

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Sycamore Row

Other names/site number: _____

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: Old State Road 29 from Deer Creek south approx. 1,300 feet to current State Road 29

City or town: Deer Creek State: IN County: Carroll

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local
Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

Signature of certifying official/Title:

Date

Indiana DNR-Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: _____ **Date** _____

Title : _____ **State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government** _____

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ___ entered in the National Register
- ___ determined eligible for the National Register
- ___ 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(s)
- District
- Site
-

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Object



Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>0</u>	<u>0</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	objects
<u>2</u>	<u>1</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

TRANSPORTATION: road-related

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LANDSCAPE: conservation area

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: N/A
walls: N/A
roof: N/A
other:

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

Sycamore Row is a short section of old State Road 29, the historic Michigan Road, which is bordered on either side by massive old sycamore trees. The trees form an allee, numbering about three dozen. The stretch of road, close to 1300 feet in length and eighteen feet wide, is old asphalt in deteriorated condition since it was bypassed in 1985. The sycamores have no regulated pattern of spacing, but are fairly equal distance from the flanking row on the opposite side of the road. The area remains mowed except toward the north end which has brush between the trees. It terminates at its north end by Deer Creek where a bridge was once located. It terminates at its south end by the new section of State Road 29 (bypassing east of Sycamore Row), as it curves back to its original alignment. The trees were never cut for power lines, so they form a broad, gentle canopy over the old roadbed. A state historic bureau sign erected in 2021 to replace a damaged sign is located near the east flanking row of trees.

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Narrative Description

Sycamore Row is a historic allee of trees flanking Old State Road 29, constructed as the Michigan Road in the early 1830s (photo 01). The allee stretches from the south bank of Deer Creek, south of the village of Deer Creek, to the old road's intersection with current State Road 29 (bypassing the allee to the east, seen in the right side of photos 03-04) and Carroll County Road East 400 North. This is approximately 1300 feet in length with a bermed roadbed including trees, the whole nominated property being approximately 40 feet wide, or 20 feet east and west from the centerline of the old road. The allee's character, which is tunnel-like (photos 05-06), changes with the seasons from letting in a dappling of sun during the summer and fall, to the stark contrast of bare trees with characteristically-white and gnarled branches of sycamores during winter.

There is a gentle rise in the topography from Deer Creek south to the county road to each side of the bermed roadbed. Deer Creek is lined with riparian forests, forming a natural screen between the allee and the village to the north. The land west of the allee is agricultural tilled ground (left side of photo 01), as is the land east of current State Road 29. The land between the allee and current State Road 29 is grass mowed by local volunteers (right side of photo 01). Looking south from the allee, the bypassing portion of current State Road 29 merges back (from the east) to its original alignment centered with the allee (best seen in photo 08). Similarly, the bypassing section of highway crosses Deer Creek with a new (1985) bridge installed at the time of the bypass and realigns itself with the historic road's centerline as it proceeds north through the village of Deer Creek.

The features of Sycamore Row, counted as a contributing site, are limited to the raised road grade/berm, the allee itself, and the deteriorated asphalt roadbed. The raised berm, considered a contributing structure, is grass or brush-covered except where the asphalt roadbed is laid. The bermed area is approximately 40 feet wide and rises approximately six feet at its highest point where the Michigan Road once crossed Deer Creek at a historic bridge (no longer extant). The historical marker is not included in the resource count.

The allee is composed of a two rows of sycamores growing from the embankment, east and west of the roadbed, which forms the bermed area. There are 22 old-growth trees on the east bank and 16 old-growth trees on the west bank. Seven additional sycamores were planted c. 1980 near the row's midpoint. Nearer the north end, the trees seem substantially larger, up to 16 feet in circumference (photos 05-06) and seventy feet tall, and are also closer to each other. Given the dense woods east and west of the row at this end, along the south bank of Deer Creek, it is possible to assume the riparian forests helped protect the trees from wind and storm damage unlike the more open and sparser trees, averaging eight feet in circumference, in the south end of Sycamore Row (photos 01/08). The old trees are unpruned but because of their proximity to each other, are mostly void of lower branches and feature narrow crowns. One or two large logs on the west side at the north end seem to be downed sycamores once part of the allee. There are several trees that show damage on their trunks facing inward to the allee; this was most likely a result of vehicular damage from when the road was in use (right side of photo 03). Recent efforts

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to sustain the alley have resulted in clearing brush and planting sycamore saplings slightly away from the original row of trees (seen in photos 02-03).

The roadbed itself, not counted, is composed of deteriorating asphalt from about 1975. It is approximately eighteen feet wide and seen in most of the photos. One other feature is located at the site. An Indiana Historical Bureau marker installed by the State Highway Commission in 1963 was once located along the east embankment of the roadway. In 2016, the post for the sign was replaced, then in 2021, the sign was damaged and replaced with a new sign (right side of photo 02). It is considered a non-contributing object because of its age, however, it is noted that the original sign would have been considered a contributing object given the period of significance.

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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.)

- 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

CONSERVATION

Period of Significance

1867-1973

Significant Dates

1925

Significant Person (last name, first name)

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder (last name, first name)

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Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance begins when the Carroll County Board of Commissioners entered into an agreement with the Logansport-Burlington Gravel Road Company in 1867 to make improvements on the Michigan Road. The period concludes in 1973, the fifty-year cutoff for eligibility. Conservation of the site continued and in 1983, advocates successfully lobbied to preserve the allee of trees and force the decision to bypass the route to the east of the original alignment of State Road 29 (the bypass was finished in 1986). The year 1925 is an important date in the history of the site because it is the earliest recorded documentation of conservation efforts to preserve the highway landmark.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

