

**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 for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Polk Street Terraces Historic District

other names/site number The Edison Concept Houses

2. Location

street & number 404-422 & 437-455 Polk Street not for publication N/A

city or town Gary vicinity NA

state Indiana code IN county Lake code 089 zip code 46402

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide X locally.
(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. 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 Keeper

Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	Noncontributing
<u>20</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
<u>20</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

Name of related multiple property listing (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

Concrete in the Steel City: The Edison Concept Houses of Gary, Indiana

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: single dwelling

Cat: _____ Sub: _____

Cat: _____ Sub: _____

Cat: _____ Sub: _____

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: DOMESTIC Sub: single dwelling

Cat: _____ Sub: _____

Cat: _____ Sub: _____

Cat: _____ Sub: _____

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Late 19th & Early 20th Century American Movements:

Bungalow/ Craftsman

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

roof ASPHALT

walls CONCRETE

other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C** Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D** Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location.
- C** a birthplace or a grave.
- D** a cemetery.
- E** a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

ENGINEERING

INVENTION

Period of Significance

1910-1957

Significant Dates

1910

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Creighton, D. F.

The United States Sheet and Tin Plate Company

Narrative Statement of Significance (Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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

Name of repository:

Indiana University Northwest Calumet Archives

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	16	470800	3	16	470930
2	16	470940	4	16	470800

See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Christopher Baas
organization _____ date August 2007
street & number 21116 North Banbury telephone (317)877-7799
city or town Noblesville state IN zip code 46062

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

- Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

name Various
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.). A federal agency may not conduct or sponsor, and a person is not required to respond to a collection of information unless it displays a valid OMB control number.

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to range from approximately 18 hours to 36 hours depending on several factors including, but not limited to, how much documentation may already exist on the type of property being nominated and whether the property is being nominated as part of a Multiple Property Documentation Form. In most cases, it is estimated to average 36 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form to meet minimum National Register documentation requirements. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, 1849 C St., NW, Washington, DC 20240.

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Polk Street Terraces Historic District
Lake County, Indiana
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7. Description

The Polk Terrace Historic District consists of two terraces located in the First Subdivision of Gary, Indiana. They are located on the opposite sides of the 400 block of Polk Street. 404-422 is located on the north end of the block, and 437-455 on the south. Each terrace consists of ten houses. The district contains twenty contributing resources. All the houses are occupied.

The district is located on Polk Street between 4th and 5th Avenues. It is bordered on the north by 4th Avenue, on the east and west by residential alleys, and on the south by commercial properties along Fifth Avenue.

The terraces are two stories in height and have basements. The terraces at 404-422 Polk have two-bedroom houses. The houses at 437-455 Polk have a larger floor plan and three bedrooms. The exterior walls, basement walls, and the walls separating each house are constructed of formed concrete. The roof, floors, and interior partitions are constructed of dimensional lumber. Each house has a flat roof (that sheds to the building's rear), front and side parapet walls, a skylight, and a chimney. Architectural ornamentation is formed in the front façade's concrete walls. Cast details include panels, geometric ornaments, windowsills, and parapet walls capped with pediments and coping.

Each terrace is symmetrical. The center two houses are paired under the highest parapet, and flanked by four houses on each side. The monotony of the mass-produced row house is softened through the delineation of houses into single and paired units by stylized parapets. For instance, 404-422 Polk has two sets of two individual houses between central and end sets of paired houses. 437-455 Polk has alternating sets of paired houses under pedimented and flat parapets. However, the same designs were used on multiple terraces. Except for very minor variations of the cast details, 404-422 Polk Street is identical to the 408-426 Monroe Street terrace, and 437-455 Polk Street is identical to 405-423 Jackson Street terrace (see Jackson-Monroe Terraces Historic District National Register application).

404-422 Polk Street (2 bedroom)

The terrace is approximately 150 feet long, 35 feet deep, and has a 7-foot deep concrete porch. Each house measures 15 feet x 35 feet deep, and has a 15-foot by 7-foot porch. The porch openings were originally open. Their door openings have been enclosed with an entry door and storm door. Most of the porch window openings have been enclosed with paired one-over-one double-hung windows.

