

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places

Shelby Place Historic District

DESCRIPTION

The Shelby Place Historic District consists of dwellings along the street of Shelby Place in the city of New Albany, Indiana. The district contains dwellings constructed from 1907 through 1925. Vernacular pyramid square and Bungalow/Craftsman designs are the predominant architectural styles found in the district. The neighborhood also contains a few examples of the gabled ell house form and Dutch Colonial and American Foursquare designs. In addition there is one Queen Anne style and one Prairie style dwelling in the district. The district contains a total of twenty-nine primary buildings, of which 100% are considered to be contributing to the character of the district. In addition to the primary buildings, there are eleven contributing outbuildings and thirteen non-contributing outbuildings. Houses in the Shelby Place Historic District retain much of their historic character through integrity of design, materials, and workmanship. There are no modern intrusions or infill within the district, and the street conveys a strong sense of time and place as an early twentieth-century neighborhood.

The Shelby Place Historic District emerged in the early twentieth century as New Albany began to recover from a period of economic depression. During this era, woodworking industries came forward as the leading businesses and supported the local economy. As the economy rebounded, the city grew. Suburban development, modern transportation, and an increasing middle class defined the nature of this growth as New Albany evolved into a modern city. Shelby Place began to develop around 1906 as a middle-class neighborhood off of the main corridor of Vincennes Street. The majority of houses were constructed on the street between 1911 and 1916 with twenty-one of the street's twenty-nine houses built during this period. And 75% of these dwellings were built in the two-year span of 1912 to 1913. Stephen S. Day and Sons Contractors was a local building firm and built many of the houses on the street.

Shelby Place Historic District is located in what is primarily a residential section of the city and is approximately three-fourths of a mile northeast of the city's downtown commercial district and approximately one mile north of the Ohio River. Shelby Place is one block in length and runs east-west. A grassy median with small trees runs down the center of the street. The street and district are bounded on the east by Vincennes Street, a main, largely commercial corridor that

extends from the uptown region. To the west is East 15th Street and the tracks of the CSX railroad. The surrounding blocks to the north, south, and west are also residential in character. The campus of New Albany High School is located to the east on Vincennes Street. The eastern entrance to Shelby Place is framed by square brick columns approximately five feet high that have a concrete cap with the words "Shelby Place" on them.

The earliest dwelling constructed on Shelby Place reflects the Queen Anne style. Completed in 1907, the Harry R. Pickens House at 1518 Shelby Place is a modest version of the popular late nineteenth century architectural style and reflects the period's transition to the more formal Colonial Revival design. Decorative details on the dwelling are limited to an oriel window on the second story, and dentil molding on the porch cornice. The Pickens House is the district's only example of the Queen Anne style, which also demonstrates its waning popularity during this period.

Around the turn of the century a renewed interest in the building designs of colonial America gave rise to the Colonial Revival architectural style, which remained popular throughout the first half of the century. The Colonial Revival style emphasizes symmetrical forms and classical detailing. Within the Shelby Place Historic District are subtypes of the Colonial Revival style. Three dwellings in the district represent the Dutch Colonial design, which is characterized by a gambrel roofline. These three dwellings were some of the first to be built on the street and were constructed between 1907 and 1911. The two-story dwelling at 1510 was completed in the Dutch Colonial style in 1907. The home of its builder, Clem Day, the house was the first to begin construction on the street, but was the second to be completed. The house features a cross gambrel roof line, a large bay window, and a partial-width porch.

The Colonial Revival style was also expressed in a simpler house form known as the American Foursquare, which was commonly built during the 1910s and 1920s. These houses are rectangular or square in massing and form, have one-story porches on the primary façade, hipped roofs, and details such as eave dentils and Tuscan columns. The Shelby Place Historic District contains two examples of the American Foursquare design at 1507 and 1605 Shelby Place. These dwellings have hipped roofs, full-width porches and rooftop dormers on the main façade.

