

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

FINAL

### 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 Second Baptist Church

other names/site number 105-055-80066

#### 2. Location

street & number 321 North Rogers Street  N/A not for publication

city or town Bloomington  N/A  vicinity

state Indiana code IN county Monroe code 105 zip code 47401

#### 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.)

*Richard R. Ralitz*

8/1/95

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:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

- 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:)

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Second Baptist Church  
Name of Property

Monroe County, Indiana  
County and State

**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)

RELIGION: religious facility  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: religious facility  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

Romanesque  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE: limestone  
walls STONE: limestone  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof ASPHALT  
other GLASS  
\_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

Second Baptist Church  
Name of Property

Monroe 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

ETHNIC HERITAGE: black

**Period of Significance**

1913-1945

**Significant Dates**

1913

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Plato, Samuel

**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

Second Baptist Church  
Name of Property

Monroe County, Indiana  
County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** less than one acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 6	5 3 9 8 6 0	4 3 3 4 4 5 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 Kathleen S. Branigin

organization Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana date December 20, 1994

street & number 340 W. Michigan St. telephone (317) 639-4534

city or town Indianapolis state IN zip code 46202

**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 Second Baptist Church

street & number 321 N. Rogers St. telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Bloomington state IN zip code 47401

**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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The Second Baptist Church in Bloomington, Indiana is located at the southwest corner of Eighth and Rogers Streets, on the western fringe of Bloomington's business district. Built in 1913 and designed by African-American architect Samuel Plato, the church is a simple yet well executed example of Romanesque Revival design, as demonstrated through the use of rock-faced limestone walls, broad, round arch openings, a tower, round arched lancet windows, and oculus tracery.

The limestone structure is one story, with a basement, and based on an L-shaped plan. Gabled projections face north and east with a two story square tower occupying the intersection of these gabled blocks. A one story, flat roofed rear section extends one bay to the south. Foundations are of poured concrete, visible inside the basement but faced with stone on the exterior. Walls are of rock-faced Indiana limestone, and the roof is covered with asphalt shingles.

Facing east is the primary elevation of the church (photo 1). The steeply pitched, parapeted gable with crow stepped ends is offset by the east face of the two story tower. Short buttresses articulate the wall into four sections. All corners of the main church building are marked by buttresses. At the basement level, there are two windows under the large round arched window, and one located to the south. North of the paired basement windows is a basement door with added metal awning. Centered at the main level of this gabled section is a broad arch which appears to spring from the top of the flanking buttresses. The arch is built of tall voussoirs and is infilled with lead-camed stained glass divided by wood mullions into three round arch lancets surmounted by two oculi.

The tower is two full stories high, with the ground floor entry accessible from a flight of exterior stairs. The round entry arch echoes the gable arch and surrounds a lunette transom and replacement paired doors (original doors are intact on the north side of the tower). The second level of the tower begins with a dressed stringcourse at the level of the base of the gable roof. A stilted arch blind arcade with diminutive niches rests on the stringcourse. Over this is a recessed panel with lunette opening with wood louvers. The radiating voussoirs of the lunette arch

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**Second Baptist Church  
Monroe County, Indiana**

infill the spandrel areas of the recessed panel. Three emphatic large square corbels complete the tower, which is then capped by a pyramidal roof.

The north elevation is a virtual mirror image of the east elevation, except that the basement level of the gable section does not have a basement door next to the tower corner. Instead, there is a fixed window.

The west elevation is the rear of the building (photo 3). The small office extension is original to the building and has always functioned as the pastor's office. The office is centered on the rear wall and has a wood entry door with transom on the north wall and simple one-over-one double hung windows on other sides. Its roof is nearly flat. Buttresses on the wall of the main part of the church flank the office extension. Round arch lancet windows with stained glass one-over-one sash flank the office. A large square stone chimney rises from the junction of the office and main church sections.

The south elevation of the church has four symmetrically placed round arch windows similar to those on the west wall. Buttresses divide the four bays on this side as well.

