

FINAL

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 an 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 McNamee-Ford House

other names/site number 169-652-23018

2. Location

street & number 536 North Wabash Street N/A  not for publication

city or town Wabash N/A  vicinity

state Indiana code IN county Wabash code 169 zip code 46992

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

*Patricia L. Rabala*

1-27-95

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Indiana Department of Natural Resources  
State of Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

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

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**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**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	Total

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**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)

Colonial Revival

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: limestone

walls WOOD: weatherboard

roof ASPHALT

other METAL: brass

**Narrative Description**

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

McNamee-Ford House  
Name of Property

Wabash County, Indiana  
County and State

### 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.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or 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

INDUSTRY

#### Period of Significance

1901-1933

#### Significant Dates

1901

#### Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Ford, Edwin Holton

#### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

#### Architect/Builder

Unknown

#### Narrative Statement of Significance

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

### 9. Major Bibliographical References

#### Bibliography

(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 Historic Sites and Structures Inventory

McNamee-Ford House  
Name of Property

Wabash County, Indiana  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreeage of Property less than one acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1   6	5   9   9   4   4   0	4   5   1   7   6   2   0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

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 Mary Ellen Gadski, Architectural Historian

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date March 8, 1994

street & number 4431 North Illinois Street telephone 317-283-5668

city or town Indianapolis state IN zip code 46208

**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**

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name Richard Ford

street & number 546 North Wabash Street telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Wabash state IN zip code 46992

**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.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**Description**

The McNamee-Ford House is located in a residential section of the city of Wabash on the north side of town. *The Wabash County Interim Report: Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory* identified it as a contributing building in the proposed North Wabash Historic District. The house faces east towards North Wabash Street with a setback of 42 feet typical of most houses on the street. The lot is uncommonly deep, extending over 500 feet from the curb to the edge of Charley Creek at its western boundary. Many tall, mature deciduous trees grace the back lawn that stretches to the creek, giving the yard a parklike quality. Until recently a garage was located to the northwest of the house. It did not date to the original construction of the house but was built prior to 1920.<sup>1</sup>

Exterior

The two-story frame house is basically rectangular in plan with a lower two-story service wing extending back to the west. All exterior walls are covered with clapboards with an overlapping exposure of 2-1/2 inches. The house is painted in colors appropriate to the period: a sage gray with white trim. The ridge of the main gabled roof is parallel to the street. In 1991 the entire roof was redone in asphalt shingles with contrasting diagonal stripes. At the center of the main (east) facade, a gabled pavilion projects approximately one foot from the main wall of the house. At ground floor level of this pavilion an open porch extends approximately 10 feet. The house sits on a limestone foundation, three courses of which are visible above grade level. The joints of the stonework are beaded, which is indicative of the quality of the masonry. A wood water table extends around the entire house.

The composition of the main elevation is perfectly symmetrical (Photo 1). As is common for Colonial Revival houses reflecting a Georgian influence, much of the design attention is focused on the entry located within the central pavilion. The

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<sup>1</sup> The 1920 Sanborn map of Wabash, which is the earliest volume to include coverage of this section of North Wabash Street, indicates a one-story rectangular building labeled "auto" to the northwest of 536 North Wabash. This utilitarian structure bore no design relationship to the Colonial Revival house.



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facade is divided into three elements by the pavilion, which is accentuated by the two-story fluted pilasters that occur at its corners as well as the four main corners of the house.

The four identical double-hung windows of the side bays exhibit the multiglazing typical of the Colonial Revival style in their upper sash, which are divided into 12 lights. The window frame of wide trim and a capped head are typical of many houses of the turn of the century. The louvered window shutters, which appear in a Ford family photo of the late 1920s, appear to be original.

The front door is centered in an elegant composition of sidelights framed by fluted pilasters with an overarching fanlight of semielliptical form (Photo 2). The mullions of the sidelights divide the panes into interconnecting diamond shapes. The elliptical form of the fanlight is more common of Adam-inspired houses. It is divided into segments by mullions that radiate from the center semicircle; the "spokes" are connected by a swag line. The door itself, of quarter-sawn oak, has a square window with beveled margins above two horizontal panels—a design typical of turn-of-the-century American architecture rather than of Georgian inspiration. Perhaps the most sophisticated features of this doorway are the panelled bases of the pilasters and sidelights.