N/A

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

Sycamore Row, an allee of trees flanking a late 19th century section of the Michigan Road in Carroll County, Indiana, was recognized as a scenic, cultural, and natural place of local significance by the 1920s. Under Criterion A/Conservation, Sycamore Row has been a rallying point for local conservationists for roughly 100 years, and threats to its preservation have been met with spirited debate and civic engagement on several key occasions. Most recently, in the 1980s, public outcry lead Indiana Department of Transportation to plan and execute a new road section to bypass the allee. As a site which combines man-made elements with natural ones, Sycamore Row is comparable to Indiana historic places such as the Deer Creek Rural Historic District in Carroll County, and perhaps the planned vistas and roadways in Indiana's state parks.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Sycamore Row grew along, or because, of one of the most aggressive road-building projects in early Indiana history. The embankment created for a bridge over Deer Creek for the Michigan Road spurred either the planting or growth of the old trees that form an allee over the road. Though not entirely clear, this occurred between 1850 with the creation of the Michigan Road Company and about 1888. Newspaper accounts point to the improvement of the Burlington Turnpike at this location in 1870-1871. This road name is associated with the fact that this part of the Michigan Road became a toll road by the middle part of the 19th century (between Logansport and Burlington). The 1921 article states that "a fill had to be made at Deer Creek to

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protect the road” and that the contractor (Mr. Uhl) created a “living embankment” by planting sycamore saplings to stabilize the bermed roadbed.¹ Speculation on the origin of the allee of sycamores also includes the most commonly-held belief that the trees sprouted from green sycamore logs cut and laid for a corduroy road in the wet area descending to Deer Creek at the north end of the allee. There were logs from a corduroy road uncovered on the adjacent property in 1939 which may have led to one of the battles in the century-long effort to preserve the trees in 1940. Regardless of the allee’s origin, Sycamore Row is significant as a remnant of road building, both through the private company associated with the turnpike/toll road and, earlier in its history, the state-funded project of the 1830s. The following narrative provides background on the construction and importance of the Michigan Road through its highway commission designation and bypass of Sycamore Row.

Construction and Early History

The Michigan Road’s history is no less than a microcosm of Indiana’s history. The state’s early growth, its booms and busts, its proudest and most shameful moments have all played out along the Michigan Road.² The Michigan Road was arguably the most important transportation route in the fledgling State of Indiana. The Indiana State Legislature commissioned the Michigan Road in 1826; it was the first state road, and it became a key thoroughfare in opening up the north half of the state to settlement. It connected Madison on the Ohio River to Michigan City on Lake Michigan via the new state capital. It was used by the pioneer, as a path for freedom for the runaway slave, and as the trail down which the Native American was removed from his land.

Several reasons led early state lawmakers to consider the construction of the Michigan Road. A need for easier routes of migration into northern Indiana, the argument for military necessity, a desire to expedite the removal of Native Americans, and a longing for greater accessibility to markets were all put forward by politicians, military men, and merchants as irrefutable reasons for the construction of a great north-south highway connecting the Ohio River and Lake Michigan via Indianapolis.³ Due to public pressure, road commissioners Lewis Cass, John Tipton, and James Ray provided for the road in article two of the Potawatomi treaty on October 16, 1826. Native American tribes ceded a strip of land 100 feet wide from Lake Michigan to the Wabash River at Logansport, including one section of good land contiguous to it for each mile from the lake to the Ohio River.⁴ Initially a southern terminus was not chosen, which led to heated debate among lawmakers; ultimately Madison, at that time the state’s largest city, was chosen as the road’s terminus on the Ohio River.

In January 1828, three commissioners were chosen to survey and mark out the road from Indianapolis to Lake Michigan, establishing a location for a suitable artificial harbor on the lake. The mouth of Trail Creek where Michigan City stands today was chosen as the northern terminus. Surveyors marked two routes to Indianapolis from this point. The most direct route passed through LaPorte and across the Kankakee swamps; the other route was twenty-eight miles

¹ “Trees Half Century Old Still Stand” *Logansport Pharos-Tribune*, 14 May 1921.

² Historic Michigan Road Corridor Management Plan (2020), pg. 4

³ Prather, “The Struggle for the Michigan Road” *Indiana Magazine of History*, Bloomington, IN XXXIX (1943) 1-5.

⁴ Montgomery, Ethel, *The Building of the Michigan Road*, pg. 13. A thesis presented to Purdue University, June, 1902.

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longer and passed by the south bend of the Saint Joseph River⁵ (later South Bend). The Kankakee swamps posed challenges in road building that were believed insurmountable then, so in 1829 the route through South Bend was chosen, though quarrels and accusations of personal influence were levied.⁶ As finally surveyed, the length of the road was 264 miles, 1 rod, and 4 chains.⁷ In December, 1830, land grants received from the Potawatomi treaty were offered for sale; the proceeds would pay for the Michigan Road's construction.

Construction of the road between Madison and the Wabash River at Logansport was to occur between August 1830 and November 1831. Construction of the southern part of the route was under the supervision of Noah Noble, later to become governor.⁸ North of Logansport, the road would be considerably more difficult to build because towns north of Logansport did not exist. Rules for the construction of the route's northern leg were accepted on February 4, 1831 and William Polke was made the sole road commissioner. Under the same act, additional lands were to be sold at Logansport for revenue to construct the route. The General Assembly granted an extension of seven months for the completion of the northern section on January 31, 1832. A month later, the road north of the Wabash River was widened to the width of the road south of the Wabash due to the state's improved financial condition. While a nine-month extension was granted on January 30, 1833 for completion of the road, by most accounts, the road was substantially complete in 1834. The area north of Logansport remained virtually uninhabited, though, as one traveler noted in the spring of 1833 that between Logansport and South Bend he passed only two cabins, one at the Tippecanoe River (likely William Polke's residence⁹) and the other twenty miles further north (likely the trading post south of present-day Plymouth). The road, while open for travel, was still lacking and was characterized in many areas as being a mud hole, swamp, and bog.

