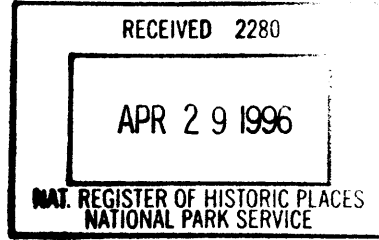


**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**



**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Portland Commercial Historic District
other names/site number 075-521-31000 (001-078)

2. Location

street & number see continuation sheet N/A not for publication
city or town Portland N/A vicinity
state Indiana code IN county 075 Jay code 075 zip code 47371

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

Indiana Department of Natural Resources

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register
 - See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Edson H. Beall

Entered in the National Register

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property (Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property (Check only one box)

- building, district, site, structure, object

Number of Resources within Property (Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Table with 3 columns: Contributing, Noncontributing, and Resource Type (buildings, sites, structures, objects, Total). Values range from 1 to 60.

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

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

- COMMERCE/TRADE: Business, Professional, Financial Institution, Specialty Store, Department Store, Restaurant
GOVERNMENT: City Hall

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

- COMMERCE/TRADE: Business, Professional, Financial Institution, Specialty Store, Department Store, Restaurant
GOVERNMENT: City Hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

- LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate, Romanesque
see continuation sheet

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation STONE: Limestone
walls BRICK, STONE: Limestone
roof ASPHALT
other METAL

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE

ARCHITECTURE

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

1870-1945

Significant Dates

N/A

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

McLaughlin & Hulsken

Wenderoth, Oscar

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 32 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1

1	6
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6	7	1	5	7	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	4	7	7	9	3	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

3

1	6
---	---

6	7	1	1	4	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	4	7	7	2	5	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

2

1	6
---	---

6	7	1	6	2	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	4	7	7	2	9	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

4

1	6
---	---

6	7	1	0	9	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	4	7	7	9	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jane R. Nolan

organization Weintraut & Nolan date 11-18-95

street & number 4118 N. Pennsylvania Street telephone (317) 283-6453

city or town Indianapolis state IN zip code 46205

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white** photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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2. Location

Roughly six blocks on Meridian Street from Arch Street to and including the South Meridian Street Bridge with resources west of Meridian on Walnut, Main, Commerce and Court Streets.

6. Functions or Use

Historic Functions

GOVERNMENT: fire house
GOVERNMENT: post office
SOCIAL: meeting hall

Current Functions

GOVERNMENT: fire house
GOVERNMENT: post office

7. Description

Architectural Classification

LATE 19th & 20th CENTURY REVIVALS: Classical Revival
LATE 19th & 20th CENTURY REVIVALS: Jacobethan Revival
LATE 19th & 20th CENTURY AMERICAN MOVEMENTS: Commercial Style

Portland Commercial Historic District is located in the City of Portland in Jay County in eastern Indiana. Jay County is set on flat gently rolling plain that is traversed by the Salamonie River.

Daniel W. McNeil surveyed the town of Portland in 1837 on land that had been donated by Daniel Reid and James Hathaway. The land was located north of the Salamonie River and was poorly drained. Over the years, Portland has required numerous ditching and dredging measures to avoid spring flooding. The historic district is contained almost entirely within the original plat which was laid out in a grid plan. Block sizes are fairly uniform in most of the district except east of the alley, historically called Rose Alley, between Meridian and Harrison Streets. Many of these blocks are somewhat smaller. Less land was set aside for the courthouse than in most Indiana county seats. Located west of the center of town, the courthouse occupies two blocks from north to south between Walnut and Main Streets (Photo 11). The east-west dimensions of the courthouse grounds are only slightly more than a city block. Court Street forms the eastern boundary of the courthouse lawn and is as narrow as an alley. Commercial buildings in the long, narrow block that front on Meridian and Main Streets have Court Street as their western boundary.

