered with brick.

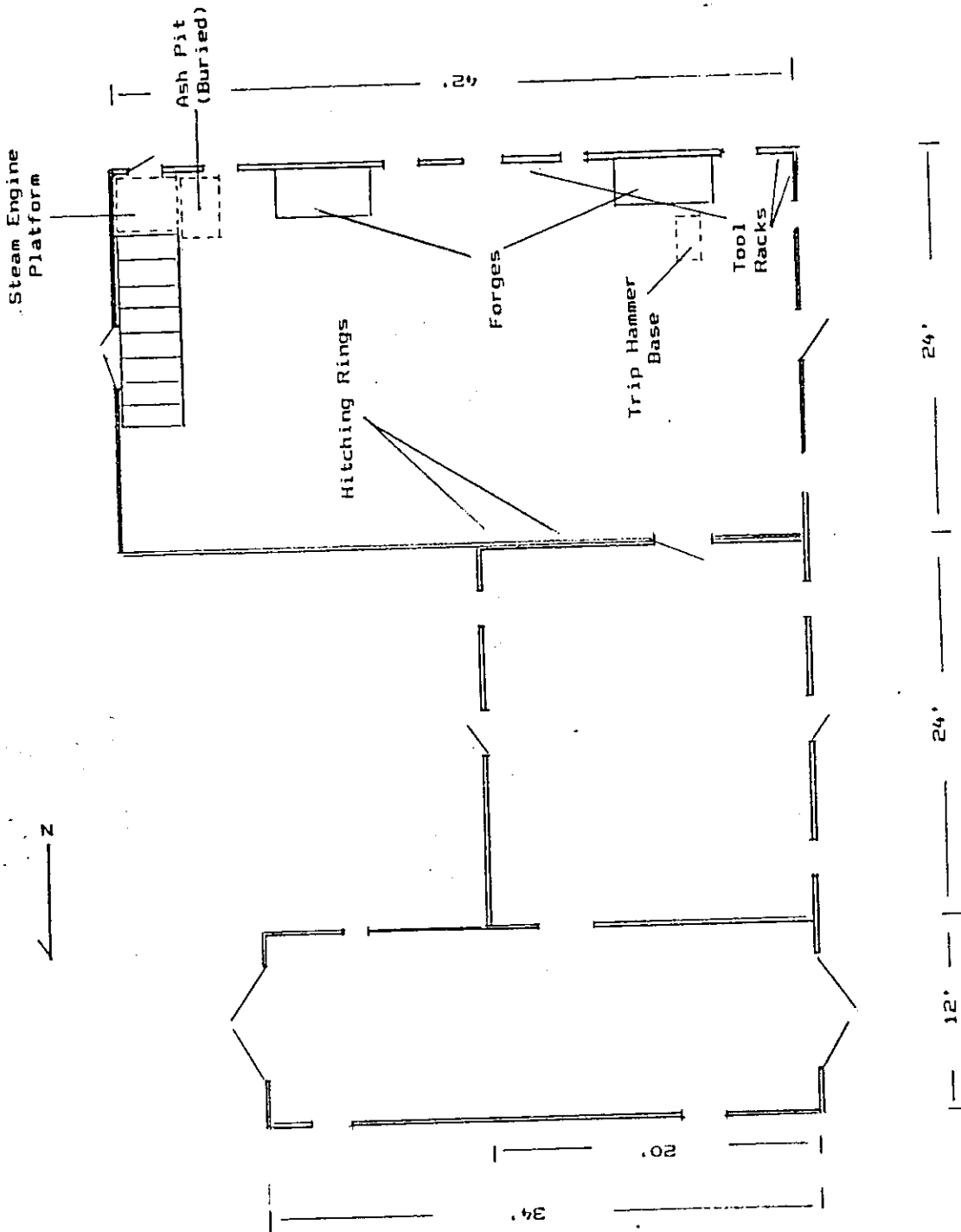
The Streibich building has evolved over the last 120 years to meet the needs of its successive owners, but the original structure remains without significant alteration with one of the two brick forges in use and with many of the Streibichs' tools extant in their racks.

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Streibich Blacksmith Shop



STREIBICH BLACKSMITH SHOP  
NEWMAN, ILLINOIS

**8. Statement of Significance**

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Commerce  
Community Planning and Development

Period of Significance

1870-1932 and 1938-1940  
1891-1892

Significant Dates

1891

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

N/A

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

See continuation sheet

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Streibich Blacksmith Shop

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The Streibich Blacksmith Shop meets Criterion A of the National Register Criteria. It was built as a blacksmith shop in about 1870 and used primarily for that purpose until 1932. A critical part of a community of the period was the blacksmith shop where repairs were made to vehicles, farm equipment, tools and housewares, and horses shod. In addition in 1891 Mr. Streibich built the county's first electric power plant in his shop. Although shortlived, this facility established the town's credentials as an enterprising community and a desirable place for commercial development. It also laid the groundwork for a subsequent electric plant by defining financial requirements for generating and distributing power. From 1938 to 1940 the building was used as a machine shop where local citizens had appliances and machinery repaired. The periods of significance for the Streibich Blacksmith Shop are from 1870 to 1932 and from 1938 to 1940, the latter date being the arbitrary 50 year cut-off date for commerce, and 1891-1892 for community planning and development.

