NPS Form 10-900
(Rev. 8-86)

OMB No. 1024-0018

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 of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Noblesville Commercial Historic District

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number Roughly bounded by Clinton, 10th, Maple and 8th Streets, Noblesville [N/A] not for publication

city, town Noblesville [N/A] vicinity

state Indiana code IN county Hamilton code 057 zip code 46060

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
[X] private	[ ] building(s)	54	10 buildings
[X] public-local	[X] district	0	0 sites
[ ] public-State	[ ] site	0	0 structures
[ ] public-Federal	[ ] structure	0	2 objects
	[ ] object	54	12 Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 2

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] 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 [X] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet.

Patrick K. Ralston — 10-29-91

Signature of certifying official — Date

Indiana Department of Natural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property [ ] meets [ ] does not meet the National Register criteria. [ ] See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this 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

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE
GOVERNMENT/courthouse

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE
GOVERNMENT/ courthouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN/Italianate
LATE VICTORIAN/ Gothic
LATE VICTORIAN/ Renaissance

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE/ sandstone
walls BRICK
STONE/limestone
roof SLATE
other METAL/cast iron

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Noblesville is the county seat of Hamilton County, today one of the fastest growing and prosperous counties in Indiana. Located on the east bank of the White River in the center of Noblesville township, the city is slightly to the south and east of the true center of the county. One major highway, State Route 32, passes through the district along Conner Street. Noblesville's current population of 17,655 reflects the outlying suburban expansion that has resulted from the growth of Indianapolis, 22 miles to the southwest of Noblesville.

As is true for the majority of county seats in the state, the commercial area focuses on the public square (Square Number 10), here bounded by Logan, Ninth, Conner, and Eighth Streets. Three solid blocks of commercial buildings, nearly all of them contributing to the district's historic character, surround the north, east and south sides of the public square (Photos 2, 4, 8, 9, and 11). Because there are no vacant lots resulting from demolition, the density that has existed since the late 1880s has been maintained to the present day and the pattern of continuous facade lines remains intact. In 1990 construction was begun on the county's new judicial center in the square to the west of the courthouse. All of the existing buildings along the west side of Eighth Street were demolished to clear the site. Now that construction for the new building is progressing, the "urban wall" enclosing the square is beginning to take on definition again.

The entire commercial district lies within the bounds of the original plat of 1823, which covered about 75 acres and established the orthogonal grid street pattern. The land chosen for the original plat is a flat site; there is no change in elevation within the bounds of the district, and no original natural features remain. Each square was quadrisected in a cross pattern by 16-1/2 foot wide alleys with the quadrants divided into two lots 66 feet wide by 132 feet long. Although the residential sections of the original plat maintained these lot sizes with primarily one house per lot, in the commercial area, these lots were subdivided irregularly according to the building planned for the property.

[X] See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:
☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally

Applicable National Register Criteria ☒ A ☐ B ☒ C ☐ D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) ☐ A ☐ B ☐ C ☐ D ☐ E ☐ F ☐ G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)	Period of Significance	Significant Dates
Architecture	1875-1931	N/A
Commerce		

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Significant Person
N/A

Architect/Builder
May, Edwin
Parsons, William R.

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

Statement of Criterion and Area of Significance

The Noblesville Commercial Historic District possesses local significance in the areas of "architecture" and "commerce." Although Noblesville experienced remarkable growth during the gas boom years beginning in 1887, its commercial district underwent steady and progressive growth from its early pioneer village days through the onset of the Depression. Noblesville has continued to maintain its significance as a county seat and marketplace town, centered in a rich agricultural area, despite the pressures of surrounding suburbanization. The buildings in the district are tangible evidence of Noblesville's prosperity in the late 19th and early 20th century and are therefore elegible under Criterion A. The district also meets Criterion C, embodying distinctive characteristics of type and period as well as representing a significant and distinguishable entity.

☒ See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

[X] See continuation sheet

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:
- [X] State historic preservation office
- [ ] Other State agency
- [ ] Federal agency
- [ ] Local government
- [ ] University
- [ ] Other

Specify repository: Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 14

UTM References

	Zone	Easting	Northing
A	16	584260	4433280
B	16	584280	4432900
C	16	584040	4432900
D	16	584040	4433260

[ ] See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

[X] See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

[X] See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mary Ellen Gadski, Architectural Historian, consultant to:
organization Noblesville Preservation Alliance date May 1, 1991
street & number 4431 N. Illinois Street telephone 317-283-5668
city or town Indianapolis state Indiana zip code 46208

All but three of the buildings in the district are commercial in function, with the courthouse, sheriff's residence/jail (now a museum), and 1931 post office (soon to house municipal courts) institutional in function. One building was originally designed to combine commercial/residential functions (the Richwine Block, Photo 18); however, many of the commercial buildings now have residential units in their upper stories where offices and shops were originally located. The First Christian Church has recently changed to commercial use.

The district does not retain any elements of its early "street furniture;" there are no hitching posts, carriage steps, street lamps, fences nor street clocks that survive from the district's period of significance. Recently new "period" street lights, which are generally sympathetic to the character of the district, have been installed. When new concrete sidewalks were laid in the summer of 1990, some of the surviving 19th-century "Main Street" pavers were incorporated as accent strips within the concrete. There are no "objects" nor "sites" among the historic resources. Surprisingly the public square lacks statuary; however, it must be remembered that there were formerly sculptural elements adorning the courthouse itself. The war memorial and bell house on the courthouse grounds do not date to the district's period of significance. The bell, which was saved from the 1870s County Poor Home on the outskirts of town, does not meet the criteria of contributing objects as specified in the National Register guidelines.

Of the 64 buildings within the boundaries of the district, 54 can be considered as contributing to the overall historic and architectural character of the district. This high percentage of contributing buildings has been fieldchecked and verified against a Sanborn map surveyed in June 1933, near the end year of the district's period of significance. (See the last paragraph of *Boundary Justification*.) Non-contributing buildings are indicated on the sketch map by shading.

The vast majority of the district's buildings, 45 in all, are two-story brick structures. Of the 10 one-story buildings, six are non-contributing buildings built (or significantly altered) after the period of significance. There are nine three-story buildings in the district, the largest of which is the courthouse. As originally constructed, the largest commercial building was the three-story Odd

Fellows Hall on the south side of Conner Street. Some time after 1933 the western third of the structure was demolished, leaving only the sections at 835-839 standing. Currently the largest commercial building is the Lacy Block, 848-856 Logan Street (Photo 3) on the north side of the square. This building extends its full height all the way back to the alley and appears from Logan Street to be even larger than its full three stories plus attic.

There follows a brief history and architectural description of 15 buildings selected largely because of their architectural merit. These examples of diverse architectural styles range in date from 1875 to 1931. The opening paragraph summarizes the history, focusing upon the original construction and major owners and/or tenants. The descriptions address scale, structure, plan, materials, design and stylistic features. For the convenience of viewing the accompanying photographs while reading the descriptions, the buildings are listed numerically by map number. Starting at the north boundary, the numbers generally run north to south. Along Logan and Conner Streets, the numbers run from west to east.

Indiana Union Traction Company Station Photo 1
181-199 Ninth Street

The Indiana Union Traction Company was the largest and oldest of Indiana's interurban lines. When its electrified passenger cars first traveled through Hamilton County in November 1903, two 19th-century residences were still located on the site of this station. The building was constructed in 1906 from plans supplied by the Superintendent of the Roadway's office in Anderson. (These same plans were later used for the interurban stations in Tipton and Hartford City.) In 1910 during the railroad's heyday, 35 trains a day passed through Noblesville. According to the company's magazine in March of that year, it was considered "as far as traffic concerned one of the banner stations of the line." In 1930 the line merged into the Indiana Railroad; by 1941 all lines had been abandoned. The separate commercial space at the southeast corner of the building was used by a variety of tenants, including the United States Express Company and George Kosto's Candy Kitchen. In later years the building served as the passenger station for the ABC Bus Company.