To improve the road, the state subjected Michigan Road lands (those lands obtained by the treaty with the Potawatomi) to taxation; they also made the counties responsible for road maintenance. Demands for improving the road continued and in 1837 a new survey was made to facilitate better service and to assign more effective responsibility to county commissioners. It was also in these closing years of the road construction project that bridges were let for construction in Logansport, crossing the Eel River (to be known as the Bridge Street and Michigan Road Bridge), and crossing the White River (to be a "free" bridge). All funds remaining in the fund from the sale of Michigan Road lands were to be used for the general improvement of the road

⁵ Kuhn, C. L., *The Michigan Road*, pg. 19. A thesis presented to the Indiana University Department of History, Master of Arts program, 1926.

⁶ Kuhn, C. L., *The Michigan Road*, pg. 20. A thesis presented to the Indiana University Department of History, Master of Arts program, 1926.

⁷ Kuhn, C. L., *The Michigan Road*, pg. 79. A thesis presented to the Indiana University Department of History, Master of Arts program, 1926.

⁸ Montgomery, Ethel, *The Building of the Michigan Road*, pg. 6. A thesis presented to Purdue University, June, 1902.

⁹ William Polke constructed a double-pen cabin on the south side of the Tippecanoe River at the crossing of the Michigan Road. Two years later he constructed a frame residence located just north of the river; it is purported to be the first frame building constructed on the Michigan Road north of Logansport. The house was relocated from the Michigan Road to the Fulton County Museum grounds; it was restored and is open to the public.

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between “Napoleon and the Lake”.¹⁰ Polke was retained as the state commissioner through 1838. Conditions along the road did not improve dramatically although towns began to be platted. By 1842, the state disposed of its remaining Michigan Road lands, closing the initial construction saga of the state’s first highway.

Early conditions of the road were crude, the original requirement itself being no more than a 100’ cleared swath with tree stumps cut to a height of one foot and a thirty foot grubbed path.¹¹ More and more people traveled the road as additional lands were sold and people immigrated north. Due in large part to financial difficulties Indiana faced from its major internal infrastructure improvement plan, building roads and canals in the 1830s, portions of the Michigan Road were awarded to private road building companies that operated their segments as toll roads. The Michigan Road Company maintained the Logansport to Rochester section, having incorporated in 1846. The segment between Burlington and Logansport was named the Burlington Pike and also featured toll gates and toll houses. One toll house was located south of Sycamore Row and another on Biddle Island in Logansport. The American House Hotel in Burlington was constructed c. 1850 to house men working on the toll road. The private road companies built plank roads due to the high availability of timber, even though it was not always the best material as it was given to rot and breakage.

A swelling of Logansport’s population by 1840 to over 2,500 was indication enough that the purpose of the Michigan Road was being realized. Additionally, it was estimated that one-half of the pioneers of the northwest quarter of Indiana had reached their homes over the Michigan Road.¹² Both LaPorte and Elkhart County’s Boards of Commissioners saw the importance of connecting to the route immediately north of the Yellow River in Plymouth and constructed their own routes to capture travelers heading north. These routes became known as the Plymouth-Goshen and Plymouth-LaPorte Trails, built by the late 1830s.

The importance of the construction of the Michigan Road is also evident through its recurring appearance in every governor’s address to the Indiana Legislature through its construction. Already realizing the importance of the newly-opened corridor, a bill was introduced in 1836 for the construction of a railroad paralleling the Michigan Road. The financial panic of 1837 and the state’s inability to pay its debt prevented the enterprise.¹³ The Michigan Road’s importance in the state ebbed and flowed with the introduction of canals and railroads, however, the road continued to connect communities and act as the vital thoroughfare for the common traveler and migrant to the north. The Michigan Road became the commercial corridor in the communities it served and remained the chief way to move among those communities, providing connections to markets needed for their residents, merchants, and farmers.

¹⁰ Montgomery, Ethel, *The Building of the Michigan Road*, pg. 12. A thesis presented to Purdue University, June, 1902.

¹¹ Kuhn, C. L., *The Michigan Road*, pg. 33. A thesis presented to the Indiana University Department of History, Master of Arts program, 1926.

¹² Kuhn, C. L., *The Michigan Road*, pg. 63. A thesis presented to the Indiana University Department of History, Master of Arts program, 1926.

¹³ Montgomery, Ethel, *The Building of the Michigan Road*, pg. 15. A thesis presented to Purdue University, June, 1902.

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When the state turned over maintenance of the Michigan Road to the counties through which it passed, its condition warranted far more work than many counties could support. In Carroll County, maintenance of the road for most of its corridor through the county, from about the middle of Burlington north to the Carroll-Cass County lines was turned over to a private road company in 1867. Carroll County Commissioner minutes from November 11, 1867 state that the Logansport & Burlington Gravel (sometimes referred to as Turnpike) Road Company petitioned the commissioners for construction and operation of a gravel road. This was done in accordance with state legislation adopted for governing gravel, plank, and macadamized roads. The private company had organized June 3, 1867. Carroll County Commissioners granted the petition to construct and operate a gravel turnpike road upon the highway known as the Michigan Road at their November 11, 1867 meeting.¹⁴ The Michigan Road was then improved as a gravel road, including grades required at the crossing of Deer Creek in the late 1860s into the early 1870s.

The Dixie Highway

As the settlement period ended and the automobile became the mode of transportation on the Michigan Road, another important designation for the road developed. Carl G. Fisher of Indianapolis Motor Speedway fame is considered the founder of the Dixie Highway (1915). Fisher was the great promoter of both the Lincoln Highway (1913) and the Dixie Highway. Both routes significantly impacted Indiana and linked the state to the rest of the nation in both east-west and north-south directions.

On April 3, 1915, at a meeting in Chattanooga, the Dixie Highway Association was formed. Extensive debate about the location of the new highway led to a decision in May 1915 to give the Dixie two routes, a Western Division that carried travelers from Chicago into the south via Indianapolis, Nashville, and Atlanta, and an Eastern Division that would eventually have its northernmost terminus in Sault Sainte Marie, Michigan, and would take travelers on the Michigan Road beginning in South Bend, then through Plymouth, Rochester, Logansport, Michigantown, and Indianapolis. From there, the Dixie Highway followed what became Highway 37 to Martinsville, Bloomington, Bedford, Paoli, and then over to New Albany. Another line ran along the eastern border of Michigan from Sault Sainte Marie to Detroit, Toledo, Cincinnati, and Lexington. A connector following the National Road (modern US 40) was established from Indianapolis east to Dayton, Ohio.