Portland Commercial Historic District is a relatively compact area that has served as the commercial, political, and social heart of the town from the earliest days. Meridian Street is Portland's central

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corridor and is its major transportation route. On Meridian Street, the district takes in one building north of Arch Street, the I.O.O.F. Hall (photo 17), and extends six blocks southward to include the South Meridian Street bridge (photo 14). The northern boundary of the district separates the historic district from newer commercial construction beyond. The long, straight, eastern boundary is formed by the alley behind the buildings on the east side of Meridian Street. To the east are homes and a few newer commercial enterprises. The South Meridian Street Bridge over the Salamonie River acts as the southern boundary separating the commercial district from a residential area. The western boundary is the most irregular. It extends west of Meridian Street to include the County Courthouse, the Portland Fire Department, and other resources on Court, Commerce, Walnut, and Main Streets as well as one significant building west of Ship Street at 319 West Main Street. The location of the courthouse west of Meridian Street may account for the group of important commercial buildings to the west. Beyond Ship Street is a more residential setting with a few later commercial buildings.

The Portland Commercial Historic District is an example of the pattern of development that took place in small towns that were not located on navigable rivers and to which the railroad came late. Log construction characterized Portland's early buildings; no pre-1870 resources remain. From 1837 when the town was surveyed until the arrival of the railroad in 1871, Portland remained a sleepy little village with limited industry and commerce due to inadequate transportation.

After the Cincinnati, Richmond & Fort Wayne Railroad finally reached Portland in 1871 interregional connections were established. Suddenly, the commercial and industrial prospects of the county seat improved. By the late 1870s two banks, Peoples Bank and Citizens Bank, and several new industries were in evidence. When natural gas was discovered nearby in 1886, the boom continued. Throughout the 1880s and 1890s business developed in Portland. Continued commercial growth occurred into the first quarter of the twentieth century.

The extant buildings reflect the years of commercial development in the district during the period of significance (1870-1945). Those constructed from 1870 to 1900 predominately represent the late 19th and 20th century revival movements as well as early 20th century American styles. Those built after 1900 continue the latter stylistic development in the main with a few exceptions. The Neoclassical post office (photo 10) designed by Oscar Wenderoth and built in 1914, the Neoclassical Courthouse (photo 11) dedicated in 1919, and the Jacobethan Revival firehouse (photo 12) built in 1929 are the most notable exceptions.

The district of 80 resources conveys a sense of the historical change that accompanied economic prosperity. Contributing and noncontributing properties appear in the resource count and on the map. With 58 contributing buildings, 1 contributing structure (South Meridian Street Bridge), 1

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contributing object (Civil War monument on the courthouse lawn), and 22 noncontributing buildings, the ratio of contributing to noncontributing is approximately 2.5 to one. There are no sites in the district.

Most of the Italianate style resources in the commercial district are quite simple and were built between 1875 and 1890. They range from the Citizens Bank (c.1875), located at 114 West Main Street (photo 4) to three buildings at 201, 203, and 205 North Meridian (c.1880) (photo 1) to a three story commercial block at 202 North Meridian St.(c.1885) (photo 3) to 302 North Meridian St. (photo 9) constructed in 1890.

The three buildings at 201, 203, and 205 North Meridian St. retain many features of the Italianate style despite some alterations (photos 1, 16). The two story commercial buildings of painted brick were built c.1880. All have projecting metal cornices and equally spaced single brackets; all were originally three bays wide with tall, rectangular one-over-one windows with smooth limestone sills. Only 203 retains its second floor window openings. The window openings have been boarded up in 205, and a modern replacement window can be seen in 201 Meridian St. The original four pilasters still flank the central door and frame the store windows at 205 North Meridian St. They rise up to a projecting metal cornice although they are partially covered by modern signage. Pilasters are still in evidence at 201 on the corner, although they too are partially obscured above the display windows. A modern store front has been installed over the two central pilasters at 203, North Meridian St.

The two story, three bay, painted brick building at 302 North Meridian St. is also Italianate. Part of this building can be seen in photo 9. Constructed c.1890, it has a projecting metal cornice with four single brackets. Two tall, narrow, one-over-one windows with limestone sills flank a similar central doorway with a transom. The two windows and the door opening have full arch hood molds. An iron balcony beneath the second story door has been removed. A window in the southern elevation has a segmental hood molding. A modern, unpainted wooden store front has been installed over the original.

