

FINAL

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name First Congregational Church of Michigan City  
other names/site number 091-406-21055

2. Location

street & number 531 Washington Street N/A  not for publication  
city or town Michigan City N/A  vicinity  
state Indiana code IN county LaPorte code 0911 zip code 46360

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 C. Est Date 10-25-01  
State or Federal agency and bureau Indiana D-SHPO

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
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain:)	_____	_____

**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)		
		Contributing	Noncontributing	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building	1	0	buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	0		sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	0	0	structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	0	0	objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	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)	Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)
RELIGION: Religious Facility	RELIGION: Religious Facility
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)	Materials (Enter categories from instructions)
LATE VICTORIAN: Romanesque	foundation STONE: Limestone
19th & 20th c. REVIVALS: Tudor Revival	walls BRICK
OTHER: Akron Plan	roof STONE: Slate
_____	other _____
_____	_____

**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.)

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1881-1909

**Significant Dates**

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Watkins & Hidden

Mahurin & Mahurin

Koehn, Henry J., contractor

**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:

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

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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 George Dobie, Terry Baxter-Potter, and Paul Diebold

organization (Dobie) Trustee, 1st Congregational Church date 08-10-2000

street & number 5911 East 1000 North telephone (219) 778-9802

city or town La Porte state IN zip code 46350

**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 First Congregational Church of Michigan City

street & number 531 Washington Street telephone (219) 874-8127

city or town Michigan City state IN zip code 46360

**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 Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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The First Congregational Church is located in the downtown area of Michigan City, Indiana. It is sited on the northwest corner of Sixth and Washington Streets. The church was constructed in 1880-1881 at a cost of \$12,886.58 and dedicated on April 28, 1881. It is the second oldest church building in Michigan City. It is classified as a late-nineteenth century, Romanesque Revival building. A fire destroyed the entire interior of the church in November of 1907 leaving only the steeple, tower, chimneys, and walls standing intact. The church was rebuilt in 1908-1909 at a cost of \$17,268.15. There is a basement level, main sanctuary level, and a second floor level consisting of two classrooms. The sanctuary plan is oriented east/west with the chancel on the west end. The entrance into the sanctuary is located on the southeast corner of the church. The exterior walls are composed of limestone and brick. The gable roof is slate and has a 12 to 12 slope. There appear to have been only minor exterior and interior changes to the church since 1909. There is sidewalk on the east and south sides of the property. To the north and west are residential houses.

The east façade is considered to be the main façade of the church (refer to photograph 1). It has a base of rough-cut limestone to 3'-8" high and is topped with a smooth limestone band, 8" high. The base course has double-hung windows, with clear glass, to allow natural light into the basement areas (refer to photograph 2). The wall above this band is buff colored brick laid in a Common bond. This construction is typical on all four faces of the church. At most of the corners there are buttresses with angled stone caps (refer to photograph 3). The entry, shown here, is used for access to the church office that is located in the basement. The top of the wall, just below the gutters, is very detailed. Approximately two feet below the eave, three courses of brick is laid in a stretcher bond. The next higher course projects one inch beyond the lower course. Two courses above this begins a series of brick corbels about every eight inches horizontally. These corbels are four courses high. As the buttresses soar up the walls they break up the corbel table.

All the smaller window openings (2'-3" wide by 8'-8" high) have pointed arches. The arches are formed of two courses of brick in a rowlock pattern. The large window (8'-6" wide by 18'-5" high) is framed with a rounded arch. The large arch is formed of three courses of brick in a rowlock pattern. Stained glass is used in the windows. The stained glass windows were added in the 1908-1909 rebuilding of the church. For the most part geometric patterns are used although the stained glass in some windows form a cross.