The tower acts as a foyer when entering the church (photo 5). The foyer has two sets of swinging doors which open into the sanctuary. The original plaster and woodwork are in good condition. Typical doors are horizontally paneled and most woodwork surrounds are architrave style moldings. The sanctuary reflects the Akron Plan, an auditorium style layout with the altar being in the southwest corner and pews spreading out from the altar in fan-like fashion. Floors throughout the sanctuary were originally wood but are now covered in burgundy carpeting, while foyer floors have linoleum tile. The entire sanctuary space is barrel-vaulted with a plaster ceiling.

The most dramatic feature of the interior is the serpentine balcony which winds across the northeast portion of the interior

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**Second Baptist Church  
Monroe County, Indiana**

(photos 8, 9, 10). The balcony is supported at three points and has a paneled knee wall. Original wooden folding seats remain on the balcony; pews in the sanctuary are contemporary replacements. Staircases with car-sided railings give access to the balcony at the northwest and southeast corners.

The large art-glass windows consist mostly of geometric forms, however, the oculi depict the cross and crown (north windows) and the Bible and dove (east windows).

Alterations to the sanctuary are few. The pews were replaced in 1982. The seats in the choir box are also replacements. A wainscot about 3 feet high was added to the walls at some point.

The basement can be accessed by a staircase at the northeast corner of the sanctuary. The walls in this area are plaster over concrete with poured concrete floors and plaster ceilings. The tile in the basement is the same as the foyer tile on the first level. The basement houses a small library, a kitchen, storage space, and the fellowship hall.

The basement staircase leads directly down to the library area, which occupies roughly one-fifth of the space in the basement. Directly to the west is a small kitchen of equal size. The fellowship hall is the largest space in the basement, occupying roughly the same amount of space as the first floor sanctuary. The fellowship hall (photo 11) is used for Sunday School classes, weekly Bible study, and various church social events. Mens and womens restrooms are located west of fellowship hall, and it is in this area that the poured concrete used for the foundation is most evident in the walls and floors. Storage space is located at the northeast and southwest corners of the basement. The southwest storage area has a small staircase which leads to the baptismal pool in the pulpit.

Both the exterior and interior of the Second Baptist Church have high integrity and still reflect the fine craftsmanship used in its construction in 1913.

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**Second Baptist Church  
Monroe County, Indiana**

*Section 8-Statement of Significance*

Second Baptist Church in Bloomington, Indiana is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criteria A and C. Under Criterion A, the church is significant for its association to the African-American community of Bloomington. Under Criterion C, the church is significant as a good example of Romanesque Revival design. Samuel Plato, a noted African-American architect who resided in Indiana at the time, designed this church. It is a good example of his early commissions. Second Baptist meets Criterion Consideration A because its significance is related to the ethnic heritage of Bloomington and its architectural importance.

Bloomington developed an African-American community shortly after the Civil War as a small group of former slaves emigrated here. Prior to the war, the area was known for its several Underground Railroad sites. It appears that most African-Americans settled on the near Westside, a neighborhood of working class cottages not far from the courthouse square. By 1881, 57 children were enrolled in the Bloomington schools, which were not segregated until 1916. It is believed that the Illinois Central Railroad transported a large working force of Asian and African-American workers to Bloomington in about 1910. Although it is thought that the men were billeted out of town, some of these workers may have settled permanently in Bloomington. The African-American population was 402 in 1910, and 479 by 1920 (total population of Bloomington in 1920 was 11,595).

The near westside neighborhood became associated with the African-American community since most of their landmarks were there. Several churches, a lodge, and a school are the most visible resources associated with the community. Churches in particular were often the center of African-American social life and pride.

Second Baptist Church was a significant institution for the African-American community of Bloomington. The congregation was formed in 1872, and worshiped in the homes of its members until



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**Second Baptist Church  
Monroe County, Indiana**

1890 when they erected a frame building (no longer standing) at the northeast corner of Eighth and Rogers Streets. In 1907, Reverend Moses M. Porter came to the church from Second Baptist Church in Bedford, Indiana. Rev. Porter became a key benefactor of the congregation, extending a loan of \$4,000.00 in personal funds to assist in the acquisition of the present lot at the southwest corner of Eighth and Rogers Streets. For the design, the congregation engaged Samuel M. Plato, a young African-American architect who lived in Marion, Indiana at the time.