There is another Italianate building at 116-118 West Walnut St. (photo 2). Built c.1880, the two part, two story, six bay building is painted and has a heavy metal projecting cornice with single decorative brackets. Two rectangular panels are between each bracket. At one time finials anchored both ends of the cornice; only one remains. The tall, rectangular windows have one-over-one lights with limestone sills and pedimented arches. The bottom of the original pilasters can be seen on the first floor; modern signage obscures the top. Between the pilasters, a modern storefront has been installed.

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The painted brick, two part, two story commercial building at 202 and 204 North Meridian St. is perhaps the most ornate representative of the Italianate style in Portland (photo 3). The seven bay facade has a projecting metal cornice with brackets separated by bands of seven diamond-shaped bosses and a chevron course. The tall, narrow, rectangular one-over-one windows have smooth limestone sills and decorative pedimented hood molds. A central doorway divides the building. Modern storefronts on the ground floor have obscured most of the original detail.

Citizens Bank at 114 West Min Street was constructed as a two story, brick Italianate building in 1875. A Classical Revival facade was added in 1912 (photo 4). The Italianate influence is still evident in the painted west elevation with its tall, one-over-one windows with limestone sills and segmental hood moldings. The 1912 facade is dominated by two engaged fluted limestone columns topped with Ionic capitals. The columns rest on square limestone pedestals that bear the dates of the building's construction. The facade features a limestone pediment with large modillions. The cornice continues around the west elevation. The frieze in the facade contains the bank's name. The three bay facade has ribbon windows on the first and second floors. Second floor windows have transoms.

The three story, painted F.O.E. Eagles Lodge at 320 North Meridian Street was constructed as the Merchant's Hotel in 1883 (photo 5). The building has a slightly projecting corbeled painted brick cornice with a series of crenellets. The four-bay facade has four sets of paired window openings in the second and third floors. The boarded third floor windows have limestone sills and wide limestone segmental arches that are linked by a belt course. The second floor has four sets of paired segmental arch one-over-one windows connected by limestone sills. Similar single windows can be seen in the north elevation. The integrity of the first floor has been maintained with its projecting shaped belt course and original metal pilasters that separate the doors and vertical display windows. The porte cochere, a later but compatible addition, is supported by three round metal posts and has a balustrade.

The building at 121 North Meridian St. (photo 6) is a three story, buff brick, commercial block that dates from 1890. Four square brick pilasters rise from a projecting limestone first floor cornice to meet a similar one near the top of the building. The pilasters continue above the upper cornice to the top of the building that has narrow limestone coping. The pilasters separate three rectangular one-over-one windows on the second and third floors. The windows on both second and third floors have limestone sills and limestone lintels. The first floor has been altered and shaded with an awning. Carrara glass covers original architectural details, and modern plate glass windows have been installed.

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Several buildings constructed around the turn of the century display touches of Romanesque Revival architectural influence. The three story, brick Johnson Building at 120 North Meridian St. is a good example with its massive appearance and stone trim (photos 7,15). The simple brick parapet has three rectangular panels, the center one being limestone with the name of the building in it. Extremely simplified brick bartizans with decorative stone caps anchor each end of the building. Underneath the turrets are limestone quoins that extend into the brick at either edge of the building on the second and third floors. Undoubtedly, quoins could also be found under the modern first floor facade. The four bay facade has arched one-over-one windows with limestone sills in the third floor. The windows at either end have a narrow limestone band above their arches. The two central windows have a larger arch that extends over both windows with a decorative fan shaped stone set between them. There is a wide stone belt course at the top third of the four windows. Second floor windows are rectangular, one-over-one elements with stone sills. Above the windows is a stone belt course that is wider over the two center windows and has keystone in the middle. The installation of a modern wooden facade on the first floor obscures the historical details.

The two part commercial blocks at 100-103 and 105-107 West Main St. (photo 8) also have features that suggest the Romanesque Revival style. The brick, three story, seven bay building at 100-103 West Main St. was constructed c. 1895. It has a metal cornice with equally spaced bosses. Under the cornice is a rough stone belt course with brick corbels beneath. Small bartizans top two square brick plasters to anchor the ends of the building, and two pilasters with bartizans flank the central window. There is a wide stone belt course atop the rectangular one-over-one windows on the third floor. The rectangular windows on the second floor also have a rough stone belt course over them with stone arches over the second and seventh windows. The first floor has a shingle shed roof with a pediment over the two modern recessed door openings. Each store has a large plate glass display window.

