

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 Bethel A.M.E. Church of Crawfordsville  
other names/site number 107-139-28030

2. Location

street & number 213 W. North St. N/A  not for publication  
city or town Crawfordsville N/A  vicinity  
state Indiana code IN county Montgomery code 107 zip code 47933

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

Jim C. St D-SHPO 7-23-01  
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

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

- building
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	0	Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

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

N/A

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

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: Religious Facility

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: Religious Facility

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN: Queen Anne

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls WOOD: Weatherboard

roof ASPHALT

other GLASS

**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)

ETHNIC HERITAGE: Black

**Period of Significance**

1892 -1950

**Significant Dates**

1892

**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

unknown

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**9. Major 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:

National Register files

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreege 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 Martha Cantrell / Paul Diebold

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date 11/01/2000

street & number 400 South Water telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Crawfordsville state IN zip code 47933

**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 Bethel AME Church

street & number 213 W. North St. telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town Crawfordsville state IN zip code 47933

**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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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

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### *Section 7 - Description*

The Crawfordsville Bethel A.M.E. Church stands on a level residential lot within the Original Plat of Crawfordsville, Indiana. Nestled in among rolling hills, the town spreads out south from winding Sugar Creek, on relatively flat land. Most of North and Spring Streets surrounding the church are lined with 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century housing stock. The playground just west of the church, directly at the corner of North and Grant, is a point of historical interest; it was the site of John Allen Speed's cabin. Speed assisted the African-American population of Crawfordsville; he sheltered runaway slaves and also sold his neighboring lot to the A.M.E. congregation so that this church could be built. The Speed Cabin was recently rebuilt on the grounds of Lane Place perhaps a dozen blocks away from its original location.

Two historic buildings stand on the nominated site, the church and associated parsonage. Portions of the church are thought to date to 1847, however, in 1892, a complete reworking of the building gave the structure most of its present-day appearance. Some oral accounts mention that a nearby school house was moved to the site and added to the church to enlarge it at that time. The parsonage appears to date from 1900, however, it may be older.

### Church

The church is a one-story, wood-framed, gable fronted building resting on a brick foundation. The front elevation consists of a broad, gabled mass with a two-story square tower tied into the east corner. A large round-arched window is centered in the clapboarded main wall. Two double hung windows divided by a heavy mullion form the lower section, while the round arched transom is divided into halves by the same mullion. The double hung sash have an unusual configuration of muntins: the top sash has narrower panes flanking two larger panes, while the lower sash has the same narrow flanking panes bordering a large central pane. The transom muntins are radiating. Much of the glass of the church is tinted in various solid colors.

The gable begins with a broad band of diagonal wood siding, radiating from a central raised disk and divided down the center by a plain board. Plain frieze boards with drip edges mark the start and end of the diagonal siding band. Above this, the apex of the gable is sheathed in vertical board siding. The eaves of the church are shallow and built of exposed decking boards and a plain thin bargeboard. The tower cuts into the gable shape several feet, and projects forward roughly three feet from the gable wall. Square in plan, the tower has concrete steps leading to the main sanctuary entrance: a double leaf doorway with round arch transom. The doors are paneled "Christian" doors. Plain boards form the entrance surround. A belt course or frieze board divides the lower story from the upper one. The upper floor has boarded up openings where louvers for the bell were located. A plain frieze with small brackets supports the hipped tower roof.

The west flank of the church has four evenly placed lancet windows. Windows, again, have large simple panes of glass in various colors. The roofline, however, changes from steeply (side) gabled to hipped just

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after the third bay back from the front. At this point, traces of a sided-over doorway are visible. Also, a small exterior brick chimney, a furnace flue, divides the wall and breaks the roofline, just north of the third window from the north. The roof of the hipped rear section is slightly lower than the main gabled roof. A sloped shed roof addition, stands just beyond this hipped section. It is offset to the west and a small brick chimney marks the junction of the hipped and shed rooflines.

The east side of the church is a virtual mirror image of the other side, however, the simple doorway between the third and fourth lancets is intact on this elevation. It has an upper panel with single light. The shed section has two small paired windows on this side. The rear of the shed section has a rectangular double hung window beside a paneled door. Interestingly, one can see that the back face of the upper tower story is clad in asphalt shingles from this elevation. Church records show bills for repairs to the kitchen in the late 1930s and early 1940s; this could indicate that this entire shed section was rebuilt or added at that time.