Construction of the church was a group effort, even perhaps a community-wide effort. The community at large donated stone for the exterior, but church members themselves hauled the stone to the site from the quarry. Concrete, electrical, and plaster work was done by members. Funds needed to erect the church were raised through suppers, choral performances, and individual contributions from church members. In all, \$40,000.00 was spent on construction of the church. The facility has been an important part of the African-American community since its completion. Reverend Porter, who aided construction of the church, stayed on as pastor until his death in 1952.

Second Baptist Church is also of architectural importance as a good example of Romanesque Revival and as a representative early work of African-American architect Samuel Plato. The Romanesque Revival style developed in two phases in Indiana and the United States. The initial wave of Romanesque-inspired architecture occurred during the mid-1800s when European trained (especially German-trained) architects and builders brought the "round arched style" to America. Thomas Teft was one of the most famous proponents of this early Romanesque revival. The more long-lived phase of Romanesque architecture came in the 1880s under the leadership of Henry Hobson Richardson. His bold stone exteriors with massive round arched openings became the popular mode for community buildings of all types from 1888 to 1915. Hallmarks of the style include masonry exteriors (with rock-faced coursed stone used for the best examples), broad round arched openings, prominent use of towers or turrets, and steeply pitched roofs.

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**Second Baptist Church  
Monroe County, Indiana**

Second Baptist Church has all the characteristics of Romanesque Revival design. Within Bloomington, there are several examples of Romanesque Revival design, most notably Maxwell Hall and several others in the Old Crescent Historic District (NRHP, 1980). Although more impressive in scale than Second Baptist, these buildings are more altered than the church. Certainly, the level of detail and craftsmanship of Second Baptist are equal to these examples. The church also represents another significant design trend—the auditorium plan (or Akron Plan), promoted by such architects as Lawrence Valk and Gordon P. Randall. This type of plan dominated Protestant church architecture from roughly 1880 to 1920.

As an example of Samuel Plato's early works, Second Baptist is significant. Plato was born in Waugh, Alabama in 1882. He attended Mount Miegs Institute in his hometown. Upon graduation from the institute, he spent a year studying in Winston-Salem, North Carolina, and he eventually entered the State University of Kentucky, Louisville, in 1898. While there, he repaired buildings on campus to earn tuition and board. After earning an education degree, he returned to Alabama to teach but decided to return to the University to study law. Upon his return to Louisville, Plato entered law school, but quickly became interested in architecture after taking a course from the International Correspondence School of Architecture in Scranton, Pennsylvania. He became so interested that he dropped all of his law courses immediately to study architecture.

In 1902, Plato left Louisville and moved to Marion, Indiana. Upon his arrival there, he discovered that few in the community were willing to give commissions to a black architect. After obtaining a job finishing stairs and doing trim work on a house in Marion, he was able to establish a reputation as a fine contractor. Plato's work as a contractor gradually developed into a private architectural practice in Marion. Several of his works in Marion still stand, including the Platonian Apartments (named for him), First Baptist Church, J. Woodrow Wilson House (NRHP, 1988), and the Weaver School (demolished). Little is known of how or when

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Second Baptist Church  
Monroe County, Indiana

Plato was contacted by the Bloomington congregation. It seems certain that he built his later career on these early works. Plato experimented with many styles, as seen in these few samples of his early work. First Baptist is Neo-Classical Revival (1912), Platonian Apartments are Craftsman (c.1910), while the Wilson House is Colonial Revival (c.1916).

Plato left Indiana for Louisville in 1921, after he was unable to get a business loan. He was hired by the Federal government later, and designed about 39 post offices around the country. Public housing projects in Louisville and Sparrow's Point, Maryland were designed by Plato. He was also active during the massive government building projects of the World War II era. Plato died in Louisville on May 13, 1957.

*Section 9-Bibliography*

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1982 Directory of Second Baptist Church.