The neighboring building at 105 West Main St. is the Stevens Building. Part of this building can be seen in photo 8. Built in 1910, the two story, brick facade has a projecting shaped cornice with equally spaced bosses and a rough stone belt course with corbeled brick beneath. Two rectangular bartizans rise from brick pilasters to flank the central window in the seven bay building. A rough limestone belt course tops the rectangular windows on the second floor. They have a continuous rough stone sill. The first floor has a modern shingled shed roof and large glass display windows.

Two 20th century, two part commercial blocks at 304-306 and 308-310 North Meridian Street were constructed in 1910 (photo 9). The building at 308-310 retains more of its original exterior features. The two story, brick building has a simple projecting metal cornice with heavy paired brackets. The two groups of three rectangular, one-over-one windows are topped by segmental stone arches with

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keystones. The windows have limestone sills that are incorporated into a stone belt course. A wide stone belt course is located under the arches and above the windows. Indented panels between the window groups and at either end of the facade add a Queen Anne touch. Narrow stone belt courses pass above and beneath these panels. A shaped metal belt course separates the first and second floors. The first floor of 308-310 is occupied by two businesses. Each has modern projecting signage that separates the first and second floor. A recessed double door and display windows in 308 and a wood and glass store front cover the historical facade on the first floor.

The adjacent building at 304-306 North Meridian St. has the same architectural details as the one at 308-310 Meridian (photo 9). However, the three windows to the north have been boarded up; the three windows to the south have been partially boarded and smaller rectangular windows have been installed. The southernmost panels have been replaced by two rectangular windows. The building has been painted light blue, and a large sign covers part of the first floor. There are two central glass doors flanked by display windows at 304 N. Meridian St. and a recent wood and glass storefront at 306 North Meridian St.

Several outstanding public buildings were constructed in the twentieth century indicating Portland's continued prosperity. Architect, Oscar Wenderoth designed the Portland Post Office in the Neoclassical style (photo 10). Built between 1914-16, the one story, five bay building has a smooth rectangular cut limestone facade. The simple projecting cornice has dentils beneath. The central doorway is set into a rounded arch with a keystone projecting into the voussoirs. Two windows with identical arches flank the door; two rectangular one-over-one windows are at either end of the facade.

The Jay County Courthouse is listed in the National Register of Historic Places (photo 11). Although it has a Commerce Street address, the facade is on Walnut Street. The courthouse, built between 1915-19, was designed by McLaughlin & Hulsken, architects from Lima, Ohio. Peter Hulsken, a native of the Netherlands, earned an architectural degree from the Ecole des Beaux Arts in France. T. D. McLaughlin graduated from Columbia University. McLaughlin & Hulsken designed numerous public buildings including the Celina, Ohio Memorial Buildings, and several schools and libraries in Ohio.

Constructed of Bedford limestone in the Neoclassical style, the three story courthouse has smooth, plain surfaces on the second and third floors and a rusticated first floor and water table. The low-pitched roof is not visible from the street. The facade and the south elevation are identical. Each has five bays with an elaborate projecting central bay that extends the height of the building. The central bay contains a pedimented main entrance. There are large Chicago style windows directly

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above the entry door in the second and third floors that are flanked by two pairs of engaged Ionic columns. The columns rest on a string course that separates the first and second floors. A limestone balustrade runs around the perimeter of the roof. The cornice is decorated with rectangular low panels and stone bosses over the central bay.

The east and west elevations are also identical, having eleven bays each. The arched windows on the first floor have six lights and exaggerated radiating voussoirs. The sixth bay contains a door topped by a decorative pediment with embellished posts. The windows in bays two through ten are recessed and trabeated with plain surrounds. They are separated by single engaged Ionic columns. The first and eleventh windows on the second floor are topped by pediments while the windows above them have keystones.

The courthouse is surrounded by green space with wide walkways leading to each of the four entrances. There is a Civil War monument to Major General John P.C. Shanks in the southeast corner of the lawn.

