

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

DEC 27 1988

NATIONAL REGISTER

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 Old U. S. Government Land Office Building other names/site number White Pigeon Land Office

2. Location

street & number 113 West Chicago Road city, town White Pigeon state Michigan code MI county St. Joseph code 149 zip code 49099

3. Classification

Table with 3 columns: Ownership of Property, Category of Property, and Number of Resources within Property. Includes checkboxes for private/public ownership and building/site/structure/object categories.

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: Director, Bureau of History. Date: 12/16/88.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet. Signature of commenting or other official. Date.

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is: entered in the National Register. determined eligible for the National Register. determined not eligible for the National Register. removed from the National Register. other, (explain:). Signature of the Keeper: Patrick W. Anderson. Date of Action: 2/7/89.

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Government/government office

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Recreation & Culture/museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls Wood/weatherboard

roof Metal/

other N/A

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Description

The former U.S. Government Land Office Building is a modest, one- and one-and-one-half-story, clapboarded, vernacular Greek Revival structure. The building as it stands today is practically square in ground plan, and consists of a gable-front left-hand part and smaller, shed-roof, right-hand section. The land office stands near the center of White Pigeon and fronts on the old Chicago Road.

The old land office fronts on the south side of Chicago Road a short distance west of the principal intersection in White Pigeon where Kalamazoo Street crosses Chicago Road, the earliest highway established in this part of Michigan. The land office stands at the west end of White Pigeon's small central business district and is bounded on the east by an alley known as South Washington Street which runs behind the older commercial buildings facing east on South Kalamazoo Street.

Standing on a lot measuring fifty feet in width on West Chicago Road and 120 feet in length north and south, the old land office building has ground dimensions of thirty-seven and one-half feet by forty feet. It consists of two sections: the main or east section, a one-and-one-half-story structure with an end-gable roof and a smaller, shed-roof, one-story addition on the west. The building has a fieldstone foundation thought to extend only two or three feet below ground level. At some later date a basement was excavated under the main section with walls about three feet inside the original foundation walls. Heavy timber posts support the floor beams -- logs with much of the bark still intact -- above.

The land office exterior has recently been refurbished and the interior is now being refurbished to restore as much as possible of the building's original character. The exterior is now clad in clapboarding, with plain cornerboards and simple classical cornices. The roofline of the gable-roof section has a broad classical architrave and frieze and raking cornices without returns. The windows, except for the storefront bay windows, have six-over-six, double-hung, sash windows. Prior to the recent rehabilitation, much of the historic clapboarding had been covered with brick-pattern, asphalt shingling. The old, double-hung sash survived in the front gable windows, but other early windows had been covered up. The windows in the front of the one-story section had double-hung, single-light sash windows. Prior to the refurbishment, a two-story, shed-roof wing of vertical-board construction was attached to the west side of the south end of the gabled part of the building. This was removed because of its deteriorated condition and ramshackle appearance.

The shopfront existing prior to the beginning of work was not the original one, but probably a late nineteenth-century renovation. Examination of the physical evidence at the time of its dismantling did not reveal the original storefront design. The present storefront recreates as closely as possible the front's appearance in the oldest available photograph, but also retains some of the trim -- including the storefront cornice and the sidewall construction of the recessed entranceway. The double doors of the front entrance are old, but salvaged from some other building, and replace a more modern single door with sidelights.

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Description (continues)

The interior has been stripped of newer materials such as wall panelling, linoleum flooring, and drop ceilings and the original material found largely intact beneath. The floor plan, which pre-dates the refurbishment, is being retained.

On the first floor are three rooms, including a large one which extends across the front and includes about three-quarters of the gable-roof part and half of the flat-roof part of the building. Fifteen-inch square wood posts along the line of the west wall of the gable-roof section support the second floor. A small, former kitchen is located in the back of the gable-roof part and a large, squarish room occupies the back part of the shed-roof section. Along the west wall of the gabled part near the back a solidly built wood staircase -- thought to be part of the original construction -- runs up to the second floor. In the downstairs, only the east wall showed any signs of plastering. Otherwise, the floors, walls, and ceilings all appear to have been finished in wide boarding. This is being kept where it still exists and matching boarding installed elsewhere.

A low second floor under the gable roof last contained a three-room apartment. Set in from the eaves on either side several feet, a row of studs, lathed and plastered on the inside, give the main, north-end room vertical side walls. In the upstairs, old plank floors, trim, and doors with latches survive. In both stories, the bathroom facilities were located in the rear wing that has been removed. Old doors and other trim that had been incorporated in the rear wing were salvaged when that structure was removed. These materials are thought to have come from the main building when changes were made. The rafters of the gabled roof are of logs -- some with bark remaining intact -- covered in planks. The original roof is thought to have been of wood shingles, but a standing seam metal roof has been in place for as long as anyone can remember.