The interior of the church is organized into three basic areas, as reflected in the exterior massing: sanctuary, fellowship hall, and kitchen / restroom. The tower doorway is the main entrance into the sanctuary. The sanctuary space is roughly forty feet square, with three-sided apse-like altar area. The congregation paneled the walls and added a suspended ceiling in the 1960s, however, the original wood door and window moldings, and wood doors remain intact. The sanctuary floor is carpeted. The twenty-six carved oak pews date from 1895 and were a gift of the Rev. Lewis Pettiford. The polygonal sided altar area is raised three steps above the sanctuary floor, and it projects from the three-sided apse. The apse area is in fact a choir loft, raised an additional step above the altar, and divided from it by a wooden railing. The communion rail is original as well.

Historic furnishings add strongly to the sense of history of the church. The pulpit was a gift of a sister congregation, the Second Baptist Church of Crawfordsville. The Second Baptist congregation donated this ornate Victorian piece to their friends at the A.M.E. church after they decided to move from their original site in 1978. The completely intact and operable c.1880 Eastlake style pump organ with high mirrored back was used by locally renowned congregation member Lucy Patterson in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Patterson also played the spinet piano just east of the altar. Choir chairs and the pastor's chair appear to date to the late 19<sup>th</sup> century.

The apse wall of the sanctuary serves to divide it from the fellowship hall and pastor's office area of the church. A paneled door leads back to this area from the sanctuary. Just inside this area is a place of historical interest. A cellar door in the floor leads to the basement, just inside the side door, which is now sided over on the outside. According to congregation historians, this cellar door and side door are part of the 1840s section of the church that was preserved during the 1890s expansion and remodeling. The cellar was used to shelter run away slaves as part of the Underground Railroad network. Granted the odd location of the doors, the story is conceivable. The woodwork is simple in this area, with plain boards framing window and door openings, and a beaded board wainscot encircling the room. Upper walls are plaster and the floor is wood.

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The fifteen by nineteen foot kitchen is just behind the fellowship hall / pastor's office area.

### Parsonage

Perhaps only three to four feet east of the church stands the original parsonage. The parsonage is a wood-framed "L" plan cottage. City directory research indicates that the parsonage was built in 1900; not only does the parsonage appear for the first time that year, but the church address is listed as 213, as it is today. Sanborn maps are less helpful since the area was not mapped until the 1907 edition. The exterior style of the house has some elements that seem to point to an earlier date, such as the wide plain frieze board. It is possible that the parsonage dates to much earlier than 1900, and that it was moved to this site.

The exterior of the parsonage is covered with vinyl siding, the roof is asphalt-shingled. It appears that the congregation replaced the foundation at some point, since it is either concrete-faced or of concrete block. The front facing gable has a single one-over-one window, an off-center gable vent, and a wide entablature board follows the gable profile. This boarding also carries over to the flanks of this front block, however, the east gable end lacks this detail (or it has been sided over on this side). A main entry door and a window are up under the shed-roofed corner porch. The porch supports are heavy turned posts, the porch floor is concrete.

The back section of the house is the base of the "L," a gabled section at right angles to the front room. A lean-to addition stands behind this section. It is a kitchen addition to the house.

### *Section 8 – Statement of Significance*

Bethel A.M.E. Church of Crawfordsville, built 1847, with a major rebuilding in 1891-93, is significant in local African-American history. It is the most prominent and oldest structure associated with black settlement in the area. In a broader sense, it represents an important chapter in the social history of a town that embraced the anti-slavery movement and black settlement. The church and rectory meet National Register Criterion A. The church also meets Consideration A because of its locally exceptional historic significance.

Crawfordsville had its roots in the early land sales in the Wabash valley. Early settlers William Miller and Henry Ristine had built cabins there in 1822. Late that same year, Terre Haute land sales agent Ambrose Whitlock bought the present site of Crawfordsville, moved the Federal Land Sales office there, and platted the Town of Crawfordsville. He named it for his friend William Crawford, then the Secretary of the Treasury under James Monroe. Crawford earlier had appointed Whitlock to his land office post. Whitlock assured his town's status as future county seat by donating a site for the county government's use. He also provided that half of the lots in the original plat could be donated to churches or schools. The county commissioners controlled the sale and donation of lots in the plat.