The two-story brick portion of the building fronting Ninth Street contained the passenger station, administrative offices, and commercial rental space while the longer, one-story portion at the rear housed the freight depot. (Sometime after 1933 an addition was made to the rear, extending the building back to the alley, and the freight platform along Clinton Street was removed and infilled.) While the first floor of the front section has undergone substantial change with the removal of its cast-iron storefront and loss of the arches over the north facade's windows, the second story remains essentially as built. Its facade is organized into three sections by banded brick quoins echoed at parapet level. The parapet's central eyebrow window is glazed similarly to the former multi-paned arched transoms over the first floor, north elevation windows. Originally the station was not painted, and today's paint scheme masks some of the building's interesting detailing, such as the splayed stone lintels over second story windows. Above these windows, an egg-and-dart molding in galvanized iron serves as a cornice.

Lacy Block
848-856 Logan Street

Photo 3

A stone tablet at the center of the facade records the name of the man who constructed this building in 1888: Albert H. Lacy (1842-1900), a prosperous farmer and stock dealer who was born in Hamilton County. Although it was known as the Lacy Block in the 19th century, it is also known as the Knights of Pythias Building owing to the other commemorative tablet at attic level. The 55-by-65-foot hall of the Bernice Lodge (Number 120 of the Knights) was located on the third floor of the building from 1888 through the 1930s. In a striking example of long-term commercial usage, the ground floor unit on the west side has always been occupied by a hardware store. This history began with the Griffin Brothers (Thomas and George) in 1888, continued to its early 20th-century successor, S. E. Hardy and Company, and spans through other hardware concerns to the present-day Kirk Hardware store begun in 1956 by Roy Kirk. The east side unit has had a multiplicity of uses, beginning with a furniture store, changing to a "motion picture house" in the early 19-teens (variously called the U. S. Theatre, the Star Theatre and the Logan Theatre), and including a Sears store after the movies left in the mid 1950s. The second floor of the Lacy Block contained professional offices, such as that of attorneys Kane & Kane, and tradesmen's shops (tailors and the like).

Although this brick building appears to be four stories tall. the top row of blind windows is actually a parapet masking the decked roof behind it. From the second floor window sills up, the facade remains intact and in an excellent state of preservation. And although the ground floor units have undergone remodeling, the building's cast-iron storefront still survives behind chases and panels. The seven-bay-wide facade is organized in three sections--west unit, central stairway, and east unit--by the projecting piers that rise from the top of the storefront up through the corbelled cornice. (There never was any surmounting element, such as a parapet fan above this cornice, as one might expect). All windows were originally of segmental arch form, varying in height at each story. The second and third floor windows feature T-form gauged brick lintels with terra-cotta rondels. Connecting these terra-cotta decorative pieces and the windows' stone sills are single courses of hard-burned black brick, which provide an interesting element of polychromed effect. Another

detail of note is the terra-cotta stringcourse of foliar design above the third floor windows.

Evans Block
864-870 Logan Street

Photo 4

The date molded on this building's parapet documents its construction in 1889, when it replaced earlier commercial units on this site. A late-19th-century pamphlet with photos of Noblesville's business blocks labelled the owner as "Evans," but it is not known which member of this locally prominent family was responsible for its construction. From the building's opening until 1910, the First National Bank was located in the east unit of the ground floor. When First National relocated to its new quarters at the northeast corner of Ninth and Logan Streets, the American National Bank moved in and was located here until the late 1920s. Frank E. Ross' Northside Drugstore occupied the west unit in the 1890s and was succeeded by a series of druggists, including William E. Axline and R. S. Truitt.

The exuberance of detailing displayed in this two-story commercial structure is quite exceptional, especially when the building is compared with some of its more staid neighbors. The employment of a galvanized iron front, a technological advance in the late 1880s, made much of this detailing possible. The ground floor contains the standard two storefronts separated by a central doorway to the second floor. The cast-iron piers of the west unit survive in excellent condition and bear the maker's shield of Hetherington & Berner of Indianapolis. Somewhat unusual for a 19th-century commercial building in Indiana, the second floor exhibits a loggia. The placement of the fluted columns and paneled balustrade pedestals reflects the asymmetrical double-hung windows behind. The small, square panes that outline the upper window sash are typically found on residential buildings of the Queen Anne style. The greatest amount of ornamentation occurs at the cornice and frieze, highlighted today by a contrasting paint scheme. Between the evenly spaced projecting brackets are bands of pressed metal ornamentation: alternating rondels and small brackets above an unusual scroll motif. The only detailing present in 19th-century photos that has disappeared are the finials that once rose above the corner frieze blocks, and the scrolled volutes formerly at the sides of the

pedimented parapet. The west unit has recently undergone some sympathetic restoration and features an interior with pressed metal ceiling.

Ourslers' Big Four Store Photo 4
884 Logan Street

When constructed in 1882, this building's address was 4 West Logan Street as is recalled by the numeral '4' in the stone tablet at the top of the facade. It appears to be the sole survivor of a three-unit commercial building that may have experienced a fire. By 1889 the Evans Block next door had replaced the two other units. Charles Oursler (1837-1913) settled in Hamilton County in 1860 and began his boot and shoe business in 1876. The store was variously known as Ourslers' Big Four, C. Oursler & Co., and later was continued after its founder's death by Frank D. Oursler. Ourslers' shoe store was associated with this building for more than 50 years.

Only 15 feet wide, this two-story brick building extended back 120 feet when first built and now extends to the alley. The original storefront featured tall columns and large plate glass windows but was apparently remodeled in the mid 1930s when the store's function changed from a shoe store to a women's clothing store (The Craycraft Annex). Above the first floor, the facade has not changed. The second floor exhibits three windows with rowlock arches; the center one is considerably narrower than the other two and is recessed behind a horseshoe arch. Above the three windows is a stringcourse of geometric terra cotta. Most of the building's detailing occurs at the corbelled cornice, which features lines of diagonally placed brick. The stone tablet mentioned above is placed above the center window within a segmental arch formed by the cornice. Photos from the late 19th century show that many of the decorative elements--the cornice, the stringcourse, the lintels, etc.--were painted white (or another light color) to contrast with the brick.

U. S. Post Office Photo 6
931-937 Logan Street

A 19th-century dwelling stood on this site until 1906 when this structure was built. In October 1902 city mail delivery had been established for Noblesville,

and at that time, the post office occupied No. 22 of the North Side Block. It is not clear whether the building was constructed by the government as a new post office, or whether it was built on speculation as a commercial rental property and then leased for post office use. The post office remained at this location from 1906 until 1931 when a new building was constructed on South Ninth Street. Sometime before 1914, a matching addition was added to the west side of the building and was occupied by various commercial concerns beginning with a drugstore.

A simple rectangle in its plan, this 30-foot-tall, two-story brick building consists of four bays corresponding to the four storefronts. The symmetrical parapet over the original three sections distinguishes this portion of the building from its later addition to the west side. The storefront for number 939 (far left in the photo) appears to be the best preserved of the four. On the second floor, windows occur in groups of three with adjoining stone lintels. The building's detailing is very spare. The stone stringcourse above the second floor windows is one of its finer features.