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)

Exploration/Settlement

Period of Significance

1831-1834

Significant Dates

1831-1834

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unknown

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

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This building served as the first home of the United States Land Office for the Western District of Michigan from June 1, 1831 until June, 1834, when the district land office was moved to Kalamazoo. During its three years of operation at White Pigeon Prairie, or White Pigeon, the office sold over 300,000 acres of land in the south-central and southwestern parts of Michigan's Lower Peninsula. The White Pigeon building is the only federal land office building known to remain standing in Michigan and is one of only a very small number which survive in the Old Northwest Territory.

The first United States Land Office in Michigan opened in 1804 in Detroit. The general survey of Michigan lands under the Northwest Ordinance began in 1815 in the southeast part of the state and in 1823 a second land office was established at Monroe, located on Lake Erie between Detroit and Toledo, Ohio. Federal survey teams surveyed St. Joseph County in 1825-27 and the county's lands came onto the market in 1828 at the Monroe land office. Robert Clark, Jr., one of the surveyors, entered the east half of the southeast quarter of section one of what became White Pigeon Township in St. Joseph County in 1828. This tract includes the site of the land office building. On May 6, 1830, Clark and other adjoining property owners platted the village of White Pigeon on White Pigeon Prairie.

The opening of the Erie Canal several years earlier had greatly encouraged the flow of settlers into previously thinly settled southern Michigan and the rapid surveying and opening for sale of the southern Michigan lands resulted quickly in a land boom. The Monroe land office, which handled sales for the southern tiers of counties, was overwhelmed and, as of June 1, 1834, an additional office was established at White Pigeon Prairie, the site of the largest community in southwest Michigan at the time. The White Pigeon Prairie office handled sales of land in all that part of the Lower Peninsula west of the Meridian which had been surveyed and opened to settlement. Abraham S. Edwards was appointed register, Thomas C. Sheldon receiver, and Theodore P. Sheldon, chief clerk.

The land office property was not owned by the federal government, but by Thomas C. Sheldon, the receiver, who had bought it from Clark prior to June, 1832 (the exact chronology is not known, since the transaction was not recorded, and sales of adjoining property and an 1878 quitclaim deed from heirs of

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Robert Clark, Jr. to Norman Thomas, the then current owner, provide the only evidence). Perhaps the land office officials were required to provide their own business space in return for the salaries and fees they obtained.

In June, 1834 the federal land office for this Western District of Michigan was moved from White Pigeon to the rapidly growing village of Kalamazoo, thirty-five miles to the north, which was by then more nearly in the center of the area in which lands were being entered. Thomas C. Sheldon remained in office as receiver after the move to Kalamazoo and in 1838 sold the former land office property to Elias S. Sevans of White Pigeon for \$1000. The deed, recorded in the St. Joseph County land records, states that the property being transferred contains "the building lately occupied as the office of Receiver of Public Monies for the United States Land office."

Approximately 300,000 acres of land were entered at the White Pigeon Land Office in the 1831-34 period. Among those who must have set foot in this building were Louis Campau, the founder of Grand Rapids, and Titus Bronson, the founder of Kalamazoo. The lands they entered in this building have become the central parts of Grand Rapids and Kalamazoo.

The White Pigeon office was in operation at the beginning of the boom in Michigan lands, but was moved to Kalamazoo before the crest of the Michigan land rush was reached in 1835 and 1836. Sales of land at White Pigeon totalled 95,980.25 acres in 1833. In 1834, when the office was located about one half year each in White Pigeon and Kalamazoo, the total sales were 128,244.47 acres. In 1835, however, the harassed Kalamazoo officials sold 745,661.34 acres and in the following year 1,634,511.82 acres--the highest total of any federal land office. In the context of the early settlement history of southern Michigan, the Kalamazoo office is clearly of greater importance. However, the White Pigeon Land Office is the only known surviving Michigan building directly related to the several generation long history of the federal land office in the state. Contact with other state historic preservation offices in the Old Northwest Territory area has brought to light the information that two former federal land office buildings may survive in Ohio at Steubenville and Franklinton (now part of Columbus). The state historic preservation offices of Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin have no knowledge of surviving federal land office buildings in their states.

