

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Scottish Rite Cathedral

and/or common Same

2. Location

street & number 650 N. Meridian Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Indianapolis N/A vicinity of

state Indiana code 018 county Marion code 097

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
	N/A	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Fraternal

4. Owner of Property

name Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite
Northern Masonic Jurisdiction, Valley of Indianapolis

street & number 650 N. Meridian Street

city, town Indianapolis N/A vicinity of state Indiana 46204

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. City-County Building, Recorder's Office

street & number 200 E. Washington Street

city, town Indianapolis state Indiana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date N/A
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Scottish Rite Cathedral is a large limestone building of Tudor Gothic architecture located on Meridian Street between North and Walnut Streets in downtown Indianapolis. The building is rectangular in plan, measuring 330' x 120', and features a center tower 210' in height. Completed in 1929, the structure is one of the city's most famous architectural landmarks and is generally acknowledged to be one of the finest examples of its style in the Midwest, and possibly in the nation.

The building's main (east) facade is symmetrical, with the main entry located in a center pavilion. The large pointed-arch opening containing this entry is flanked by wall buttresses with gablets. Four-story, octagonal towers appear on either side of the pavilion. The dominant feature of the building, the 210' tower, appears just behind the entry pavilion. This tower is square in plan, and features angle wall buttresses, large stained glass windows in pointed-arch openings, and a delicately-pierced parapet wall. This tower contains a 65-bell carillon, at one time the largest in the country, and is specially reinforced to carry this heavy load.

The wings on either side of the entry pavilion are each comprised of five bays delineated by interposing wall buttresses. The splayed window openings in these bays vary in shape and size from one floor level to the next; the most notable of these are the wide, tudor-arched openings on the second floor level. Flying buttresses near the tops of the interposing wall buttresses visually support the slightly set-back upper floors. Large, three-story octagonal towers terminate the north and south wings; these towers feature clasping wall buttresses and splayed window openings with label hood molds.

The north and south facades of the structure feature auxiliary entries similar to that on the main facade. Decorative detailing throughout the exterior of the building is similar to that on the main facade, and includes the use of wall buttresses, flying buttresses, and octagonal towers on the extreme western corners of the north and south wings.

Inside the main entrance is the Tiler's Room (photo 5). The marble floor represents the floor of the inner sanctum of King Solomon's Temple. The polished travertine marble walls are richly carved and ornamented with Masonic emblems. A ceiling that has been decorated with an intricate design adds to the beauty of this room. The large art glass transom over the entrance also contains many symbols of Masonry. A bronze centerpiece set in the floor depicts the signs of the Zodiac and the emblems of the four principal degrees of Scottish Rite. The chandelier is cast bronze. This room is a perfect cube of 33 feet; the entire interior of the building is laid out in multiples of 33, commemorating the 33 years which Christ lived on earth.

Directly west of the Tiler's room is the main lobby (photo 6), 66 feet square, containing only four columns. The floor is marble with walls paneled in white oak, and the plastered ceiling is decorated with white oak beams. The architecture is Tudor. Two bronze statues, representing the Spirit of Life and Maternal Love, stand on marble bases in this room.

North of the main lobby are the working rooms of the Rite, consisting of the Secretary's offices, the Lodge of Perfection Room, in which the business meetings of the Rite are conducted, and the wardrobe room for costumes used in the ritualistic work.

South of the Lobby is the lounge, 82½ feet wide and 99 feet long. It has two rows of columns 33 feet apart and spaced 16½ feet on centers. On either side is a loggia set off by a series of arches. Tudor Gothic in style, the room has marble floors, paneled

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Item number 7

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walls of Russian white oak and a beamed ceiling similar to the lobby. The carpets in both the lobby and the lounge were designed by the architect. Those in the lounge feature the Tudor rose. The eight art glass windows in the east wall of the lounge are dedicated to the arts and sciences; Medicine, Law, Music, Painting, Sculpture, Electricity, Engineering, and Education. All are memorial windows donated by members of the Rite or their families. The eight windows in the west wall have been created to represent the lessons of several degrees of the Scottish Rite.

South of the Tiler's room and east of the lounge is a small room known as the Baxter Room (photo 7), named for the late Arthur R. Baxter, which is used for the reception of distinguished guests.

At the southeast corner of the lounge is the library (photo 8). It is octagonal in shape and 33 feet in diameter. The architectural style is Jacobean. The floor is marble. Book cases which extend entirely around the room are made of white oak and the walls above the cases and ceiling are plastered. The art glass windows in this room were given in memory of Winfield T. Durbin, Governor of Indiana from 1900 to 1904. The subjects of these windows, Travel, Statesmanship, the Military, History and Literature, were chosen because they were vital interests in the life of Governor Durbin.

Directly west of the main lobby is the grand staircase, 33 feet wide, leading to both the upper and lower floors. On either side of the approach to the stairway are the elevators, the most interesting feature of which is the beautiful steel etching on the doors. The stairway is illuminated by three art glass windows. They illustrate much of the symbolism of the first three degrees of Masonry and are commonly called the Blue Lodge windows.

On the second floor is the ballroom (photo 9). Two stories high, this room is 99 feet square and features a mezzanine or balcony 16½ feet wide on all four sides. The walls are paneled in white oak. The parquet floor of white oak and black walnut is laid over a system of springs and deadening felt for resiliency. The ceiling is decorated acoustical board. The architecture is of the Elizabethan period. The large crystal chandelier, which weighs over 2500 lbs. and contains nearly 200 incandescent lamps, is suspended on a winch by which it can be lowered to the floor for cleaning and for replacing the lamps.

To the north of the foyer on the second floor is the auditorium (photos 10 and 11), where all ritualistic work, entertainments, Cathedral Hour religious services and all other public gatherings take place. The auditorium has 1,100 permanent seats and an arena 33 feet square. The stage is 33 feet deep with a proscenium arch 38 feet wide and 28 feet high. The walls of the auditorium are paneled and the ceiling is formed with richly carved cathedral trusses, all of curly Russian white oak. Carving on the trusses was done at Minneapolis by the sons of Anton Lang. The carpets in the room are black with small white triangles, especially designed for the Scottish Rite. The ceremonial furniture of the room is richly carved white oak, and the carving is symbolical of the fourteenth degree of Scottish Rite Masonry. The bronze chandelier in the center of the auditorium weights 2,400 lbs. Like the crystal chandelier in the ballroom, it is mounted on a winch for lowering to the floor.

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On the third floor of the building is a balcony around the ballroom, a foyer and the auditorium and a memorial room containing some interesting items relative to the past history of the Scottish Rite. The fourth floor leads to the auditorium balcony.

The basement of the building, consisting of two levels, is devoted to the large banquet hall (photo 12), seating over 2,500 people, surrounded by a balcony or mezzanine on which are the recreation rooms and the cafeteria. The banquet hall is 212 feet long and 80 feet wide and is two stories, or 25 feet, in height. It is decorated in the English Renaissance style.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics government	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates 5-3-27 - Ground Broken
 7-1-29 - Opened

Builder/Architect George F. Schreiber, Architect; Hunkin-Conkey Construction Co., General Contractor

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Scottish Rite Cathedral is significant as one of the finest examples of Tudor Gothic architecture in the midwest. Begun in 1927 and completed two years later, the building and its grounds occupy one-half of a full city block near the center of Indianapolis' downtown area, and has been a prominent city landmark for over 50 years.

The Scottish Rite Cathedral was designed by George T. Schreiber. Born in Aix La Chapelle, Germany, in 1875, he studied architecture at Aix La Chapelle University, Stuttgart, and Heidelberg, specializing in the Gothic style. His design for the Cathedral was chosen from among eight competing designs submitted to the Scottish Rite's Building Committee in 1924. Two and one-half years were spent drawing, elaborating, and perfecting the plans, which were finally approved in January, 1927. Ground was broken in May, 1927, and the cornerstone laid November 29, 1927. Construction continued according to plan, although the bell tower was redesigned to accommodate a 65-bell carillon, at the time the largest carillon in the country. The interior of the building was decorated by Henry L. Behrens, a local designer, although Schreiber was engaged to design the furniture and fixtures of the Library. The building was completed in the summer of 1929 and formally dedicated on September 20, 1929.

The Scottish Rite Cathedral was, at one time, designated by the International Association of Architects as "one of the seven most beautiful buildings in the world." Certainly, it is the finest example of Tudor Gothic architecture in the state, and one of the finest in the nation. The building features the finest materials and extraordinary craftsmanship on both inside and out. The interior makes extravagant use of marble, stained glass, and fine hardwoods such as white oak and walnut. The exterior is constructed of limestone and includes polygonal bays, numerous wall buttresses, and a 210' central tower rising dramatically from the center of the structure. The building is prominently situated on North Meridian Street, the city's major north/south artery, and it is directly across the street from a block-wide landscaped mall, allowing the building to be viewed from vantage points several blocks away. Carefully maintained and preserved by its proud owners, it remains one of the architectural masterpieces of the city.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Brown, Paul D., Editor. Indianapolis Men of Affairs. Indianapolis: American Biographical Society, 1923.

"Masonic Symbolism in Wood and Stone"; Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite Valley of Indianapolis
 "One Hundred Years"; Ancient Accepted Scottish Rite Valley of Indianapolis, 1865-1965.