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There is a significant amount of relief on the gabled end of the church, all part of the original 1880s construction (refer to photograph 6). The brick bay around the large window is set 8" out from the main wall surface. The brick steps out in a series of two corbels of approximately 4" each. Under the eave line, as the wall marches up to the peak, is a raking corbel table about 12" wide. The corbels start at the buttress at the edge of the wall. The buttress projects approximately 12" in front of the main wall face and is in the same plan as the brick under the eave. As the brick steps down to the main wall plane each series consists of several corbels. The first two courses corbel in 2". The next three courses corbel in 2" as one unit. The next two courses corbel in 2" as a unit also. The bottom two courses corbel in 2" each and step over 4". The shadows created on the wall, by this pattern, are very interesting.

Underneath the large window are three brick panels that are recessed approximately two inches. The top two courses of these panels are corbeled out one inch each creating a pleasing shadow line. There are similar panels above the large window. Above the upper panels is a circular window approximately 3'-6" in diameter (refer to photograph 6). It is banded with three courses of brick laid in rowlocks.

The main entry of the church is located at the southeast corner of the building and faces Washington Street to the east (refer to photographs 7 and 8). This small open recessed entry appears to be an early 20<sup>th</sup> century addition. There are seven concrete steps from the sidewalk up to the entry porch and one more step up to the doors into the church. A broad Tudor arch in coined stone frames the steps. The south face of the entrance has a similar arch. The parapet has stylized stone crenellation work. The flat roof over the porch appears to have originally been drained by a scupper on the south side (refer to photograph 12). However, a roof drain was added at some later time requiring the use of the downspout visible to the right of the arch.

There is a second entrance located at the north end of the east façade. There is a sidewalk and three steps leading to this entrance. The doors are solid wood with raised panels and a shallow arched window. The glazing in the window is stained glass. The doors are stained to a deep brown. Above the doors is a rectangular transom over which is a pointed arch transom. The glazing in the transoms is stained glass. The stained glass in the pointed arch transom is a chalice motif.

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The south façade faces Sixth Street (refer to photograph 9). The base is composed of rough-cut limestone to 3'-8" high and topped with a smooth limestone band, 8" high. The wall above this band is brick laid in a Common bond. The corners have buttresses. These projections are capped with smooth limestone. All the smaller window openings have pointed arches. The one large window opening into the sanctuary forms a rounded arch. Underneath the windows are three brick panels that are recessed approximately two inches. The top two courses in the panel project out one inch. The effect creates a pleasing shadow line. The top of the wall, just below the gutters, is very detailed. Approximately two feet below the eave the wall begins the first of three corbel projections of one inch each. The gabled end of the sanctuary is even more detailed (refer to photograph 10). The brick is corbelled out a total of six, two inch, increments. It appears that some brick repair work was done at the top of the westernmost section of the south elevation. There is a new wood stair which provides exiting out of the chancel.

The most prominent feature on the south façade is the bell tower (refer to photograph 11). It is constructed with the same materials as the rest of the building. The lintels over the openings in the bell tower are formed with limestone in the shape of a pointed arch. It appears that two of the rounded arches may have been reworked slightly since the original pointed arch construction (refer to photograph 4).

There are buttresses, capped with limestone, on the southeast and southwest corners of the bell tower. A brick pilaster continues above the buttress and at the northeast and northwest corners (refer to photograph 13). Above the second window is a course of brick that corbels out 1". The brick course above that is composed of rowlocks set at a 45 degree angle with the horizontal plane. Several courses above this begin two corbel projections, 16" wide, which begin to frame the highest opening. Recessed in these projections is the shape of a cross. The louvers in the opening are a source of venting for the spire. The opening is finished off with a pointed arch and capped with a gable that breaks up the line of the cornice. These occur on all four sides. A wonderful corbel cornice, about 5 courses high and 6" wide, caps the termination of the wall under the eave.

The broached spire of the bell tower is very steep. There is a change in pitch to the roof approximately 6'-0" above the eave. The slate on the roof is composed of alternating sections of rectangular and hexagonal shaped pieces.

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The west façade has the least amount of detail when compared with the other three façades. It is here that the two additions are located. This is the outside wall of the chancel. In 1908-1909 the area behind the organ was extended 8'-0" to the west to accommodate the Roosevelt pipe organ. The roof over the organ was raised by 13'-0". The brick color in this area is slightly different from the rest of the brick. The limestone base is left off of this addition. Also, the brick detailing under the eaves, that is so prominent on the rest of the building, has been omitted from this area. There are small arched windows (2'-6" wide by 7'-5" high) on either side of the chancel and these are the extent of the fenestration on this elevation. There is one little storage room sited on the northwest corner of the building that was added after 1909. This storage room is the only other known addition. It is the only part of the structure that is built with concrete blocks. There is a gas meter located on the west elevation just around the corner from the storage room.

Similar to the west façade, the north façade has very little detail (refer to photograph 14). As there is on the east and south, the base is composed of rough-cut limestone to 3'-8" high and topped with a smooth limestone band, 8" high. The wall above this band is brick laid in a Common bond. All the smaller windows have pointed arched openings formed of brick and have limestone sills. The large window opening into the sanctuary is a rounded brick arch and also has a limestone sill. One interesting feature is the 8'-6" diameter rose window which provides natural light for the north stairs between the second floor and the basement. This gabled end also has the same brickwork near the eave associated with the other prominent gabled ends on the east and south elevations (refer to photograph 5).

Moving inside the church, via the main entry, one enters a small vestibule that is 13'-0" by 12'-8". The ceiling is acoustical tile. There is a steam radiator on the south wall. Stairs in the northwest corner lead into the basement and stairs in the southwest corner lead to the second floor. There is one stained glass window on the south wall of the vestibule. There are two sets of wood panel double doors to the north. One set (5'-6" wide by 7'-6" high) leads directly into the sanctuary. The other set (3'-8" wide by 7'-6" high) opens into the parlor. Each of these doors are glazed with one stained glass window that is similar to the stained glass in the exterior window (refer to photograph 15).

Entering the sanctuary, which is almost square in shape, the chancel is on the left or west end (refer to photograph 16). There is an eight foot deep alcove on both the north and south sides. These contain the large stained glass windows. The floor slopes down approximately 1'-0" from the back of the sanctuary to the chancel platform. There is carpet



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on the floors. There is a wood chair rail running level around the perimeter of the sanctuary. The height of this chair rail is 3'-8" above the finish floor as measured at the back of the sanctuary. The walls are plaster. The north/south walls have crown molding that is 15" to 18" high. The east/west walls have crown molding that is 6" high. There are two exposed steam radiator pipes on either side of the chancel plus six others around the sanctuary. Two are located next to the north/south doors, and two are located in each alcove.

In the center of the sanctuary ceiling is a round grill. Its purpose may be to act as a heat vent. It is trimmed with 24 lights that are suspended approximately 4'-0" from the ceiling. The lights are in the art deco style. There are two main wood beams running north and south with a ceiling fan located at the apex. At the base of the beams are ornate capitals (refer to photograph 17). Approximately 6'-0" out from the wall, near the base of the arch is a grouping of five lights similar to those in the center of the sanctuary ceiling. Directly under those are four of the six gas wall sconces of three lights each mounted approximately 6'-2" above the finish floor. These lights are no longer in use. In addition, there are two gas wall sconces flanking the chancel. There are secondary beams across each of the north/south alcoves. All four beams appear to be purely for decoration.

On the south wall of the chancel is a door to the outside. There is one double door (3'-8" wide by 7'-6" high) in the north wall (in the east corner) that leads to the north stairway. The doorway is recessed in the wall approximately 2". The opening is shaped into a shallow, pointed arch.

On the east wall are three large wood panel doors (12'-0" wide by 10'-0" high, refer to photograph 18) in an arched opening. At 7'-0" above the finish floor the doors have stained glass panels. These are pocket doors that, instead of sliding to either side, slide up into a pocket above the door. This seems to be an unusual arrangement for pocket doors. The doors are counterbalanced and can be raised or lowered easily by one person. The north door leads into a kitchen (refer to photograph 19). The other doors open into a narthex/meeting room/overflow space.