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The former White Pigeon Land Office served various commercial uses over the years -- as a hardware store in 1858 and as a barber shop, hardware store, tavern, and restaurant in more recent years. In 1981 the late Harold Carr of White Pigeon purchased the building to ensure its preservation. Mr. Carr died in 1984 and his widow, Mrs. Lottie Carr, in 1985 donated the building to the St. Joseph County Historical Society. The society is in the process of restoring the land office to its early appearance and intends to use it to house a museum of local and county history.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Everts, L. H., and Co. History of St. Joseph County, Michigan.
Philadelphia, 1877.

St. Joseph County Abstract Office, Centreville. Abstract of Title
for Lot 49.

Wickman, Helen L. Various letters and other materials. Located in
Bureau of History site file for Old U. S. Government Land Office.

Previous documentation on file (NPS): none

- 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 # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

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

Specify repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property Less than one acre

UTM References

A 16 6112650 4628000
Zone Easting Northing

B _____
Zone Easting Northing

C _____

D _____

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

E 1/2 of lot 49, Original Plat of the Village of White Pigeon.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

This is the entire lot associated with the building since the 1870s.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Robert O. Christensen, National Register Coordinator
organization Bureau of History date April, 1988
street & number 208 N. Capitol Ave. telephone 517/335-2719
city or town Lansing state MI zip code 48918

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SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD

NRIS Reference Number: 88003234

Date Listed: 2/7/89

Old US Govt Land Office Bld.
Property Name

St. Joseph
County

MI
State

Multiple Name

This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

Patrick Andrus
Signature of the Keeper

2/7/89
Date of Action

=====
Amended Items in Nomination:

The Current Function of the building needs to be clarified. At the time of nomination the building was undergoing renovation. The current function should be listed as Vacant (rather than as museum). Bob Christensen with the MI SHPO agrees that this is accurate, and the nomination form is now officially amended to reflect this change.

DISTRIBUTION:

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without nomination attachment)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY US Government Land Office Building, Old
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: MICHIGAN, St. Joseph

DATE RECEIVED: 12/27/88 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 1/10/89
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 1/26/89 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 2/10/89
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 88003234

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: Y NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 2/7/89 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*Historically significant building associated
Federal land transactions in Michigan
in the 1830s*

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept A
REVIEWER Katrick Andrus
DISCIPLINE Historian
DATE 2/7/89

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

CLASSIFICATION

count resource type

STATE/FEDERAL AGENCY CERTIFICATION

FUNCTION

historic current

DESCRIPTION

architectural classification
 materials
 descriptive text

SIGNIFICANCE

Period Areas of Significance--Check and justify below

Specific dates Builder/Architect
Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

summary paragraph
 completeness
 clarity
 applicable criteria
 justification of areas checked
 relating significance to the resource
 context
 relationship of integrity to significance
 justification of exception
 other

BIBLIOGRAPHY

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

acreage verbal boundary description
 UTMs boundary justification

ACCOMPANYING DOCUMENTATION/PRESENTATION

sketch maps USGS maps photographs presentation

OTHER COMMENTS

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to

_____ Phone _____

Signed _____ Date _____



UNITED STATES LAND OFFICE

AGO RD

NE HWY

U.S. LAND OFFICE
WHITE PIGEON
NORTH ENTRANCE
1988

Old U.S. Government Land Office Building
White Pigeon, St. Joseph Co., MI
St. Joseph Co. Hist. Soc.
Feb., 1988
Neg: St. Joseph Co. Hist. Soc.
N facade(front) face S
photo 1 of 12



US. LAND OFFICE
WHITE PIGEON
EAST ENTRANCE
1988

Old U.S. Government Land Office Building
White Pigeon, St. Joseph Co., MI
St. Joseph Co. Hist. Soc.
Feb., 1988
Neg: St. Joseph Co. Hist. Soc.
E facade face SE
photo 2 of 12

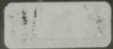


US LAND OFFICE
WHITE PIGEON
SOUTH ENTRANCE
1988

Old U.S. Government Land Office Building
White Pigeon, St. Joseph Co., MI
St. Joseph Co. Hist. Soc.
Feb., 1988
Neg: St. Joseph Co. Hist. Soc.
S facade face N
photo 3 of 12



RESTAURANT



PHILLES



FRESH
EL PRODUCTO



*Interior
Front entrance*

U.S. Government Land Office Building
White Pigeon, St. Joseph Co., MI
St. Joseph Co. Hist. Soc.
Mar., 1985
Neg: St. Joseph Co. Hist. Soc.
Interior of front entrance face N
photo 4 of 12