State funded roads to Terre Haute and Indianapolis gave Crawfordsville residents access to better goods and more markets beginning in 1824. A main road also connected Crawfordsville to Lafayette by this

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time. But the single most distinct event in Crawfordsville's history, aside from its selection as county seat, was the founding of Wabash College in 1832. Presbyterian minister James Thomson met with nine persons, including five other ministers, in his Crawfordsville home that year. The school was known early on as Wabash Teacher's Seminary and Manual Labor College, but by about 1840, officials changed the name to Wabash College. The college gave the town a more sophisticated air than most Hoosier towns still wallowing in their settlement years.

More significant from a social point of view, the new Presbyterian college lured clergy and professors New England. Most of them, such as Caleb Mills, were steeped in abolitionist views, and were eloquent in expressing them.

Into this early settlement atmosphere of Crawfordsville came many Scots-Irish immigrants. John Allen Speed, born in Perthshire, Scotland in 1801, came to the United States in 1821, and eventually to Crawfordsville by 1834. A stone worker by trade, Speed brought his family with him. Initially, Speed came to America for architectural work in Washington, D.C. and Raleigh, North Carolina. While working in Virginia, Speed was obliged to help quell a slave uprising. The event so troubled him that he became an ardent abolitionist. Later, Speed worked on the National Road through Indiana. The family decided to settle down in Indiana and selected Crawfordsville as their home. The Speeds bought the lot at the southeast corner of North and Grant Streets, and built a log cabin. Speed earned fame for his exploits involving the Underground Railroad – a loose network of families and places that harbored fugitive slaves, then passed them on ever northward to freedom in Canada. Speed became the city's mayor years later.

But black settlement began in Crawfordsville almost as early as the founding of the town. In 1832, the Gates family – born to slavery but freed while living in Kentucky – came with the Fry family to Crawfordsville. The Frys, former slave owners, sought a better education for their children in this new college town. The family of Isaac Jones, also a freed man, traveled north with the group. African-Americans were tolerated if not helped by the wealthier Euro-Americans in town. Maria Patterson, for example, was part of this early influx of blacks. She was employed as a cook by Isaac Elston, one of Crawfordsville's richest and most powerful citizens. Mrs. Maria Elston was a Quaker; she and Maria Patterson formed a life-long friendship. Maria also found work in the homes of Sen. Henry Lane and Lew Wallace. The Elstons also assisted the Underground Railroad, along with a number of other residents of Crawfordsville. The town was a known stop on the way north, a route through Greencastle and then northward toward the Wabash River. No doubt, the fact that Crawfordsville was a stop on the Underground Railroad encouraged African-American settlement here both before and after the Civil War.

By the late 1830s, enough African-Americans had moved to town to begin plans to form a congregation. Denied leadership roles in many American church hierarchies, many blacks turned to the African Methodist Episcopal Church, a Protestant denomination founded in the eighteenth century. So it was not surprising that the Crawfordsville group first sought to establish an A.M.E. church. The fledgling A.M.E. congregation met in area homes until 1847, when they sought land for their own church building.



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John Speed and his anti-slavery actions were well known to the African-American community. In one recorded incident, Speed had sent a fugitive in his care to the Patterson family, who lived on the same street, to avoid suspicion. The Pattersons were charter members of the A.M.E. congregation. Speed suggested that the congregation purchase lot 20 in the original plat of the town, which was still available and located next to his own cabin. Speed apparently informed the group that they only need apply to the county commissioners to obtain a deed to the lot, which the fledgling church successfully did. They began construction of a wood frame church in August of 1847. This first church was thirty by twenty-six feet in size and was quickly finished before the winter of 1847. An 1878 map of Crawfordsville shows two separate structures on the lot, both labeled "African Ch."

Together with Speed, the Bethel A.M.E. Church of Crawfordsville played a significant role in the Underground Railroad network. Only a remnant of the original 1847 building survives, it is thought to be the back section of the current building. A side entrance facing toward the Speed Cabin is thought to be the entrance used to hide fugitives.

When the Civil War broke out, members of the A.M.E. Church were ready to play a role. Several are known to have served in segregated U.S. Army units.