A large portion of the dwellings in the Shelby Place Historic District were built in a pyramid square design. This common vernacular design is characterized by a square house plan with a hipped or pyramidal roof. These dwellings were often built with decorative porches on the main façade and with dormers at the roofline. These dwellings often have windows and detailing reflective of the Bungalow/Craftsman style that emerged in the early twentieth century and are often a blend of the two designs. The district contains eleven examples of the pyramid square design, and one of the best examples is the John A. Gadiant House at 1517

Shelby Place. Built in 1912, this dwelling features a full-width inset porch, a hipped dormer at the roofline, and Craftsman style windows.

Two examples of the gabled ell plan can be found in the district. This vernacular house form features a projecting gable bay on the main façade, decorative porches, and one or more primary entrances. The dwelling at 1501 Shelby Place is a representative example of this house form and features a more elaborate example of the gabled ell form and combines elements of the Dutch Colonial and Bungalow designs with a gambrel roof on the ell portion and paneled, tapered porch columns.

Another dominant architectural style in the neighborhood is the Craftsman/Bungalow style, which was one of the most popular residential architectural styles in the country during the early twentieth century. Common features of this style include a horizontal form with wide eaves, exposed roof rafters, and large porches with tapered columns and column piers or pedestals. Windows in these dwellings commonly have decorative upper sashes often in various geometric designs. Examples include the dwelling at 1608; it was built in the Bungalow design in 1913 and has a full-width inset porch with tapered wood columns, and a large shed roof dormer at the roofline of the main elevation.

One of the last dwellings to be constructed in the district was the large, two-story, Prairie style home at 1620 Shelby Place. Definitive features of the Prairie style include a low-pitched hipped roof with wide eaves, large one-story porches with massive square supports, and detailing emphasizing horizontal lines. The Ferdinand N. Kahler Jr. House at 1620 Shelby Place is the district's only example of this style. Built in 1922 it has a wraparound porch with large square brick columns, and an extended first-story roofline that forms a porte-cochere.

The Shelby Place Historic District continues to be a cohesive neighborhood that conveys a strong sense of its early twentieth century development. Dwellings within the district have a high degree of historic architectural integrity and have not been significantly altered. Representative architectural forms within the district reflect popular styles of the period and the unified development of the Shelby Place neighborhood.

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Historical Overview

The street of Shelby Place was developed in the early twentieth century as New Albany was recovering from a period of economic depression. After investing heavily in industrial development in the decades following the Civil War, New Albany experienced an era of growth

and prosperity, which reached its peak in the 1880s. Changing markets, increased competition, and the onslaught of the 1893 depression brought hard times to the city. After its leading manufacturer and largest employer shut down, thousands of skilled workers left the city. The city began to recover in the early twentieth century as a variety of woodworking industries arose to support the local economy. As the economic health of the city returned, modern improvements occurred and new neighborhoods, such as Shelby Place, emerged.

Three brothers from New York founded New Albany, Indiana in 1813. Joel, Nathaniel, and Abner Scribner came to the region with the goal of establishing a new town in the undeveloped Northwest Territory. They purchased around 800 acres north of the Ohio River opposite Louisville, Kentucky, which had been founded in 1780, and near the Falls of the Ohio, a navigational barrier where the river drops some twenty-six feet over a two- and one-half mile section.

The Scribner brothers named their town New Albany in honor of the capital city of New York, their home state. They quickly cleared land, and had the town platted with spacious lots, wide roads, and areas for markets, schools, churches, and public squares. The original town plat extended from the river to Oak Street and between East Fifth and West Fifth. A road was surveyed to connect with the old Buffalo Trace, a widely used migration and trade route, and a sawmill was established. By November 1813, the Scribners were advertising the sale of lots in newspapers throughout the northeast. Indiana became a state in 1816, and New Albany incorporated as a town the following year. Initially, New Albany was a part of Clark County. In order to help promote the growth and importance of their town, the Scribners embarked on a campaign to create a new county of which New Albany would be the county seat. Their efforts were successful, and Floyd County was established March 4, 1819 out of portions of Clark and Harrison Counties. With land set aside for a county courthouse and other public buildings, New Albany was declared the county seat. After clearing some financial hurdles the courthouse was completed in 1824.