Castor Block Photo 7
960-972 Logan Street

Two small houses remained on this site until about 1905. Since they were labeled "old" on the 1892 Sanborn map, they probably dated to Noblesville's earliest period of settlement. The stone tablet of the facade records that a member of the Castor family constructed this building in 1909, probably for commercial rental purposes since the earliest known tenants were not associated with the Castors. The larger portion of the building at the west (960) first housed Carl O. Hare's garage, which functioned as an auto showroom in the 1920s and later was used as a hardware store. The smaller unit (972) was the home of the Worthington Brothers' [John M. and A. D.] Model Meat Market into the 1930s. An iron-clad smokehouse was originally located behind the rear wall of the market.

Nothing remains of the original first floor facade to identify the fact that two

separate businesses were located here. Although the second floor facade is in an excellent state of preservation, it does not give any indication of how different the two sections of the building were. The garage section, constructed with a concrete floor, extended back to the alley, while the meat market was only about half the garage's depth. The nine identical windows of the second floor, grouped in threes, are double-hung units with rowlock arches. The corbelled cornice harkens back to many 19th-century commercial buildings in the district.

Castor Block/Cherokee Lodge Photo 7
984-996 Logan Street

During the 1890s this building was known as the Castor Block, being the original commercial building constructed by a member of the Castor family. It was built in 1891, as documented by the parapet tablet, and was a joint venture with the Cherokee Tribe, Lodge Number 96, of the Independent Order of Red Men, which had been organized in February 1890. The fraternal organization purchased ownership of the third floor for a sum of $3,500. The ground floor was divided for two tenants, the first known ones being a grocery store at the west and a restaurant at the east. The Clark Supply House, a plumbing business, was one of the longest-term tenants of the building, residing in the east from the mid 1890s until some time after 1923 when Ludlum Whippet Auto Sales & Service moved in. Professional offices, tradesmen's shops, the Thayer photo studio and a gymnasium once occupied the second floor. For some time in the mid 1890s, the office of the Mayor of Noblesville was located in the Castor Block.

The first architectural feature that one notices about this large, three-story brick building is its stepped gable. As discussed in the section on architectural significance, the Castor Block was not the first building to employ this feature but it is a prominent example. The lower portion of the six-bay-wide cast-iron storefronts on Logan Street are still in place underneath the recent shingled shed roof addition. Maker's plates of the Architectural Iron Works of Muncie, Indiana, survive on the wider fluted columns flanking the front door. Proportionally the storefronts were *very* tall, extending above the current shed roof. All of the upper windows on the Logan Street facade are double-hung units.

recessed within stilted arches. Decorative inserts in a sunburst motif occur over the windows. The string courses of diagonally set brick at sill level were originally more prominent before the building was painted; however, the lines of the corbelled brick accenting the stepped gable remain distinct. The semicircular inset tablet that occurs above the center bay of blind windows contains the inscription: "7th Sun Snow Moon G S D 399." The rear section of the building is only two stories tall.

Wild Block
16-24 N. Ninth Street

Photo 9

Once again an inscribed tablet on the facade documents the building's construction date (1880) and builder (Leonard Wild). A news item in an April 1880 issue of *American Architect & Building News* identified its architects: Huebner & Mueller of Indianapolis. The 1915 county history memorialized Wild (1834-1909) with the statement: "It is safe to say that no man has done more for the city of Noblesville than Leonard Wild did during his career of more than half a century." A native of Ulm, Germany, Wild settled in Noblesville in 1855. In true Horatio Alger fashion, he rose from farm hand to one of the most successful businessmen in Hamilton County. According to the county history quoted above, he was "the merchant prince and the largest builder of his home city," spending over $100,000 in erecting two opera houses, schools, several commercial buildings, and numerous residences. This building, also known at the East Side Business Block, marked his entry into the dry goods business with his son Frank. Originally their store occupied the entire ground floor. After Leonard Wild retired in 1897, a clothing business was then continued in the south half by the partnership of William Lowther and Samuel Tescher. The north side unit was occupied as a drugstore/bookstore for nearly three decades by Truitt & Son. Around 1910 the Indiana Gas Light Company moved in to this space. In the late 1920s the A & P Tea Company was located in the building.

This two-story, double-unit commercial building is distinguished by its stone facade and fine detailing. The storefronts were restored in 1990 to near original configuration (with the exception of the narrow center windows). The four tall, cast-iron columns are original. At second floor level, all elements are original except for the six double-hung windows which were recently replaced.

The center pair of windows lack the segmental surrounds of the other four and are surmounted by the inscription tablet and another pair of smaller windows at attic level. The facade's most interesting feature is the composition that rises from the center of the parapet. Elements above the stone portion have been reconstructed based on old photographs. Likewise the two urn-like ornaments that rise above the corners of the parapet are also new. Color has been used quite effectively in the restoration to accent and highlight delicate ornamentation.

Sheriff's Residence and Jail
818 Conner Street

Photo 10

In June 1875 construction was begun on a new jail for Hamilton County with an attached jailor's dwelling. William R. Parsons of Terre Haute, Indiana, was its architect and superintendent of construction; Williams, Giger & Durfee of Noblesville, which operated a planing mill in town, was its contractor; Thomas & Richter of Indianapolis furnished the jail's patented iron cell blocks; and Allen Fisher of Noblesville supplied the bricks from his local kilns. While the 1850s jail had been located on the northwest corner of the public square, this building was placed at the southwest corner (site of the 1832 Recorder's Office) so that the jail portion would not be as prominent to the businesses on the south side of the square. Construction was completed in April 1876 at an approximate cost of $30,000. The jail retained its original function until construction of a new county jail in 1977. Among its more infamous prisoners were D.C. Stephenson, a Grand Dragon of the Ku Klux Klan on trail for murder in 1925, and Charles Manson, who was then a 17-year-old escapee of the Indiana Reformatory. Since July 1979 the Hamilton County Historical Society has leased the building from the County Commissioners for use as a history museum and archives.

The residence and jail were designed as two independent structures that happened to share a party wall. The two-story brick residence follows an irregular plan of stepped setbacks, while the one-story stone jail adjoining to the north is square in plan. The house displays many features characteristic of the French Second Empire style: its general massing, its slate Mansard roof, its accenting dressed stone quoins, its three-story central tower (truncated since

1948 when a tornado removed its gabled cornice and pyramidal roof), and its attic dormer windows (only one of which survives in modified form today). Except for the arched window of the attic, all windows are the original two-over-two, double-hung sash with pedimented, sheet metal lintels. Original porches survive at the south and west elevations, although some of the elements, such as railings and balustrades, have been replaced or are missing. Other original decorative details that have been lost include roof and tower cresting, tall, staged chimneys, louvered shutters, and the original double doors of the central entrance, which were changed to a window in 1948.

The jail's thick walls of coursed, rough limestone blocks convey an impression of massiveness important to the conception of a 19th-century jail. Although the interior originally consisted of two levels with windows at the upper level, the structure appears to be a single story. The tall, slate-covered Mansard rises to a flat deck roof. The west, north, and east elevations were originally identical with three symmetrical window openings aligned with three arched roof dormers. All dormers have disappeared, and new windows have been inserted on all sides. The original windows retain their original iron grilles. The surrounding metal bracketed cornice survives, but the iron cresting at the roof's deck has long since disappeared. In 1940 a two-car garage addition was made to the east side of the jail; this one-story brick structure will soon be removed as the first step of an exterior restoration of the entire Sheriff's residence and jail. The interior of the jail was completely reconfigured in 1941, at which time the original jail equipment was sold for scrap.