The Dixie Highway is significant in Indiana as part of the evolution of the Michigan Road corridor from South Bend to Indianapolis, but also as an early auto and transportation route that linked those north of Indianapolis to New Albany via Bloomington, Bedford, and Paoli. Locals provided accommodations and services to tourist which contributed to the economic development of all communities touched by the route. The construction of the Dixie Highway was closely associated with the growing popularity of more cohesive road networks which began to emerge around 1910. This cohesive approach blended the interests of those who desired local

¹⁴ Carroll County Board of Commissioner Minutes November 11, 1867. Pg. 309

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farm-to-market roads with those who supported interstate road systems that would provide benefits for the auto tourism industry.¹⁵

In addition, the Lincoln Highway, Fisher's initial highway concept, followed the Michigan Road from downtown South Bend to just east of Rolling Prairie, where it left the Michigan Road on its way to LaPorte. These auto trails brought a new era of travel to the Michigan Road and with it a new type and style of architecture related to automobile travel. Roadside diners; cafés; auto garages and gas stations; motels; and recreational venues such as parks, drive-in theaters and restaurants became common sights and still exist in many locations along the route today.

20th Century Developments

The Indiana State Highway Commission designated most of the Michigan Road as State Road 29 in 1926. While other portions of the Michigan Road would be re-designated with other route numbers into the 1950s, the portion between Logansport and Boyleston (intersection with US 421) retains the designation of State Road 29. Because of the narrowness of State Road 29 through Sycamore Row, attempts were made to widen the roadbed and remove the trees. This led to public lobbying in favor of saving the allee (more in the section on Conservation), which ultimately led to a bypass of the allee in 1985-1986. The bypass is seen in the right side of photos 03-04.

CONSERVATION

The significance of Sycamore Row is less about how the trees came to grow along the embankment of the roadway, but more about efforts that started as early as 1925 to preserve the site. Without a doubt, a part of community organizing and lobbying to save Sycamore Row occurred because of the understood history of the site, as stated before, of the idea the trees sprouted from logs laid for a corduroy road. This firmly-held belief strengthened the public's resolve, but so did the site's scenic qualities. The tunnel-like appearance and nearness of the trees to the roadway are part of the collective memory of people who traveled the route with any frequency (photos 05-07). This section of road featuring the old iron Deer Creek Bridge with sycamores in the background was placed on a c. 1910 postcard and named "Lovers Lane."

The effort to save the trees, for both their scenic beauty and historical significance, first came at a time when highway beautification projects were being undertaken by groups such as the Indiana Federation of Women's Clubs, who flexed their muscle in the protection of the Indiana Dunes and were part of beautification projects along the Lincoln Highway. That organization was represented by over 600 clubs across the state in 1923.¹⁶ Through the 1920s, organizations associated with the Federation undertook small projects such as rest park creation and planting groups of native trees, particularly along the new alignment of the Lincoln Highway and Dixie

¹⁵ The Dixie Highway Across Indiana, Shupert-Arlick, Jan & Rein, Russell (2010).

¹⁶ Rimby, Susan. Mira Lloyd Dock and the Progressive Era Conservation Movement.

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Highway/Michigan Road in Indiana. The trees planted along these routes in Indiana were to honor heroes of the county through which the roads passed.¹⁷

The 1930s Highway Beautification Program

Conservation and road beautification efforts of the 1920s gave way to programs under Federal Relief projects in the 1930s. These included both conservation efforts undertaken by the Civilian Conservation Corps in state and national parks, as well as highway beautification projects. In late 1933, the Indiana State Highway Commission contracted George G. Holley, a landscape architect from Washington D. C. who was associated with the Federal Bureau of Public Roads, to visit the state and review its highways for landscape improvements. While it doesn't appear that Holley likely created specific landscape designs for each roadway that was a recipient, it seems that he recommended what highways should be part of the program, as well as species of trees and shrubs that should be planted.¹⁸ He also likely provided some general guidance regarding locations as there seems to be a pattern that emerges as one begins to discern the trees tied to the program.

The types of trees that were recommended were all native to the regions for planting. These included honey locusts, pin oak, sugar maple, sycamore, red oak, red maple, elm, as well as several flowering trees including crabapple, redbud, and hawthorn. With little doubt, Holley would have been familiar with noted landscape architect Jens Jensen, who wrote exhaustively on the use of native trees and shrubs for inclusion in landscape design. Jensen designed the "Ideal Section" of the Lincoln Highway in the early 1920s with this more natural approach to design, and greatly promoted the idea of highway beautification.

Part of Holley's recommendations included only projects along roads with rights-of-way 80-100' in width. This is important to note because during the early 1930s, state routes were being designated in greater numbers, and many were having their boundaries increased to 100 feet.¹⁹ Many of these road improvements and widenings were undertaken by men that were part of Federal Relief programs and it was estimated that by the time the program ended, over 1000 miles of roadways had been widened in Indiana. In most places, Michigan Road's historic boundaries, dating back to 1829, were 100' wide. An article from 1935 stated that Indiana was "reclaiming right-of-way given by Indian treaty" belonging to the Michigan Road (Old 31).²⁰ This work was being done in advance of the beautification program.

At first it seemed that the program would rely on donations of funds and materials, particularly from a variety of Garden Clubs and/or Women's Clubs in communities across the state.²¹ But by early 1935, funds were being directly distributed from Washington D.C. to the State Highway Commission specifically for vegetation and nursery stock. Labor was provided by men engaged with Relief programs. Beautification of the Michigan Road stretch through Marshall and Fulton Counties, according to an article in the *Argos Reflector* from March 1935, was the first segment

¹⁷ "The Pocket Periscope" *Evansville Courier and Journal* 23 Dec 1923. Pg. 8, Cols. 3-4

¹⁸ "Washington Expert to Landscape Roads" *The Indianapolis Star* 12 Dec 1933. Pg. 22, Col. 4

¹⁹ "Wider Highways are Needed" *Muncie Morning Star* 25 May 1935. Pg. 2, Col. 5

²⁰ "State Reclaiming Right-of-Way Given by Indian Treaty" *Argos Reflector* 8 Aug 1935. Pg. 1, Col. 1

²¹ "State Welcomes Aid of Civic Clubs in Beautifying Roads" *Franklin Evening Star* 2 Jan 1934. Pg. 4, Col. 8

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in the state completed.²² The project employed a crew of 35 men and included planting sycamore and elm (most of these succumbed to Dutch elm disease), as well as a variety of flowering trees and was anticipated “to make this strip of highway the most beautiful in the state.” It seems obvious from existing trees that the program extended north of Plymouth as well. Many of these trees are extant in Fulton, Kosciusko, and Marshall Counties.

An April 1935 article entitled “Workmen Engaged in Roadside Plantings” cites there were seventeen locations identified in Indiana for the program, among those were sections of Highway 29 (Michigan Road, southeast of Indianapolis) and Highway 30 east of Fort Wayne. The article references fourteen locations were planted the previous year.²³ By September 1935, additional locations were identified and included Highway 31 near Seymour, Highway 29 (Michigan Road) near Kirclin, Highway 30 from New Haven to the state line (east), and Highway 6 near Gary. By 1936, additional sections included Highway 30 between Warsaw and Columbia City, Highway 30 between Plymouth and Atwood, and Highway 31 between Franklin and Greenwood.²⁴ A *South Bend Tribune* article on March 22, 1936, stated that the Plymouth-Atwood planting had started along Highway 30 by men employed under Relief programs from both Marshall and Kosciusko Counties.²⁵

Into the early 1940s, roadside parks soon joined the highway landscape. In 1937, the Indiana General Assembly authorized the establishment and maintenance of roadside parks, which often featured shelters. More than forty had been built by 1939 and more than a dozen were planned for completion by 1941.²⁶ Carroll Countians lining Highway 29 took pride in the appearance of the corridor, as is noted from a beautification effort during the mid-1950s. By 1956, farmers along the route were made members of the Rural Beautifying Association to encourage improvements, particularly to fences from the Deer Creek Bridge north to the Carroll County line. The idea was promoted by Albert A. Newer of Washington Township who encourage painting fences, gates, and utility poles white. Gates were to have a bright red top board. Farmers were also encouraged to place their names on barns lining the route. The project was to be completed by the fall of 1956 and include a speech on the history of the Michigan Road.²⁷ Newer was no stranger to beautification efforts on the route. He built the West Sonora Arch at the north edge of Deer Creek about 1918. West Sonora was the name the village at Deer Creek was platted under, however, the post office name of Deer Creek is what was held by its residents. The arch was restored in 2017.²⁸ The Highway Beautification Act of 1965 led to federal standards for treatment of the nation’s highways.

Saving Sycamore Row

A year before the state highway commission designated this section of the Michigan Road as Route 29, a brief mention of the sycamore allee is made in an *Indianapolis Star* article

²² “Plant Trees and Shrubs on Road 31” *Argos Reflector* 13 March 1935. Pg. 1

²³ “Workmen Engaged in Tree Planting” *Culver Citizen* 10 April 1935. Pg. 4, Col. 4

²⁴ “Take Bids Friday on Materials for Roadside Planting” *Franklin Evening Star* 24 Sept 1935. Pg. 5, Col. 1

²⁵ “Plymouth-Atwood Planting Started” *South Bend Tribune* 22 March 1936. Pg. 6, Col. 7

²⁶ “New Roadside Parks to Serve Motorists on Indiana Highways” *Hancock Democrat* 21 Nov 1940. Pg. 2, Col. 1

²⁷ “Farmers Plan Beautification of Lands Along Old Michigan Road” *Delphi Citizen* 12 Jan 1956.

²⁸ “Restoration returns historic West Sonora Arch to like new” *Carroll County Comet* 18 Oct 2017. Pgs. 1, 7

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highlighting news from the Indiana Federation of (Women's) Clubs. Under "Carroll County Clubs Meet in Second Session" this statement is made: "It was reported that a row of sycamore trees were to be destroyed in paving the Michigan road and resolutions were adopted to plan measures for saving these trees, which are a beautiful spot in the county and a well-known landmark."²⁹

This article was written in 1925, which was just four years after another article was written concerning the origin of the trees which pointed to their planting for bank stabilization in 1870-1871. That article begins with "Everybody who has traveled the Burlington road to the south has seen and admired the rows of big sycamore trees which are on either side of the road at Deer Creek."³⁰ It is clear that the organizing and conservation efforts made following the 1925 article proved successful as the road was paved and the trees remained.

In 1935, a different account of the origin of the trees was recorded in the *Indianapolis Star*. An 86 year-old gentleman named John McCoy from Logansport was interviewed concerning his four-year journey with horse and buggy visiting each state of the Union. McCoy had been a teamster and hauled logs for building corduroy roads around Logansport. The article states "He backs up the statement of many old-timers that the two rows of sycamore trees on State Road 29 grew in their lines from the ends of submerged corduroy flooring. He thinks he may have hauled some of those logs, although he admits that was a long time ago."³¹ This origin story was given some credence when the state highway commission cut grade at the Fouts Farm (immediately south and on the west side of State Road 29) in 1939. During grade work, which cut the hill in front of the Fouts residence by about three feet, four sycamore logs were uncovered "which were thought to be some of those in the old corduroy road, one of the first in this part of Indiana, over what was then called the Michigan Pike."³² The article goes on to state that dirt was being filled in along each side of the road by the avenue of sycamore trees which Carroll County clubs have fought to preserve for their historic value.

