

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

FILE

W/ continuation sheets
7.26.97

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 Morton School
other names/site number _____ 157-333-13056

2. Location

street & number 222 North Chauncey Avenue N/A not for publication
city or town West Lafayette N/A vicinity
state Indiana code IN county Tippecanoe code 157 zip code 47906

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 36CFR 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.)

Signature of certifying official/Title _____ 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 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

Morton School
Name of Property

Tippecanoe IN
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building
- district
- site
- structure
- object

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.)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

Indiana's Public Common and High Schools MPDF

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION: School

SOCIAL: Meeting Hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

19th & 20th c. REVIVALS: Tudor Revival

foundation STONE: Limestone

walls BRICK

STONE: Limestone

roof ASPHALT

other METAL: Steel

Narrative Description

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

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

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.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographic 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 #

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1930-1947

Significant Dates

1930

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Scholer, Walter Sr.

A.E. Kemmer Construction Company

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

Morton School
Name of Property

Tippecanoe IN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property <1

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	16	507930	4474750	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				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 William Floyd / Paul Diebold
organization former Prinicipal, Morton School / DHPA date 4/3/97
street & number 2741 North Salisbury Street telephone 765-497-1788
city or town West Lafayette state IN zip code 47906

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 City of West Lafayette
street & number 609 West Navajo telephone
city or town West Lafayette state IN zip code 47906

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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Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

Morton School, Tippecanoe County, Indiana

Section 7-Description

Morton School, dedicated February 1930, is a two-story, flat-roofed, brick and limestone building occupying a site bound by Salisbury, Chauncey, North and Columbia Streets in West Lafayette, Indiana. Most of the old portion of West Lafayette occupies a relatively flat land feature, with land sloping away sharply to the east and south toward the Wabash River, and gently rising to the northwest. The immediate site of Morton School is flat. Late 19th and early 20th century homes and surface parking lots surround the site, but only one block to the south the "village" business district begins, and two-three blocks west is the densely developed Purdue University campus. The east half of the school lot is paved surface parking. The west, north and south edges adjacent to the school have lawn strips, public concrete sidewalks, street trees, and shrubs against the front wall of the building.

The simple yet well detailed main facade facing Chauncey Street typifies the building. The exterior walls are of dark red face brick laid in a variation of common bond, with five rows of stretcher bond to a row of alternating header-stretcher bond, resting on a limestone foundation. Architect Walter Scholer articulated this facade into an E-shaped format common for early 20th century schools. The end and center stems of the "E" form forward-projecting pavilions. The center pavilion is the main entrance of the building, though, by virtue of increased automobile use, the side and rear entries are for all practical purposes the main entrances. Limestone quoining and shouldered voussoir blocks highlight the triple arcade of segmental, multiple archivolt arches. The new glass and metal main doors approximate the original wood and glass double leaf doors. Multi-light square paned transoms are above each doorway. The quoin work marks the outside and inside corners of the pavilion all the way to the roof line. A stone tablet engraved with "MORTON SCHOOL" with torches and heraldic shields flanking is centered over the triple arcade. Three windows are centered on the second floor. Each is quoined and has a stone sill. The windows themselves are the original steel sash units with interior opening hopper and awning opening units; these are intact throughout the building. A stone belt course runs across the building at the second floor window header height, forming a simple cornice. Above the second floor windows is a stepped parapet, the center and highest step merges with the lower step with graceful stone consoles. Limestone coping completes the parapet. A square stone linenfold bas-relief tablet is centered in the parapet of the center pavilion.

The flanking wings of the main elevation carry the Tudor Revival theme, in simpler fashion. The windows have simple soldier course headers and plain stone sills, no quoining, but the stone beltcourse-cornice is carried around the entire building. Scholer broke up the sheer mass of the front elevation by dividing it into sections vertically with runs of stone quoin work, making the divisions at six bays on either side of the central pavilion; after the quoin strip is another five bays of fenestration, then come the blank end pavilions. The projecting end pavilions are marked by quoining as well. The flanking section's parapets are flat, lacking the stepped work of the central section.