Joseph Building Photo 11
853 Conner Street

According to the 1915 county history, Louis N. Joseph (1869-1930) constructed this building in 1899 when he took charge of his family's clothing business, known as J. Joseph & Company. Originally begun by Louis' father Solomon and then continued by his brother Julius, the Joseph's men's clothing store had first located on this site in 1883. When Julius moved to New York, Louis razed the two-story, two-unit block that had been on this site and built a modern structure. Unfortunately its architect's name remains a mystery. J. Joseph & Company remained a going concern here until the late 1920s. Louis Joseph was

prominent in many aspects of Noblesville's business community, serving as vice president of the Citizens State Bank and founding the Noblesville Water Company. He also was one of the largest farm operators in Hamilton County, at one time managing about 1,600 acres.

This long and narrow two-story brick building is distinguished by its terra-cotta facade, which was a novelty for Noblesville. Little remains of the first floor storefront, but a historic photo of Louis Joseph in front of his store shows that it had a recessed central entry and paneled wood bases below plate glass windows. The upper story survives intact with the exception of a few missing balusters of the parapet's railing. The focal point of the building is a three-part window in basket arch form accented by egg-and-dart molding. Pilasters flank the central window, which is further accented by a keystone and foliar ornament above. Within the spandrels over the arch are low relief cartouche designs with the letter 'J' inscribed. The whole composition is framed by fluted pilasters which support the classical entablature of the attic and parapet. Most interesting are the three small round windows in the frieze. Crowning the building is the parapet tablet commemorating the name of the builder and its construction date.

Hamilton County Courthouse — Photo 13
Courthouse Square

Despite a public referendum in 1875 that had voted down the idea of a new courthouse, County Commissioners began planning for Hamilton County's third courthouse in March 1877. From among the many architects who submitted plans, Edwin May's designs were chosen the following month. In June demolition of the 1837 courthouse was begun despite an injunction against the Commissioners' issuance of bonds to finance the new building. It was not until October that the $99,959 construction contract was awarded to Aaron G. Campfield, who had recently completed the courthouse in Winchester, Indiana. Foundation excavations were begun in the fall, and contracts let for the major building materials: foundation stone from Anderson, Indiana; Berea sandstone for the exterior from Cuyahoga County, Ohio; and local brick from Allen Fisher's kilns. Controversy continued to surround the new courthouse in January 1878 when May was summarily fired and John C. Johnson of Fremont, Ohio, was hired

as supervising architect. In March Philadelphia pressed brick manufactured by the Peerless Company was chosen to face the building, and local doctor Joshua Cottingham was appointed local superintending architect due to Johnson's infrequent appearances. April 20, 1878 marked the cornerstone laying ceremony attended by more than 4,000 people (nearly three times the city's population). From this point until the completion of construction in July 1879, construction proceeded without incident until it was time to settle the contractor's account. The discrepancies regarding his claims led to arbitration by a jury. Its report provides a detailed document of construction expenses, which amounted to approximately 50 percent more than the original estimate.

Architectural historian David Hermansen, an authority on Indiana's courthouses, has written that the Hamilton County Courthouse is "one of the most lucid expressions of the Classical French Renaissance mode to have been constructed in the Midwest during the 19th century and is reminiscent of French examples of the 17th and 18th centuries in form, materials, and details. The banded columns are an expression of the French Order devised and exploited by Philibert de l'Orme in the 16th century." Certainly this courthouse was important in the evolution of May's design of the Indiana Statehouse in 1878. Basically cruciform in plan with an extended pavilion at the north facade, the courthouse rises three stories above a raised basement to a tall Mansard roof. The domed clock tower rises 148 feet above the building's cross axis. The rich architectural detailing of the courthouse has survived up to the level of its Mansard. The dressed sandstone is used most extensively at the first floor level at the four entry pavilions. The banded columns cited above occur at the main entrance from Conner Street at the south. Above the entries at the east, north and west elevations, pilasters support a pedimented entablature and flank an elaborate window composition with a semicircular arch at the third floor level. The treatment at the extended north pavilion is varied by the use of an elliptical fan instead of a triangular pediment. The design of the double-hung windows varies at each floor: first floor windows are of segmental arch form, with those occurring at the corners with banded enframements; second floor windows of the east and west pavilions are placed within pedimented enframements; and third floor windows are set directly under the cornice, which formerly exhibited dentils. Since 1937 the Mansard has been laid bare of its original dormers, tall chimneys, corner copings and ocular windows; the

statue over the south elevation's pediment and the iron cresting at the deck disappeared earlier. These elements which so greatly enriched the building will all be replaced in an extensive exterior restoration now in the planning stages. In addition to the stabilization of the deteriorating sandstone and pressed brick, which were sandblasted in 1951, the restoration will remove the radiating concrete stairs of the south entrance (added in 1911), the long sidewalk ramp leading to the south basement entry (constructed in the 1960s), and the concrete additions at the inside corners which were built in 1939 to provide access to restrooms.

Becker House/Grand Hotel Photo 15
996 Conner Street

Because no biographical information exists on J. Frank Becker, the proprietor of the Becker House confectionery, steam bakery, restaurant and boarding house, it is difficult to document this building's construction more precisely than within a 10-year period. In October 1877 Becker's dining room was still located on the south side of the public square; the 1887 Sanborn map documents that this building was constructed some time prior to that date. The earliest directory that fixes Becker at this location dates to 1893. Following Becker's death, some time before 1896, his widow continued the business. By 1905 the Grand Hotel under the proprietorship of John Dietrich had taken over. This establishment continued the hotel and dining room with a new "sample room" (bar) in a small separate building at the northeast corner of the lot. By 1914 the Butler Printing House had acquired the building and remained here through the late 1930s. This concern probably added the rear addition.

This narrow, three-and-a-half-story brick building extends all the way back to the rear lot line along the alley. The front stepped gable derives from Becker's assumed German heritage and the general popularity of this feature in late-19th-century Noblesville. The building is one of the most exemplary recent restorations in town. Historic photos indicate that the elaborately detailed, cast-iron columns of the storefront have survived intact except for the loss of their Corinthian capitols. All of the building's windows retain their original openings, which vary from arched to rectangular from floor to floor; however, most of them were glazed differently than they are today. The storefront

windows were divided into three tall sections, while the second and third floor windows (plus the central attic one) were divided into six panes. The small, circular windows of the gable end were originally glazed, not louvered. Along the Tenth Street facade, only two of the original six tall chimneys rise from the roof line. (The Grand Hotel advertised that every room had a fireplace.) A tent pyramidal roofed tower rises over the fourth bay back from Conner Street. Another feature of note is the simulated cornice comprised of iron brackets that run under the gutter along Tenth Street.

Richwine Apartment Building Photo 18
62-98 S. Ninth Street

George C. Richwine (1852-1927) began manufacturing carriages and buggies in in 1879, the year he moved to Noblesville from his outlying farm. His large two-story house located on this site was eventually engulfed by the many additions to the carriage repository on the lot. In 1914 Richwine cleared the site for the construction of this combined apartment house and business block. At the time his sons Wally W. and Fred A. Richwine were in business with their father as G. C. Richwine & Sons. Originally there were six businesses located in the ground floor storefronts and four five-room flats on each of the upper floors. Among the earliest business tenants, as documented by the 1916 city directory, were Jones & Jones, milliners, and the Forsythe Electrical Shop. Both George C. Richwine and his son Fred were among the first occupants of the upper apartments.

