

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 Chesterton Commercial Historic District

other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 109-193 N. Calumet Rd and 130-134 N. Calumet Rd. N/A not for publication

city or town Chesterton N/A vicinity

state Indiana code IN county Porter code 127 zip code 46304

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]
Signature of certifying official/Title

7/26/99
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

Name of Property

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

Table with 3 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing, and Resource Type (buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total). Values: 15, 2, 0, 0, 0, 0, 15, 2.

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

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: Business, Professional, Financial Institution, Specialty Store, Department Store, GOVERNMENT: City Hall

COMMERCE/TRADE: Business, Professional, Financial Institution, Specialty Store, Restaurant

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate, Romanesque, 19th & 20th c. AMER.: Commercial Style, OTHER: Arts and Crafts

foundation: BRICK, walls: BRICK, STONE: Limestone, roof: ASPHALT, other: TERRA COTTA

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE
ARCHITECTURE
POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

c.1895-1949

Significant Dates

1902

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Unkown

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 #

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

Westchester Township Public Library

Chesterton Commercial Historic District
Name of Property

Porter IN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 3.15

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

16	495600	4806340
Zone	Easting	Northing

3

16	495730	4806220
Zone	Easting	Northing

2

16	495400	4806350
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4

16	495600	4806220
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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 Jim Morrow and Beverly Overmyer
organization Heritage Society of Northwest Indiana, Inc. date 06-25-98
street & number PO Box 508 telephone (219)926-3669
city or town Chesterton state IN zip code 46304

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 various
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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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Section number 7 Page 1 *Chesterton Commercial Historic District, Porter Co., IN*

Section 7- Description

Chesterton is a small town in the Calumet Region of Indiana, positioned roughly half way between Gary and Michigan City. The terrain is mostly flat, being former scrub dunes and prairie transformed into level terrain by years of settlement. The downtown area is level, however, the lots on the east side of Calumet Street sharply fall away to Coffee Creek, down perhaps thirty feet, so that the rear elevations of these buildings have an at-grade basement level. The alley, Lois Lane, is parallel to Calumet but about thirty feet below it. This fact is not discernable from the front of the buildings. Lake Michigan is about two miles north of the historic downtown of Chesterton.

The district is a cluster of seventeen brick buildings dating mostly from about 1902 to 1915, centered on the main transportation routes of the area, the Valparaiso-Michigan City Road (today known as Calumet Road) and the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railroad. The grid plat of the town is skewed to follow the railroad which runs west/northwest to east/southeast, linking this part of the Calumet with Chicago. Calumet Road, however, roughly follows Coffee Creek and predated the plat, therefore, it runs north/northwest. The buildings on the east side of Calumet face slightly southwest. One building on the west side of Calumet (#2) is flat-iron shaped and the other south of it is rhomboidal because of the skewed plat. The freight and passenger depots were across the street from the Calumet Road commercial buildings. Both survive; the passenger depot was recently placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

Stylistically, most of the buildings are vernacular commercial buildings; they front close to the street, have ground floor storefronts, second floor apartments, and flat or shed roofs masked by a decorative parapet. Few have enough style elements to be classified into one or another category, however, most of the buildings pay deference to existing popular styles of the day, including Italianate, Romanesque Revival and Neo-Classical Revival. Modest features in the craft details of the buildings were used to refer to these popular styles. The cohesiveness of the district owes to the fact that Chesterton merchants rebuilt most of their shops following a disastrous fire in 1902. The local brickyards in Porter and Chesterton likely provided the brick and simple terra cotta detailing for the buildings, which also contributes to the cohesiveness of the district. Most buildings are two stories high but a few are one story buildings.

The following is an inventory of the contributing and non-contributing buildings and items in the district. Non-contributing buildings were either built after the period of significance or have been altered so that few traces of their historic nature remain intact. In one case, it is possible that the building remains intact under a later facade treatment. Contributing buildings are part of the historic and architectural development of downtown Chesterton. They possess compatible design elements and maintain the scale, use and texture of the district.

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Numbers refer to building numbers on map. All buildings are contributing unless otherwise noted.

North Calumet Road (West side)

1. 132-134 North Calumet Road, c. 1905, Photograph 1.

The local Odd Fellows chapter purchased this site in about 1910, razed the existing original wood frame building, and ordered the construction of this brick and stone trimmed building. While of no style in particular, the oriel bay, cornice work, and heavy window lintels give the building a modest Neo-Classical Revival influence. The building footprint is rhomboidal because of the skewed plat of the town. The lodge used the upper floors of the building and various shopkeepers rented the ground floor. The wooden storefront configuration of large windows with wood frames and a recessed entry with wood single light door seems to be the original layout. The central and corner piers of brick banded with stone divide the storefront in halves. The south entry leads to a stairs to the upper floor. Taking advantage of the unusual lot, the storefront wraps around to the north side of the building with a single window to catch the eye of pedestrians up the street. The upper floor is hard fired dark brown face brick. The upper floor windows are one-over-one double hung windows with stone sills and lintels. Over the north half storefront, the second floor has a rectangular oriel window with simple classical ornamentation, and a double window to the front and narrow windows on the sides. The cornice has brick corbels at two points and a table of alternately recessed bricks, creating the impression of dentils. A stone coping caps the parapet, which crow steps down to the west or rear of the building. Datagraphic Printing is housed in the building.

2. 130 North Calumet Road or 101 Broadway, c.1895, Photograph 2.

In 1888, Elias Thomas built a brick building on this site. In 1898, the store was likely rebuilt in its present form by Myron and Harry Smith who operated a general dry goods store called M. Smith and Son. His son Harry operated the store until his death in 1961, at which time Harry's son Richard continued the business until 1973.

This building has a flat-iron shape and the entry bay wall and second floor above is chamfered. The chamfered face of the storefront has double leaf wood doors with a wood transom above. The lintel over the doorway is segmental arch shaped and has scroll shaped corner blocks supporting it. The brick corner piers flanking the door have stone banding. Steel or iron I-beam lintels with rosettes span the tops of the side storefronts which have wood framed large windows and transoms. The flank of the building along Calumet Road has a row of small multi-pane windows set high on the wall. Each has a stone sill and segmental arched, multi-coursed arches top each square headed window. A double row of sawtooth-laid brick link the window arches. On the second floor, full size one-over-one double hungs march along the Calumet Road side, each with a stone sill and sawtooth coursing linking the sills and arches. The arches on the second floor are header multi-coursed with a projecting extrados course forming a hood. The north elevation facing Broadway has a double window on the second floor with a single broad arch over both windows. The sheet metal cornice has only two brackets, one at each end of the building. Decorative balusters with finials stand

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atop the entrance chamfered bay and the end of the building facing Calumet. The building is now an antiques store.

North Calumet Road (East side)

3. 193 North Calumet Road, c.1905, Photograph 3

The *Chesterton Tribune* commissioned construction of this building in 1904 and it continues to serve as the paper's headquarters. Arthur Bowser first published the paper in 1884 and he owned the paper when the decision was made to build this structure. It is a two story brick commercial building. The ground floor storefront has been altered; stucco (or perhaps sto) covers the kick panels and piers. A old-fashioned style simple cloth awning covers the storefront. The original steel or iron I-beam spanning the ground floor remains intact along with the decorative rosettes. The red brick walls rise above the I-beam and three windows puncture the wall, each with dressed stone sills and lintels. Centered over the windows, a stone tablet reads "The Chesterton Tribune" in Times Roman or Courier style typeface. The elaborate parapet gives the building a slight Romanesque Revival style flavor. First, a beltcourse of sawtooth-laid brick runs across, then a frieze of alternating recessed single bricks. The raised brick corbels dividing the upper parapet into four panels mimic machicolations, with infilling of progressively corbeled courses of brick.

193 North Calumet remained the home of the *Tribune* through the years. J.G. Graessle bought the paper from Bowser in 1923, Warren Canright purchased it in 1928, and held the paper until his death in 1975. His son Warren and grandson David continue to publish the *Tribune* out of the building. The *Tribune* is the oldest existing business in Chesterton, and still publishes daily except for Sundays.

4. 139-141 North Calumet Road, 1903, Photograph 4

The Smith Block was constructed in 1903. The first floor housed various businesses while the Knights of Pythias Lodge used the second floor as their meeting hall from 1903 until 1968. The local Knights of Columbus lodge has occupied the space since 1969. The first floor storefront seems to be a c. 1950 remodeling, utilizing aluminum and glass doors and muntins to hold the large plate glass shop windows. It seems that the recessed central entry configuration was retained from the original storefront design, due to the placement of the structural columns. The storefront end piers of brick and stone are original. The second floor tan face brick walls have an Arts and Crafts feeling, especially in the use of the central Chicago window. It is flanked by double hung one-over-one units. The parapet area has three recessed brick panels with stone corner tabs, the center panel has a stone tablet with raised letters spelling "SMITH BLOCK" in a simple sans-serif typeface. A table of stone corbels runs across above the panels. The rest of the parapet is plain brick. Bulletes Hair Salon current occupies the ground floor.

5. 137A North Calumet Road, c.1905, Photograph 5

This building was constructed to replace one of those lost in the 1902 fire. The ground floor has been altered

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with residential style windows and wood siding, however, the location of the entries seems to be correct to the original design. The upper floor has three windows, each having rock-faced stone lintels and sills. The cornice has a few simple flourishes; first comes a belt course of red terra cotta blocks with bulls-eyes cast into them, then a course of cyma reversa-molded brick topped by a rock-faced coping. Attorney Jeanne Blumenthal & Associates recently occupied the building.

6. 137B North Calumet Road, c. 1905, Photograph 6

This diminutive one story shop was home to a barber shop until the 1960s. The wooden storefront seems to be original, with recessed kick panels below a large wood framed window, and the recessed entrance set to the north with single light wood door. The metal awning is likely from the 1950s. The face brick walls have two double recessed panels on the parapet and a stone coping. A craft shop now uses the building.

7. 135 North Calumet Road, c.1900, Photograph 7

The Hoham Block is a two story brick and stone commercial building. In 1903, Bennett Morgan constructed this building as a hardware store. He and his son Robert operated the store until Bennett died in 1974. The double recessed entrance storefront seems to have some original features and others dating from perhaps the 1930s. The iron corner piers are original, the doorways appear to be original, but the metal framing and edging for the shop windows seems to be a Moderne style replacement. The upper floor face brick walls have two bays, one wood double hung window with stone sill and lintel, and an oriel window. The semi-hexagonal bay has pressed metal kick panels and entablature, both have Classical swag and floral motifs. A stone tablet with raised letters spelling "HOHAM BLOCK" is centered over the window and oriel. The cornice has a lower sawtooth course of brick, a run of alternately recessed brick, fake machicolations, and a three course corbel table with stone coping. The sides of the building always stood above its neighbors and have several operable windows. Country Loft Crafts occupies this store currently.

8. 133 North Calumet Road, c.1940, Photograph 8

Now occupied by Edward Jones & Co., an investments broker, this one story simple shop was once used by neighboring Morgan Hardware. It has a c. 1940 inwardly angled shop front with aluminum and glass central door framed by brick end piers. The parapet wall is plain face brick with dressed stone coping.

9. Non-contributing - 131 North Calumet Road, c.1935, Photograph 9

After the 1902 fire, this site lay vacant until 1935, when Walter Baur built this store. The building has been completely covered in wood siding and is non-contributing, however, it may retain original brick detailing underneath the later materials. Wings and Things Hobby Shop currently uses this building.

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10. 129 North Calumet Road, 1903, Photograph 10

A local butcher rebuilt on this site after the 1902 fire, and used this building until the 1940s. In its craft details and original intent, this building is virtually the same as 137 A North Calumet (#5). Only the alterations make it significantly different; the wood and aluminum storefronts and doors, and the single pane windows installed on the second floor. Otherwise, it has the same distinctive cornice treatment.

11. 127 North Calumet Road, 1902, Photograph 11

Hess Restuarant and Hotel used this building from 1902 until 1920. From 1920 until recent years, Johnson Grocery Store occupied the building. Anton Insurance company now utilizes this building and the neighboring block at 129 Calumet. 127 is a two story, three bay commercial block. The first story shop front was remodeled in c.1950. The front is angled inward in a single plane, with two shop windows to the south and a double entry to the north. The kick panel area is brick and the doors and windows are framed in brushed natural metal (likely aluminum). The insurance company added the rigid curved awning. The second floor has three windows with stone sills and lintels. The cornice has false machicolations and corbeled brick courses.

12. 125 North Calumet Road, 1903, Photograph 12

The same craftsman responsible for the masonry work on 129 and 137 Calumet may have built the cornice treatment for 125, since the same bulls-eye terra cotta block and cyma-reversa molded brick work links all three buildings visually. The building at 125 is different from the other two in that it is only a one story building. The owners of Flannery's Tavern remodeled the storefront significantly in the 1940s or 50s with large banks of glass block, fixed picture windows and a metal awning. The upper parapet section of brick has been painted, and the neon sign is likely from the 1950s. The cornice has been painted also. A saloon stood here as early as the 1880s. After the fire of 1902, the owners rebuilt a saloon on this site. From 1910 to 1915, Jeffrey's Motion Pictures (only silent films at the time) was located here. A pool hall used the building from about 1915 until the mid 1930s, when Flannery's Tavern opened. Flannery's still owns and occupies the building.

13. 123 North Calumet Road, Photograph 13

This one story brick building was one of few to withstand the devastating fire of 1902. It was built as Lowenstine Clothing Store in 1898 and purchased by Charles A. Smith about 1908, when Lowenstine moved to Valparaiso. Charles A. Smith and his wife Oral operated the clothing store until the early 1960s when it was sold to Falvey's Men's Store. It is now jointly occupied by Frank's Shoe Repair and Chicago Title Insurance Company and Anderson Barber Shop. The storefront seems to date from the 1950s or 1960s (the gazebo-like form on the front in actually part of the contemporary awning). The upper walls of brick are original. A distinctive lozenge fret beltcourse of terra cotta runs beneath the corbeled parapet of false

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machicolations with rough stone coping.

14. 119 North Calumet Road, Photograph 14

This two story brick commercial block is larger than most of the other stores on Calumet, having an extra bay of width (four bays across the second floor instead of three or two). H.F. Carlson built this block in 1903, and ran his general store here until 1907. In that year, Joseph Heward opened a drug store in the building and his business continued in operation until the 1970s. Subsequent owners remodeled the building into the current Main Street Arcade, a multi-use building with several small shops and stores on both floors. The basic storefront design of a central recessed double leaf doorway with flanking transomed shop windows remains, however, the doors and other elements have been replaced with metal and glass units. The upper floor has four symmetrically placed double hung windows with "New Orleans" style balconies added in front of each. The upper parapet contains most of the elaborations of other Calumet Road buildings; sawtooth brick belt coursing, false machicolations, and corbeled brick panels.

15. 117 North Calumet Road, Photograph 15

Chesterton residents knew this block as the Kreger Building when it was built in 1903. The first uses were a saloon on the first floor and offices on the second floor. The owners of Leonard's Restaurant altered the storefront some time in the 1960s, judging from the nature of the materials used. The pilasters next to the side door are part of the original storefront, but wood siding, signage, and new windows comprise the rest of the ground floor. The second floor has simple classical detail. Each window bay is set within a recessed panel, flanking pilaster strips give the facade a portico-like effect. The top of each window panel corbels out to the plane of the rest of the facade and that of the pilasters. Each window has a dressed stone sill and lintel and a blind transom panel (possibly a replacement for transom windows). The sheet metal entablature has a plain frieze with paterae. The cornice is supported on a course of dentils and a course of modillions. A brick parapet completes the building. Because the neighboring building was not rebuilt until the 1960s, the north side of 117 has several historic painted signs and a few randomly placed double hung windows.

16. Non-contributing - 111 North Calumet Road, Photograph 16

Malcolm Anderson, attorney, became the first to rebuild on this site after the fire of 1902, when he commissioned this one story Modern office in 1960. Local lore has it that the fire began in a building on this site. A typical small scale Modern style office design, the building does not contribute to the history of the district at this point in time.

17. 109 North Calumet Road, Photograph 17

The Chesterton town leaders decided to build town hall on this site following the fire. The first floor had a vehicular bay for the fire department, now a storefront of metal of glass, and a segmental arched door with transom (which remains intact). The pent roof, asphalt shingle covered roof over the first floor was added

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after about 1970. The second floor housed city offices and a meeting hall. A double window with continuous rock-faced lintel and sill stands centered in the wall. Single windows flank the double units. Over the central windows, a stone tablet is set into the wall. The tablet has raised letters reading "CITY HALL" in a half-arc over the date "1902". The sheet metal entablature has simple classical detail, a plain frieze of paterae and a full cornice. The parapet has raised corner piers and a rock-faced stone coping. In the 1960s, Chesterton officials built a new city hall just outside the old downtown. This building is now home to art galleries and studio space.

18. Plaque in Sidewalk, 1952, Photograph 18

This plaque was placed in 1952 to commemorate the centennial of the founding of Chesterton. It refers to a publicity event held in that year. The plaque is not counted because of its small scale but it does add to the sense of place of the district.

19. U.S.G.S. benchmark, placed 1946, Photograph 19

Benchmark is attached to the old City Hall Building (#17 above). It is not counted since it is essentially part of the building.

Section 8 - Statement of Significance

The Calumet Road strip of 14 commercial buildings in Chesterton, Indiana, exemplifies the development of small rail towns in Northern Indiana. As an intact commercial core of a rail town, downtown Chesterton illustrates the relationship of transportation to commerce. The buildings also have architectural significance since they embody the characteristics of typical small town commercial blocks of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The Chesterton Commercial Historic District meets National Register criteria A and C in the areas of commerce and architecture for these reasons.

Chesterton was previously known as Thomas Mill, Coffee Creek and Calumet. The roots of the present historic commercial core of Chesterton extend back to the beginnings of the community. William Thomas established the Thomas Inn at the corner of present-day Calumet and Morgan in 1833 to serve travelers on the Michigan City - Valparaiso Road (long since demolished). Settlers created a village named Coffee Creek in 1833, and in 1852 when the Lake Shore and Michigan Railroad built tracks nearby, land owners began to gradually move the village closer to the tracks. The railroad built a freight and a passenger depot just west of where the tracks crossed Michigan City - Valparaiso Road (later called Calumet Road). The railroad's choice of such a strategically important location served to reinforce the two blocks south of the tracks as an important commercial center. The first plat in the commercial district dates from the same year as the arrival of the railroad, 1852. In 1869, the village decided to change names to Chesterton (instead of Coffee Creek and Calumet, two previously used names).

Industries contributed to the success of the area, and provided a market for local commerce. The nearby village

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of Porter was becoming an industrial center; in the 1880s, eight brickyards were manufacturing products and soon the Chicago Hydraulic Brick Company established a factory in town. Hitcheloff Brick Company, Purington Yard, and Anderson's Brick Yard were other prominent brick makers. By 1882, 50 million bricks per year were being made in the area's yards. Porter brickyards were a major supplier to the growing Chicago construction market until the turn of the century, when dwindling clay deposits and other suppliers gradually put the Porter yards out of business.

The Chesterton Tribune was established in the 1880s and actively promoted the town's commercial and residential interests. The downtown area was filled with general stores and shops to serve travelers and residents. Seventeen saloons stood downtown. One building in the district survives from this decade, the Smith Building at 101 Broadway / 130 Calumet. It was built in 1888, after a large fire in 1887 destroyed the commercial area west of Calumet.

In the 1890s, Chesterton was a center for commerce and industry. The town could boast the Hillstorm Organ Company with more than 125 employees, the Vienna Enameling and Stamping Company, the American Brass Works plant, and a number of smaller concerns. A nation-wide economic panic in 1893 affected Chesterton, as several key industries failed. Eventually, two of the factories reopened, and two other important industries came to town, the Daniel Webster Rattan Chair Company and the Warren Featherbone Company, makers of corsets and collar stays from turkey feathers. The town incorporated in 1899, an earlier attempt to incorporate in 1878 failed due to lack of a tax base.