There are nine rows of pews in the center section with aisles on the ends. There are seven rows of pews in each of the outer sections. The rows are curved slightly. The ends of the pews have some minimal carving in the shape of a flower.

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The opening to the chancel is framed in a rounded arch. Centered within the chancel is the Roosevelt Organ. The chancel platform is raised up 2'-3" above the main sanctuary floor. Access to the chancel is via three sets of stairs (four risers each); one on each end and one in the center of the chancel. The handrail on all three stairs is a freestanding wrought iron handrail that seems out of place in such close proximity to all the stained woodwork.

Behind the chancel is the choir area. This is where the organ console is located. Access to this area is via two sets of stairs (three risers each) at the north and south ends. There is wood paneling separating the choir space from the chancel. The wood paneling is also on the back wall of the choir to a height of 9'-9". Above the paneling are 31 of the largest pipes. Two access doors into the pipe space are framed in the panels to hide them from view. There is a small/shallow closet on the north wall of the choir area. The walls of the pipe space are plaster on wood lath. The plaster appears to be in fairly good condition.

The floor of the parlor is carpeted. The walls are painted plaster and there is an acoustical ceiling tile system throughout the room (refer to photograph 20). The acoustical ceiling tile system is part of a remodeling project completed around 1986. It is placed below the top of the window. There are exposed radiator pipes centered under the windows on the east and south walls. The one exterior opening, on the east wall, contains a large stained glass window. The pattern in the glass window includes a stylized cross. There are two small arched windows on the south wall (refer to photograph 21). Around the entire room is a wood chair rail at 3'-4" above finished floor. There is a side pocket door 8'-0" wide by 10'-0" high on the north wall opening into the kitchen.

The kitchen has a small cooking area in the northeast corner of the room on the north wall. This includes a sink, range/stove, and a small refrigerator. The floor is 9" by 9" vinyl tile. There are two small arched windows on the east wall. A 36" wide by 7'-0" high door in the northwest corner of the room on the north wall leads into the north stairway.

The north stairway is a single run set against the north wall of the building. There is a wood handrail on the south side of the stairs. The north side of the stairs is a plain wall. The stairs do run right across a small arched window. It is possible this north stairway was added at some later time. It is in this stairway that the stained glass rose window is located. The window is approximately 8'-6" in diameter. The pattern of the stained glass is geometric with a cross pattern repeated throughout the window. There is a 9" high wood base, 6" high chair rail, and crown molding on the plaster walls. There are six steps down from the main

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floor to the entry door. There is a radiator mounted level with the main floor and located on the south wall.

At the top of the south stairs there is a large landing. It is here that the rope for the bell is located. The bell carries the following description, "Andrew Meneely, West Troy, New York, 1846." The second floor is divided into two spaces and is used for storage. At one time these rooms may have been used as class rooms or meeting rooms. There is a pocket door approximately 7'-0" wide by 7'-8" high between the rooms (refer to photograph 22). The wood trim at the head of the door forms a pointed arch. The walls and ceiling are painted plaster on wood lath. Each space has a 9" high wood base and 6" high wood crown molding. The south room has a pair of doors off the tower. On the south wall next to the door is a fireplace. Natural light comes through the east wall via the top of the large stained glass window. The north room is open to the north stairway. There is a small toilet room in the northwest corner of the room. This room has a considerable amount of damage to the plaster. The toilet room is not functional as a toilet room. There is an access door from this room that leads to the space above the sanctuary ceiling. Each large room has one radiator that is no longer in use.

Access to the basement is via the two stairways, one on the south side, one on the north side. The basement contains the church offices, toilets, kitchen, boiler room (accessed through the kitchen), storage rooms (accessed through the boiler room), and a large meeting room which is located at the east end of the basement. The floor is concrete. The ceiling is plaster and approximately 7'-6" above the floor. There are steam pipes running just below the ceiling. There are two radiators (mounted in a horizontal position) in the northeast and southeast corners of the meeting room. In the boiler room the sanctuary floor joist are visible. The 2" by 10" joist are spaced 16" center to center and run in the north/south direction. The windows in the limestone base course provide natural light for some of these spaces.