In the past when travel was much slower and more difficult than it is presently, relatively small communities served as commercial and service centers for local residents as well as the surrounding rural population. Manufacturing took place in a few restricted localities, and as the industrial revolution progressed and technology became more complex, repair and maintenance developed into important facets of the services provided in these smaller communities. Implements could be repaired with greater speed and at less cost than new equipment or replacement parts could be obtained. In addition the blacksmith shop was the source of special items which might be available as factory products elsewhere, but only after considerable delays.

The Streibich Blacksmith Shop was essential to the commercial life of Newman and the surrounding rural areas. It housed successively three different businesses each of which was important during their respective tenures. These businesses operated from the time of the first cultivation of the local prairie until the dawn of today's high-tech farming in the 1940's. All three provided vital production and repair services to farmers, townspeople, and commercial establishments, which saved residents time-consuming journeys to other towns, and all three introduced new technological advances to Newman. In addition to housing a blacksmith shop the building was the site of the first electric generating plant in Douglas County. That phase of the building's history reflects the ingenuity and acumen of Ignatius Streibich, and paved the way for a larger city-wide generating plant constructed in about 1895 which powered street lights as well as business and residential lighting.



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By 1870 Mr. Streibich had been a blacksmith for more than a decade and apparently had clear-cut ideas about the ways in which the building could contribute to his efficiency and consequent commercial success. In 1900 Holstrom wrote in Modern Blacksmithing, "The shop is the place where the smith spends most of his time and he should take as much care in building it, as a sensible housekeeper does in the construction of her kitchen."<sup>3</sup> Holstrom might have been writing about Streibich whose shop preserves design features he felt were particularly suited to the space, ventilation and lighting needs of a blacksmith. The building successfully housed skilled, inventive and creative tenants who played an important role in the commercial life of the area by recognizing and manipulating the latest mechanical developments of the periods in which they lived.

### HISTORICAL CONTEXT

Ignatius Streibich had his blacksmithing tools hauled by wagon from Paris, Illinois, in September, 1869 and set up shop in the growing town of Newman.<sup>4</sup> Born in Germany in 1834, he emigrated to the United States in 1851 and settled in Paris where he was naturalized as an American citizen. He worked there as blacksmith before the Civil War and returned to Paris after his discharge from the Union Army.<sup>5</sup>

On November 23, 1869 he purchased the south halves of two lots located at the north-east corner of Newman's square, and in the early 1870's had a two story brick blacksmith shop erected.<sup>6</sup>

In the mid-nineteenth century, as the population of Illinois increased, governmental units were continually subdivided to accommodate the needs of the people. As part of this general pattern, Douglas County was created in 1859.<sup>7</sup> The town of Newman was platted in 1857 anticipating the formation of the county and with the prospect that the Indianapolis, Decatur and Western Railroad would pass through the town.<sup>8</sup> Newman remained a small and isolated settlement for several years with only a few businesses and with much of the surrounding prairie unbroken and uncultivated.<sup>9</sup> In July of 1869 the town passed a bond issue to support railroad construction and the first train passed through in July, 1873.<sup>10</sup>

The town was laid out with a public square at its center. The four blocks facing the square were platted as 20 x 740 foot lots for businesses in contrast to the 50 x 720 foot residential lots found in the remainder of the original town.<sup>11</sup> The square was significant as the focus of many of the town's activities. It contained the first school, an artesian well and a band stand. As construction brought the railroad closer to Newman in the 1870's the number and variety of businesses

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increased, "...a bank, lumber yards, a canning company, ... marble works, hay press, broom factory, flour mills and various other industries have been established...". Newman's business district became the north and west sides of the square, and the area between the square and the rail line located two blocks to the north.<sup>12</sup>

Mr. Streibich operated his blacksmithing business in Newman from 1869 until 1912. His account book for the years 1869-1877 was preserved in the building and provides a picture of the work he did during that period. Among the diverse items he made for his customers were well grills, chain links, fire shovels, chimney supports, wheel barrow hardware, and buckets. He repaired buggies and wagons, farm machinery and guns, stoves and tools. In addition he shod horses and sharpened plows. Although factory production was well-established by the 1870's, Mr. Streibich often made commonly manufactured items, such as nuts, bolts, hooks or washers which were not available locally in the sizes his buyers needed. The skills he provided to the community were vital for the continued usefulness of domestic items and farm equipment. The timely repair of a plow or mower could be crucial to a customer during the urgency of the agricultural cycle.