This large, three-story building broke new ground in Noblesville in many respects and was originally considered a monstrosity by most of the townspeople. Today it is admired for its expression of the Mission style of architecture, which is somewhat rare in Indiana towns. Rectangular in plan, the building extends five bays along Ninth Street (corresponding to the five storefronts) and three bays along Maple Street, where there is an additional shop space. The choice of golden yellow glazed brick for the major building material was a large part of the lack of popular acceptance. The main elevation's strongest design feature is the two-story loggia at the center of the apartment floors. Its green tile pent roof supported by large, projecting brackets gives it added emphasis. Flanking the central composition are two

"towers" with stylized crenellated parapets. The elevation is spared from complete symmetry by the entrance to the upper apartments (just south of the first storefront) and its corresponding openings above. Accenting details--stringcourse, loggia sills, parapet coping and ornament, and most interesting of all, the small diamond insets between floors of the loggia--are of Bedford limestone. The storefronts remain as built except for addition of the tile covering over the buttressed bases. Not visible in the photo are the small upper lights, similar to Luxfer lights, made by the American 3-Way Prism Company of Chicago, Illinois.

United States Post Office Photo 19
135 S. Ninth Street

Two large 19th-century dwellings remained on this site until well into the 20th century. For decades there had been talk in Noblesville about the federal government's construction of a building specially designed to be a post office, but acquisition of a good site forestalled the project. For 25 years the city's post office was located on Logan Street (see Photo 6). This building's cornerstone records both the date of construction (1931) and the names of James A. Wetmore, Acting Supervising Architect for the federal government, and A. W. Mellon, Secretary of the Treasury at the time. In 1989 the Postal Service abandoned this building in favor of a new location on the outskirts of town. The City of Noblesville is currently planning to incorporate the building into a new complex for municipal courts and fire station.

Typical of many government buildings of its era, this brick post office bears a strong classical influence. The plan consists of a rectangular main section at front, approximately 75 feet along S. Ninth Street, with a smaller rectangular section at the rear (west). Although only one story tall, the 20-foot height and the raised basement faced in dressed stone give the building a greater stature. Emphasizing the height is the central colonnade of six tall Ionic columns of stone. A broad stairway of seven granite steps, corresponding to the central three bays of the colonnade, rises to the main entry located in the center. New aluminum doors have replaced the original doors, but its classical frieze with metopes survives. The large rectangular windows, which give excellent illumination to the interior, are all divided into 24 lights (with the exception of

the one over the entry door). The building's frieze under the dentilled stone cornice has unusual brickwork of soldier brick. Also of note are the two iron torchères that rest on the stairway's cheek walls.

First Christian Church Photo 20
136 S. Ninth Street

The Christian Chapel, a simple, rectangular brick structure, stood on this site from 1855 to 1897. It was the worship place of the oldest Christian congregation in Hamilton County, which had been founded by pioneer William Conner in 1834. During the pastorate of E.S. Conner, plans were made for a new structure to replace it. The cornerstone was laid on August 1, 1897, and construction was completed by the dedication on January 30, 1898. The Fort Wayne architectural firm of Wing and Mahurin designed the building, while J.L. Fatout of Indianapolis was its builder. The total original building cost, including furnishings, was over $16,000. In September 1901 a gas explosion caused extensive damage to the church, especially the original frescoing done by O. J. Kover & Sons of Fort Wayne and the art glass windows. During the pastorate of A. H. Moore in 1923, a large, adjoining educational building of 15 rooms was built at the northeast corner of the property. Extensive architectural changes were made in 1961 when the main entrance was moved to a new addition at the juncture of the church and educational building and some interior reconfiguration was done. The church function ceased on July 1, 1989, and the building is now known as the Adler Office Building.

Features such as the pointed arch windows, loggia arch, rear steeple, corner buttresses, and large central rose window point to a strong Gothic design influence, yet popular currents of 1890s American architecture combine to make this a very distinctive building. Architectural historian Craig Leonard, an authority on the architectural firm that designed the church, has stated that it "is the largest and most elaborate of a number of similar church designs that were done by Wing and Mahurin using the form of two unequal towers on the facade with an arcaded porch between." The overall dimensions of the building are 63 feet wide by 132 feet deep; the south tower with pyramidal roof rises 74 feet while the north tower is only 40 feet high. The primary building materials are red brick with rock-faced Bedford limestone trim and a fishscale slate roof.

Originally entrance to the church was gained by passing up a wide stone stairway from Ninth Street that led under the broad Tudor arch to an open loggia. (In 1961 a brick infill wall was constructed here.) Entry to the sanctuary was through vestibules located in the base of the towers. Originally the 400-seat sanctuary (called the auditorium) was separated from the 300-seat Sunday School to its east by a partition wall that could be raised to form one large open space. The interior has recently been remodeled into office space. The sanctuary's ribbed Gothic vaults formerly rose to a high point of 27 feet under the broad gabled roof and gabled transepts. The stained glass windows were removed prior to the office conversion for use in a new church building; however, the Gothic tracery survives in place.

Synopsis of the Development of the Noblesville Commercial District

In January 1823 William Conner and Josiah Polk laid out the town of Noblesville's original plat of 26 squares encompassing approximately 75 acres along the east bank of White River.[1] That same month Hamilton County was established as Indiana's 50th county, and in March 1824, commissioners were appointed to select a county seat. Conner and Polk offered the usual convincing inducement for the selection of their town: a sizable donation of land including the public square. A post office was soon established and the pioneer village was off to an auspicious start. As an indicator of the growth of Noblesville, the first addition to the plat was made in May 1838 by William Eamons. In February 1840 the Indiana General Assembly first passed an act to authorize the town to incorporate. This incorporation apparently failed, because the legislature acted again in 1850 to authorize the town to incorporate. At that time Noblesville's population stood at less than a thousand people.[2]

In John Haines' *History of Hamilton County* published in 1915, the author related some of the earliest building activity in Noblesville.[3] By that time nearly all of the pioneer buildings had disappeared. Founder William Conner's own grocery store had been demolished for the construction of the First National Bank (Photo 5) in 1910. The Old Corner Drug Store built by Dr. Shaw had just been torn down in the summer of 1914 and replaced by another building of the same name. The

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1 An original drawing of the Plat of Noblesville can be found in *Commissioners Record Book A, 1823-1832*, at the County Commissioners Office, Hamilton County Courthouse. There are various versions of the story behind the name, which appears to have been inspired by a member of the Noble family of Indianapolis, either Miss Lavinia Noble, at one time Polk's betrothed, or Senator James Noble. When Noblesville's streets were renamed and addresses were regularized in the mid 1890s, Polk's commemoration in the district's street names was lost to Eighth Street. However, Conner's name continues its prominence as the name of Noblesville's most important commercial street.

2 *Indiana Local Laws*, 1840, Chapter XXI, pp. 73-77, and 1850, Chapter CCCXVIII, pp. 458-460. Another amendatory act was passed on January 15, 1851--see *Indiana Local Laws*, 1850, Chapter LIV, pp. 48-49. According to historian John F. Haines in *History of Hamilton County, Indiana: Her People, Industries and Institutions*, (Indianapolis, IN: B. F. Bowen Company, 1915, p. 198), it was not until May 1853 that it was actually incorporated. According to U. S. Census figures of 1850, the population of Noblesville in that year was 664 people.

3 Haines, *History of Hamilton County*, pp. 197-198.

corner of Ninth and Conner Street apparently was an important commercial node from Noblesville's early decades. A member of the Evans family built a frame "business room" on the site that was taken over by the Citizens Bank Building in 1871. Across the street another of the earliest buildings at this corner was Daniel Hare's frame business room constructed around 1848. Today, as might be expected, none of the early frame commercial buildings survives.