South center and back wall
US LAND OFFICE white Pigeon

Old U.S. Government Land Office Building
White Pigeon, St. Joseph Co., MI
St. Joseph Co. Hist. Soc.
Mar. 1985
Neg: St. Joseph Co. Hist. Soc.
S wall of main room
photo 5 of 12



Carthage
West Annex

Old U.S. Government Land Office Building
White Pigeon, St. Joseph Co., MI
St. Joseph Co. Hist. Soc.
Mar. 1985
Neg: St. Joseph Co. Hist. Soc.
W annex entrance face N
photo 6 of 12



Old U.S. Government Land Office Building
White Pigeon, St. Joseph Co., MI
St. Joseph Co. Hist. Soc.
Mar. 1985
Neg: St. Joseph Co. Hist. Soc.
View second floor crawl space showing
construction
photo 7 of 12



W CHICAGO RD

ROSEN

TELEPHONE

Old U.S. Government Land Office Building
White Pigeon, St. Joseph Co., MI
St. Joseph Co. Hist. Soc.
Mar. 1985
Neg: St. Joseph Co. Hist. Soc.
N facade front face S
photo 8 of 12



Old U.S. Government Land Office Building
White Pigeon, St. Joseph Co., MI
St. Joseph Co. Hist. Soc.
Mar. 1985
Neg: St. Joseph Co. Hist. Soc.
NE facade face SW
photo 9 of 12



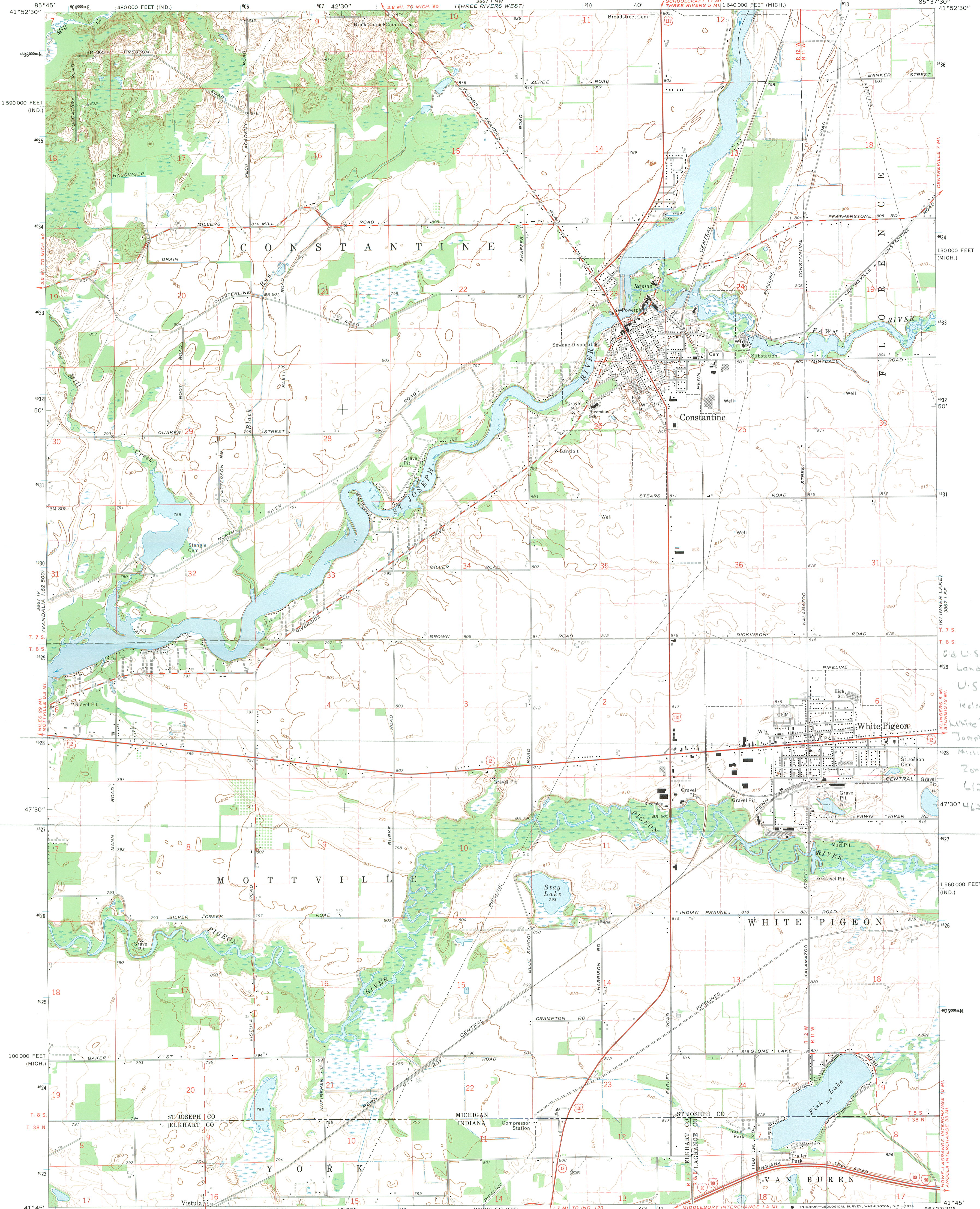
Old U.S. Government Land Office Building
White Pigeon, St. Joseph Co., MI
St. Joseph Co. Hist. Soc.
Mar. 1985
Neg: St. Joseph Co. Hist. Soc.
NW facade face SE
photo 10 of 12