New Albany grew quickly and by 1819 had approximately 1,000 residents and 150 houses. By 1830, it was the largest town in Indiana with a population of 2,079. In 1839, New Albany incorporated as a city. Its position along the busy Ohio River made it an ideal shipping port, and in combination with an abundance of timber resources made it a profitable center for the shipbuilding industry. New Albany became a top producer of steamboats, and was second only to Pittsburgh in their production. New Albany's riverfront area developed with shipyards and related industrial sites such as lumber yards, foundries, and mills. Commercial development took place along Main, Market, and Spring Streets and by the mid-1830s included numerous dry goods stores, groceries, hardware shops, drug stores and saloons. Residential development occurred to the west and northeast of the commercial district. New Albany also gained its first

railroad in 1847 with the construction of the New Albany and Salem line, which was completed in 1851.

Steamboat production peaked in New Albany in 1856 and then rapidly declined following the Civil War. The increasing importance and effectiveness of railroads weakened the shipbuilding industry by the 1860s, and the circumstances of the Civil War hastened the decline of the industry in New Albany due to the city's strong commercial ties to southern markets. Contracts from southern states on which the industry depended came to a halt. In the post war years, the steamboat industry struggled, but never recovered.

In the years following the Civil War, New Albany redefined itself with a new, more diverse industrial base. By the 1880s, the city once again was experiencing an era of prosperity as extensive manufacturing development provided jobs, strengthened the economy, and spurred growth of the city. Furniture manufacturers, breweries, tanneries, and producers of soap, candles, tobacco, pottery, and marble all contributed to the local economy. Chief among the new industrial developments were textile mills, iron works, and the manufacture of plate glass. The Ohio Falls Iron Works and New Albany Rail Mill were founded ca. 1865 and employed 600 workers in the 1880s. New Albany Woolen and Cotton Mills, located on Vincennes Street, was the largest textile operation in the Midwest and employed 800 workers. The New Albany Hosiery Mill, established in 1879, had 150 employees. By far the largest and most important plant in New Albany was the American Plate Glass Works. Established in 1865, as the New Albany Glass Works by John B. Ford, the company was the first to produce plate glass in the United States and installed the first American-made plate glass in a New Albany tailor shop in 1870. Later purchased by local capitalist Washington C. DePauw and renamed the American Plate Glass Works, it was the largest factory of its type in the country and employed over 1,200 individuals. It occupied over thirty acres along the riverbank and had its own power plant, water works, barge line, foundries, warehouses, sawmill, and box factory.

These numerous concerns resulted in an increase in New Albany manufacturing sales from \$2 million in 1868 to \$20 million in the 1880s. The city experienced a number of improvements during these boom years. By 1882, five railroad lines traveled through the city, and in 1886 the Kentucky and Indiana (K&I) bridge was constructed across the Ohio River to accommodate rail traffic. Telephone service arrived in the city in 1883, and electricity followed in 1887. Many of the new industries were established in the eastern portion of the city along Vincennes Street, and the New Albany Water Works was developed in this area in 1875. The city's mule-driven street car system, established in 1867, was expanded to accommodate these facilities.

The success of area industries created an era of great prosperity in New Albany. Many of its leading businessmen and industrialists became quite wealthy, and the city was home to some of the richest families in the state. Times were good throughout the 1880s, but in the early

1890s a nationwide economic depression and the loss of the city's largest factory and employer, DePauw American Plate Glass Works, resulted in an abrupt halt to New Albany's prosperous era. Over 4,000 residents, many of them skilled laborers, left the city resulting in the first decrease in its population since its founding. The population dropped from 21,059 in 1890 to 16,500 in 1893, and approximately twenty-five percent of the houses in the city stood vacant for the remainder of the decade.