In 1851 the first railroad to reach Noblesville was the Indianapolis and Peru Railroad.[4] Until this time farmers wishing to bring their crops to market needed to travel to Cincinnati. With the accessibility of rail transportation, Noblesville soon became a grain center for the rich outlying agricultural region. Warehouses were built, and in 1854 the Evans Brothers erected the first flour mill in the county in Noblesville. Two more rail line eventually came through the city, greatly expanding its transportation options.

The first side of the public square to become fully developed was probably the south side. In 1875 its business owners had sufficient clout to change the location of the county jail so that the residence portion faced their businesses (rather than the jail portion as had been originally intended).[5] The sketch map showing the building footprints of the commercial structures on the south side of the square indicates the pattern of narrow, smaller buildings when compared to those buildings of the east and north sides of the squares known to have been built after 1880. Two of the oldest commercial buildings are 817 and 819 Conner Street, which were probably built in the 1860s following the Civil War. Other buildings on the south side of the square may have originally resembled these two buildings, since some of them are known through newspaper reports to have undergone successive modernizations beginning as early as the late 1870s.

An article in the *Hamilton County Register* in 1869 enumerating the city's businesses gives a good reference point for Noblesville's commercial

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4 *Ibid.*, p. 199.

5 *Noblesville [Weekly] Ledger*, Friday, June 4, 1875, p. 4, c. 2.

development at this time.[6] There were eight dry goods stores, six millinery shops, one clothing store, four tailor shops, six groceries, two restaurants, two bakers/ confectioners, one book store, four drug stores, two harness shops, three boot and shoe shops, three meat markets, one feed store, two tin shops, one tin and stove store, one banker/broker [but no bank], and two hotels. In addition there were the expected services supplied by blacksmiths, liveries, barbers and people in the building trades plus professionals such as 14 attorneys, six doctors and one dentist. It is clear that Noblesville's commercial development outpaced its industrial development at this time, which was confined to two flour mills, one woolen factory, one saw mill, one planing mill, two wagon manufactories, and a brewery. Five years later *The People's Guide*, a directory of Hamilton County, reported little change in the overall picture.

The construction of the Hamilton County Courthouse from 1877 to 1879 played a large role in stimulating the construction of business blocks around the square. The stylish building, which cost nearly $150,000, was incredibly impressive, especially considering its predecessor. It replaced a small, simple brick courthouse of 1838 that was stylistically retarditaire when first constructed. The new courthouse was considered to be the finest structure in the state outside of Marion County. One of the first people to be inspired to build was Allen Fisher, who had supplied the million construction brick for the new courthouse from his own kiln. In September 1878 he built a new commercial block employing the same type of pressed brick as was used for the facade of the courthouse (Photo 9). In commenting on the project, the local newspaper stated that it was "the first enterprise of the kind in Noblesville for several years."[7] When completed, it was lauded as "the most elegant structure of its kind in Noblesville." The next year, Fisher's brother Wes made an adjoining addition to the south, and together these are called The Fisher Block, 8-12 N. Ninth Street. Around this same time other business blocks were remodeled with cast-iron storefronts, pressed brick facades, and new plate glass windows (e.g.,

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6 As referenced in Haines, *History of Hamilton County*, p. 200. Haines gave the incorrect title "Noblesville Register" for this newspaper.

7 *Noblesville [Weekly] Ledger*, Friday, September 6, 1878, p. 4, c. 2. See also November 22, 1878, p. 4, c. 1.

the Bachmann Block and the Meisse Block, both on Connor Street).

The north side of the square on Logan Street was the last part of the square to develop to its full density. The *Sanborn Fire Insurance Atlas* of August 1887, when compared to the next edition of the atlas in September 1892, shows the dramatic difference that occurred in a few short years. In 1887 the southwest quadrant of Block 8 had only a few small frame buildings, some of which were vacant. Less than 20 percent of its land area was built upon. The southeast quadrant was only half developed, although its buildings were more substantial brick structures. At the northwest corner of Logan and Ninth [then Catherine Street], the map indicates that Craycraft's dry goods store (now 894 Logan Street, Photo 4) had just been substantially rebuilt and expanded. Next door there was a three-unit block housing a hardware store, post office and boot and shoe store at ground floor level. This building had been constructed in 1882 and may have suffered a fire between 1887 and 1892. Today only the easternmost unit survives (originally the Ourslers' Shoe Store, Photo 4). In 1889 a member of the Evans family constructed a new building on the site of the two western units (Photo 4). Its prime tenant was the First National Bank. Next door in 1888 Albert Lacy constructed a large, three-story business block on the land that had appeared as unimproved in the 1887 map (Photo 3). This building took full advantage of its site, extending back to the alley. In 1889 J. L. Evans constructed the Northside Block, a six-unit, two-story brick building that replaced the old frame structures of an earlier period. This building was significant for the scale of its development, encompassing an entire quadrant and hosting a great variety of businesses. Today only one unit survives with much of its original facade intact: 808 Logan Street (Photo 2). A fire in the 1950s destroyed a large part of the central three units, which were rebuilt and modernized. The easternmost two units have completely lost their original facades to a later remodeling.

The greatest impetus to the flurry of building activity on the north side of the square in the late 1880s was the discovery of natural gas in Noblesville. Many communities in central Indiana benefitted from sudden prosperity brought by the new-found natural resource. However, the effect upon Noblesville was as dramatic as could be found anywhere. The first well was dug in the fall of 1887 in a residential area within the incorporated limits of the city, approximately

10 blocks southeast of the courthouse. For the first winter, the geyser burned as an open fire without containment. In the spring a company was organized to capitalize upon the resource and later a gas plant was built. Soon after this the famous Wainwright Wonder came into existence followed by the Banner well. These geysers were actually tourist attractions with daily excursion trains from Indianapolis bringing people to view the burning wells. Within a short time hundreds of wells were sunk in all parts of Hamilton County. The new supply of cheap fuel attracted new industry to Noblesville, such as the American Strawboard Company and the National Carbon Works. Naturally the county seat and marketplace town benefitted from the prosperity brought by the natural gas boom. The value of properties escalated to a new high.[8]

The building boom in the commercial core of the city continued in the early 1890s. Two new business blocks constructed next to each other in 1890 on the west side of S. Ninth Street, just south of the Old Corner Drug Store, were 23-29 S. Ninth and the Stephenson Block at 35-37 S. Ninth Street. In 1891 a member of the Castor family constructed a large, three-story business block at the northwest corner of Logan and Tenth [then Anderson] Streets (Photo 7). The building was actually a joint venture with a fraternal lodge, which purchased ownership of the third floor for its hall. In 1893 three new brick buildings--26, 32, and 36 S. Eighth Street (Photo 17)--replaced earlier structures on the site that had been demolished the year before. The two southern units retain portions of their tall, cast-iron storefronts manufactured by Hetherington and Berner's architectural iron works of Indianapolis.

The 1893-94 Hamilton County directory called Noblesville "a land flowing with milk and honey."[9] While the agricultural interests of Hamilton County were prospering, it was natural gas rather than milk and honey that was flowing. Locally published directories can not be expected to be the most objective

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[8] Information on the natural gas boom was taken from an article in the *Noblesville [Daily] Ledger* of October 30, 1914 as printed in: Haines, *History of Hamilton County*, pp. 202-203. See also pp. 213-214 re: industry attracted to Noblesville by the discovery of natural gas.

[9] *Annual Statistics and Post Office Directory of Hamilton County, Indiana, 1893-94.* Noblesville, IN: Ledger Book & Print, [1893], p. 32.

source of information, yet this directory's concluding paragraph on Noblesville is worth quoting for its indication of the community's hope for the future.

> It is situated in the heart of the gas belt with an abundance of that fluid for all purposes. The prosperity of the business interests of the city is on a solid basis, with a sure and steady growth, which in a short time will make it second to no city in Central Indiana, excepting the capital of the State.