The front porch continues the classical themes present in the design, most notably in the Ionic-style columns (Photo 3). A triplet of columns supports the front corners while a single column occurs next to the pavilion's pilasters at the juncture with the house. A flight of four concrete steps at the south end rise to the porch floor, also of concrete. The porch's foundation walls, currently hidden by mature shrubbery, are of the same limestone as the house. At the north and east, a low wooden railing with turned balusters extends between the columns. The porch's ceiling is finished in flush boards. The wide overhang of the porch's flat roof is accentuated by a darkly painted cornice member. At second floor level, a balustrade with chinoiserie motifs extends along all three sides (Photo 4). By the 1950s the corner posts and surmounting urns were all that remained of this balustrade. Using the historic photo of the late 1920s referred to earlier, in 1991 the diamond-patterned railings were faithfully reconstructed. The acorn style urns were also refinished at this time to reveal their unusual brass caps.

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Reinforcing the main elevation's design focus on the central pavilion, a tripartite window occurs at the second level of the porch (Photo 4). While not a true Palladian window, this window is a distillation of the Palladian theme, that is, a wide center window (similar to the other four windows of the front) flanked by narrow windows two lights wide. Fluted pilasters separate and frame the windows.

The central feature of the pavilion's pedimented roof gable is a semicircular fanlight divided into segments in a manner similar to the front door's fanlight (Photo 4). The raking cornice of the gable, the horizontal member of the cornice below, and the "keystone" of the arched fanlight are painted a contrasting dark gray to accent these features. Unfortunately the dentils of the cornice members—one the house's most refined features—are now difficult to see.

The side and rear elevations of the house are considerably simpler, continuing the same materials and windows but with less formality. The south elevation is completely symmetrical (Photo 5). Because of the central chimney, concealed except for the short brick chimney at roof level and the framed firebox wall above the foundation, the four main windows are pushed to the sides. Two small attic windows occur in the gable. The north elevation is asymmetrical and more complex, reflecting the less formal interior room plan (Photo 6). While there are three of the same twelve-over-one double-hung windows found on the main and south facades and the same style attic windows, there are also smaller casement windows where bathrooms and kitchen occur. All windows repeat the capped head and multiglazing.

Extending back from the main block of the house is a lower two-story service wing original to the construction of the house. Its gabled roof extends at a right angle below the eaves of the main roof. It is sheathed in the same style siding and contains one of the major twelve-over-one double-hung windows on its south elevation. However, on this wing's north and west sides, it also has two simpler style double-hung windows with a single vertical mullion dividing each sash into two lights.

The date of construction of the one-story enclosed porch that extends to the west of the wing is uncertain (Photo 7). Its awkward cut into the north

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elevation, its composite roof form (hip over shed roof), its lack of a limestone foundation, and its vertical beaded board siding all tend to suggest that this porch was not an original feature. Additionally its eight casement windows do not exhibit the small panes of the Colonial style. However, its documentation on the 1920 Sanborn map and its materials support a date close to the original construction. It is possible that the small hipped roof originally sheltered a smaller back entry porch.

As is typical, the rear elevation is the most informal of the four sides of the house (Photo 8). To the south of the wing and back porch just described, the asymmetrical placement of a door and windows also reflects interior functions. The wide double-hung window adjacent to the wing and just below its eave line sits at the landing of the main staircase. The largest window in the house, it is divided into 18 over 18 lights. At first floor level, a bay with hipped roof extends 32 inches to the west. (Note the similarity of this roof with the one over the shed roof of the enclosed back porch.) The triple windows of this bay are divided into 12 over 12 lights. Between the projecting bay and the south wall of the wing, a concrete patio floor was poured at some date after the house was constructed.

Interior

The house's interior follows the traditional center hall plan most commonly found in Colonial Revival houses. Upon entering, the living room is to the left, the dining room to the right, and the stairhall directly ahead. The original spatial configuration of the entire first floor has survived intact, including the pantry between the dining room and the kitchen, the tiny lavatory, and the back hall communicating between the living room and the kitchen. In 1992 the south end of second floor was reconfigured to allow for the insertion of two new bathrooms. By removing the stair to the attic, which was replaced by a retractable stair, spatial alterations to the two bedrooms affected were minimized.