By 1900, the downtown was crowded with a hodge-podge of mostly wood frame commercial blocks that had sprung up along Calumet Road and Broadway. As with many small towns in Indiana, Chesterton was ill-prepared to deal with the dangerous combination of closely spaced buildings of wood construction, stores of flammable wares, typical 19th century heating systems, and disorganized fire protection. On April 6, 1902, a fire raged along Calumet Road, destroying scores of buildings and nearly leveling the downtown. Eleven buildings and contents were lost in all, including a feed store, bakery, theater, hotel, meat market, hardware and paint store, general store, three saloons, the town hall, newspaper office, pool hall, grocery, harness shop and livery. On Calumet, only Charlie's Department Store (101 Broadway) remained standing along another wood frame shop which was later replaced with the current building at 132-134 Calumet by Odd Fellows Lodge. A 1984 issue of the *Chesterton Tribune* called the fire "the worst disaster in the history of the town."

Within two years, merchants rebuilt most of the downtown with sturdy brick buildings. It is possible that a relatively small group of craftsmen and "architects" were responsible for most of the new buildings. The similarity of the brick work on many buildings would seem to confirm this. Some of the details were possibly manufactured locally in the brickyards. The cyma-reversa molded brick and decorative terra cotta blocks on several buildings may be examples of locally made building products. The *Chesterton Retail Merchants Directory* for the c.1900 time period lists several lumber yards, hardware stores, builders and contractors. Carpenters (builders and contractors) listed in the directory were James Adams, George Bundy, a Mr. Dille, Christopher Lembke, and Alexander Watt. The Foster Lumber Company could provide

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contracting and building services as well as lumber and building materials, according to the directory. The Ameling family are listed as contractors and builders, Joseph as a contractor, Henry and Edward as carpenters. It seems probable that they rebuilt their own saloon building at 125 Calumet after the fire. It was among the very first stores to be rebuilt. Christopher Lembke was the masonry contractor for the impressive Brown mansion in Chesterton in 1885; he was still active fifteen years later according to the directory, but one can only guess that he worked on some of the buildings.

Aside from these circumstantial facts, no information exists at this time on the architects or builders of the new brick stores in Chesterton. The only local paper, the *Chesterton Tribune*, does not mention any contractors for the new buildings in the few years following the fire. The paper simply stated that the new buildings "brought modernity and beauty to our business district."

Chesterton's downtown prospered well into the 20th century. The railroad, now adsorbed by the New York Central, rebuilt its passenger and freight depots in 1914, reaffirming Chesterton as a rail center. New industries came to town in the first two decades of the twentieth century. The Sall Mountain Asbestos Company, the Chicago Flint and Lime Glass Company, the Chesterton China Works, the Bell Foundry, Reid Murdock Pickle Factory, Gary Chemical Company, J.H. Ameling Planing Mill, a shoe factory, cattle yards, grain elevator, washing machine company, concrete block factory, and a broom factory all settled in town. As rail traffic declined, Chesterton still had its road transportation link -- the old Michigan City - Valparaiso Road. Auto traffic on the road probably helped Chesterton's businesses remain viable during the lean times of the 30s and early 40s. Chesterton's proximity to the Chicago market meant that rail traffic on the old New York Central line (Amtrak) remains viable today, although stops in Chesterton ceased sometime after 1960.

Chesterton's downtown is the best example of a small railroad town commercial center in Porter County. This phenomenon is found in many parts of northern Indiana, since many of the northern counties developed relatively late in Indiana's history. As the initial rail lines crossed toward Chicago in the 1850s, small villages sprang up along them at refueling or watering points. As rail technology changed, some stops were no longer necessary and the towns faltered, while others gained. Kosciusko County has several intact small rail towns founded in the mid-19th century that exemplify this trend. Those towns with an advantage over others grew into cities. For example, the county commissioners chose Valparaiso as the county seat, and, multiple rail lines met there. Valparaiso developed into a larger market city as a result. Nearby Michigan City (LaPorte County) had the advantages of rail lines to Chicago, a early permanent road to Indianapolis, and a port on Lake Michigan.