The period from the early 1860's to the 1890's saw many important technological changes in transportation, agricultural equipment and sources of energy. In 1871 the industrial dynamo was perfected.<sup>13</sup> Thomas Edison devised methods for the economical production and transmission of electricity in 1878, and in 1879 demonstrated the first practical incandescent bulb.<sup>14</sup> In 1882 a shop in England became the first commercial establishment lighted by incandescent bulbs.<sup>15</sup> During this period Ignatius Streibich continued making and repairing goods for Newman citizens, and learned to repair the mechanized farm equipment which was growing in popularity. But his knowledge and competence were not limited to chain links, horse shoes and plows. Exploiting the changing technology of the time, in 1891 he installed in the building an electric generator driven by a steam engine to provide power for an electric lighting system. On March 13, 1891 Newman became "the first city . . . in Douglas County illuminated by electricity".<sup>16</sup>

The project was supported by more than 2 dozen local merchants and professional men, and the newspaper was able to boast that "The business portion of the town is lighted by electricity, and the system will undoubtedly soon be extended to reach throughout the residence districts".<sup>17</sup> Mr. Streibich was praised as an "enterprising and public spirited" citizen.<sup>18</sup>

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During 1891 the Newman Independent reflected the enthusiasm of the citizens for electricity and civic pride in the local power plant with the following statements: "The electric light plant is working beautifully." (May 8) "Newman's citizens can well feel proud of her electric light plant." (June 19) "The electric lights are doing magnificent work." (July 3)

The effect of Ignatius Streibich's venture may have been more symbolic than actual. Businesses such as the bank, shoe store, livery stable and the offices of the town's three physicians were each illuminated by a single light bulb. By contrast two of the general stores and the drug store each had 5 light bulbs installed. The maximum in any establishment was 6 lights in the dry goods store.<sup>19</sup> While electricity was undoubtedly superior to coal oil, the 16 candle power bulbs furnished only about half the amount of illumination provided by a modern automobile tail light.

The power plant broke down after about a year of operation and Streibich's efforts to install a larger dynamo were not successful, but his efforts laid the groundwork for the permanent electrical system which followed in about 1895. Even though his power plant lasted for only about a year its significance was recognized as late as 1919 when the newspaper wrote that it "was a great convenience to those of our business men who had the privilege to enjoy the electric lights. The plant was run at his blacksmith shop and from this developed a larger and much more extensive plant that afterwards fell into the hands of the C.I.P.S. Company (Central Illinois Public Service Company."<sup>20</sup>

After his venture in public utilities Mr. Streibich continued his position in the community for more than two decades until his retirement in 1912. As a craftsman Mr. Streibich was indispensable for the production of specialty items, and for extending the life of many simple articles such as tubs or hoes. His mechanical expertise was significant to the community since he could also repair and maintain the horse-drawn mechanized farm equipment which continued to grow in importance for area farmers.

In 1916 Ignatius Streibich sold the building and business to his son Fred. Initials and dates carved in the bricks of the forge suggest that Fred had worked in the shop since about 1900. The younger Streibich continued the reputation for superior workmanship which had been established by his father.

The mechanical and technological developments of the years following the First World War are reflected in the contrast between the kind of work done by Ignatius and his son Fred. Newman citizens who knew Fred have remarked that he specialized in repairing the newest machines of the period rather than clinging to the declining tasks and

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techniques of the nineteenth century. In the words of one resident, Fred "quit shoeing horses before he had to."<sup>21</sup> Another said, "The old boys (other blacksmiths) was the ones that shoed the horses and hammered out the plow shares".<sup>22</sup>

One of Fred Streibich's specialities is illustrated in the photograph of the building c.1916. His advertisement "WE WELD CAST IRON" (see photo) indicates a skill rare among blacksmiths of the day. "He had a acetylene generating system there, made his acetylene. He was welding cast iron. I guess he was the first one around that part of the country that welded cast iron."<sup>23</sup> Steam and gasoline replaced horses as agricultural power sources in the twentieth century, and these early engines and the thrashing and baling machines which they drove utilized cast iron brackets and cog wheels in their construction. But cast iron is extremely brittle and impossible to weld in the way that the wrought iron of the nineteenth century could be welded by heating and hammering.