The Bethel A.M.E. congregation also had an important role in the education of Crawfordsville's African-American children. Church records and city directories confirm that school was held in the church at least into the 1880s. In 1881, a town school trustee stated that the church-based school was severely overcrowded – 126 pupils meeting in a building sufficient for only forty-nine. Bethel congregation had moved the classes to a recently vacated downtown Presbyterian church which they rented for school use at that time. The trustee suggested that the town purchase the A.M.E. Church and raze it. Eventually, in 1882, the town school board built a school house, called Lincoln School, in part for area black children. Religious education continued in the church, even after general classes were held elsewhere for a time. In 1924, school officials built a second Lincoln School on East Wabash; this later school was apparently a segregated school for at least a brief time. Neither school survives.

The old A.M.E. church building must have been feeling its age by then; being forty years old and heavily used. Pressure from the community perhaps led the congregation to remodel their building in 1891. The A.M.E. conference sent Rev. Martin Coleman to assist the congregation with this project. Coleman also had the task of helping the Greencastle A.M.E. congregation with their new structure at this time.

Church oral traditions state that the congregation bought a nearby frame school, moved it to the church grounds, and connected it to the existing structure. The roofline seems to reflect several joined buildings. Certainly, if this is the case, both structures were extensively reworked inside and out. A newspaper obituary of 1901 cites Ephraim C. Griffith as the builder of the church. Griffith (a European-American) was born in Crawfordsville in 1833, his father was also a contractor. Griffith served as construction superintendent for the 1876 courthouse. The paper also credits Griffith with the Elston Bank, other commercial blocks downtown, and the First Methodist Church. City directories of 1895 and 1900 list Ephraim as a contractor and his son George as an architect. It seems likely that George Griffith would

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have designed the church, since his father is known to have built it. As an interesting aside, an E.C. Griffith was listed as a school board member in 1881, during the aforementioned school controversy.

The Bethel A.M.E. Church continued to serve as a rallying point to much of the black community in Crawfordsville well into recent memory. As time has passed, changes in mobility and increasing opportunities have begun to disperse a once vibrant and cohesive African-American neighborhood and congregation.

There are few traces of Crawfordsville's ethnic heritage left. A few homes in the area of the church were once part of the black community. The Speed Cabin was saved from demolition, and eventually reconstructed on the grounds of Lane Place about eight blocks to the south and east. The Bethel A.M.E. is the most visible reminder in town of how African-Americans settled and prospered in the "free" north.

### *Section 9 – Bibliography*

*Atlases and Maps of Montgomery County, Indiana, 1864, 1878, 1898, 1917.* Evansville, IN: Unigraphic, 1975.

Beckwith, Hiram. *History of Montgomery County.* Chicago: H.H. Hill and N. Iddings, 1881.

Cadwallader, Charles. "Decaying Shack Is Relic of Underground Railway," *Crawfordsville Journal and Review*, October 21, 1931, unknown page number.

*City Directories of Crawfordsville, IN.* 1874, 1878, 1890, 1895, 1900. Microfilm copies, Crawfordsville Public Library.

Cockrum, Col. William. *History of the Underground Railroad as it was conducted by the Anti-Slavery League.* Oakland City, IN: J.W. Cockrum Printing, c.1915.

Death Records of Montgomery County, IN.

Gronert, Theodore. *Sugar Creek Saga: A History and Development of Montgomery County.* Crawfordsville, IN: Wabash College, 1958.

"George F. Patterson Is Dead at Home Here," *Crawfordsville Journal and Review*, November 20, 1928, p. 1.

*History of Montgomery County.* Indianapolis: B.F. Bowen, 1913.

"Miss Blanche M. Patterson Is Dead at 80," *Crawfordsville Journal and Review*, February 26, 1965, p. 1.

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“Mortuary Record,” (obituary of Ephriam C. Griffith) *Crawfordsville Journal*, unknown date in 1901, unknown page number.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, Crawfordsville, Indiana. 1887, 1896, 1907, 1913, 1925.

U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. Census of the Population, 1820 – 1920. Microfilm copies, Crawfordsville Public Library.

Walters, Crystal Pauline. *The History of Churches in Montgomery County, Indiana, 1821-1975*. New Ross, IN: Walters, 1975.