Old U.S. Government Land Office Building
White Pigeon, St. Joseph Co., MI
St. Joseph Co. Hist. Soc.
Mar. 1985
Neg: St. Joseph Co. Hist. Soc.
SW facade face NE
photo 11 of 12

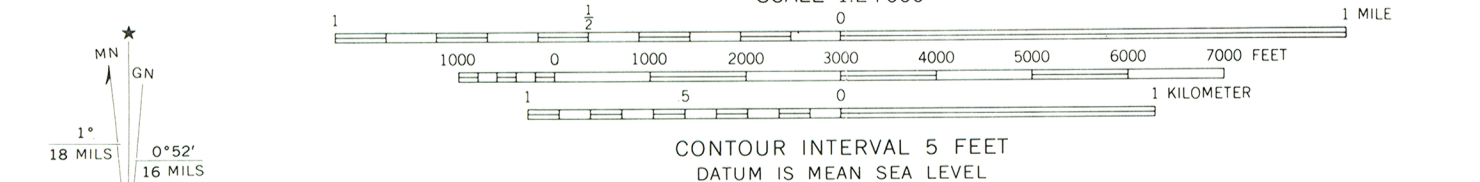


Old U.S. Government Land Office Building
White Pigeon, St. Joseph Co., MI
St. Joseph Co. Hist. Soc.
Mar. 1985
Neg: St. Joseph Co. Hist. Soc.
inside view of front entrance face N
photo 12 of 12



016 U.S. Government
Land Office
U.S. 12, west of
Kalamazoo Street
White Pigeon, St.
Joseph County
Michigan
Zone 16
612650E
4628000N

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey
Control by USGS and USC&GS
Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial
photographs taken 1969. Field checked 1972
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum
10,000-foot grids based on Michigan coordinate system, south zone
and Indiana coordinate system, east zone
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,
zone 16, shown in blue
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where
generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked



ROAD CLASSIFICATION
Primary highway, hard surface
Secondary highway, hard surface
Unimproved road
Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
Interstate Route
U.S. Route
State Route

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242
AND INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES, INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA 46204
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

CONSTANTINE, MICH.-IND.
SW/4 THREE RIVERS 15' QUADRANGLE
N4145-W8537.5/7.5

MICHIGAN DEPARTMENT OF STATE

RICHARD H. AUSTIN

SECRETARY OF STATE



LANSING

MICHIGAN 48918

BUREAU OF HISTORY

ADMINISTRATION, PUBLICATIONS
ARCHAEOLOGY AND HISTORIC
PRESERVATION

208 N. Capitol Avenue
517-373-0510

STATE ARCHIVES

3405 N. Logan Street
517-335-9165

MICHIGAN HISTORICAL MUSEUM

208 N. Capitol Avenue
517-373-3559

DEC 27 1988

NATIONAL
REGISTER

December 15, 1988

Ms. Carol D. Shull, Supervisory Historian
National Register of Historic Places
National Park Service
U.S. Department of the Interior
P.O. Box 37127
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed are National Register of Historic Places nomination materials for the Old U.S. Government Land Office Building in White Pigeon, Michigan. I certify that the intent-to-nominate notification requirements have been fulfilled. This property is being submitted for listing in the National Register.

All notarized statements of objection and written comments concerning this nomination submitted to us prior to the submission of this nomination to you are enclosed.

Please direct all questions concerning this nomination to Robert O. Christensen, National Register Coordinator (517) 335-2719.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Martha M. Bigelow".

Martha M. Bigelow, Director
Bureau of History
and

Michigan State Historic Preservation Officer

MMB/ROC/cc

enc: