

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

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

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Old East Historic District  
other names/site number 045-025-09000

2. Location 400 block of E. Washington Street and the 400 and 500 blocks of E. Monroe Street  
street & number N/A not for publication  
city, town Attica N/A vicinity  
state Indiana code IN county Fountain code 045 zip code 47918

### 3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>43</u>	<u>14</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>2</u>	<u>0</u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
		<u>45</u>	<u>14</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

### 4. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Signature of certifying official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
Indiana Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

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

Signature of commenting or other official \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_ Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
 DOMESTIC/single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)  
 DOMESTIC/single dwelling

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification  
 (enter categories from instructions)

Italianate  
 Tudor Revival  
 LATE VICTORIAN

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE/sandstone  
 walls WOOD/weatherboard  
 BRICK  
 roof ASPHALT  
 other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Attica, the largest town in rural Fountain County, is located on the northern border of the county on the south shore of the Wabash River. The Old East district is located to the east of the original plat of the town. Its west boundary is Council Street, known to the local populace as "the highway;" as U. S. Route 41 and State Road 55, it is a major thoroughfare.

All primary buildings within the district are residential in function, and nearly all of them are single-family homes. (A few of the larger houses have apartments for tenants on upper floors.) The vast majority of the houses are frame (29 out of 37), with two-story houses predominating. There are only five brick houses in the district.

Attica's original plat of 1825 established the city's orthogonal grid street pattern. In the Old East district, comprised of three separate plats as outlined in Item 8, the prevailing lot size is 65 feet wide by 165 feet deep (four rods by ten rods). The lots in the 500 block of E. Monroe Street, which were platted in J. S. Nave's South Side Addition of 1884, are smaller at only 55 feet wide. However, many of the 15-foot-wide alleys originally located between every two lots have been vacated, allowing for much the same frontage throughout the district.

The rule of one primary building per lot prevails, giving a uniform density to the district. Where a post-1930 building has been built at the rear of a lot, such as at 402 S. College behind 413 E. Monroe Street, these non-contributing buildings have been excluded from the district. There are no instances of houses built on double lots, but in the 500 block of E. Monroe Street, three lots were never developed, which gives a sense of spaciousness between homes. Two of the district's three primary non-contributing buildings, 411 E. Washington and 507 E. Monroe, were built on lots that remained vacant during the district's period of significance. Although there is no uniform setback, all of the houses were built within 25 feet of the front lot line, which lends a general uniformity of development with small front yards. There are no parks or public spaces in the district; however, the high school's athletic fields to the east of Oak Street provide nearby open space.

**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)

Period of Significance

Significant Dates

Architecture

c. 1865-1930

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

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

Statement of Criterion and Area of Significance

The Old East Historic District possesses local significance in the area of "architecture" and meets Criterion C, embodying distinctive characteristics of type and period as well as representing a significant and distinguishable entity. The majority of houses in this residential district were built at the turn of the century during a period of revival in Attica's economy.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

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

Specify repository:

Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property 12

UTM References

A 

1	6
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4	7	9	0	9	0
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4	4	5	9	8	7	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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4	7	9	3	3	0
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4	4	5	9	5	0	0
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B 

1	6
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4	7	9	4	0	0
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4	4	5	9	7	5	0
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Zone Easting Northing

D 

1	6
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4	7	9	0	0	0
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4	4	5	9	6	2	0
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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Mary Ellen Gadski, Architectural Historian & Consultant to

organization Fountain County Historic Landmarks date November 9, 1989

street & number 4431 N. Illinois Street telephone (317) 283-5668

city or town Indianapolis state IN zip code 46208



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Between the eastern and western boundaries of the district, there is a modest change of elevation reflecting the gradual upper slope of the Wabash River Valley. To accommodate the downhill drainage toward the river, Washington and Monroe Streets have excavated ditches running along the rights-of-way between street pavement and sidewalks. These ditches are lined with cobblestone or with larger rocks, and flyover ramps occur at driveways and sidewalks. Some lots have been terraced to compensate for the change in grade level between the street and house site, such as the adjacent lots of 400, 402, 404 and 406 E. Washington. The latter two houses have a low retaining wall with large stone blocks (Photo 3). The pronounced change of grade between street and house site occurs for the first three houses on the south side of the 500 block of E. Monroe Street (Photo 9). Small boulders at 503 E. Monroe serve to arrest erosion. All of the streets in the district are paved with asphalt, but none of the alleys is paved. In fact some of the little-used alleys are merely grassy strips between back lots, such as the east/west alley between Washington and Monroe in the 500 block.

The Old East district's shade trees are an important natural asset which add immeasurably to the character of the district (Photo 9). All three blocks have mature trees, predominantly maples, between the street and sidewalk. On the north side of the 400 block of E. Washington Street, the uniform row of maples of the same age indicate that they were all planted at the same time as part of a street improvement project. In the fall, the foliage color is very impressive, rivaling a New England village in its sheer quantity and intensity. The district does not retain many elements of its early "street furniture," but there are two examples of 19th-century wrought-iron fences--at the front of 406 E. Washington Street (Photo 3) and at the rear of 410 E. Washington--that can be considered as noteworthy "structures." There are no "objects" or "sites" among the historic resources.

Of the 37 primary buildings within the boundaries of Old East, 34 can be considered as contributing to the overall historic and architectural character of the district. This high percentage of contributing buildings has been fieldchecked and verified against a Sanborn map surveyed in 1927, near the end year of the district's period of significance. (See last paragraph of "Boundary Justification.") This process has also been followed in evaluating the 20 outbuildings, only 9 of which can be considered as contributing. Most of the district's old carriage houses, barns and early garages have been demolished. Two interesting early-20th-century outbuildings of note are the one-and-a-half-story, board-and-batten barn at the rear of 409 E. Washington Street, and the one-and-a-half-story stable with vertical flushboard siding behind 402 E. Monroe.

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There follows a description and integral brief history of nine structures selected as "pivotal buildings" largely because of their architectural merit. The descriptions address scale, structure, plan, materials, design and stylistic features. (A general account of architectural styles represented in the district can be found under the heading "Architectural Significance" under Section 8.) The opening paragraph summarizes the history, focusing upon the original construction and major owners and/or tenants. For the convenience of viewing the accompanying photographs while reading the descriptions, the buildings are listed numerically by map number. Starting at the west boundary, the photo numbers run east along Washington Street and then follow the same pattern for Monroe Street.

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400 E. Washington Street

Photo 1

Alexander Holmes (1833-1921) and his wife Rebecca (1842-1906) purchased this property in October 1876. Construction of the house is presumed to have been completed in 1877. Holmes can be considered to have been a real estate developer in 19th-century Attica, for he built and owned a number of homes. He was also a city councilman for the first ward. He and his wife lived here only five years before moving to 801 S. Brady Street and selling to Oliver H. Palin (1833-1902) and his wife Belinda (1827-1903). The Palins retired here from their farm in the county and remained in the house for over 20 years until they died. In 1908 the house was sold to Martha J. Meharry of Tolono, Illinois, who purchased the property to be next door to her son Charles. (See 402 E. Washington Street.)

Sited at the northeast corner of E. Washington and Council Streets, this two-story, brick house with sandstone block foundation is typical of the most common form of Italianate house built in Indiana in the mid 1870s. This view shows the three-sided, two-story bay that projects from the east elevation. The roof consists of a series of low hips; its wide overhang is supported by carved wood brackets that occur in pairs. The tall, double-hung windows are all of segmental arch form with lintels of header brick. The porch that wraps around the southwest corner of the house is not original but may have replaced one of the same configuration. The plain Tuscan porch columns and the porch railing are similar to those of other houses on the street built around 1900. The front entry's sidelights and transom are not typical of an Italianate house.

Charles L. and Esther Meharry House  
402 E. Washington Street

Photo 2

A mechanics' lien filed against this property in February 1909 documents the completion date of this house's construction and its contractor, Charles Perkins. Charles Leo Meharry (1885-1937) purchased the lot in March 1908, a few months before his marriage, while still living in Tolono, Illinois. He had earned a degree in agriculture at the University of Illinois in Champaign. During his 25-year residency in Attica, he was president of the Central National Bank and Trust Company in the mid 1920s and served on the school board for nine years.

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He is best known today as a pioneer in the cultivation of soybeans in the United States. He wrote numerous articles promoting the soybean, and in cooperation with Purdue University, he imported seeds from abroad. He was involved in agricultural experimentation on his extensive land holdings in Fountain County and was thus a formative influence in developing Indiana's second most important crop today.

This two-and-a-half-story house of brown brick veneer exhibits many characteristics of the Tudor Revival style, foremost among them the simulated half-timbering and stucco wall surfaces of the gable ends. The house consists of the main rectangular, two-story block with a broad cross-gabled roof to which a one-story wing is added at the west side. Filling out the southwest corner between these two sections is a one-story, low roofed porch; another one-story porch originally existed at the east. The symmetrical south facade of the main block is organized around four central, casement windows on each floor, all of which exhibit the small diamond quarrels reminiscent of medieval buildings. At first floor level, the windows are contained within a rectangular projection with its own overhanging roof. The carved, wooden struts that occur between the narrower second floor windows support an original balcony at the third floor level, although its railing appears to be new. Green slates cover the roof and its large dormer at the east side.

Will and Ella Colvert House  
405 E. Washington Street

Photo 4

The construction date of this house is also known through a mechanics' lien placed against the property in March 1901 by the Henry Taylor Lumber Company of Lafayette, which supplied lumber, glass and labor. At the time that the Colverts purchased the lot in January 1900, they were living at 300 S. Brady Street, the home of Hester Jane Colvert (1837-1908). Will Colvert (b. 1863), a farmer, apparently left this new home and moved back to the Brady Street house following his mother's death. By 1914, Jesse Martin (1867-1922) and his wife Lydia, their three daughters, and Mary Thompson, the widowed mother of Mrs. Martin, were living at 405 E. Washington Street. At that time Jesse Martin was president of the Central National Bank and a member of the City Council. Prior to this he had held the post of cashier at the Farmers' and Merchants' Bank at Wingate. Jesse Martin is perhaps best known as the Mayor of Attica. He was elected in the fall of 1917 by the largest margin of votes in the city's history, which is indicative of his great popularity in the community.



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Built at the beginning of the century, this large, two-and-a-half-story frame house exhibits very few characteristics of Victorian architecture and was therefore a very modern house for its day. Broad gabled roofs extend over the rectangular projections from the main block with a hipped section connecting the gables. The windows with simple, classical surrounds are all of the wider proportions characteristic of the turn of the century. The most interesting windows are the deeply set ones in the framed gable ends, whose small, square panes recall the Colonial Revival style. The framing elements of the narrowly overlapped clapboards, such as the corner boards and horizontal trim boards, were probably originally more prominent in a contrasting paint scheme. A large front porch wraps around the north and northwest sides of the house with a diagonal corner. Its foundation and the piers that support Tuscan columns are of an interesting building material that was popular for a brief period at the turn of the century: a brown, glazed vitrified brick with rusticated surface. A porte-cochère formerly existed to the west across the drive as an extension of the porch.

J. Frank and Emma McDermond House  
409 E. Washington Street

Photo 5

The newspaper announcement of the 50th wedding anniversary of J. Frank and Emma McDermond documents this house's completion in 1897. The lot had been purchased in January 1896, and presumably construction began that spring. J. Frank McDermond, Sr. (1866-1950) was one of the most prominent merchants in Attica's history. Having inherited his father's wholesale dry goods firm in 1890, he developed this business to such an extent that by 1913 he was called "the leading merchant of Attica and one of the largest in northern Indiana." He was then the proprietor of the Progressive Department Store (touted as 10 stores in one) at the southeast corner of Mill and Perry Streets. In Thomas Clifton's history of Fountain and Warren Counties, McDermond's biography stated that "his influence in promoting the material growth and prosperity of the city in which he resides has won him a place in the public eye second to that of none of his contemporaries." This comment was no doubt made in reference to his leadership in the Attica Land and Improvement Company, a group of nine local businessmen who organized in the early 1900s to promote the long-term health of the city's economy. He was also president of the first merchants' association organized in Attica in 1896 and served as a director of the Central National Bank and Trust Company for 27 years. Frank and Emma McDermond resided in this house until their deaths in the 1950s. Their youngest daughter,

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Marquita VanLandeghem, occupied the residence until her death in 1957. The house was then sold to the family of the present owner. Thus, only two families have resided here, a fact which helps to account for its excellent state of preservation.

Built at a time of transition in residential architecture, the McDermond house exhibits an amalgam of late Victorian and early Classical Revival stylistic elements. The large, two-and-a-half story frame building is basically rectangular in plan, but the variety of projections and roof forms masks this. At the northeast corner, a circular tourelle rises to a conical roof sporting an eagle ornament. All levels of this corner bay are covered by fishscale shingles, while clapboards with a very narrow overlap sheathe the rest of the exterior at first and second floor level. The four-color paint scheme does much to enhance the architectural components. The front porch that spans the north facade is decidedly classical in character, with its Tuscan columns and its simple railing and surmounting balustrade contrasting with the Victorian features of the tourelle. Of anecdotal interest, the porch's pendant lamp is one of six brought back from Turkey by author Lew Wallace, U. S. Ambassador to that country in the 1890s. Above the front door at second floor level, an oval window is another hallmark of the turn-of-the-century Classical Revival. Most of the windows are double-hung in the rectangular form with wider proportions that is a sign of classical influence. However, there are also leaded glass windows with diamond panes in the tourelle's third floor, arched windows in the main and east facades' gables, and a beveled glass transom above the wide window looking on to the front porch. On the west side, the original porte-cochere survives. Arches spring from its tall stone piers, which match the house's foundation of large sandstone blocks. On the east side, a three-sided bay projects and is surmounted by a balustrade that extends from the shingled gable end. On the interior, there are many Victorian features of note including Lincrusta wall coverings and parquet floors. At the southwest corner of the lot along the alley, the original one-and-a-half story tall stable with board-and-batten siding survives.

William and Lottie Schermerhorn House  
402 E. Monroe Street

Photo 6

Soon after establishing himself in Attica in 1898 with the position of cashier of the Central National Bank, William Schermerhorn (b. 1865) began construction of a new home for his wife Lottie and daughter Bernice. Until this time he had engaged in farming and stock raising on his family's homestead north of Newton in Richland Township. From architectural drawings owned by a descendent, we learn that Niemann and Gault of Lafayette designed the house in 1899. A mechanics' lien filed

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in February 1900 documents the completion of the building's construction as well as the name of its contractor, George H. Sims. William Schermerhorn remained in his post at the bank for 30 years and was a director of the Attica Chamber of Commerce. During the 19-teens, school teachers roomed in the Schermerhorns' house, among them Miss Bertha F. Nelson, principal of the high school in 1914. The house remained in possession of the family until 1969.

This turn-of-the-century house consists of a main central section with tall, hipped roof from which two gabled-roof wings extend. At the rear of this two-and-a-half-story house, there is an original one-story section. Typical of the most common housing type in Attica in this period, the house is frame over a foundation of large, sandstone blocks. Fishscale shingles occur at the wings in the gable ends and in a wide band between the windows of the first and second floors. The porch that wraps around the southeast corner, connecting the wings, has plain columns and no railings. One of the most decorative features of the house are the leaded, stained glass windows of the south facade and the stair landing at the west. The original stable with vertical flushboard siding survives at the northeast corner of the lot.

Joseph M. and Anna Hixon House  
407 E. Monroe Street

Photo 7

In 1926 local architect Louis Johnson (1873-1950) designed this house for Joseph Hixon (b. 1876), owner of a local lumberyard, and his wife Anna (b. 1878). Joseph Hixon, Jr. (b. 1906) resided here until 1952, when the house was sold to Dr. William D. Pfeifer, an optometrist. The Pfeifers lived here until their move to Lafayette in 1976.

Architect Johnson took his cues from the Colonial Revival style popular in the mid-1920s for the design of this two-story, frame residence. The main portion of the house is a rectangular, two-story block with gable roof, its ridge parallel to the long side facing the street. To this were added (all originally) an attached garage at the southwest corner, a sunroom at the northeast corner, a porte-cochere at the northwest, and a projecting entry pavilion at the center of the main facade. The elements added at the corners act as foils to the otherwise perfectly symmetrical facade. The composition siding shingles present on all sections serve to unify the disparate elements. The house's double-hung windows are divided into eight lights in the upper sash over a single light in the lower--a configuration quite popular for Colonial Revival houses of the 20s. One of the house's most interesting details is the arched frontispiece of the front door; a carved sunburst pattern occurs in the usual position of a fanlight.



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The gable returns of the central pavilion echo those found at the east and west facade rooflines. Balustrade railings formerly existed atop the porte-cochère and the sunroom.

John S. and Ellen Martin House  
414 E. Monroe Street

Photo 8

When John Sayers Martin (1829-1903) purchased this property from John Van Reed (b. 1853) in the fall of 1902, the house had already been built. Van Reed, who lived all of his life on the old family farmstead in Liberty Township in Warren County, had apparently built the house on speculation. Martin had resided on his farm in Richland Township near Newton in Fountain County for over 50 years before retiring to take up residency in town, perhaps to be closer to his son Jesse. (See 405 E. Washington.) His obituary identified him as "one of the most prosperous farmers in Fountain County" who had accumulated considerable property. His wife Ellen (1833-1918) continued to live in the house until her death, apparently renting rooms to boarders.

This two-story frame house typifies the most common form of housing built in the district at the turn of the century. Crossed gable roofs cover the main two-story portion of the house with a shed roof over the original one-story section in the northwest corner. All four gable ends, which feature prominent returns, are covered with decorative shingles while the rest of the exterior is sheathed in narrow clapboards. The shingled gable located at the diagonal entry to the wraparound porch is one of the few ornamental features to survive from the original porch. All windows are simple, double-hung units. The present tricolor paint schemes highlights the corner boards, gutters, eaves and trim boards that define the frame structure. The house sits on a sandstone foundations, not visible in this photo.

Goldsmith and Carson Briner House  
501 E. Monroe Street

Photo 10

Records of the Fountain County Auditor's Office indicate that Mrs. Carson L. Briner (b. 1889) purchased this property in 1925 for \$50 and sold it in 1928 for \$2,500. Since the house shows up on the 1927 Sanborn map, it was constructed between 1925 and 1927. Considering its short term ownership by the Briners and by its next owner, Ralph MacKerner, it may have been built on speculation for rental purposes. Since Goldsmith Briner was a carpenter by trade, he may have been involved in the house's construction.

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As the only Craftsman bungalow of Spanish design influence in the district and indeed in the city, this one-story house represents an unusual housing type for Attica (although it was common in urban centers in the 1920s). The double, low-pitched gable roofs with wide eave overhangs, the pergola at the front porch, and the stuccoed walls are all characteristic of the style. The typical arched openings of the front porch contrast with the rectangular, double-hung windows throughout the house. The curve of these arches is echoed in the side walls of the flight of six concrete steps that lead from the sidewalk to the level portion of the terraced lot. At the house's west elevation, a bay with three windows projects. Low roof dormers occur at the center of each slope of the main roof. The original matching stuccoed garage survives behind the house, and even the house's center chimney is stuccoed.

Samuel T. and Christine McConahay House  
513 E. Monroe Street

Photo 12

Shortly after purchasing the lot in February 1900, Samuel T. McConahay (b. 1856) and his wife Christine (b. 1863) took out a mortgage from the Attica Building and Loan Association. Construction of a new house is assumed to have begun that spring. Samuel McConahay was the publisher of Attica's 1914 city directory, the first such compilation in over 20 years. In this reference he was listed as a Justice of the Peace. For many years Christine McConahay ran a dressmaker's shop in the central business district.

A roof of broad, crossed gables covers the one-and-a-half-story front portion of this frame house. A later one-story addition extends to the rear. Turned wooden columns are the only original elements to survive from the front porch that extends across the north elevation. The prominent brick chimney at the east elevation was probably added in the 1920s.



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The first plat to encompass a portion of the area delineated as the Old East Historic District was not laid out until August 1851, 26 years after Attica's original plat of 1825. McDonald, Spears and Company's Addition adjoined the original plat on the east and consisted of 73 lots, only 12 of which were located within the bounds of the district.<sup>1</sup> Twenty years later, James D. McDonald replatted the eastern portion of the 1851 addition and added land to the south as far as Pike Street.<sup>2</sup> The later version eliminated a street called Orchard Street, which was divided into lots, and created a new street approximately 200 feet to the east called College Street. College marked Attica's farthest extension to the east for approximately 60 years. It also formed the west property line of "the College Ground," a 2.65-acre parcel of land dedicated to the city's schools.

McDonald, Spears and Company's plat was an expression of this company's business success resulting from the Wabash and Erie Canal, which had arrived in Attica in 1846. The partnership of James McDonald, Ezekial McDonald, and James Spears was engaged in the pork packing industry. It had prospered through shipping its product via the new means of transportation to markets in the East. There does not appear to have been any building on the lots of McDonald, Spears and Company's plat in the area now part of the Old East District that coincided with the heyday of the canal in Attica in the 1850s. The oldest known house in the district is 404 E. Washington Street (Photo 3), which was built between 1866 and 1869 and was the home of Thomas and Deborah Burch in the late 19th century. It is possible that earlier houses were demolished before the earliest Sanborn map of the area in 1910. However, the 1869 "Bird's Eye View of the City of Attica," an excellent documentary source of the town's physical development in this year, shows the area east of Council Street to have had only a few houses at that time, 404 E. Washington among them. The largest building, at the southeast corner of Council and Washington, was demolished many years ago and is now the site of a gas station. And although Monroe Street east of Council and Orchard Street existed on paper as officially platted rights-of-way, neither are depicted as streets in the 1869 bird's eye view. The most prominent building in the area east of Council is the three-story-tall Attica Graded School completed in that year. Its construction undoubtedly had a positive influence on the development of the surrounding area. Well into the 20th century, the neighborhood was a favorite residential area for teachers who wished to live nearby their school.

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In July 1884 J. S. Nave's South Side Addition completed the platting of the area within bounds of the district.<sup>3</sup> Lots 1-16 were located in the 500 block of E. Monroe Street. (Joseph Shannon Nave (1850-1937), a prominent attorney, lived at 303 E. Monroe Street.) The platting was somewhat unusual in that a 15-foot-wide alley was located between every two lots. (Most of these alleys were later vacated and divided between adjoining property owners.) For the first time Oak Street, the eastern boundary of the district, appeared on this plat. However, it was not opened as a through street until around 1930 and was therefore another example of a right-of-way that existed on paper only.

Between 1870 and 1890 population stagnated in Attica, hovering at about 2,300 people for these two decades.<sup>4</sup> The city retained its position as the chief marketplace for both Fountain and Warren Counties, but it did not share in the general post-war prosperity that other Indiana communities did. Its business district experienced some new development, but because industries remained small and few new people were attracted to move to Attica in these years, little new home building occurred. In the late 1890s when a new era of large industries and businesses had an important impact upon Attica's economy, residential building was renewed. As lots in the city's oldest, central neighborhoods, such as the Brady Street district, were filled, the adjacent Old East area became a popular place to build.

One of the most influential factors in popularizing the Old East area was the construction of 409 E. Washington Street by J. Frank McDermond in 1896-97. There is no doubt that this was the grandest house ever built in the district. McDermond (1866-1950) was one of the most prominent merchants in Attica's history and was the proprietor of the Progressive Department Store. He also played a large role in the revival of the city's economy as a leader of the Attica Land and Improvement Company, a group of nine local businessmen who organized in the early 1900s to promote the city's growth. His biography in the 1913 county history stated: "Not the least of his contributions to the material growth and beauty of Attica is the magnificent modern residence which his family occupy."<sup>5</sup> By McDermond's progressive example of locating here, others chose to do the same. Within the next few years, large houses were constructed on surrounding lots. This residential building activity was cited in an 1899 article on Attica, published in a state magazine, which claimed that more new homes were being erected than at any time before. The article's leading paragraph about the city, which follows below, may well have been based on a tour of the Old East district.

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Attica, the largest town in Fountain County, is one of the prettiest in the State. Its neat, modern homes surrounded by well kept lawns, its handsome shade trees that almost arch the broad streets, at once catch the eye of every stranger.<sup>6</sup>

As Attica's economy prospered with the establishment of two important industries in Attica in the first decade of the 20 century--the National Car Coupler Company (later the Harrison Steel Casting Company) and the Poston Brick Company--lots in the Old East district continued to be developed. Although many modest homes, particularly one-story frame cottages, were built on Washington and Monroe Streets, several architecturally significant homes were built by prominent people in the community up until the mid-1920s. (See next section, "Architectural Significance.") The majority of development, however, occurred during the decade bracketing the turn of the century, 1895-1905.

Many homes in the district are reflective of an interesting sociological trend that occurred in the early years of the 20th century. Prosperous farmers who had lived on farms in various townships of the county for all of their lives suddenly decided to take up residency in town after their retirement from agricultural interests. John Sayers Martin (1829-1903) is an example of this trend. After Martin had spent over 50 years working his farm near Newton and had accumulated considerable land holdings, he moved to 414 E. Monroe Street to reside in town. Others who had engaged in farming in Fountain County before building houses circa 1900 in the district include Will Colvert, 405 E. Washington Street, and William Schermerhorn, 402 E. Monroe Street.

With the onset of the Depression in 1930, new building came to a halt and the Old East district maintained status quo for several decades. Attica's population remained constant at about 3,500 people from 1910 until 1940.<sup>7</sup> This constancy created a continued need for the existing housing stock, so that old residences were not demolished. Indeed, study of the 1914 city directory reveals that numerous single-family homes were being shared at that time by more than one family, or by numerous members of an extended family including married children and grandchildren.<sup>8</sup> It was a common practice to rent rooms to boarders, especially to single school teachers who worked nearby. The continuing demand for housing, at a time when no new construction was taking place, acted as a great force for preservation in the district. Not until around 1970 were three new houses built in the district; of these, only one necessitated the demolition of an existing home. Therefore, with only three exceptions, the area within the boundaries of the district remains essentially as it was built in the late 19th/early 20th century.



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A large number of the homes in the Old East Historic District can be considered architecturally significant because of their excellent state of preservation and their high degree of integrity. Among the 34 primary buildings that contribute to the historic character of the area (out of a total of 37 primary buildings within the district's boundaries), there are outstanding representatives of architectural styles from the 1870s through the 1920s.

The earliest high-style house in the district to survive with a large measure of integrity is the 1877 Holmes House at 400 E. Washington Street (Photo 1). This two-story brick house with sandstone foundation is typical of the most common form of Italianate house built in Indiana in the mid 1870s. Because Attica did not experience much growth during the 1870s, Italianate houses are relatively less common than they are in other 19th-century Indiana communities. Perhaps because the Holmes House is a substantial brick building, it did not undergo the degree of alteration that has masked the Italianate character of two other Italianate houses in the same block: 407 and 413 E. Washington Street. Both of these frame houses are assumed to have been built in the 1870s, and both have undergone remodelings and are now covered with aluminum siding.

The showcase house of the district, and one which played an important role in encouraging residential building in this neighborhood, is the 1896-97 McDermond House at 409 E. Washington Street (Photo 5). Built at a time of transition in residential architecture, the McDermond House exhibits an exuberant amalgam of late Victorian and early Classical Revival stylistic elements. Its architect, who unfortunately remains unknown, chose freely from a variety of disparate architectural elements to create a very unique house. Several of its features, such as its porte-cochère, probably were influential in the design of other nearby houses, such as the 1900-1901 Colvert House at 405 E. Washington Street (Photo 4). The later house falls into a category of turn-of-the-century houses sometimes termed "Free Classic" in Indiana; it draws some elements from the Classical Revival style, but the overall asymmetrical massing and ornament are freer than the classic and derivative of late Victorian architecture.

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Two houses that typify the most common form of housing built in the district at the turn of the century are the Schermerhorn House at 402 E. Monroe (Photo 6) and the Martin House at 414 E. Monroe (Photo 8). These houses are scaled-down versions of the Free Classic as more fully expressed in the Colvert House. Both houses are frame, two stories tall, with wraparound porches connecting two gabled roof wings. Some late Victorian ornament carries over, such as the fishscale shingles in the gable ends, but window proportions and trim are definitely classically inspired. Another house of this genre that would actually be more noteworthy architecturally, save for its present poor condition, is 509 E. Monroe Street, believed to have been built in 1898.

The most architecturally significant building built in the district in the first decade of the 20th-century is the 1908-09 Meharry House at 402 E. Washington Street (Photo 2). This two-and-a-half-story house of brown brick veneer exhibits many characteristics of the Tudor Revival style, foremost among them the simulated half-timbering and stucco wall surfaces of the gable ends. Because the house is a comparatively early example of the style in Indiana, and one previously unknown in Attica, it can be considered to have been an exceptionally modern house for its time in the local context.

Two distinctive houses built in the mid-1920s are notable as excellent representatives of their architectural style. The 1926 Hixon House at 407 E. Monroe Street (Photo 7) is a good example of the Colonial Revival style popular in the mid-1920s. Projecting elements at the corners of the two-story, frame residence--such as a porte-cochère, an attached garage, and a sunroom--act as foils to the otherwise perfectly symmetrical facade. Raised on a terrace at the southeast corner of College and Monroe Streets, the Briner House (Photos 9 and 10) is the only Craftsman bungalow of Spanish design influence in Attica. The double, low-pitched gable roofs with wide eave overhangs, the front porch pergola, and the stuccoed walls are all characteristic of the style, which was quite popular in urban centers in the 19-teens and 20s.



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The names of only two architects among those to have designed houses in the district are currently known. Louis Johnson (1873-1950) is associated with the Colonial Revival house at 407 E. Monroe Street through the recollections of his wife and daughter, both still living in Attica. Niemann and Gault of Lafayette are known to have designed 402 E. Monroe Street through architectural drawings that survive in possession of a descendent. Mechanics' liens record the names of two building contractors who worked in the district: Charles Perkins, who built the Tudor Revival residence at 402 E. Washington Street, and George H. Sims, who built the Schermerhorn House at 402 E. Monroe Street. Because building permits have not survived among city records, there are no readily available documentary sources of architects active in residential building in Attica. The majority of houses in the district, especially the one-and one-and-a-half-story frame cottages built between 1895 and 1905, were most probably built by carpenters and builders.

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## NOTES:

1. Plat Map 19B in the Recorder's Office, Fountain County Courthouse, Covington. The 12 lots of this plat within the Old East District are: from west to east along the north side of Washington--28, 27, 26, 25; along the south side of Washington--41, 42, 43, 44; and along the north side of Monroe--48, 47, 46 and 45. These last four were later subdivided and renumbered 15, 14, 13, 12 and 11 in the 1871 plat.
2. Plat Map 19A in the Recorder's Office, Fountain County Courthouse, Covington. Lots 6 and 7 of this plat were created from the right of way of the original Orchard Street.
3. Plat Map 20B in the Recorder's Office, Fountain County Courthouse, Covington. Lots 17-24 of this plat were located on the north side of the 500 block of E. Pike Street.
4. U.S. Census figures for Attica's population:  
1870: 2,273  
1880: 2,150  
1890: 2,320
5. Thomas A. Clifton, ed. Past and Present of Fountain and Warren Counties, Indiana. (Indianapolis, IN: Bowen, 1913), p. 460.
6. "Historical and Picturesque Indiana--Fountain County," Indianian, vol. 4 (June 1899), p. 23.
7. U.S. Census figures for Attica's population:  
1910: 3,335                      1930: 3,700  
1920: 3,392                      1940: 3,760
8. Attica City Directory, 1914. Attica, IN: S.T. McConahay, 1914. Copy at the Attica Carnegie Library. This publication is significant as the first comprehensive directory of Attica to include street numbers, and the first directory of any kind published since 1887. Unfortunately there is no "criss-cross" guide by address listing--only an alphabetized list of residents. Atticans Erma Walker and Paul R. Foster researched the entire book looking for selected addresses and compiling lists of residents.

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### Boundary Description

Beginning at the point of intersection of the east curb line of Council Street and the north curb line of E. Washington Street, the boundary line proceeds north along Council Street to the northwest corner of the property at 400 E. Washington Street. Here the boundary turns east and runs along the contiguous north (rear) property lines of the buildings on the north side of the 400 block of East Washington Street until it reaches the northwest corner of the property at 410 E. Washington Street. Here the line turns south, running along the east line of 410 E. Washington until it reaches the north (rear) property line of 412 E. Washington. At this juncture, the boundary turns east until reaching the west curb line of College Street.

The line then travels south along the west curb of College, crossing E. Washington Street and then an east/west alley between Washington and Monroe Streets. At the northeast corner of the property at 414 E. Monroe Street, the boundary turns east, crossing College Street and continuing along the contiguous rear (north) property lines of all the houses on the north side of the 500 block of E. Monroe Street until reaching the west curb line of Oak Street. Here the line turns south along this west curb, crossing Monroe Street and continuing until reaching the southeast corner of 515 E. Monroe.

The boundary then proceeds west along the rear property lines of 501-515 E. Monroe Street until reaching College Street. Here the line turns north to a point where the rear property line of 413 E. Monroe Street would intersect if carried across College Street. The line then moves west across College and the aforesaid property line until reaching the east property line of 411 E. Monroe, where it turns south to join the rear property line of this house. The boundary then runs west along the north side of the east/west alley between Monroe and Pike Streets to the southwest corner of the property at 407 E. Monroe Street. Here the boundary turns north, running along the west line of 407 E. Monroe and continuing across Monroe Street until reaching the north curb line of Monroe where it intersects with the west property line of 406 E. Monroe. The line then turns west along the north curb of Monroe until reaching the east curb line of Council Street.



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At this corner, the boundary moves north to the northwest corner of the property at 400 E. Monroe, where it then turns east, running along the south line of the east/west alley between Monroe and Washington Streets. At the northeast corner of the property at 402 E. Monroe Street, the line turns north, traveling across the aforesaid alley, running up the west property line of 405 E. Washington Street, and again crossing Washington Street. At the southeast corner of the property at 402 E. Washington, the boundary turns west, running along the north curb line of Washington until reaching the point of beginning.

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The Old East Historic District was identified in the Fountain County Interim Report: Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory, published in 1988 and known as "the survey." The name itself is not historic but is derived from the fact that it is the only older neighborhood in Attica to the east of the main business district and center of town.

Council Street on the west, a major thoroughfare, divides the older Brady Street district from the Old East district. The commercial development that has occurred along Council has resulted in the demolition of several 19th-century homes. Larger, non-contributing buildings have been built in their place or car sales lots and gas stations have been introduced. These non-compatible intrusions serve as a barrier between the two districts. When necessary, the boundary jogs around these non-contributing buildings with the aim of a tightly drawn district containing the greatest concentration of contributing historic resources.

Commercial development has also occurred on the south side of E. Jackson Street, west and east of Council, replacing several residences. The east/west alley between Washington and Jackson in the 400 block no longer exists. A gas station and fast food restaurant (both with large paved lots) and a new housing project have totally changed the pattern of development to the immediate north of Old East.

On the north side of the 500 block of E. Washington Street are located modern buildings of the Attica Public School system. The city's school buildings have been located here since the 1860s and therefore played a role in the development of the neighborhood. However, all of the 19th-century and early-20th-century buildings from the district's period of significance have been demolished and replaced. Houses on the south side of this block of Washington Street were considered for possible inclusion in the Old East district. The land was separately platted as Linn's Addition. A large new apartment building is now located at the southeast corner of College and Washington Streets, and a non-contributing house is located at the other corner. The houses in between appear to date to the early 20th-century but are not distinguished in architectural character. Most of them have had unsympathetic alterations, such as aluminum siding, or have been totally rebuilt.

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The north side of the 400 and 500 blocks of Pike Street, immediately south of Monroe Street, was also considered for inclusion in the district. However, the majority of its houses were not built until after 1930. Oak Street, which marks the east side of the district, was not opened as a through street between Washington and Monroe until about 1930. To its east lie athletic fields owned by the school system.

To summarize, although a broader surrounding area was taken into consideration in determining district boundaries, the district as described here corresponds very closely to the boundaries outlined in the county survey. Only slight modifications have been made to exclude two non-contributing houses built at the rear of lots and to include one 19th-century house at the corner of Monroe and Council. There are no "scattered sites" immediately adjacent to district boundaries.

Because the October 1927 map of Attica from the Sanborn Fire Insurance Atlas was so close to the end date of historic significance for the district, it was particularly important in documenting contributing buildings. Copies of the 1927 map were taken to the field and checked building by building. Those structures existing today that were not drawn on the 1927 Sanborn, nor appearing to have been built prior to 1930, are shaded on the map as non-contributing buildings.