Just across the street from the courthouse is fire station #1 (photo 12). It was constructed in the Jacobethan Revival style in 1929 and is the only building of its type in Portland. The two story, brick station has a shaped, castellated stone parapet with a triangular pediment. Within the pediment is a square decorative stone plaque. A hipped roof tower with dentils beneath the roofline houses the entry door with its pointed stone arch. The decorative stone door surround projects into the brickwork. The station has three bays on the ground floor and four bays above. Casement windows with metal sash have heavy stone sills. The two engine bays have stone surrounds with pointed keystones at the center. A stone plaque between and above the bays has "Fire Station #1" on it.

The nearby West Walnut Street Church of Christ is a non-commercial building that enhances the character of the district. The Neoclassical two story, brick building was built in 1913. It has a nine bay facade and a flat roof. There is a pediment over the central entryway. Four columns support the one story entry porch that has four round-arched windows above. Three pairs of rectangular windows with double-hung sash and keystones in the center of each pair flank each side of the entry porch.

The building at 121-129 West Main Street was constructed c.1940 near the end of the period of significance. The two story, brick building with its streamlined horizontal emphasis and glass blocks above the main entrance represents the Moderne style in the district. Metal casement windows flush with outer walls provide further Moderne touches. The first floor has large plate glass display windows.

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The historic district as originally designated has been expanded slightly to include several buildings that are compatible with the commercial district and that merit description. The four story, brick 20th century Commercial Review Building at 309 West Main St. originally housed a wholesale grocery business (photo 13, 20). The three bay facade has a plain masonry topped parapet. Rectangular insets in the brick facade are utilized vertically above the fourth floor windows and horizontally at either end of the building. Window openings with a line of vertical bricks above and limestone sills are almost square in the third and fourth floor. The two window openings in the second floor are slightly smaller. Two double windows with stone sills flank the central door on the first floor. The entry has two wooden doors with full length panes and transoms. The east part of the entry has been filled in. There are two large rectangular panes over the entryway. Above the simple brick door surround is a long rectangular white ceramic sign, W.H. Hood Co., the original wholesale grocer. Atop the sign is a highly decorative scroll with red ceramic apples cascading down the sides of the scrolled plaque. It is not known what was in the middle of the scroll.

Another addition to the district is the South Meridian St. Bridge that now forms the southern boundary of the district (photo 14, 19). In 1913 Portland's city fathers decided to include a new bridge in their civic improvements. Otto O. Clayton, the city civil engineer, prepared the design for the new bridge. He proposed a reinforced concrete span with through arches modeled on the Benson Street Bridge over Mill Creek in Cincinnati. Constructed in 1914 with walkways for pedestrians on either side, the bridge is the only example of a once popular design extant in Indiana. The bridge maintains its integrity and still has its original lights on heavy square supports, two at either end of the bridge. Photo 14 looks southward from the historic district and shows the residential nature of the area south of the bridge.

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8. Statement of Significance

Portland commercial Historic District is eligible for listing in the National Register under Criterion A for its significant association with the history of commerce, politics/government. The district is also significant for its collection of 19th and 20th century commercial and public buildings and in that way meets Criterion C.

Commerce played a vital role in the development of Portland's downtown area. After its designation as the county seat, the town became the central market place for Jay County and some of the surrounding area including west-central Ohio. As the county seat, Portland attracted residents of the countryside to the courthouse to transact legal business and to engage in local politics.

Architecturally, the Portland Commercial Historic District conveys Portland's historic past and reflects its later stages of commercial development. The years 1880-1895 and 1905-1925 represent the two most active periods of construction in the commercial district. A number of prominent architectural styles including Italianate, Romanesque Revival, Neoclassicism found expression in those periods of major construction.

The territory from which Jay County was formed was ceded to the United States government in 1818 by two treaties signed by U.S. commissioners and chiefs of the Potawatamie and Miami Indians. The Indiana general Assembly passed a bill in 1835 under which all unorganized territory of extinguished Indian title was laid out into suitable communities. By this action Jay and fifteen other counties were formed. Jay County, formally recognized as a county on January 30, 1836, was named after John Jay, U.S. Supreme Court Justice.