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First Congregational Church of Michigan City meets National Register criterion C, for its unusual combination of 19<sup>th</sup> century Romanesque design and 20<sup>th</sup> century Tudor Revival architecture. The church is also a good example of a distinct church type, the Akron Plan church. Fort Wayne architects Mahurin and Mahurin, well known in northern Indiana, planned the 1908 rebuilding of the church following a fire. The church, its architecture, and congregational history reflect much about the beginnings and history of Michigan City, Indiana. The church meets Criterion Consideration A because of its architecture.

The religious heritage of First Congregational Church of Michigan City has its roots in the founding of the nation. The Separatist movement began in England shortly after the formation of the Church of England by Henry VIII. Unlike the Puritans, who wished to further the break with the Catholic Church by increasing reforms, or purifying, the Church of England, Separatists like the Congregationalists wished to leave both Catholicism and the Church of England.

Within a few years, the Congregationalists fled England for relative freedom from persecution in Holland. In 1620, fourteen years after their founding, the Congregationalists made the famous voyage to Plymouth Bay aboard *Mayflower*. The group of 102 settlers reached an accord for self-government, named the Mayflower Compact. Self-government was common to religious activities of the Congregationalists and is maintained to this day. Congregationalists ascribe to set of common beliefs; yet, each congregation manages its own affairs independently.

Congregational churches weathered several significant attempts to merge with other groups in the last two centuries. First, the Presbyterian Church and Congregationalists hoped to merge by way of a Plan of Union, creating the Unitarian Church. Later, many Congregationalists abandoned this idea.

By the mid nineteenth century, Congregationalists had once again moved away from strict Calvinism, began to interpret the Bible in a more liberal way, and began to embrace long-discarded traditional Christian liturgies as part of worship. The Congregationalists also embraced social ministry, including abolitionism, equality for women, and a concern for the working urban poor.

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Two proposed mergers of the Congregationalists with other similar-minded church bodies in the 1930s nearly ended the church. A number of Congregationalist churches opted to avoid these mergers, on the grounds that it sacrificed autonomy, a hallmark of Congregationalism. Those who stayed became part of the new United Church of Christ.

In 1955, the Congregationalists formed a national support group, the National Association of Congregational Christian Churches. Congregational churches still maintain independent congregations as they have for nearly 400 years.

The founding of First Congregational Church of Michigan City reflects the history of the denomination and its westward expansion in the United States. The initial members were originally from Massachusetts, not surprising, since many parts of northern Indiana have a strong Yankee heritage. Many of the nine or so families that founded First Congregational in 1835 were leaders in the fledgling community. The first Town Coroner, a coal and lumber merchant, the surveyor who assisted Major Isaac Elston of Crawfordsville in laying out Michigan City (later he was a shipwright), and a lawyer were among the founding members.

The church prospered and the congregation decided to cease using an upstairs meeting hall in a commercial block downtown. In 1843, they acquired a lot at 4<sup>th</sup> and Franklin and began to build a new church. It was a wooden, gable-fronted Greek Revival church with a Gibbsian bell tower.

The church hosted the Convention of Congregational Churches of the West in 1846. Out of this event came the National Council of Congregational Churches, a confederacy of like-thinking Congregationalist churches which permitted independence of each individual church.

Through the years, First Congregational gave rise to other churches in the community, by dissent or by positive action of its own. For example, one pastor during the 1870s led a group of Congregationalists to form First Presbyterian Church in town. In the 1890s, First Congregational's missionary programs led to formation of Emmanuel Congregational Church for the German neighborhood in town. The First Congregationalists also organized the Ann Sanborn Chapel, a mission house, for the Swedish residents of Michigan City in the 1890s.

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By the late 1870s, the congregation recognized the need for a new church. The trustees bought land on 6<sup>th</sup> between Washington and Wabash in 1880, and began construction of a new church. Previously, the group had bought land adjoining this and they built a new parsonage in 1880 (still standing but not included with this nomination). Church correspondence cites Watkins & Hidden as the architects of the 1880-81 church, J.V. Consaul as general contractor, R.G. Young as the contractor (likely carpenter or builder). Mr. Fred Haskell, co-owner of the Michigan City Haskell and Barker railroad car works, paid off the remaining debt on the new brick church in 1885.