The symmetrical, two-story front façade has a continuous, single story, porch that extends the length of the terrace. The terrace has a massing of paired houses in the center and on each end, with two sets of two individual houses in-between. The paired houses are delineated from the individual houses by variations in the parapet roof, window spacing, and cast ornamentation (See Photos 1 & 2). All the houses are separated by a buttress-like detail that extends from the porch to near the bottom of the pediments. The porch of the central section has a pedimented parapet with cast lines that simulate a triangular panel. The remainder of the porch has a flat roof with a frieze that displays a rectangular panel-like detail.

The central section has two houses (412 and 414) and displays a pedimented parapet roof with a coping that steps and angles down to the adjacent houses. It displays three vertical rectangles in the peak.

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Four individual houses (408, 410, and 416, 418) display a simple pedimented parapet of angles and steps. The pediments have a tassel-like detail of a square with a cross over a linear band. Each upper story has two one-over-one double-hung windows.

The paired houses at the ends of the terrace (404, 406, and 420, 422) are similar to the central section, except the parapet displays a flat crown with raised and squared ends, and a cast horizontal rectangle. It does not display the coping detail seen on the central section.

Each house has a raised porch with a flat roof that covers the façade's ground story. Concrete steps with concrete sidewalls access the porch. An opening to the basement's coal room is located next to each stair. The porch's frieze displays alternating square depressions (that house downspouts), and cast geometric ornamentation.

The terrace's north and south facades, or "ends," are windowless concrete walls that display the roof's sloping side parapet wall, and the skylight well.

The terrace's rear (west) façade is divided into five projecting wings by narrow, two-story courtyards that allow light and air into the sides of each house (See Photo 3). Each wing and courtyard serves two houses. The ground story of the wing's rear façade displays two entry doors between two one-over-one double-hung windows. The second stories have two one-over-one double-hung windows located over the first-story entry doors. The courtyard's sidewalls display a single, small one-over-one double-hung window on the first-story, below a larger second-story one-over-one double-hung window. The courtyard's rear wall is "flat" (as opposed to the forty-five degree angles of the three bedroom terraces), and displays one-over-one double-hung windows on each story. The courtyards have doors to the basement.

437-455 Polk Street (3 bedroom)

The terrace is approximately 150 feet long, 42 feet deep, and has a 7-foot deep concrete porch. Each house measures 15 feet x 42 feet, and has a 15-foot by 7-foot porch. The porch openings were originally open. Their door openings have been enclosed with an entry door and storm door. Most of the porch window openings have been enclosed with a large, single light window flanked by one-over-one double-hung windows. Although all the houses are equal in width, massing of a larger central block between four sets of paired houses lessens the monotony of the mass-produced housing.

The symmetrical, two-story front façade has a continuous, single story porch that extends the length of the terrace. It has a tall, central section containing two houses that is flanked on each side by two sets of paired houses. The paired houses are defined by variations in the parapet roof, window spacing, and column-like bands of concrete (See Photos 9-11).

The central section has two houses (445 and 447) and displays a pedimented parapet roof that has a squared crown that steps and slopes down to the flanking houses. It displays a cast vertical rectangle, flanked by diamonds. The second-story of each house has paired one-over-one double-hung windows with a concrete sill.

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The four flanking houses (441, 443, and 449, 451) have a flat parapet with a coping. The parapets have cast diamonds like the central section. Each of the house's upper story has two one-over-one double-hung windows with concrete sills.

The houses at the ends of the terrace (437, 439, and 453, 455) have a parapet roof with a broad pediment crown that slopes down to flat ends. The pediments have a cast rectangle with a shallow alcove. Each upper story has paired one-over-one double-hung windows with a concrete sill.

Each house has a raised porch with a flat roof that covers the façade's ground story. Concrete steps with concrete sidewalls access the porch. An opening to the basement's coal room is located next to each stair. The porch's frieze displays a cornice-like linear coping with openings for downspouts.

The terrace's north and south facades, or "ends," are windowless concrete walls that display the roof's sloping side parapet wall, and the skylight well.