The 1835 bill provided for four commissioners to choose the county seat. They decided not to locate the seat at the geographical center of the county which is 1 1/2 miles west of Portland because the land was too low. After much consideration, the commissioners accepted ninety acres of land on the north bank of the Salamonie River. The selection of the site later raised questions, however, because the high ground where flooding was less frequent lay south of the small river. Over the years, the city of Portland has required extensive filling, ditching and river redredging to avoid the danger and inconvenience of spring flooding.

At a special session of the Board of Commissioners in December 1836, the village was named Portland. There was some controversy over the name of the new town. While some wanted to call it Reidville after Daniel Reid, Daniel W. McNeil, who surveyed the original town site, insisted on Portland. Local lore suggests that he wanted to express the idea of an "inland port" or a "land port".

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The streets were platted as Meridian, Ship, Commerce and Pleasant Streets.

Initially, Portland grew quite slowly due to the lack of a navigable waterway. Early settlers arrived by land and most were of British or German extraction. Many were of Scots-Irish extraction as evidenced by the names of current residents.

The area designated as the Portland Commercial Historic District is the historical center of Portland. The first stores, schools, houses, and commercial buildings were located there. When Henry Cuppy was appointed treasurer of Jay County, his house served as the county's official meeting place until September 1837 when the new log courthouse was completed. Joshua Pennock built a log jailhouse nearby. By 1839 a contract was let to Lewis N. Byram to build a brick courthouse for \$1,750. A year later Joshua Pingry contracted to construct a brick jailhouse in the courthouse yard. The courthouse remained in use until 1859 when it was abandoned and sold at auction. The third courthouse was built in 1868. It served Jay County until 1919 when the present building was completed.

All the structures from the earliest period of Portland's history were constructed of logs, and none are extant. However, some of the buildings deserve mention. Daniel Farber's home, one of the first in Portland, housed the U.S. Post Office in 1835. In January 1839, Robert Huey was granted the first license to operate a grocery store and in the same year N.R. Hawkins established a general store which he later used as his law office. Moses Knapp constructed a post and fence enclosure to serve as the public pound. The Miller-Houston Hall on the northeast corner of Meridian and Main streets and the Black Hotel were constructed in 1845. In that year the Jay Lodge #87, Free and Accepted Masons, was established in Portland.

Portland's early commerce and industry was limited to the production of basic tools, goods, and staples that could be carried in canoes or in wagons. Small local grist mills, saw mills, and blacksmith shops provided Jay County residents with necessary goods and services. Primitive dirt roads, muddy in the rainy season and hardened ruts in the dry season, made travel and trade difficult in the land-locked village. County produce, sold or exchanged, included grains and cereals, lumber, hides, wool, cured meats, and slaughter animals. Farm production gradually increased as the mainstay of commerce for the town and the county.

Unlike many small county seats located on navigable rivers, Portland continued to have problems with transportation. An effort was made to remedy the lack in 1851-52 when the first railroad was proposed to pass through Jay County. It was a north-south line called the Cincinnati, Union & Ft. Wayne. Popular subscriptions were made to the road both in money and land. Grading was begun

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between Union City and Portland and continued part of the way to Decatur. Although the company raised nearly \$150,000 in Jay County, it was not enough to complete the road, and the project was abandoned. This failure worked a great hardship on the small county of barely 7,000 residents. Not until October 1871 did a railroad, the Cincinnati, Richmond & Ft. Wayne, reach Portland.

By 1876, Portland boasted several new businesses as well as improved services. Peoples Bank, one of the oldest chartered state banks, was established in 1873. It was soon followed by Citizens Bank in 1875. Haynes Milling Company, an outgrowth of the old Centennial Mill, erected a new mill building in 1876. That year Joseph Lay perfected and patented an industrial broom and opened a manufacturing company that bore his name. His company soon developed a national market.