The twentieth century brought hardships and strife to First Congregational Church. In 1907, the church burned. The congregation decided to save the exterior walls and intact tower, and rebuild the structure. The roughly \$5,000 of insurance was inadequate to cover reconstruction costs, but donations and an estate bequest made up the difference. The church hired architects Mahurin and Mahurin to redesign the building, and contractor Henry Koellin to perform the work in 1908. The total rebuilding cost was \$17,268.15.

In 1948, First Congregational voted not to affiliate with the newly formed United Church of Christ, a union of old Congregationalist churches and Reformed Evangelical churches. First Congregational remained independent until 1962. The pastor at that time decided to lead the church to join the United Church of Christ organization. The affiliation was not successful and First Congregationalist voted to once again become independent in 1969.

Like its historic home, First Congregationalist Church of Michigan City has endured many trials and managed to survive into the twenty-first century. Architecturally, the church is among the oldest public or semi-public buildings existing in Michigan City. Of the six 19<sup>th</sup> century churches that survive in town, First Congregational (1880-81) is among the oldest in town.

The reconstruction of the church gives it an unusual style, reflecting both early Romanesque Revival elements from the 1880-81 construction, and Tudor Gothic Revival features from the Mahurin and Mahurin 1908 remodeling. The Romanesque Revival inspiration for First Congregational's 1881 church may have come from early to mid-nineteenth century "round arch style" designs by German-trained architects. No other works by Watkins & Hidden are known from which to compare to First Congregational.

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Richardson and other eastern architect's works may have inspired the design. Henry Hobson Richardson was the greatest practitioner of Romanesque Revival. Working out of Boston, he was widely acclaimed in eastern states by 1880. Recalling the strong Massachusetts roots of the congregation, it is reasonable to compare First Congregational to Richardson's North Church of Springfield, MA, of 1872. The overall massing, tower placement and broached spire in particular are similar.

The Romanesque elements of First Congregational are evident -- massive round-arched openings, heavy corbeling, steeply gabled roofs, asymmetrical massing, and masonry construction. Most of these features are still evident on the exterior of the building, despite the fire that gutted the building in 1907. Other historic churches in town have some elements of Romanesque. St. Paul's Lutheran, 1876, has heavy corbeling, similar to First Congregational, however, it is Gothic Revival in style and completely symmetrical. St. Mary of the Immaculate Conception, 1868, is executed in stone rather than brick, and has an unusual triple-tower symmetrical design, with Gothic details. Architect John Renkawitz designed both structures. In 1889, the local Anglicans built a new sanctuary along decidedly Richardsonian Romanesque lines. Trinity Episcopal Church recalls Richardson's later works. First Congregational stands out from these other early churches by virtue of its early Romanesque style, picturesque massing and earlier date.

The Tudor Gothic Revival details of the building are also distinctive. Architects Mahurin and Mahurin incorporated Tudor Gothic elements into the structure as part of the reconstruction. For example, the "Perpendicular" style tracery in the two-story-high round arches on the sides and front elevations were part of the 1908 effort. Tudor arch label lintels on the tower were also part of the reconstruction, as was the addition of an entry porch on the tower. These tower windows were originally a narrow lancet, while the second story one was an oculus.

The interior bears the most remarkable stamp of the 1908 building campaign. The Mahurin brothers took advantage of the necessary rebuilding effort, and utilized the latest development in church architecture: the Akron Plan. Lewis Miller, an inventor, Sunday school teacher and amateur architect, devised the plan for his congregation in Akron, Ohio in 1867. His church was First Methodist Church in Akron, completed in 1872. Miller's innovation was to place the altar in one corner of the sanctuary, and have wedge-shaped banks of pews that radiate out from the altar, allowing good sight lines for all. Furthermore, Miller allowed for young Christians to participate in services, by planning for a moveable

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screen wall at one side of the sanctuary, to open or close off a children's classroom from the rest of the space. Floors of Akron Plan churches are often banked for even better views and acoustics. First Congregational has all of these characteristics.