The terrace's rear façade is divided into five projecting wings by narrow, two-story courtyards that allow light and air into the sides of each house (See photo 12). Each wing and courtyard serves two houses. The ground story of the wing's rear façade displays two one-over-one double-hung windows between two entry doors. The second story has two one-over-one double-hung windows. The courtyard's side walls display a single one-over-one double-hung window on the first and third stories, and two on the second. The lower story of the courtyard's rear wall connects to the sidewalls at two forty-five degree angles, and displays a one-over-one double-hung window. The upper story is "square" to the main structure, and displays a one-over-one double-hung window.

House Plans and Interiors

The houses within each terrace have identical interior layouts in alternating, mirrored plans. The plan for the three-bedroom 437-455 Polk is approximately 7 feet deeper from front to back.

The ground story for both types consists of an entry porch, a living room at the front of the house, a dining room in the center, and a kitchen in the rear (See Photos 4 & 5). Entry doors are located from the porch into the living room, and from the rear yard into the kitchen. The second stories consist of bedrooms and a bathroom clustered around a hallway and stairwell. The two-bedroom plan has bedrooms located at the front and back of the house, with the hallway, bath, and closet in-between. The extended length of the three-bedroom plan allows for a bedroom along the hallway.

The interior walls, floors, and partitions are wood frame construction. The ceilings and walls have plaster applied to weaved wood lath, likely prefabricated and installed in panels. The terraces have Arts and Crafts inspired details. Where historic material remains, the floors are wood, and the baseboards are a plank topped with a simple molding. Door surrounds simulate a classical entablature supported by column-like jambs. The doors display a large panel over a smaller panel.

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The living room has a fireplace that is topped with a plain wood mantel and decorative molding. The firebox also displays a decorative molding (See Photo 6). The stairs are also located in the living room. They are enclosed on one side by the house's outer wall, and are open to the living room (See photo 7 of modern replacement newel, balusters, and handrail).

The dining room has built-in shelves over a cabinet base. The courtyard corner of the room (in the three-bedroom plans) is constructed on a forty-five degree angle. The small kitchen has a door to the rear yard, and built-in cabinets. A square skylight illuminates the stairwell. The basement has a coal room beneath the porch, and utility spaces for the furnace and laundry machines.

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8. Statement of Significance

The Polk Street Terraces Historic District is eligible for the National Register under Criterion A as an example of the historic trends in the development and growth of the City of Gary. It represents a novel concept for house construction designed, patented, and promoted by inventor Thomas A. Edison, and refined by other architects and inventors. Their construction was regarded as the country's first experiment of this type of large-scale housing production. Constructed for the employees of the U.S. Sheet and Tin Plate Company, they are also representative of one solution to the city's housing shortage caused by the influx of workers to the new mills. The district is eligible under Criterion C as an outstanding example of early twentieth century company-supplied worker housing that utilized experimental methods and materials of house construction. The houses were designed by architect D. F. Creighton of Ambridge, Pennsylvania. They exhibit simple, efficient, and homey spaces. The exterior use of building heights, organization and grouping of houses, and cast details shows the architect's understanding of the need for variation to lessen the monotony of mass production. The terraces are identified in the Lake County Interim Report and received an Outstanding rating.

The district's period of significance is 1910-1957. Terrace construction began in 1910, and the fifty year benchmark for eligibility is 1957. City directories indicate the mill continued to rent the houses into the early 1970's. Rental periods appear to have been as short as a year and for up to decade or more in length. Some units continued to be rented for several years to the widows of mill workers.

The district is one of five included in the *Concrete in the Steel City: The Edison Concept Houses of Gary, Indiana* (2007) Multiple Property Document within the historic context of *United States Sheet and Tin Plate Company Concrete Houses of Gary, Indiana, 1910-1957*. By 1910, Gary's private enterprises could not meet the housing demand caused by the new U.S. Steel mill works and its subsidiaries. To help speed the transfer of management level employees, the subsidiary U.S. Sheet and Tin Plate Company constructed worker housing in terraces of formed concrete.

The houses are the first large-scale attempt of employing Thomas Edison's concept of providing affordable and sanitary housing for the working classes. Beginning in 1906, Edison patented metal forms and a process for casting a house in a single pour. While Edison never successfully employed his invention, the concept was assumed and developed by others, including the Reichert Manufacturing Company (that patented the forms used in Gary). The method was described in 1920 as "small, light-weight unit steel forms."¹ Their advantage over other concrete forming systems (for instance wood or hydraulic forms) was the ability to be assembled with unskilled labor in repeated applications. The forms were invented and patented in Milwaukee, Wisconsin by August Reichert in 1911, and sold under the name of Reichert Adjustable Metal Forms. Apparently, it was further refined about 1919 and renamed Metaforms. The company is still actively producing concrete related products.