The first floor's generous center hall is over 11 feet wide (Photo 9). The oak front door is veneered in cherry on the interior side to match the other interior doors (Photo 10). The floor here and throughout the first floor is of tongue-and-



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grooved cedar boards 2-1/2 inches wide. The 8-1/2-inch-tall baseboards in the hall are repeated throughout the house. The staircase features a fluted, columnar newel post, top rail and landing posts all of mahogany (Photo 11). The simple balusters, which are square in section and taper slightly toward the rail, rest on poplar treads. The staircase's outward flair at the bottom two steps adds to its overall elegance.

Five-foot-wide pocket doors communicate from the center hall to the living room and the dining room (Photo 9). These identical single-leaf doors have four horizontal panels, again more characteristic of turn-of-the century American architecture than of Georgian style.

The living room extends the full depth of the building. Its focal point, and perhaps the finest interior element of the house, is the cherry mantel of the fireplace (Photo 12). Nearly nine feet wide, the mantel features recessed panels of mid-18th-century inspiration. Its overall effect is heightened by the way in which the mantel continues around the corners of the projecting chimney breast wall, giving it an uncommon three-dimensional quality. The firebox is surrounded in brick, which is repeated at the hearth.

Directly adjacent (to the west) of the fireplace are original built-in cherry bookshelves that rise from floor to near-ceiling height. The west end of the room recedes to a bay surrounded by five windows where a window seat was formerly located (Photo 13). The door to the back hall is a four-panel cherry door typical of those found throughout the interior.

Both the living and dining room have wood cornices of a modified *cyma recta* molding, which is scaled down in the hallway. One other interior feature of note on the first floor is the built-in pantry in the west wall of the dining room.

The second floor contains three bedrooms and three baths plus sitting room in the main portion of the house. In addition, there is the original maid's room in the west wing which connects to its own bath. A narrow service stair communicates between the maid's quarters and the back hall connecting the living room and the kitchen (also located in the west wing).

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As might be expected for a house of this style, the significant architectural spaces are located on the main floor of the house. The second floor's finishes are similar to those of the first floor (plaster walls, hardwood floors, paneled cherry doors, etc.), but there are no architectural features of note in the bedrooms or bath.

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**Significance**

The McNamee-Ford House possesses local significance in the area of architecture and meets Criterion C: embodying the distinctive characteristics of a type and period, possessing high artistic values, and representing a significant and distinguishable entity. The house is outstanding in the quality of its design, materials and craftsmanship; since it is in pristine condition, its high degree of integrity distinguishes it among houses of its period in the area.

The McNamee-Ford House also possesses local significance in relation to Criterion B, being associated with the life of a person significant in Wabash's past, namely Edwin H. Ford, inventor and founder/president of the Ford Meter Box Company, one of Wabash's most important industries since 1911.

Construction History and Architect of the House

Prior to the research undertaken in conjunction with this nomination, the McNamee-Ford House was believed to have been built circa 1904. However, several items from 1901 conclusively point to that year as the date of construction.

On March 7, 1901 Henry and May McNamee purchased a portion of outlot 25 from members of the Atkinson family, who had built the house at 540 North Wabash Street in 1883-84.<sup>1</sup> This parcel of land, 208 feet deep with a 75-foot frontage on Wabash Street, was directly south of 540 N. Wabash, then occupied by Alexander and Laura Hess.<sup>2</sup> The purpose of the purchase was spelled out in an article titled "Bought a Good Building Lot" in the *Wabash Plain Dealer* two days later:

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<sup>1</sup>The deed for this parcel is recorded in Wabash County Courthouse, Deed Record Book 75, page 554. Research on the land history of 536 North Wabash Street relied heavily on an unpublished report by Mary Ellen Gadski completed in March 1988: "History of the Atkinson-Hess-Ford House" compiled for Richard E. Ford.