New Albany gradually recovered from the downward turn of the 1890s, and during the first decade of the twentieth century the production of veneer, plywood, and paneling emerged as a new leading industry to boost the local economy. The region's plentiful timber resources, available work force, and ample shipping facilities helped to support this new industry as several companies were established. One of the city's first woodworking plants was the Wood-Mosaic Corporation, founded in 1898, which specialized in cut flooring. Arthur Stout established the Indiana Veneer and Panel Company in New Albany in 1901 and others soon followed. John N. Roberts and James Conner began a veneer cutting plant in 1904, and in 1907 the E. V. Knight founded the New Albany Veneering Company. The Hoosier Panel Company followed in 1915. The new industry proved successful, and by 1920 the city was the nation's largest producer of plywood and Knight's New Albany Veneering Company became the largest veneer plant in the world.

Additional woodworking operations in New Albany produced furniture, tool handles, boxes, and baskets. Other industries also emerged during the early twentieth century, and area factories manufactured glue and fertilizer. For a short time a few New Albany businessmen tried their hand at manufacturing cars. The American Automobile Manufacturing Company was established in the old woolen mills factory on Vincennes Street in 1910. The site continued as a car manufacturing plant until 1917, during which time the ownership and name of the business changed five times. By 1923 over forty major industrial plants were in operation in New Albany.

It was during this renewed economic climate that Shelby Place was developed. Residential development was on the increase in this part of the city northeast of the commercial center and near various industrial sites. Neighborhoods increasingly emerged as blocks of homes were constructed on lands between lumberyards and manufacturing plants. The land that later became the Shelby Place neighborhood served as a lumber and pipe storage yard at the beginning of the twentieth century. To the east across Vincennes Street was the old New Albany Woolen Mills factory, which by 1910 became New Albany's first car production facility. Residential neighborhoods lay to the south, and to the west, across the tracks of the Monon Railroad line, was the lumber yard of Stephen Day and Sons Contractors.

Shelby Place was platted in May 1906 by George W. Seibert. The block was designed with thirty-four lots, including six lots facing Vincennes Street, and it featured a central curb, or median. Landscaped medians and other scenic elements were increasingly coming into vogue and reflected the ideals of the City Beautiful Movement, which greatly influenced city planning and civic landscapes in the early 1900s. The central grassy and tree-lined bands added a bucolic touch to urban neighborhoods and were an attractive incentive to residential development.

Shelby Place developed slowly at first with only four houses constructed on the street by 1910. But, a burst of activity occurred on the block between 1911 and 1916, when twenty-one new houses were erected. The local building company of Stephen Day and Sons Contractors had a strong hand in creating the Shelby Place neighborhood. Not only did the Day family build many of the houses on the street, but many family members also made it their home. The family's history in this area reaches back to the late nineteenth century when builder Stephen Day moved from Lanesville, Indiana to New Albany in the late 1880s. He purchased a large tract of land west of Vincennes Street that included his future homestead at 1517 Ekin Avenue, one block south of the present day Shelby Place. Stephen and his wife had four sons, Adolph, Herman, Will, and Clem, and he began his business, Stephen Day and Sons Contractors, in the rear of his Ekin Avenue home. As his business progressed, Stephen Day purchased land west of 15th Street between Ekin and Beeler and around 1902 constructed a two-story, brick building with a mill on the second floor. The mill was equipped with a line shaft and pulleys from the nearby old New Albany Woolen Mills on Vincennes Street.

Day's business was successful, and from 1895 through the 1920s, Stephen Day and Sons Contractors were responsible for building several prominent New Albany buildings. Among them are St. Edward's Hospital, the County Poor Home, People's College (which later became New Albany High School on Spring Street), and the city's Carnegie Library. The Day family also built schools, churches, and various commercial buildings including what serves as the Schmitt Furniture Store today.