The north and south elevations are virtually mirror images of one another. Each side elevation is formal and well detailed like the front elevation. An entry section projects forward from each and has a segmental arched limestone doorway with multiple splayed archivolt, framed by slightly projecting stone quoined buttresses with angled "coping stones" just above the arch springing point. The spandrels are finished in limestone with heraldic shields and linenfold bas-reliefs. The blind tympanum has Art Deco foliate and sunburst bas-relief carving framing a

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square tablet with inscriptions. The south door carving reads: "AN EDUCATION/IS THE/BIRTHRIGHT OF/EVERY CHILD," the north door reads: "EDUCATION IS/PARAMOUNT/TOGOOD/CITIZENSHIP." Likely, the original doors were wood and glass double leaf units, now, metal and glass single doors mark each entrance, with a sidelight. Over the arch is a quoined window, and quoining marks the corners of the pavilion. A linenfold tablet is centered in the parapet. Five bays of windows, similar to the front elevation, mark the sections flanking the entry pavilion.

The rear of Morton School also forms an "E," but the central stem containing the gymnasium projects outward considerably farther than the end wings. The quoining, belt coursing, and stone foundation are carried over to the rear elevation. On the end wings, windows are grouped on the inward half of the wall, leaving the outer half of the wall blank. In the center of each wing is a plain entrance. The recessed wings immediately flanking the gymnasium have five bays of windows. Scholer articulated the gymnasium differently from the rest of the building. Its north and south flanks have two story high round arched windows. Closest to the main block of the building is one window, then a plain strip pilaster, then two windows, another pilaster, then two more round arched windows, then a final pilaster. Each round arch window has brick voussiors and a stone keystone. Two regular windows (one story high) are placed furthest from the main block on each north and south flank. The end (east) wall of the gymnasium has two regular windows and two plain entrances with stairs, one at each corner. The boiler room stack is centered on the roof line.

The interior of Morton School retains much of its original feeling. Scholer laid out a series of double loaded corridors running down the center of each floor. The front central foyer has pairs of wooden multi-paned glazed doors leading to the central hallway. The hallway with rooms on either side takes the form a capital "C" with sections extending east at either end of the building. Finishes are simple; terrazzo floors which also form a base, glazed brick wainscoting, plaster walls and ceilings. Classrooms have wooden single light doors and very plain finishes, with no woodwork or trim around the windows. Several classrooms still have original cabinetry, cloak closets and chalkboards. The administration altered some classrooms through the years by lowering ceilings several inches, adding new light fixtures, or adding new laboratory equipment.

The floor plan is echoed on the second floor. The gymnasium is by far the most dramatic space in Morton School. Multi-paned wooden doors lead to a foyer area, then another set of doors leads to the gym. Scholer used classical and Art Deco motifs in the decorative plaster work of the gym. The space is a full two stories high, with tall round arched windows on either long side. Classical pilasters divide the windows. At the far end of the gym is a raised stage with a Tudor arched proscenium opening. The opening is framed by an architrave molding and linen fold pattern. The spandrels feature Deco sunburst relief patterns and skewed shields. Centered over the arch is a plaster shield with a capital "M." The gym floor was built for basketball play and is wooden. Service rooms are placed backstage.

The school board altered Morton School very little over the years. The superintendent installed new heating units in each room in the late 1940s, and paved the current parking lot. Some rehabilitation work was done on the school in 1969-1970. The superintendent likely installed the dropped ceilings in several rooms at that time. In 1985, the West Lafayette Parks and Recreation Department, using federal Community Development Block Grant funds, purchased the school property from West Lafayette School Board, and in the late 1980s, rehabilitated the school

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Morton School, Tippecanoe County, Indiana

into an elderly and multiple use community center. Some minor alterations to the basic fabric of the school were done at this time, including the addition of carpeting in some office areas and general repairs. The school stands very much as it was when it was in use as an educational facility.

Section 8-Statement of Significance

Morton School meets National Register criteria A and C. The school also meets all of the requirements set forth in *Indiana's Public Common and High Schools* Multiple Property Documentation Form. Morton School is the most intact historic building representing the development of free public education in West Lafayette. The school board completed and opened the school in 1930 and it served continuously through 1985. Through the years, the school enjoyed a close relationship with programs at adjacent Purdue University; university faculty taught classes at the school and the school benefited from the resources of a major university in many other ways. Walter Scholer, a prominent Lafayette architect, designed the school building and it is fine example of his local work as well as being a fine example of early twentieth century school design.

Morton School qualifies under the MPDF as a significant example of a multi-room consolidated school. The context within the MPDF, "Indiana's Public Common and High Schools," outlines the early history of education in Indiana and the period of consolidated schools that flourished toward the end of the 1800s and especially in the early 1900s. The property type analysis includes "Two or More Room Consolidated Rural and Urban Schools," which describes exactly the Morton School.