<sup>2</sup> Subsequent to the death of Alonzo M. Atkinson, the Hesses resided at 540 N. Wabash between September 1899 and August 1902. See above report and city directory research.

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H. H. McNamee, yesterday, purchased from Mrs. A. M. Atkinson and Howard Atkinson, the lot between the residence of Capt. Alex Hess and that of James Lynn, on north Wabash Street for \$1,400 cash. Mr. McNamee expects to build a dwelling on the property this spring.<sup>1</sup>

At that time, the newly married McNamees were living at the McNamee family house on the corner of Hill and Cass streets. Approximately six weeks after purchasing the lot, construction on their new home was begun as is documented by another brief newspaper reference on April 20: "H. H. McNamee has begun the excavation for his new residence on north Wabash Street."<sup>2</sup> Aside from a mention of a new furnace ordered for the residence a few days later, nothing further is known about the construction history of the house.<sup>3</sup>

The McNamee's daughter Mary Ellen, who was born in the house in 1908 and grew up here, remembers from family tradition that an architect designed the house but can provide no definite information on the individual.<sup>4</sup> She was presented with a list of architects known to be active in Wabash at that time (based on newspaper reading and information from the research of Wabash's two historic district currently on the National Register), but she could not identify any of

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<sup>1</sup> *Wabash Plain Dealer*, March 9, 1901, p. 1, c. 7.

<sup>2</sup> *Ibid.*, April 20, 1901, p. 4, c. 5.

<sup>3</sup> *Ibid.*, April 25, 1901, p. 1, c. 5. (Article titled: "Direct Indirect Heating.") The preparer read all issues of the daily *Wabash Plain Dealer* between March 8 and July 2, 1901 looking for any and all references to construction of the McNamee house. In addition, selected issues of the weekly *Wabash Star* were also read without result.

<sup>4</sup> See the following correspondence: Letters from Mary Ellen Gadski to Mary Ellen Shipnes, Indianapolis, December 23, 1991, January 27, 1992, August 26, 1992, October 17, 1992, February 14, 1994. Mary Ellen Shipnes to Mary Ellen Gadski, Brenham, Texas, January 22, 1992, February 3, 1992, September 22, 1992, October 22, 1992. All correspondence in the files of the preparer.

No architectural drawings are known to survive in possession of the family.

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the candidates as the architect.<sup>1</sup> Knowing that her father had a deep respect for Indianapolis architect Lee Burns, who knew McNamee best in the late 1920s when they both resided in Indianapolis and Burns' career was thriving, she postulated that Burns had been its architect. However, in 1901 when the house was built, he was only 29 and had not yet begun to build houses. The Burns Realty Company was not founded till 1910. Research in the Burns Collection at the Indiana Historical Society Library found nothing that would support attributing the house to Burns. He did very few houses outside of Indianapolis and none documented prior to 1913<sup>2</sup>. Therefore, despite considerable research aimed at finding the architect of this house, the architect remains unknown.

Brief Biography of Henry H. McNamee

Henry H. McNamee was born in Wabash on July 14, 1864, the second son of Thomas and Mary E. (Armstrong) McNamee.<sup>3</sup> He was first employed in the Wabash National Bank, which his father had co-founded in 1877, and served as assistant cashier here at the time the house was built. By 1907 he was associated in business with Mark C. Honeywell and Joseph Teague in the Honeywell Specialty Manufacturing Company. He served as both treasurer and vice-president of this company during a period when it made many advances in the home heating industry. In 1926, following personal financial reverses, he left Wabash and went to Indianapolis where he was in the home building business, initially as a contractor. For a period of a dozen years, he was associated with Dickinson & Reed Inc., a real estate company, serving as its

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<sup>1</sup> Letter from Mary Ellen Gadski on August 26, 1992 cited above. Architects known to have been active in Wabash in 1901 included: Alfred Grindle, G. R. Laidlaw, T. M. Morris, Christian Risser, and Wing & Mahurin.

<sup>2</sup> An ARCHIE search on October 15, 1992 could not find any records at the Indiana Historical Society, repository of Burns material, that indicated that the architect designed any houses in Wabash County.