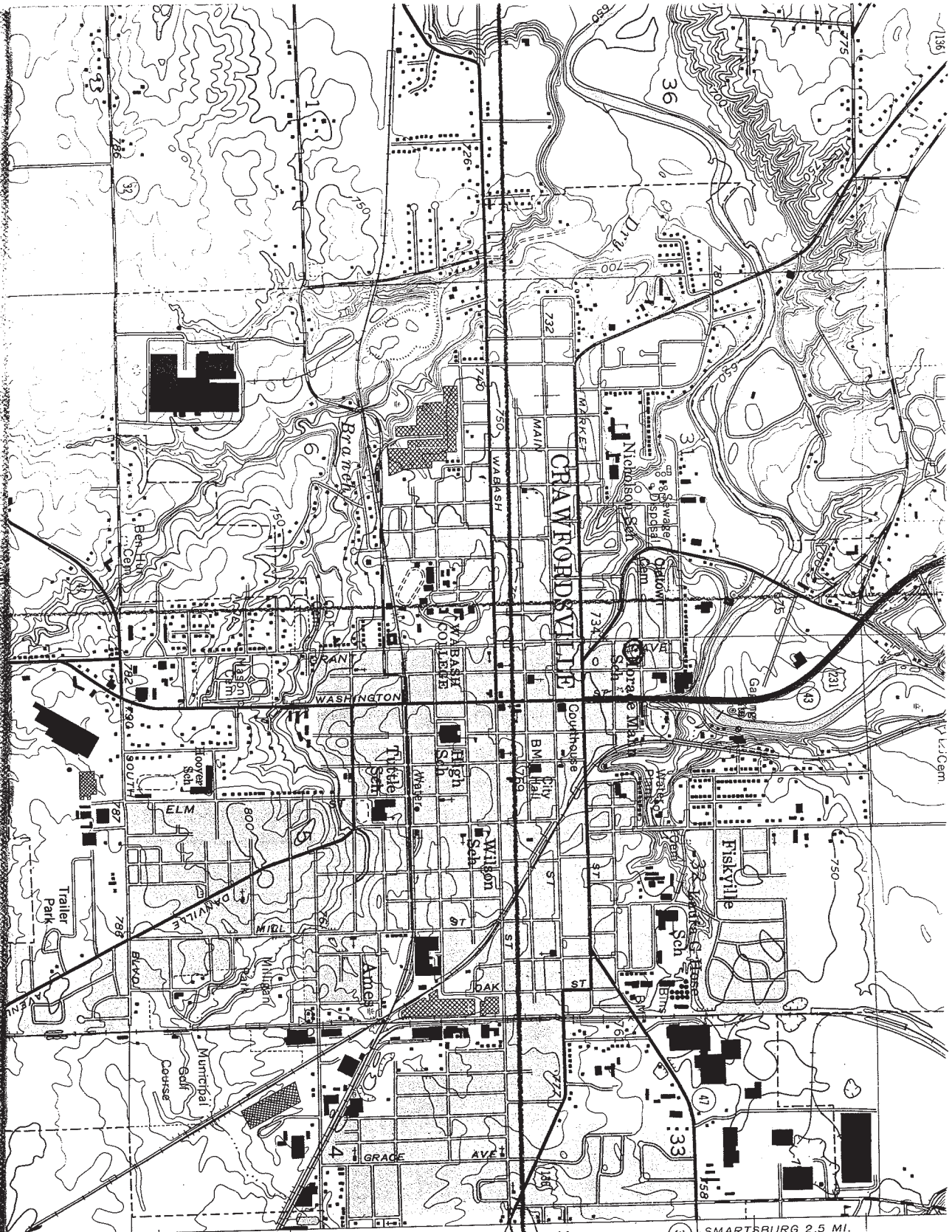
Wabash College Oral History Project. Includes two sections: “Crawfordsville and the Black Experience,” and “Wabash and the Black Experience,” 12 volumes of audio tapes, interviews conducted 1982-1987.

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

Lot 20 in the Original Plat of Crawfordsville, Indiana.

### ***Boundary Justification***

This is the original property boundary.



MACE 4.5 MI.  
 INDIANAPOLIS 43 MI.  
 SMARTSBURG 2.5 MI.

230' UTM  
 19 N 508210 4932520  
 T. 18 N.  
 BETHEL AVE  
 CHURCH  
 MATTHEWSON CO.,