Consolidated schools prospered in small towns, where they often served the surrounding township. One such small town was the nascent village of West Lafayette, Indiana. West Lafayette was actually the final name of three separate attempts to establish a settlement on the west banks of the Wabash River, across from the bustling canal town of Lafayette. August Wylie platted 140 lots in 1836 adjacent to a sand bar that was used as a ford across the Wabash into Lafayette. Although settlers bought lots and built structures, constant flooding soon erased the community. Several hundred yards to the west and parallel to the river, the land rises sharply out of the flood plain. This land was much more suited to permanent occupation. Jesse Lutz founded Kingston there in 1855, and the Chaunceys, out-of-town land speculators from Philadelphia, platted the village of Chauncey in 1860. Two other adjacent villages were Jackson and Oakwood. By 1888, the separate villages had united under the name West Lafayette. Residents of West Lafayette were tied to the same economy as Lafayette, river and canal trade at first, then, by the Civil War, railroads and heavy manufacturing. By the 1880s, a covered bridge spanned the Wabash and carried State Street (a main State road) into the heart of the small town and beyond. The single most significant event in the history of West Lafayette happened in 1869, when the General Assembly accepted businessman John Purdue's gift of \$150,000 and a campus site to establish a college of agriculture and mechanical arts not far from the town. Purdue University opened its doors in 1874 and gradually became one of two major public institutions of higher learning in the state. West Lafayette became a college town with Purdue being the major employer and focus of the town.

But elementary level education had not gone untended in West Lafayette. The first school in Chauncey was

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Morton School, Tippecanoe County, Indiana

at the corner of North and Salisbury, part of the nominated site. The township trustees of Wabash Township, Tippecanoe County, built a one room wood frame school house in 1855 to replace a log school on that site. With Chauncey's incorporation as a town in 1866, citizens organized a school board and petitioned the township trustees for control of the school. Less than ten years later, the Chauncey town trustees let contracts to build a new multi-room brick school building. A property owner bought the old frame school, moved it to nearby Wiggins Street and remodeled it into a home. The frame school is still a home today, with numerous additions and details from the Queen Anne period. The brick school on North and Salisbury was used continuously until 1891. A remodeling and addition in 1887 increased its capacity.

A fire destroyed the brick school in 1891, and by 1892, the school board built a new ten room brick school. This 1892 school faced North Street at the corner of North and Salisbury. Enrollment kept pace with the growing community. In the 1860s and 70s, sixty to forty students per year attended the old Morton School, but by 1887, that figure had increased to 250. By the 1920s, enrollment was approaching 400 pupils. West Lafayette petitioned successfully to become a city in 1924.

In May of 1929, the minutes of the West Lafayette School Trustees noted that when old Morton School was built in 1891-2, the population of the town was 4,000, and that the 1929 population was 6,000. Enrollment at old Morton had risen to 416 pupils. Furthermore, the Trustees found that it was "an obvious waste of money" to add to or repair old Morton (book 4, p. 167). School Trustee officials declared that "an emergency exists" as a result of the overcrowded schools of the community (book 4, p. 160). In May of 1929, the West Lafayette School Trustees issued bonds in the amount of \$120,000 to fund construction of a new Morton School. The eventual cost was about \$198,000, with the difference covered by an unsecured promissory note. The Trustees had hired Walter Scholer to design the school in 1928, and the construction contract was let to A.E. Kemmer Construction Company in August, 1929. The old Morton School was demolished, and, in the months before hand, the Trustees acquired and cleared the entire block of the few remaining houses. The new Morton School opened February 14, 1930, witnessed by a festive grand opening celebration for the community with live music, refreshments, and floral decorations.

Morton School was the most important public elementary school building in the community. It housed the most pupils and became the showcase of the community. The proximity of a major university had a profound and positive effect on Morton School, and on the entire West Lafayette school system. For example, in 1911, Purdue and West Lafayette school officials agreed to let Purdue students teach Home Economics classes to high school students in the community. The town provided the classroom space and equipment, Purdue paid for salaries. Just three years before Morton School was under construction, Purdue and West Lafayette schools inked an agreement allowing Purdue staff and students direct observation and teaching in the West Lafayette public schools. Biology, Chemistry, Mathematics, Modern Language, and Physics courses were included in the agreement. College students and faculty enjoyed the benefit of first hand experience, while the local schools enjoyed input from a major university.

In designing Morton School, the Trustees and architect acknowledged a new trend in the Hoosier educational experience: athletics. The growing national trend for physical fitness is reflected in the placing and planning

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Morton School, Tippecanoe County, Indiana

of a gym wing for the new Morton School. More direct was the influence of the basketball craze. "Hoosier Hysteria," the Indiana high school basketball championship, began in 1911 and quickly became a form of popular entertainment in Indiana. Community interest in competition at the elementary level might insure a high school championship team.