Further media attention aided in this origin story, even before the logs were uncovered at the Fouts Farm. *Outdoor Indiana*, a publication by the Indiana Department of Natural Resources, featured Sycamore Row in their February 1938 magazine with a full-page feature story, with photo of the sycamores (1938) with the old iron bridge over Deer Creek in the background. The article headline, across the top of the page in bold border, reads "Sentinel Sycamores Sprouted from Logs Placed in Mud Holes On the Road." The article provides additional local-tradition/lore that the trees were cut by farmers to lay across mud holes during the winter, then sprouted the following spring. The article also mentions a similar accidental allee of trees on the National Road (Highway 40) west of Brazil, Indiana. The article states "At various times agitation has developed for the removal of the trees on the ground that they formed a traffic hazard and should be taken down to permit widening the roadway. These proposals have been

²⁹ "Carroll County Clubs Meet in Second Session", *Indianapolis Star* 14 June 1925, pg. 12 col. 5.

³⁰ "Trees Half Century Old Still Stand" *Logansport Pharos-Tribune*, 14 May 1921

³¹ "Recalls Jaunt on Birthday" *Indianapolis Sunday Star*, 6 January 1935. Col. 5

³² "Deer Creek Road Corduroy Road Found at Taylor Fouts Place" *The Logansport Press*, 1 September 1939

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defeated and the trees have been preserved with the support of state officials and motorists who appreciate the scenic beauty of the trees.”³³

Again, while the origin of the trees is not the qualifying point of significance, the legend of the trees is no doubt what aided in the continual effort for their protection, and is therefore necessary to highlight. Again in published histories (both newspaper and book-form), the corduroy origin was underscored in 1950 and 1954. The 1950 article entitled “Legend Surrounds Deer Creek Trees” provides a good account of the condition of the trees at the time of publication as well as the history of construction of the turnpike. At the time of the article, there were 36 trees on the west side of the road and 56 on the east side. Charles McCloskey, interviewed for the article, recounts that he remembered the trees growing along the road in 1868. McCloskey wrote a record of this to the Carroll County Historical Society which reads “In 1850, the Michigan Road Co. headed by Cyrus Taber, of Logansport, held the contract to lay a plank road from Logansport to Burlington. They built a bridge over Deer Creek and laid logs as a foundation for the roadbed south of Deer Creek in the lowland. These logs, no doubt, were the source of the Sycamores.”³⁴

This origin story was refuted in the same article through an interview with Dr. J. J. Stanton of Logansport, the grandson of Dr. J. M. Justice who was the president of the Logansport and Burlington Turnpike Company that laid the gravel road in 1888 (this is twenty years after the county’s agreement with the turnpike company). Stanton states that “the trees were planted along the road so the filled-in place wouldn’t be washed away. Dr. Justice dug the small trees out of the woods which grow nearby and planted them along the edge of the road there.”³⁵ Still, another individual interviewed in the article stated his grandfather, who lived near the creek, told him several times the trees sprouted from logs. Carroll County historian Dora Thomas Mayhill also recorded the story about the trees sprouting from logs in 1850 in her 1954 history of the county, Postal History. In it she states that old residents recalled that by 1868 the sycamores were good sized saplings.³⁶

While the celebrated trees were awarded an Indiana Historic Bureau sign telling of their story in 1963 (see right side of photo 02 for new sign), by the late 1970s, calls for improved safety on State Road 29 took center stage with the death of a Silver Lake man in 1978. Walter Ault’s vehicle skidded into one of the trees then burst into flames, killing Ault.³⁷ In 1979, the Carroll County Historical Society requested that the Indiana State Highway Commission provide assurance that Sycamore Row would not be destroyed by highway expansion then or in the future. Ten years prior, the group recommended a historic rest park be established at the site, but no action was taken. The new effort, dubbed “Save the Sycamores” circulated petitions to save the trees. In a letter to the highway commissioner, the president of the historical society noted several nearby features of historic value, along with the heritage of the trees, as a reason to maintain the sycamores. These included the location of the first post office in Deer Creek south

³³ “Sentinel Sycamores Sprouted from Logs Placed in Mud Holes On the Road” *Outdoor Indiana*, February 1938, pg. 29

³⁴ “Legend Surrounds Deer Creek Trees” *Logansport Pharos-Tribune*, 12 April 1950, pg. 1

³⁵ “Legend Surrounds Deer Creek Trees” *Logansport Pharos-Tribune*, 12 April 1950, pg. 1

³⁶ Mayhill, pgs. 334-335

³⁷ “Truck Driver Killed at Sycamore Lane” *Logansport Pharos-Tribune*, 14 August 1978, pg. 1, cols. 4-5

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of the site, the location of a toll house near the site, the Fouts farm being the test plot for the introduction of soybeans in the United States, and the grave of a Revolutionary soldier nearby.³⁸

The 1980s saw the most significant action and conservation which proved to save the trees. As a reflection of American sentiment, the trees were adorned with yellow ribbons in 1981 to honor the American hostages held in Iran. In 1983, the Indiana Department of Highways held a public meeting concerning the fate of the trees with plans to build a new bridge over Deer Creek. As planned, the bridge would be east of the original structure, but tree removal was still planned in order to make the alignment work. The trees were to be removed since the state deemed them a safety hazard. Several trees had been removed, but opposition caused the state to stop removal. The hearing was held in the basement of Deer Creek Methodist Church, just up the road from the sycamores.³⁹ By 1985, an agreement had been reached to bypass Sycamore Row to the east to align with a new bridge and let the trees remain. In 1985, there were 22 trees along the west edge and 32 trees along the east edge, some a mere 10-15 inches from the roadway itself.⁴⁰ The resulting bypass was constructed in 1985-1986 (seen in the right side of photos 02-04). Since that time, local groups have maintained and, where necessary, replanted sycamores.