<sup>3</sup> Biographical information on Henry McNamee was compiled from the following sources: his obituary, *Wabash Plain Dealer*, Monday, June 2, 1952, p. 2, c. 3-4; city directory research in both Wabash (1897-1924) and Indianapolis (1927-1943) directories; Citizen Historical Association paper on Wilbur Armstrong McNamee, July 3, 1937, Indiana Division of the Indiana State Library; *Indiana History Bulletin* (v. 20, no. 3), March 1943, p. 78; *Record of Interments, Falls Cemetery, Wabash Cemetery Society, 1838-1971* (Ft. Wayne, IN: Ft. Wayne Public Library, 1972), pp. 344-45.



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secretary-treasurer. Following a brief residency in Tucson, Arizona, in the late 1930s, he moved to Northport, Michigan, where he continued in the home building business. He died on May 30, 1952 in Northport, survived by his wife, daughter and two grandchildren.

Brief Biography of Edwin H. Ford

Edwin H. Ford was born in Wabash on January 12, 1861, the sixth child of Dr. James E. and America Ford, early pioneers of Wabash.<sup>1</sup> He attended both Butler College and Lehigh University, but his dream to earn an engineering degree as a midshipman at Annapolis was thwarted. He spent his early years as an overseer for his father's landholdings in Blackford County. Following the discovery of natural gas in the area in the 1880s, including wells on the Ford farm, he worked leasing drilling rights from farmers. Later as a field representative of the Fort Wayne Gas Company, where he supervised laying of pipelines from wells to Hartford City, he was awarded a patent on a gas regulator.

In 1894 he supervised the installation of the city waterworks plant in Hartford City, of which he served as superintendent for several years. During this time he became interested in finding a solution to the problem of customers' waste of water and began to experiment with the development of water meters. From his home "laboratory," he developed a below-ground meter pit so that outdoor meters could be operational when located below the frost line. Hartford City's water system was then metered with this system, probably the first utility in a cold climate to have all meters installed outside at the curb. When demand for meter boxes spread to neighboring towns' utilities, Ford began manufacture in the basement of his home and then opened a machine shop in a vacant home about 1906. Patents in 1910 and 1911 on such technical devices as the worm lock, double lid cover and the yoke—all of which became standard components of

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<sup>1</sup> Biographical information on Edwin H. Ford was compiled from the following sources: Charles Roll, *Indiana: One Hundred and Fifty Years of American Development*, 5 vols. (Chicago: Lewis Publishing Co., 1931), pp. 313-314; *History of the Ford Family*, rev. ed. by John L. Ford, Sr., (Wabash, IN; Published by the Ford Family, 1972), pp. 50-55; 60-68; and Citizen Historical Association paper on Edwin Holton Ford, July 31, 1937, Indiana Division of the Indiana State Library.

Note: Edwin Ford's birthplace, 177-79 West Hill Street, is a contributing building in the Wabash Residential Historic District, listed on the National Register in April 1988.

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water metering systems—helped encourage him to return to Wabash and incorporate the Ford Meter Box Company in 1911. He served as president of the company until his death in 1933, at which time his sons continued its operation. Ford Meter Box continues to operate to this day as one of Wabash County's most important industries.<sup>2</sup>

Edwin Ford and his wife Elizabeth purchased 536 Wabash Street from Henry and May McNamee in May 1926.<sup>1</sup> During the seven years that Mr. Ford was associated with this house, he continued to earn patents on innovations in water metering systems, such as the copperhorn device for basement meter settings and magnetically driven meter registers. Many of his innovations later were standardly adopted by American water utilities. Millions of Ford's meter boxes have been sold throughout the country, primarily in the East and Midwest. Following his death in 1933, his wife Elizabeth continued to reside at 536 Wabash until her death in 1950. The home was then inherited by their son Holton N. Ford, who was treasurer of the company from 1950 to 1970.<sup>2</sup> He and his wife Rosalind lived here until their deaths, she in 1980 and he in 1991. The house continues in family ownership, having been inherited by Richard E. Ford, grandson of Edwin H. Ford. Thus 536 Wabash Street has been associated with Edwin Ford and his descendants for over 60 years.