Stephen Day's son, Clem Day, initiated building on Shelby Place with the construction of his own home at 1510 Shelby Place. He chose a Dutch Colonial design with cross gambrel roofs, a small side porch, and decorative dormers. Clem's was not the first house completed on the street, however, as he built the house himself while working after hours and weekends from his construction job. The house was completed though, by the time he married Louisa Weber in August 1907. It remained the home of Clem and Louisa Day until their deaths in 1961.

While Clem was busy working on his own house in the evenings and on weekends, he spent his days building the house at 1518 Shelby Place for Harry Pickens. The two-story Queen Anne influenced Pickens House was the first house completed on the street in 1907. One more

house was built on the block over the following two years. The dwelling at 1515 Shelby Place reflected a version of the popular Colonial Revival style.

Construction on the street then slowed for a time and resumed again in 1912 with the completion of a third Dutch Colonial Revival style dwelling at 1601 Shelby Place ca. 1913. Construction then took off as fifteen houses were built over the following two years. Five more dwellings were built on Shelby Place between 1914 and 1916 making the block nearly complete. The final three homes of the neighborhood were constructed between 1919 and 1925. One of the last homes built on the street was also constructed by the Day family. The large two-story Prairie style dwelling at 1620 Shelby Place was built ca. 1922 and was the home of Ferdinand N. Kahler Jr., whose father operated a nearby furniture factory and for a time owned the Ohio Falls Motor Company, which manufactured automobiles in the old woolen mills building across the road on Vincennes Street. The Kahler House is situated at the southeast corner of Shelby Place and its size and prominent corner lot have made it a well-known landmark over the years. Across the road from the Kahler House on the other eastern Shelby Street corner was the Brent Apartments. This large, two-story apartment building burned in 1984 and the lot remains vacant.

Shelby Place was an upper middle-class neighborhood and homes within the district represented mainly popular pyramid square forms and Bungalow/Craftsman designs. Residents of the neighborhood were employed in a variety of occupations including sales, education, manufacturing, and retail. Some were involved in the city's rising woodworking industries. John A. Gadiant, the original owner of the dwelling at 1517 Shelby Place, was a superintendent at the New Albany Veneer Company. Harry Pickens, whose house was the first completed on the street, was the assistant treasurer for the Wood-Mosaic Company. Roy L. Weidman, who lived at 1501 Shelby Place in the 1940s, was an inspector for the Breece Veneer and Panel Company. Their neighbors included Glen Scott, superintendent of Floyd County Schools, who lived at 1602 Shelby Place, and deputy County Treasurer Edward Newhouse at 1513. Mutual Trust Bank president Frank P. Clipp lived at 1502 Shelby Place in the late 1920s. Other residents on the street in its early years include, window trimmer Thea C. Kleiber, train dispatcher Clarence P. Smith, jeweler Arthur Kesler, cigar maker Cut Gordon, and riverboat captain Stephen Green.

The majority of the dwellings on Shelby Place were owner-occupied, but some were used as rental properties over the years. In some instances the owner of a rental home also lived on the block. One dwelling, the Dutch Colonial house at 1515 Shelby Place, served as the parsonage for the DePauw Methodist Episcopal Church from 1911 until the 1960s. The church is located on Vincennes Street, one block north of Shelby Place.

The Day family continued to have close ties with Shelby Place throughout its history. In addition to Clem and Louisa Day, Louisa's cousin Sophia Hassenmiller lived on the street at 1513, and another Day relative, Henry Day, lived at 1509 Shelby Place. Henry Day was a letter carrier for the U.S. Post Office. He and his wife, Agnes, purchased the Shelby Place home in 1924. Agnes continued to live in the house following Henry's death in 1930 until her death in 1948. The house then became the home of their children, Dr. George Day and Anna Day Hall, who was a widow. Dr. Day passed away in the mid-1950s, and Anna Day Hall continued to reside in the house until the late 1970s.