¹ Whipple, *Concrete Houses: How They Were Built*, 10.

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The houses in the Polk Terrace have both private and not-for-profit owners. The not-for-profit Horace Mann-Ambridge Neighborhood Improvement Association owns 10 of the 20 houses, and rents them for public housing. Beginning in the 1980s, the Association rehabilitated the houses. The exteriors were painted, and the interiors were modernized with carpeting, drywall, and modern kitchens. While much of the interior's historic materials were removed, the houses still display the original plans and details, evident in some examples of remaining woodwork, stairs, and fireplaces. 10 of the houses are privately owned, and largely maintain their historic layouts and materials.

The Multiple Property Document presented the houses' historic context, significance, and conditions for listing. To be eligible, the district, must display the integrity of design, location, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The overall design of the district's terraces is intact. Their exterior appearance and interior spaces represent original design and construction. The concrete building material has not been covered or altered, and a representative portion of the historic interior woodwork and details remain. While the porches have been enclosed, they are readily identifiable as porches. The terraces are in their original location, and its historic, residential, First Subdivision context remains relatively intact. The terrace's materials represent the workmanship of materials, most notably the concrete walls, cast details, woodwork, plaster, and windows.

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Polk Street Terraces Historic District
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9. Major Bibliographical References

Baas, Christopher. *Concrete in the Steel City: The Edison Concept Houses of Gary, Indiana* Multiple Property Document, 2007.

Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana. *Lake County Interim Report: Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory*. Indianapolis, 1996.

Whipple, Harvey. 'How Will the Individual Owner Get a Concrete House?' in *Concrete Houses: How They Were Built*. Detroit: Concrete-Cement Age Publishing Company, 1920.

10. Geographical Data

Verbal Boundary Description

The Polk Street Terraces Historic District has a discontinuous boundary that includes two areas. The first area starts at a point of beginning on the northwest property corner of 404 Polk Street; then east to the west curb line of Polk Street; then south along the curb line to a point even with the south property line of 422 Polk Street; then west to a point even with the west property line of 422 Polk Street, then north to the point of beginning.

The second area starts at a point of beginning on the northeast property corner of 437 Polk Street; then south to a point even with the south property line of 455 Polk Street, then west to the east curb line of Polk Street; then north to a point even with the north property line of 437 Polk Street, then east to the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

A discontinuous boundary is appropriate for the district because it incorporates resources that developed simultaneously, but are not adjoining. It uses easily identifiable points to define its limits, includes all contributing resources, and excludes neighboring properties.

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Polk Street Terraces Historic District
Lake County, Indiana

Photo Log

Polk Street Terraces Historical District (City of Gary)

Lake County, Indiana

Photographer: Christopher Baas

Photographic CD Location: Indiana SHPO

1. 404-422 Polk Street looking southwest. Photographed July 27, 2007.
2. 412-414 Polk Street looking west. Photographed January 7, 2006.
3. 404-422 Polk Street looking northeast. Photographed July 27, 2007.
4. 414 Polk Street living room and porch looking east. Photographed July 27, 2007.
5. 414 Polk Street living room, dining room, and kitchen looking west. Photographed July 27, 2007.
6. 414 Polk Street fireplace looking south. Photographed July 27, 2007.
7. 414 Polk Street stairs looking west. Photographed July 27, 2007.
8. 404-422 Polk Street concrete detail looking west. Photographed July 27, 2007.
9. 437-455 Polk Street looking northeast. Photographed July 27, 2007.
10. 437-439 Polk Street looking east. Photographed July 27, 2007.
11. 449-451 Polk Street looking east. Photographed July 27, 2007.
12. 437-455 Polk Street looking northwest. Photographed July 27, 2007.



Polk Street Terraces Historic District, Lake County IN
Photo 1



Polk Street Terraces Historic District, Lake County IN
Photo 2



Polk Street Terraces Historic District, Lake County IN
Photo 3



Polk Street Terraces Historic District, Lake County IN
Photo 9