Within the 20-year period at the end of the 19th century, Noblesville's population more than doubled from 2,221 in 1880 to 4,792 in 1900.[10] This was the biggest jump in its history and helps to explain the predominance of buildings from the 1880s and 1890s in the commercial district. The "sure and steady growth" referenced above had been a factor throughout the 19th century, steadily producing buildings every decade. This trend continued for another 15 years, although the rise in population between 1900 and 1910 was minimal with 5,073 in the latter year.

During the first decade of the 20th century, several new commercial buildings were constructed within the bounds of the district, including the Post Office Building in 1906 at 931-937 Logan Street (Photo 6), the Castor Block in 1909 at 960-996 Logan Street (Photo 7), and the Augusta Block, 32-40 N. Ninth Street (Photo 9). The arrival of the electrified interurban railroad line in 1903 was a big boon to Noblesville's businesses. At one time 35 trains a day passed through the city, making it easy for people in the outlying county areas to come to town to shop. In 1906 the Indiana Union Traction Company constructed its storefront station at the southwest corner of Ninth and Clinton Streets (Photo 1). Other commercial buildings constructed in the early 1900s were 165-173 N. Ninth Street, 71-79 S. Ninth Street, and 46-54 S. Ninth Street.

The First National Bank building at 130-32 N. Ninth Street (Photo 5) was constructed in 1910 as the first new building of the new decade. Originally this bank had been located in the east ground floor unit of 864-70 Logan Street

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10 U. S. Census statistics from the Data Center, Indiana State Library.

(Photo 4). At its opening the classically-inspired headquarters was called "a modern banking house." Another important building of the decade was the Richwine Apartment Building at 62-98 S. Ninth Street (Photo 18). It combined six ground floor businesses with eight flats above and appears to have been the only building with these originally intended combined functions. The J. C. Heylmann & Son Company, which manufactured buggies and carriages, built its large new headquarters at 964 Conner Street (Photo 16) around 1913. Soon after the building was converted to automobile sales and service.

Between 1910 and 1920 Noblesville's population dropped slightly; between 1920 and 1930 it remained the same.[11] The big growth years of the preceeding decade had come to an end. The supply of natural gas had proved to be short lived. Some companies that were attracted to Noblesville by the promising cheap fuel—e.g., the American Strawboard Company—found that their wells lasted less than 10 years. Large quantities of the fuel were siphoned off to Indianapolis by means of pipelines. Eventually the gas was exhausted. To some extent the development of water power-generated electricity by the White River Light and Power Company's dam circa 1910 compensated for the loss of the gas. However, it did not prove to be the magnet to industry that was imagined.

A few buildings were constructed within the bounds of the district in the 1920s, most notably the Christian Church's 15-room Educational Building at 935 Maple Avenue in 1923 and the Neal Block at 957-75 Logan Street in 1926. With the onset of the Depression in 1930, new building came to a halt and the district maintained status quo for several decades. The one exception was the federal government's 1931 construction of the new post office building at 135 S. Ninth Street (Photo 20), which had been in the planning stages for many years. In the 1930s some important local industries closed down (such as the National Carbon Works, first lured to Noblesville by a cash bonus offered during the gas boom years), while others moved away (such as the Union Sanitary Company, the city's largest employer in 1915, which relocated to St. Louis in the 1930s).[12]

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[11] *Ibid.* In 1920 the population was 4,758; in 1930 4,811.

[12] For information on Noblesville's vanished industries, see: Haines, *History of Hamilton County*, pp. 201-202, 205-206, and 214; Sanborn maps from 1933 corrected to 1945; and the *Indianapolis Star Magazine*, Sunday, November 29, 1964.

With the city's population at a fairly constant level, the need to maintain existing commercial buildings acted as a force for preservation. No new construction is known to have taken place in the later 1930s and 40s, which has helped in determining the commercial district's end date of significance.

Architectural Significance

A large number of the buildings in the Noblesville Commercial Historic District can be considered architecturally significant because of their excellent state of preservation and their high degree of integrity. Among the 54 buildings that contribute to the historic character of the area, there are outstanding representatives of architectural styles from the 1870s through the 1930s.

One of the earliest representative examples of an architectural style is the Citizens State Bank Building (Photo 14) built in 1871 at the prominent southeast corner of Conner and Ninth Streets. Although this building has undergone the usual modernization of its ground floor storefronts, the upper story, with its pedimented window surrounds and its bracketed cornice, is a good example of the Italianate style's adaptation to a commercial building. The Sheriff's Residence at 818 Conner Street (Photo 10) is an outstanding expression of the French Second Empire style with its irregular plan of stepped setbacks, its slate Mansard roof, its accenting dressed stone quoins, and its central tower. An exterior restoration now in the planning stage will replace many of its lost architectural features, including its attic dormer windows, the upper portion of the tower (with gabled cornice and pyramidal roof), its tall, staged chimneys, and the iron cresting that enlivened the roof line.

Without doubt the most architecturally significant building in the district (and perhaps the entire county) is the Hamilton County Courthouse (Photo 13) constructed in 1877-79 at a cost of nearly $150,000. Its role as a catalyst to the development of the commercial buildings around the square has already been discussed in this section. It is a rare example in Indiana of the French Renaissance style of architecture, in many ways resembling a 16th-century pavilion of the renowned Louvre. It has also been cited (see *Description*) as one

Magazine, Sunday, November 29, 1964.

of the best examples of the style in the Midwest. Clearly this courthouse was important in the evolution of architect Edwin May's design of the Indiana Statehouse in 1878. Plans are now under way for a thorough restoration which will reinstate lost architectural elements, most importantly above the roof line.

The first building to open the decade of the 1880s was the Wild Block at 16-24 N. Ninth Street (Photo 9). This commercial structure is notable for its stone facade and fine detailing. In 1990 an excellent restoration project recreated the original storefront. The three-unit H. M. Caylor Block at 925-939 Conner Street (Photo 14) was constructed in 1884. Although it has lost its ground floor storefronts, the second story displays some fine brick detailing, a corbel table, and polychromy (provided by stone accents) that are typical of the Victorian Gothic style. Two important buildings of the late 1880s are the Lacy Block (848-856 Logan Street, Photo 3), currently the largest commercial structure in the district, and the Evans Block (864-870 Logan Street, Photo 4), notable for the exuberance of detailing displayed in its galvanized iron facade.

Perhaps the most architecturally significant building of the 1890s is the First Christian Church (136 S. Ninth Street, Photo 20) constructed in 1897. It is the largest and most elaborate of a number of similar church designs that were done by the Fort Wayne architectural firm of Wing and Mahurin using the form of two towers of unequal heights flanking an arched entry loggia. Features such as its pointed arch windows, steeple, corner buttresses, and large central rose window indicate a strong Gothic design influence, yet popular currents of 1890s American architecture (e.g., heavy rock-faced limestone trim) combine to make this a very distinctive building. Two years after the church was completed, the Joseph Building (853 Conner Street, Photo 11) was constructed. Its finely detailed terra-cotta facade indicates some influence of the Beaux Arts style, particularly in the classical motifs such as the fluted pilasters, the enlarged entablature, and the balustraded parapet. Another important building of the 1890s that should be mentioned is the Wild Opera House on S. Ninth Street, constructed circa 1895 but demolished in 1959 for a parking lot. This building was an outstanding example of the Romanesque Revival style; its demolition represents a significant cultural loss to the community.