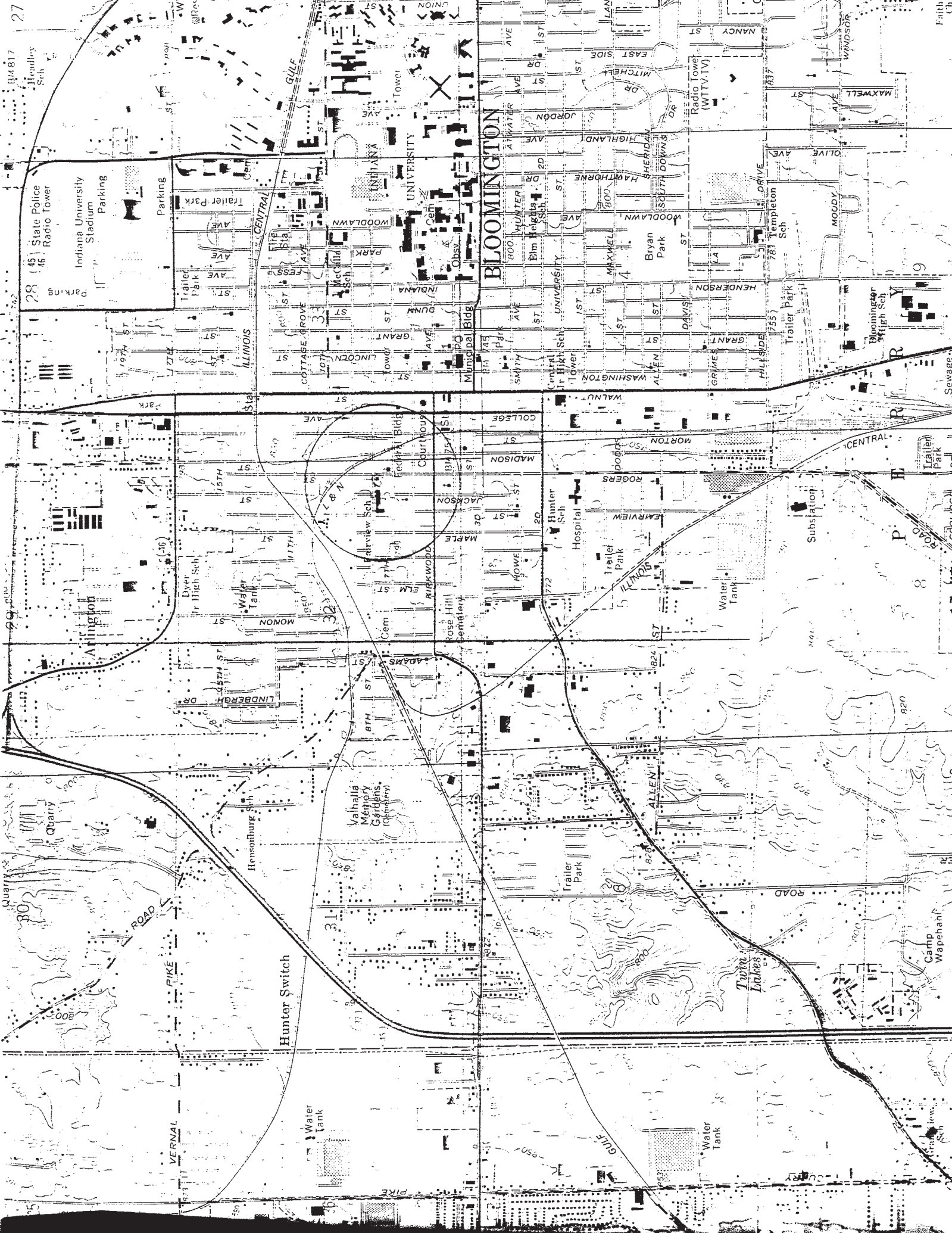
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Bloomington Interim Report, 1986.

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Jourdan, Katherine M. National Register of Historic Places  
nomination, J. Woodrow Wilson House, listed 8-11-88.



(45) State Police Radio Tower  
(46) Indiana University Stadium Parking

Vernal Pike  
Hunter Switch

Valhalla Memory Gardens (Cemetery)  
Hensonsburg Sch

Water Tank  
Hunter Switch

Indiana University  
Municipal Bldg

Madison St  
Jackson St

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BLOOMINGTON