Tiny Chesterton did not have these assests, but, the town did have a secondary stop on the Lake Shore and Michigan Southern Railroad, and a strategic location on the Michigan City - Valparaiso Road. Because of the quality and concentration of historic buildings in the downtown, Chesterton was the only small town rail center recommended for nomination to the National Register in the Porter County Interim Report. The adjacent town of Porter once had a similar business district to Chesterton, however, it never developed to the extent of Chesterton's downtown. Because of the loss of many buildings, surveyors did not recommend Porter as a district. Valparaiso, as discussed, developed into a city centered on the courthouse square. The

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square and surrounding commercial buildings are listed on the Register. In Chesterton, the best example of a small railroad town commercial core in Porter County remains almost intact.

Section 9 -Bibliography

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Section 10 - Geographical Data-Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at the southeast corner of Broadway and Calumet Road at the point where a line drawn along the south curb of Broadway would meet the east curb of Calumet; thence north along the east curb line of Calumet Road to the south edge of Lois Lane; thence east along the south edge of Lois Lane, following as it curves south, following the south edge of Lois Lane as it becomes the west edge of Lois Lane, and follow south to the south property line of 193 N. Calumet, thence west along the south property line of 193 N. Calumet to the east curb line of Calumet Road, thence north along the east curb of Calumet to a point in line

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with the south property line of 132-134 Calumet Road, thence west along said imaginary line across Calumet, continuing to follow the south property line of 132-134 Calumet to the west boundary of the same property, thence north along the west property lines of 132-134 Calumet and 130 Calumet/101 Broadway to the south curb line of Broadway, thence following said curb line east and in a straight line proceeding to the east curb line of Calumet Road, the point of origin.

Boundary Justification

The district as defined includes the most significant and intact collection of commercial buildings in the downtown. Intrusions along Broadway prevent the district from extending further west, and no other significant concentrations of buildings exist to the north or south. Coffee Creek borders the district on the east. The district was identified in the 1991 Porter County Interim Report.

Photographs

All photos of the Chesterton Commercial Historic District, Porter Co., IN were taken by Don Swoverland, 846 CR 75 West, Valparaiso, IN 46383, in December of 1997. The negatives are on file with Mr. Swoverland, 219-926-2665.

photograph number / view / description

1. 132-134 N. Calumet, camera looking SW, Datagraphic Printing
2. 130 N. Calumet / 101 Broadway, camera looking SW, 101 Antiques
3. 193 N. Calumet camera looking E, Chesterton Tribune
4. 139-141 N. Calumet, camera looking E, Bulletes Hair Salon
5. 137A N. Calumet, camera looking E, Blumenthal, attorney
6. 137B N. Calumet, camera looking NE, old barber shop, now Craft Shop
7. 135 N. Calumet, camera looking E/SE, Hoham Block, Country Loft Crafts
8. 133 N. Calumet, camera looking N, Edward Jones Investments
9. 131 N. Calumet, camera looking E, Wings and Things Hobbies
10. 129 N. Calumet, camera looking E, Anton Insurance
11. 127 N. Calumet, camera looking E, north section of Anton Insurance
12. 125 N. Calumet, camera looking E, Flannery's Tavern
13. 123 N. Calumet, camera looking E, Anderson Barber Shop, Frank's Shoe Repair, Chicago Title
14. 119 N. Calumet, camera looking E, Main St. Arcade
15. 117 N. Calumet, camera looking E, Leonard's Restaurant
16. 111 N. Calumet, camera looking E, Attorney's office
17. 109 N. Calumet, camera looking E, old City Hall, now Coffee Creek Studios
18. Plaque on sidewalk
19. Camera facing E, benchmark on old City Hall
20. Streetscape along Calumet Road, camera facing NE
21. Streetscape along Calumet Road, camera facing SE

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