Constructed during the 1870s, 1880s, and 1890s in Noblesville were buildings that featured a somewhat uncommon architectural feature, namely the stepped gable (also known as the corbie gable). Today we see examples in the former Masonic Lodge at 82-98 N. Ninth Street (Photo 8), the Becker House/Grand Hotel at 996 Conner Street (Photo 15), and the Castor Block at 996 Logan Street (Photo 7). Interestingly all three buildings are three-story brick structures prominently located on corners. The Masonic Lodge and Castor Block's stepped gables are most alike, each featuring four steps with corbelled courses underscoring their lines. The Becker House exhibits six smaller steps capped by stone in a steeper, more medieval composition. Because this is an architectural feature of Germanic and Flemish origin, Noblesville's sizable German population has been suggested as an explanation of the popularity of the stepped gable. This may well be the case, especially for building owners of German origin such as J. Frank Becker. However, the first building to incorporate the stepped gable was the Masonic Lodge, whose architect has recently been discovered to be W. H. Brown of Indianapolis.[13] Brown was selected to critique Edwin May's preliminary plans for the Hamilton County Courthouse in June of 1877. Because he was an architect respected in the community, his choice of the stepped gable may well have influenced wider use of the feature.

Notable 20th-century representatives of architectural styles begin with the First National Bank at 130-32 N. Ninth Street (Photo 5). This is another building influenced by the Beaux Arts style, deemed particularly appropriate for banks. Although today's spandrel panels and the new metal roof over the south portion detract from the original design, this building still exhibits most elements of its well-executed limestone facade, such as the two-story Ionic pilasters. The J. C. Heylmann & Sons Building at 964 Conner Street (Photo 16) was noted in the 1977 survey as a notable example of the Chicago School style, most probably for its three-part windows. While this may be a misnomer for a three-story building, the facade is notable when considering the building's original function as a carriage manufactory. Constructed approximately a year later on the profits of another carriage-making business, the Richwine Block is a noteworthy example of yet another architectural expression: the Mission style.

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13 *Noblesville [Weekly] Ledger*, Friday, June 22, 1877, p. 1, c. 2.

The choice of this style is somewhat rare for a combined commercial building/ apartment block in a small Indiana town. Its facade materials—golden yellow glazed brick and green tile—made an unusual statement in the generally restrained architectural milieu of the Noblesville commercial district. The federal government's choice of a classical theme for its 1931 post office at 135 S. Ninth Street (Photo 19) was more in keeping with the generally conservative architectural trends in the commercial district.

Unfortunately documentation of architects known to have practiced in the district is limited to those six previously cited herein, namely (in chronological order) W. H. Brown of Indianapolis; William R. Parsons of Terre Haute; Edwin May of Indianapolis (best known for his numerous courthouses across Indiana and of course the state capitol); Huebner & Mueller of Indianapolis; Wing and Mahurin of Fort Wayne; and James A. Wetmore of Washington, D. C., who designed more than 2,000 buildings during his 45-year term as architectural supervisor of the Treasury Department. In addition to the two contractors who have been cited—Aaron G. Campfield, originally of Newark, New Jersey, and Williams, Giger and Durfee of Noblesville, who built many bridges in Hamilton County—two other contractors' work in the district has been documented. During the late 1870s, Phillip Waltenburg was referred to as both architect and builder for buildings on the south side of the square, and Ed Springer was mentioned as the contractor of the Fisher Block at 8-12 N. Ninth Street (Photo 9).[14]

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[14] *Ibid.*, July 19, 1878, p. 4, c. 3; see footnote 7 re: Fisher Block.

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Boundary Description

Beginning at the point of intersection of the south curb line of Clinton Street and the west curb line of N. Ninth Street, the boundary line proceeds south along N. Ninth Street, crossing an east/west alley, to the northeast corner of the property at 894 Logan Street. Here the boundary turns east, crossing N. Ninth Street, and proceeding along the rear property lines of the buildings along the north side of the 900 block of Logan Street. At the west curb line of N. Tenth Street, the line turns south and proceeds to the north curb line of Conner Street. At the southeast corner of the property at 996 Conner Street, the boundary turns west, crossing the north/south alley until reaching the southeast corner of the property at 936-938 Conner Street. Here the boundary turns south again, crossing Conner Street and continuing along the west line of the north/south alley until the first east/west alley south of Maple Avenue.

At the southeast corner of the property at 136 S. Ninth Street, the boundary line turns west, proceeding along the north line of the alley, crossing S. Ninth Street, and continuing until the first north/south alley west of Ninth Street. At the southwest corner of the property at 135 S. Ninth Street, the boundary turns north, running along the east line of the alley, crossing Maple Avenue, and continuing to the north line of the first east/west alley north of Maple Avenue. At the southwest corner of the property at 841 Conner Street, the line turns west, crossing the alley and continuing until reaching the east curb line of S. Eighth Street.

At the southwest corner of the property at 36 S. Eighth Street, the boundary turns north along the east curb line of Eighth Street, crossing Conner and Logan Streets, until reaching the south line of the first east/west alley north of Logan Street. At the northwest corner of the property at 808 Conner Street, the line turns east, running along the south line of the said alley, until reaching the east line of the first north/south alley. At the northwest corner of the property at 848 Logan Street, the boundary turns north and runs along the east line of said alley until reaching the south curb line of Clinton Street.

At the northwest corner of the property at 181-199 N. Ninth Street, the boundary line turns east again, running along the south curb line of Clinton

Street until reaching the point of beginning.

Boundary Justification

In the *Hamilton County Interim Report: Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory* published in 1978, a district of 137 residential and commercial buildings was identified as the Noblesville Historic District. Because the residential buildings do not have a direct relationship to the core commercial area and could be linked with other residential districts, they were omitted from this district. All but three of the 64 buildings within this district have primary commercial functions; therefore, consideration of historic context could concentrate on a commercial theme. At this writing, the 1978 county survey is being redone; the boundaries proposed for the Noblesville Commercial District correspond to those being proposed here.

The overall aim in delineating district boundaries was to define a tightly drawn district containing the greatest concentration of contributing historic resources of a commercial function. When necessary, the boundary jogs around non-contributing buildings or vacant lots. For example, the parking lot on the northwest quadrant of Block 8 was omitted. (This is where Evans and Sohl's flour mill of 1878 was located. It was later called the "Model Mill" and was replaced by a lumber yard that existed here through the early 1980s.) Contiguous buildings that were built during the district's period of significance but have had their facades substantially modernized--e.g., 172-96 N. Ninth Street and 949 Conner Street--have also been excluded.

With the demolition of the commercial buildings on the west side of the square, the west boundary line necessarily was drawn to exclude the west side of N. Eighth Street. Some consideration was given to including three commercial buildings on the west side of S. Eighth Street, which date to the second and third decades of the 20th century. These buildings replaced 19th-century buildings on the site, and two out of three have undergone unsympathetic alterations. Because of these reasons and the fact that they did not share some of the same themes of context, they were omitted from the district.

Tenth Street historically marked a dividing line between the commercial and residential areas of Noblesville. However, during the 20th century, many of the homes on the east side of Tenth Street were demolished for commercial development, beginning with a gas station at the northeast corner of Conner and Tenth Streets. Due to the number of non-contributing buildings and the original residential nature of the east side of Tenth Street, the eastern boundary of the district follows the historic development pattern.

Because the June 1933 map of Noblesville from the *Sanborn Fire Insurance Atlas* was so close to the end date of historic significance for the district, it was particularly important in documenting contributing buildings. Copies of the 1933 map were taken to the field and checked building by building. Those structures existing today that were not drawn on the 1933 Sanborn, or that have been significantly altered since 1933, are shaded on the district sketch map as non-contributing buildings.