Architectural Significance

The McNamee-Ford House is an excellent example of a Colonial Revival house demonstrating the influence of mid-18th-century Georgian architecture. The sophisticated composition of its main facade, with a two-story projecting pavilion with pedimented gable, was more commonly used in later years with larger scale houses of neoclassical design. Use of the side gable was not common in Colonial Revival houses until after 1910, and the house's classical details—which tend to be overscaled or exaggerated in examples of the style

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<sup>1</sup> Wabash County Courthouse, Deed Record Book 125, page 88.

<sup>2</sup> Obituaries of Holton N. Ford, *Wabash Plain Dealer*, February 6, 1991, p. 1; *Indianapolis Star*, February 12, 1991, p. D-3.

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prior to 1910—are refined and elegant.<sup>1</sup> These stylistic factors take on more significance in Indiana, where the Colonial Revival was in its early development at this time, unlike in Eastern states where there are examples from the 1890s.

Because nothing is known of the house's architect, the McNamee-Ford House can not be considered in the context of an architect's total work. Lacking this information, the house must be evaluated within the context of local homes of the era. *The Wabash County Interim Report: Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory* was used as a source of evaluation.<sup>2</sup> In all of Wabash's historic districts and scattered sites, the report identified only three Colonial Revival residences as "outstanding:" the McNamee-Ford House, the William Yarnelle House at 614 West Hill Street, and a residence at 240 North Cass Street.

The Yarnelle House is a contributing building in the Wabash Residential Historic District, listed on the National Register in 1988. It is of far greater scale than the McNamee-Ford House and was apparently planned after Henry McNamee had begun construction of his house. Recent research has identified the architect of the Yarnelle House to be Alfred Grindle of Ft. Wayne, who was hired in June 1901 to design the structure.<sup>3</sup> Little is known about the history of the residence at 240 North Cass Street.<sup>4</sup> The interim report lists a date of "circa 1900," but based upon stylistic characteristics, the construction date is probably later. With features such as its front porch and its lack of classical ornament, it is not a "high style" example of the Colonial Revival.

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<sup>1</sup> See: *A Field Guide to American Houses* by Virginia and Lee McAlester (New York, NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 1984), pp. 322.

<sup>2</sup>*The Wabash County Interim Report: Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory* (Indianapolis, IN: Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana, 1982). See photos of Yarnelle House on page 49 and of 240 North Cass on page 52.

<sup>3</sup> Information on the Yarnelle House was discovered in the course of newspaper research on the McNamee House. At the time the National Register nomination of the Old Wabash district was prepared, the architect and construction date of this house were unknown. See *Wabash Plain Dealer*, June 8, 1901, p. 2, c. 4 re: the site's clearance and June 18, p. 2, c. 4 for the citation re: the architect.

<sup>4</sup> Telephone interview with the house's current owner, Robert Beauchamp, September 22, 1993.

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Based on these comparisons, the McNamee-Ford House is architecturally significant as one of only two high-style Colonial Revival houses built in Wabash at the turn of the century. The year 1901 was one of the most prolific in Wabash's building history with numerous new homes and commercial buildings reflecting the city's prosperity.<sup>1</sup> Among these buildings, the McNamee-Ford House has retained a high degree of integrity, thus enhancing its architectural significance.

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<sup>1</sup> See *Wabash Plain Dealer*, April 13, 1901, p. 2, c. 3: "All local contractors and architects are authority for the assertion that this year will be one of the most important of any in the history of Wabash for the amount of building that will be done."

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**Verbal Boundary Description**

Part of outlot 25 of the Northern Addition of the City of Wabash as described here: beginning at the southeast corner of outlot 25, proceed north six degrees and 30 minutes east along the west line of Wabash Street for 80.78 feet; then proceed north 87 degrees, 10 minutes west for 143 feet to an iron stake; then west on a line parallel with the south line of outlot 25 to the west line of outlot 25; then south five degrees east on said west line to the southwest corner of outlot 25; then east along the south line for 505.23 feet to the place of beginning.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundaries of the lot described above correspond to the current boundaries of the property, which was assembled in four separate parcels. Each of the four has its own legal description as was recorded on October 17, 1991, in Wabash County Deed Record Book 277, pages 202-204. For simplicity, these were combined into one verbal description.