Auditorium or central-planned places of worship date to man's early history; Greeks and Romans used them. The Pantheon is the most outstanding ancient example. Early Christians, especially Eastern Orthodox congregations, built round church buildings. Circular or polygonal baptisteries remained a tradition in Italian church architecture for centuries. As several sources point out, Miller's idea was not without American precedents. Robert Mills' Sansom Street Baptist Church, 1808, Philadelphia, is based on an auditorium style plan, and Huguenot immigrants to America also used a similar format for their churches.

Miller's plan, however, created a distinct trend in church design for the first time. Suitable for rectangular buildings, the Akron plan could be used for country churches and city churches. Engineers and architects could take advantage of the new understanding of truss technology, permitting clear span of large, open rooms. Until architectural tastes returned to the traditional nave forms in the late 1920s, Akron Plan churches were widely popular for protestant denominations. It is not known which church was the earliest in Michigan City to adopt the Akron Plan, however, the oldest surviving church to do so is First Congregational.

Architects Mahurin and Mahurin were among the largest and most prolific firms in northern Indiana during the late 1800s to early 1900s. Marshall Mahurin (1857-1939) and John Wing (1852-1947) were both draftsman in the Fort Wayne offices of T.J. Tolan and Sons, designers of several Indiana courthouses. Wing and Mahurin formed a partnership in 1882 in Fort Wayne. The two designed schools, churches, public buildings, and private homes from Muncie north to the Michigan state line. Wing and Mahurin parted ways in 1907. The Congregational Church commission was likely among the first works Marshall began with his brother Guy (1877-1941) as partner. Correspondence between First Congregational and the firm is under the Mahurin and Mahurin name. The two were busy with another commission in Michigan City, for a still-extant courthouse, which seems to have led the congregation to choose the firm. Marshall partnered with his brother Guy until 1918. Guy worked for the federal government for several years during W.W. I. The two brothers then practiced individually. Wing also practiced on his own for the remainder of his career.



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The historic Roosevelt Pipe Organ adds significantly to the integrity of feeling of the interior. The organ has 3 manuals and 1540 pipes. It is Opus No. 506 of the famous New York firm, originally built in 1891 for the Unitarian Church of the Messiah in Chicago. When the Unitarians moved to Hyde Park, the organ became available and was purchased by First Congregational Church of Michigan City. Coburn Organ Company of Chicago salvaged the instrument, and shipped it by steamer to Michigan City in 1910. Workers had to extend the loft to fit the pipes. Most of the ranks (pipes) are original to the 1891 fabrication. In 1999, First Congregational hired Rutz Organ Company of Morristown, MN, to restore portions of the organ. Roosevelt organs are rare and highly prized, carefully restored ones such this are even more rare. Of the 536 organs the firm made, only 70-75 are thought to exist. Only five organs in Indiana are intact enough to have received the Historic Organ Citation from the national Organ Historical Society, including No. 506.

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### Section 9 - Bibliography

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Letters and statements of account, Mahurin and Mahurin, architects  
Minutes of church board meetings

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### Section 10 – Geographical Data – Verbal Boundary Description