Morton School is the best physical representative of the development of West Lafayette public schools. The former frame schoolhouse, as mentioned, has been extensively remodeled into a two story house. The Oakwood School, built as a high school but used as an elementary school at one point, has been long since demolished. In the 1930s, W.P.A. funds helped in the construction of a new high school, at Grant and Meridian. This building still stands but has been greatly altered and the school district added a major addition to it in 1997.

Morton School is also architecturally significant. Walter Scholer was the architect of the building, and it remains among his finest works. The school was commission number 28-30 for Scholer (30th job, year 1928, according to his *Commission Book*). The school board minutes never specifically mention Scholer as the architect, but they specify his presence at the receiving of bids meeting, and several newspaper accounts mention Scholer as the architect. Walter Scholer was perhaps the best known architect in the greater Lafayette area by the 1920s.

Walter Scholer (1890-1972) was one of 13 children born of Swiss immigrants who had settled near Portland, Indiana. His older brother, trained as a draftsman, encouraged Walter to take up architecture. Walter moved to Indianapolis at age 18 and worked in the leading offices of the city, including Rubush & Hunter and Herbert L. Bass. He married Alice Caster of the Portland area in 1911, and attended Columbia University's architecture program in 1913-14. Returning to Indianapolis, Scholer began private practice out of the State Life Building in 1918. The Scholers moved to Lafayette in 1920, and Walter embarked on a long successful career there. He maintained a partnership with Nichol and Hoffman starting in 1920, but in 1925, Scholer took independent control of the firm. The single most impressive commission the firm received was for the design of the Purdue campus plan in 1923, and subsequently, the design of nearly all the campus buildings for the next decades. Prior to 1923, the Daggett and Sons architecture firm dominated all of the Purdue commissions, going back to the turn of the century.

Other fine examples of Scholer's work in the greater Lafayette area include Mars Theater (1921, with Nichols and Hoffman); the Wells Memorial Library (1926); and the U.S. Post Office (1931). Kemmer Construction was the contractor for the Mars Theater; Scholer likely had a good working relationship with them. Scholer's designs were always traditional, solid, well-executed, and practical. Of his educational buildings, of course, many remain at nearby Purdue, but nearly all have been altered in plan. Morton School is perhaps his most intact educational building commission to survive, and it has all of the hallmarks of his work.

Walter Scholer, Jr. followed in his father's footsteps, and firm became Scholer and Associates in 1945. Walter, Sr. retired from practice in 1968, after more than four decades of work. He was registered architect

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Morton School, Tippecanoe County, Indiana

#13 under the Indiana Architectural Registration and Licensing Law of 1929. He died in 1972, but the descendent firm of Scholer Corporation still practices in Lafayette and maintains an excellent record of Walter, Sr.'s achievements.

Section 9-Bibliography

Floyd, William M. *A Vision of the Past, History of the West Lafayette Schools*. West Lafayette, unknown publisher, 1976.

Minutes of the School Trustees of West Lafayette, Indiana. Book 4.

"Morton School Draws Throngs," *Unknown paper* (likely the *Lafayette Journal and Courier*), February 1930 (Pasted in *Minutes* Book 4, February 19, 1930).

"Notice to Builders and Contractors," *Unknown paper* (likely the *Lafayette Journal and Courier*), August 16, 1929. (Legal notice for sealed bids for Morton School construction)

Scholer Corporation. "Biographical Data - Walter Scholer, Architect" (unpublished fact sheet, judging from content, written c.1970).

----. *Commission Book*. (A list of commissions by Walter Scholer and successor firms). Collection of Scholer Corporation, Lafayette, Indiana.

----. "Walter Scholer, Sr., FAIA, 1890-1972" (unpublished fact sheet)

"Walter Scholer, Sr. (Obituary)" *Lafayette Journal and Courier*, January 30, 1972, p. A-6.

State of Indiana. *Report of the Department of Public Instruction of the State of Indiana*. Published variously. 1897-1930.

Section 10-Geographical Data-Verbal Boundary Description

A parcel of land in West Lafayette, Indiana, bound by the south curblin of North Street on the north, the north curblin of Columbia Street on the south, the east curblin of Chauncey Street on the west, and the west curblin of Salisbury on the east.

Boundary Justification

This is the parcel of land bought to build the school.