In 2009, efforts to have the entire length of the Michigan Road adopted into the network of state scenic byways began. The road was named the Historic Michigan Road Scenic Byway by proclamation of the Lieutenant Governor in 2011. Sycamore Row features prominently in the byway's nomination and corridor management plan. As a way to honor what are commonly referred to simply as "the Sycamores" and those who fought to retain this unique site along the byway, the Historic Michigan Road Association bestows an honorary award named "Tall Sycamore of the Road" upon individuals contributing to the history and preservation of the Michigan Road. The first recipient of the award was Mrs. Juanita (Stutz) Hunter (1922-2018), a former Logansport school teacher and chief historian of the Michigan Road. Ms. Hunter's archives including her research and written history of the road are housed at the Indiana Historical Society.

Developmental History/Additional historic context information

N/A

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Carroll County Board of Commissioner Minutes November 11, 1867. Pg. 309

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³⁸ "Carroll historical unit launches campaign to 'Save the Sycamores'" *Kokomo Tribune*, 24 November 1979. Pg. 18, cols. 1-2

³⁹ "Trees Fate to be Aired" *The Indianapolis News*, 28 June 1983. Pg. 1, cols. 4-5

⁴⁰ "Points of Interest" *The Indianapolis Star*, 8 September 1985. Pg. 3B, col. 1

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"Carroll historical unit launches campaign to 'Save the Sycamores'" *Kokomo Tribune*, 24 November 1979

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"State Reclaiming Right-of-Way Given by Indian Treaty" *Argos Reflector* 8 Aug 1935

"State Welcomes Aid of Civic Clubs in Beautifying Roads" *Franklin Evening Star* 2 Jan 1934

"Take Bids Friday on Materials for Roadside Planting" *Franklin Evening Star* 24 Sept 1935

"The Pocket Periscope" *Evansville Courier and Journal* 23 Dec 1923. Pg. 8, Cols. 3-4

"Trees Fate to be Aired" *The Indianapolis News*, 28 June 1983

"Trees Half Century Old Still Stand" *Logansport Pharos-Tribune*, 14 May 1921

"Truck Driver Killed at Sycamore Lane" *Logansport Pharos-Tribune*, 14 August 1978

"Washington Expert to Landscape Roads" *The Indianapolis Star* 12 Dec 1933

"Wider Highways are Needed" *Muncie Morning Star* 25 May 1935

"Workmen Engaged in Tree Planting" *Culver Citizen* 10 April 1935

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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

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Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 015-158-00035

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Approx. 3.5 acres

Use the UTM system

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone:16 | Easting: 551505 | Northing: 4495482 |
| 2. Zone: 16 | Easting: 551500 | Northing: 4495095 |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Note that the two above UTM points describe a line that is roughly along the centerline of the nominated area described below.

A herein defined parcel of land in Washington Township, Carroll County, Indiana, described as follows:

The south of edge of said parcel beginning at an east-west line 51' north of the centerline of Carroll County Road E 400 N. The width of the nominated parcel extends 30' (thirty feet) to either side of the west right-of-way line of parcel owned by INDOT; said INDOT parcel being arc-shaped with an eastern right-of-way line on the east side of the active route of SR 29. Said west line of the INDOT parcel corresponds to the centerline of Sycamore Row (old State Road 29). The nominated area extends 30' (thirty feet) to either side of centerline of old State Road 29, for a total of 60' (sixty feet) in width. The 60' wide nominated parcel extends from the previously defined point north to the banks of the Deer Creek, a length of about 1,261' (one thousand two hundred sixty-one feet) and includes the old roadbed and flanking sycamore trees.

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Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary follows the original alignment of State Road 29 (old State Road 29) between its intersection with County Road E 400 N to the south bank of Deer Creek. This is a sixty foot corridor which contains the historic Michigan Road roadbed and allee of sycamore trees as preserved by the bypass of State Road 29 to the east. Due to the manner in which the deed for the INDOT property and the deed for the adjoining land trust property to the west were recorded, two property owners jointly own the land, the centerline of old SR 29 being the divider. A 25' (twenty-five foot) easement for ingress and egress, with centerline on the old SR 29 alignment, is noted in each deed. The devised boundary of 30' on either side of the centerline firmly accommodates all the trees on both sides of the old roadbed. Said easement is described in full in Instrument 200700003737 DR Book 68, Page 430.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Kurt West Garner
organization: Friends of Carroll County Parks, Inc.
street & number: 12954 6th Road
city or town: Plymouth state: IN zip code: 46563
e-mail: kwgarner@kwgarner.com
telephone: 574-780-1423
date: November 23, 2021

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

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Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Sycamore Row
City or Vicinity: Deer Creek
County: Carroll State: Indiana
Photographer: Kurt West Garner
Date Photographed: November 22, 2021

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking north into the allee from near the old road's intersection with State Road 29

1 of 8.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking north in the allee with the historic bureau sign on right

2 of 8.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking north in the allee from the south third of the site

3 of 8.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking north in the allee from the middle of the site

4 of 8.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking south in the allee from the north end of the site

5 of 8.

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Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking south in the allee from the north third of the site

6 of 8.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking south in the allee from the middle of the site

