



49.1991.1 and 49.1991.2 North Meridian Street Historic District
Marion County
Marker Text Review Report
11/18/2008

Marker Text

Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, 1986 “One of America’s Great Streets”

Report

This marker does not provide enough information to establish the topic’s historical significance. It lacks historical context of the 1920s and forgoes mention of Booth Tarkington’s home and the Governor’s residence. Additionally, the origin of the quote, “one of America’s great streets,” is unclear. The following report attempts to determine the source of the quote.

The district was “entered on the National Register of Historic Places on September 22, 1986.” For more information see the National Register website, www.nr.nps.gov. Unfortunately, the text does not indicate who uttered the quotation placed on the marker. Both the book, *The Main Stem of North Meridian Street* (1992), by David J. Bodenhamer, Lamont Hulse, and Elizabeth B. Monroe, and the *Meridian Street Foundation Newsletter* (Summer 2004) claim that Grady Clay made the statement. Clay was former president of the American Society of Planning Officials, chairman of the 1965 White House Conference on Natural Beauty, editor of *Landscape Architecture Magazine*, and an urban design critic. For more information see *New York Times* articles from July 24, 1988; July 28, 1985; April 27, 1986; and February 17, 1985. A search of sources including Clay’s books on urban design, the *New York Times*, numerous academic journals, various Indianapolis newspapers, the *Encyclopedia of Indianapolis*, and the Historic Landmarks Foundation of Indiana monthly publication the *Preservationist* only uncovered one Clay quotation about North Meridian Street. In a May 17, 1990 article, the *Indianapolis Star* quoted the design expert from an interview they conducted during his visit to the city. He stated that North Meridian was “Among the great streets of America.” Why this quotation was not used is unknown, but it is clearly not the same quotation placed in the marker text. The Indiana Historical Bureau can only speculate that the statement was paraphrased, but inaccurately placed in quotations.