Fred Streibich's expertise drew customers from beyond the immediate vicinity of Newman. Commenting on the extent of his reputation, a former resident said that farmers brought machinery from "further than Newman 'cause the old thrashing machines, they was all around. So, he was the only one that could do it (weld cast iron parts). He'd charge 'em half what a new one cost."<sup>24</sup> The newspaper observed that Fred's was "The only shop within 50 miles able to do the trick."<sup>25</sup> The younger Streibich's position in the community was as important as his father's had been, since he provided special skills for the increasingly complex agricultural community of the region.

In 1932 Fred Streibich died suddenly and the building stood vacant until it was purchased by Mr. Kermit O. Tucker in 1938. Mr. Tucker was much more a machinist than a blacksmith but he continued the tradition of businesses in the building by repairing equipment, machinery and appliances for the population of Newman and the surrounding rural area. For his work space he used the 24 ft. X 20 ft. room which had been added to the building sometime between 1893 and 1916. Unlike the original blacksmith shop, this room has a concrete floor which provided a more desirable surface for Mr. Tucker's machine tools. Local residents recall that Mr. Tucker repaired electric motors, fabricated parts for farm machinery, and worked on household appliances from refrigerators to "toasters, if you would bring it to him."<sup>26</sup> He also rebuilt equipment used for moving grain into and out of ships. Mr. Tucker retired in 1969. Establishing his business at the end of the Great Depression and continuing into the Second World War, Mr. Tucker played a central role in the community by keeping irreplaceable machinery and appliances in operation.

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Streibich Blacksmith Shop

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### CONCLUSION

The Streibich building reflects aspects of the history of Newman and the surrounding countryside from the time of the settlement of the local prairie in the nineteenth century to the mid-twentieth century. It stands as the only building of its period to have survived fires in Newman in 1876, 1881, and 1885. Its occupants were essential to the maintenance and repair of tools and machines which ranged from harness through steam engines to electric cargo transfer devices. The men who used the building reflect as well the opportune judgements and creative skills of craftsmen who adapt to and take advantage of changing technological contexts.

### ENDNOTES

- 1 M. T. Richardson, Practical Blacksmithing. 1889, pg. 52. (Reprinted in 1978, Weathervane Books, New York.)
- 2 Newman Independent, March 13, 1891.
- 3 J. G. Holstrom, Modern Blacksmithing. Alhambra Book Company, Chicago, 1900, pg. 32.
- 4 Ignatius Streibich Account Book, 1869-1877.
- 5 Charles M. Keller and Paul Benson, Ignatius Streibich, Blacksmith, Early American Industries Association Chronicle, vol. 42, no. 2, pg. 47, 1989.
- 6 Douglas County Tax Records.
- 7 Henry C. Niles, History of Douglas County Illinois. Tuscola, Ill., 1876, pg. 7.
- 8 ibid., pg. 41.
- 9 Newman Independent Souvenir Edition, 1895, pg. 10.
- 10 Niles, pg. 17; Newman Independent Souvenir Edition, pg. 10.
- 11 Caleb Garrett, An Illustrated Historical Atlas Map of Douglas County, Ill. Illinois, 1875, pg. 67.
- 12 Newman Independent Souvenir Edition, 1895, pg. 11.
- 13 James Trager, ed., The People's Chronology. New York, pg. 546.
- 14 op. cit., pg. 576.
- 15 op. cit., pg. 588.
- 16 Newman Independent, March 13, 1891.
- 17 op. cit., December 25, 1891.
- 18 op. cit., June 19, 1891.
- 19 op. cit., March 13, 1891.
- 20 op. cit., January, 1919.
- 21 Ted Shepard, conversation, February, 1985.

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23 *ibid.*

24 *ibid.*

25 Newman Independent Centennial Edition, 1957, "Up and Down Broadway -  
1910 to 1957".

26 Ted Shepard, conversation, February, 1985.

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1959 Patterns From the Sod; New York, Arno Press.

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1981 Shucks, Shocks and Hominy Blocks: Corn as a Way of Life in Pioneer  
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Blacksmith, 1742-1935; Lewisburg, Pennsylvania, Union County Historical  
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Pease, Theodore Calvin  
1922 The Frontier State: 1818-1848; Chicago, A.C. McClurg & Co.

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository: \_\_\_\_\_

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property Less than one acre

UTM References

A 

16	4	16	8	60
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44	05	5	9	0
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 Zone Easting Northing

C 

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B 

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 Zone Easting Northing

D 

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

South 1/2 of Lots 8 and 9 , Block 8 of original town of Newman.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the city lots historically associated with the blacksmith shop.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Charles M. Keller/ Associate Professor date October 31, 1990  
 organization \_\_\_\_\_ telephone 217-352-0803  
 street & number 1819 Hemlock Drive state Illinois zip code 61821  
 city or town Champaign