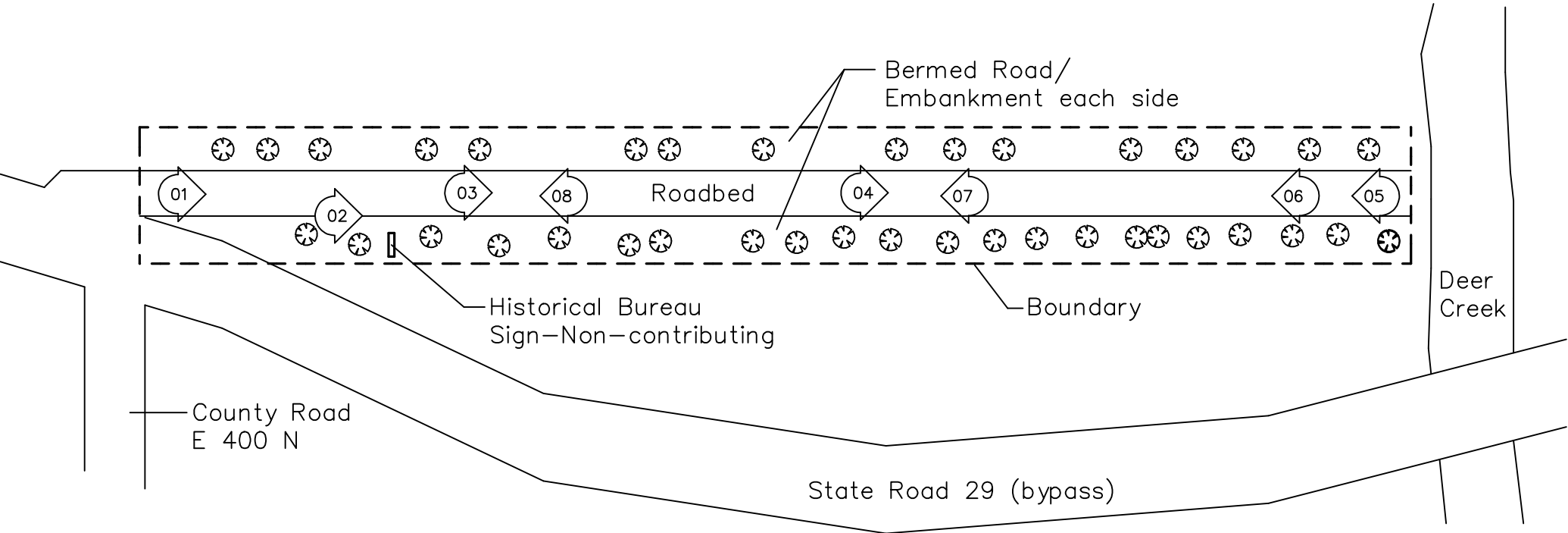
7 of 8.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking south in the allee from the south third of the site

8 of 8.

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.460 et seq.).

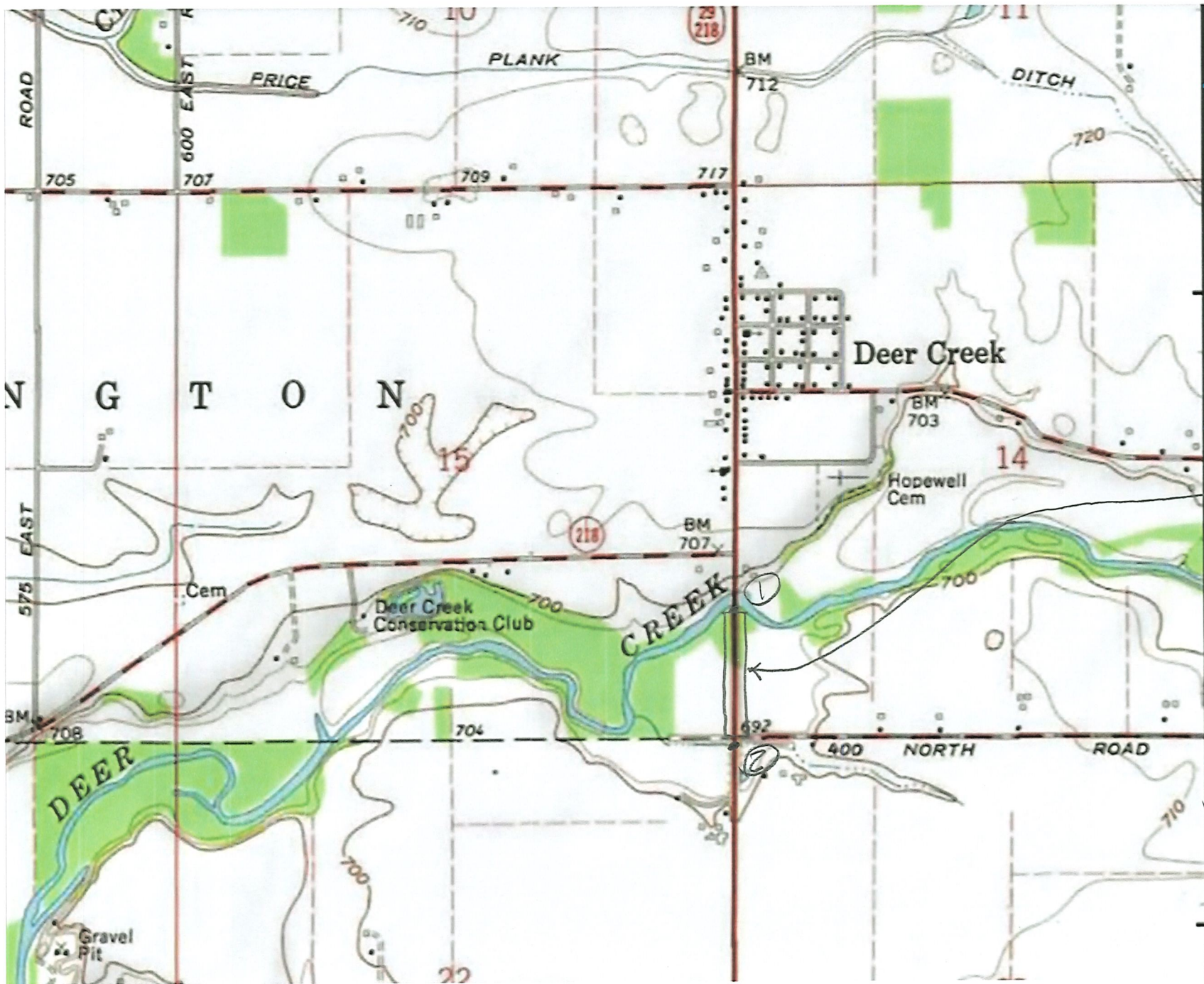
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



Sycamore Row
 National Register of Historic Places
 Site Sketch Map
 Deer Creek-Carroll County, IN

 = Photographs





4497000 m
40° 37' N
4496
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N

Sycamore Row
NATIONAL REGISTER
OF
HISTORIC PLACES

CARROLL COUNTY
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TWO WAD
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① 16 551505
4495482

② 16 551500
4495095



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