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 1.75+

Quadrangle name Indianapolis West, Indiana

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

1	6	5	7	2	1	1	0	4	4	0	3	0	4	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification

Parcel No. 1094776, Brown & Morris Sub-Division Lands L1 through L3 and L10 through L12 and one-half vacated Pierson Street

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
N/A			
state	code	county	code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Harry E. Hunter, A.I.A.

organization Tislow, Hunter & Associates, Inc. date October 19, 1982

street & number 9101 Wesleyan Road, Suite 205 telephone 317/875-8733; 875-7754

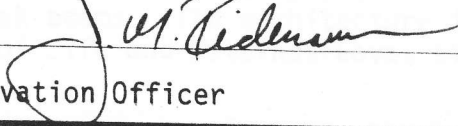
city or town Indianapolis state Indiana 46268

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer date 4-6-83

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

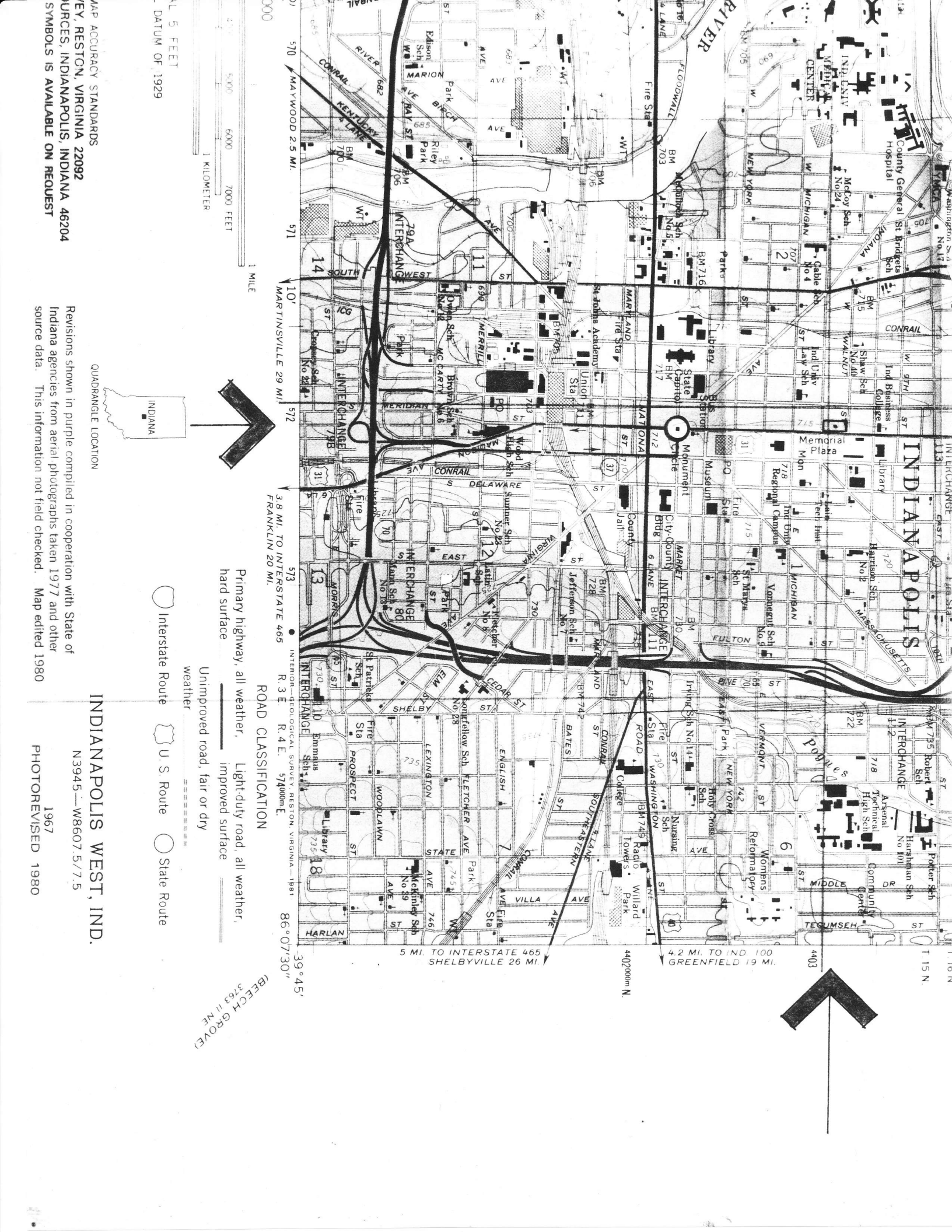
date

Keeper of the National Register

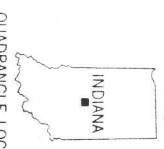
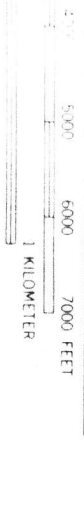
Attest:

date

Chief of Registration



SCALE 5 FEET
 DATUM OF 1929



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

INDIANAPOLIS WEST, IND.

N3945—W8607.5/7.5

1967
 PHOTOREVISED 1980

(BEECH GROVE)
 3763 11 NE

MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
 EY, RESTON, VIRGINIA, 22092
 SOURCES, INDIANAPOLIS, INDIANA 46204
 SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with State of Indiana agencies from aerial photographs taken 1977 and other source data. This information not field checked. Map edited 1980

5 MI. TO INTERSTATE 465
 SHELBYVILLE 26 MI.

4.2 MI. TO IND 100
 GREENFIELD 19 MI.

4402000m N