The Day construction business continued to operate into the late twentieth century. After Stephen Day's death in 1931, his sons Will and Clem operated the company as Day Brothers Contractors. Will eventually left the business and Clem and his two sons, Edgar and Bernard, oversaw the enterprise. The two brothers continued to run the family business after Clem retired in the 1950s and incorporated the firm as Day Lumber Company. A disastrous fire consumed the Day's facility on East 15th Street just west of Shelby Place in 1977, and the business was then sold out of the family.

During the early history of Shelby Place the city saw the expansion of its streetcar system and the development of an interurban line. The mule-powered streetcar system was expanded and electrified in 1893. In 1902 Sam Insull, former secretary to Thomas Edison, came to New Albany and purchased and reorganized utility companies. Insull also developed an interurban line which by 1908 linked the city to Indianapolis. Other improvements include the construction of a new K & I bridge to replace the original 1886 structure over the Ohio River. The city's population began to rise once again and reached nearly 23,000 by 1920. Housing construction increased as residential neighborhoods emerged.

On the afternoon of March 23, 1917, a devastating tornado hit New Albany and caused severe damage throughout the city resulting in the destruction of five factories and around 500 homes. In all, the storm caused 45 deaths and over a million dollars in property damage. The Shelby Place area narrowly missed the storm's destructive path, which traveled down Vincennes Street. Although some Shelby Place homes might have suffered some damage, none were destroyed. Vincennes Street, though, was hit especially hard. Here the tornado destroyed the Hercules Motor Works, which had occupied the old woolen mills factory, and the large operation of Rasmussen's greenhouses suffered tremendous damage. Further north at Vincennes and Grantline Road, Kahler's furniture factory was also leveled. In 1927, a new high school was constructed on the site of the old woolen mills. This property has remained the school's campus, which has expanded over the years.

New Albany experienced another natural disaster as a record flood took place in January 1937. The city had endured previous floods, the most severe occurring in 1907 and 1913, but the

1937 flood was the worst in its history. The water crested at 85.48 feet above flood stage before gradually receding and leaving behind over \$8 million in damage. Thousands of people required aid, and the city had to undertake a massive cleanup. Although nearly a mile away from the river, Shelby Place did not escape the rising waters as nearby creeks and streams overflowed as well.

Also during the 1930s, the city suffered the effects of the Great Depression along with the rest of the country. The poor economic conditions caused some leading businesses and industries to close, including New Albany Veneering and the Ohio Falls Iron Works. But, better economic times came in the post-war era of the 1950s. The city experienced significant growth during this period as returning soldiers began to build homes away from the traditional downtown area. As suburbs began to grow, businesses began to follow. In 1950, New Albany's population reached 29,346. Ten years later it had climbed to over 37,000. This was in large part due to the annexation of a large area of land that more than doubled the city's size in 1956. Manufacturing remained steady with plywood and veneer production continuing to be an important industry. In the 1960s, a new vehicular bridge was constructed over the Ohio to connect New Albany to Louisville. The Sherman Minton Bridge opened in 1962 as part of the new Interstate 64. The development of the interstate and subsequent connections and loops led to increased residential and commercial development in outlying areas, which caused the traditional downtown commercial area to suffer. The city's population peaked in 1970 with 38,402 residents and then began to decline in the late twentieth century. Today the population of New Albany is approximately 37,000.

Today, Shelby Place remains a thriving middle-class neighborhood. The historic architectural design of its dwellings remains intact, and the blocks continue to convey a strong sense of time and place of the early twentieth century. Homes remain primarily single-family, owner-occupied dwellings and no modern intrusions or infill have occurred on the street. Dwellings within the district retain a high degree of their historic character and appear much as they did in the early twentieth century.