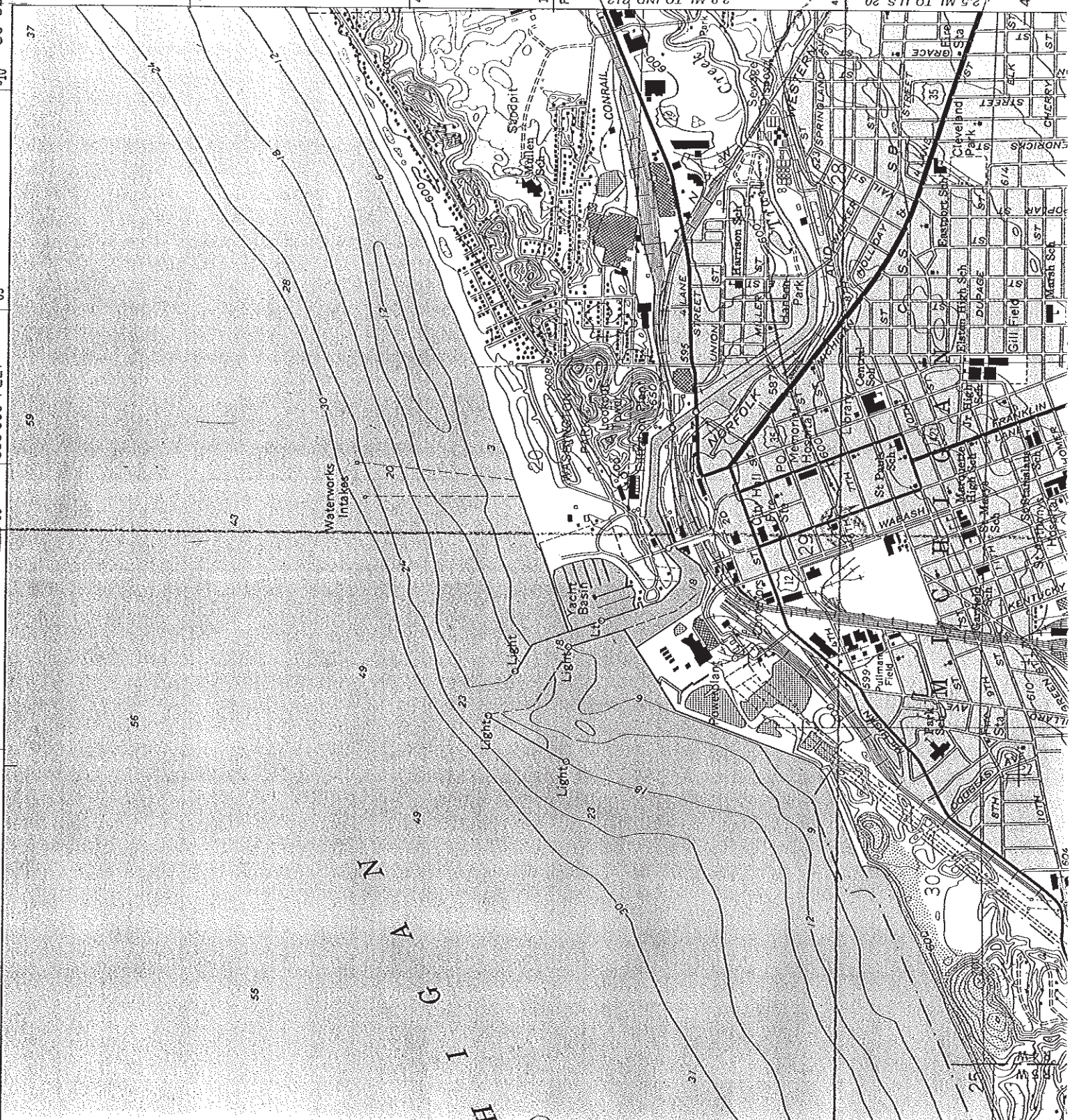
Lot located in Michigan City, LaPorte County, Indiana described as follows:

Parcel 42 01 29 403 023 also know as Lot number 7, Block 24 in the Original Plat of Michigan City.

### Boundary Justification

This is historic boundary for the church building.

506 55' 507 550 000 FEET 509 510 86° 52' 30" 41° 45'



FIRST CONGRESSIONAL  
CHURCH  
LAFAYETTE CO. IN  
WASHINGTON DC  
SIXTH STREETS  
UTMF  
10 508040468020

1:540 000  
FEET

2.9 MI. TO IND. R. 12  
NEW BUFFALO, MICH. 8 MI.

2.5 MI. TO U.S. 20  
LA PORTE 11 MI.

42'30"

10 508040468020