Throughout the 1880s new businesses continued to grow in the Jay County seat. Although they were not located within the historic district, their presence stimulated the development of the downtown area. Portland Foundry and Machine Shop, established by H. Sees and P. Moffitt in 1880, produced box stoves, plows, ventilators, gas pipes and brass fillings. The company flourished and became Portland Forge and Foundry Company in 1909. By 1936 the foundry was involved in the manufacture of automotive spare parts and drop forgings. The Creamery Package Manufacturing Company, established in 1884, was another company founded in the late 1800s that continued operations well into the twentieth century. Devoted to the manufacture of the finest grade of spruce and ash butter tubs, the business grew with the dairy industry. By 1936, the company claimed to be the world's largest manufacturer of dairy equipment including butter tubs. Portland boasted a lumber mill, factories that manufactured barrels, sashes and blinds, wagons and carriages, and garments. There was also a marble works and a tile kiln.

In the early 1900s local businessmen, always interested in improving the city's economy, formed the Commercial Club of Portland. Its purpose was to attract business and industry to Portland by creating a favorable climate for business. By 1903 Portland Tile and Hollow Building Block Works was founded. Its name was changed to Portland Tile Company in 1936 when it operated seven kilns. Portland Silo Corporation was established in 1910. The company produced wet-mix concrete stave silos which were sold in eight states. Sheller Manufacturing Corporation opened in 1911 and made baseball bats, butter tubs, and wooden steering wheels. As the automobile grew in popularity, Harry Sheller negotiated with Ford Motor Company to manufacture composition steering wheels for Ford automobiles. In 1921 two local men, J.A. Williams and O.R. Easterday, founded the Jay Garment Company to supply work clothes for national retailers. Jay Garment Company soon became the largest employer in Portland. These new businesses, although not located within the historic district, necessitated the expansion of services downtown.

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Portland received its charter as a city in 1883, just three years before Indiana's first high pressure gas wells were brought in near Portland. The discovery of natural gas in Jay County in 1886 boosted Portland's fortunes even more dramatically than had the arrival of the railroad. Although this period of unusual prosperity did not last, Portland's commerce and industry continued to thrive although on a lesser scale. Portland Natural Gas and Oil Company was organized for the purpose of drilling and piping gas into the city. By the spring of 1887 the city of Portland was partially supplied with gas. Elwood Haynes, a native of Portland and later a pioneer in the development of the automobile, was designated superintendent of the company from 1886 to 1890.

City-wide utilities arrived in Portland in 1890. Fred Bimel supplied electric service to residents when he installed and operated a 1,500 kilowatt generating facility. At the same time, Portland instituted its first city-wide water service from six wells and a direct pressure plant.

New construction between 1870 and 1895 markedly affected the appearance of the Portland Historic District contributing to the distinct atmosphere it has today. Many of the extant buildings were built during this period. With Meridian Street as the central corridor, the commercial district expanded considerably. Wooden structures were replaced with brick ones and vacant lots were filled by two and three story commercial blocks.

The Italianate and other nineteenth century revival styles predominated during this period. Most Italianate buildings in Portland are simple, such as the three from 201-207 North Meridian Street (photo 1) and the building at 116-118 West Walnut Street (photo 3). However, 202-204 North Meridian St. is one of the finest examples of the style in the city. The building at 121 North Meridian St. (Photo 4) illustrates a more classically influenced 19th century commercial building.

These commercial buildings housed small businesses, light industry, hotels, taverns, and men's clubs. Sanborn Fire Insurance Co. maps and early county maps indicate that grocers, bakers, dry goods merchants, milliners, tailors, tobacconists, shoemakers, furniture and carriage makers, bankers, doctors, lawyers, insurance agents all conducted business in the offices and shops in the district. This expansion attests to Portland's significance as a commercial center for the surrounding region. Residents of Portland alone could not have supported the new businesses.

Many of the buildings from the early twentieth century period of growth are extant and contribute to a historic sense of the district. Several were constructed in twentieth century styles. Some, such as the Johnson Building at 120 North Meridian St. and the Stevens Building at 105-107 West Main St., have touches of Romanesque Revival influence. Portland constructed many of its public buildings in the twentieth century. The U.S. Post Office was built in 1914 in the Neoclassical style

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as was the Jay County Courthouse dedicated in 1919. The Portland Firehouse #1 was built in the Jacobethan Revival style in 1930.

The Portland Commercial Historic District continued to be the central marketplace for the region and prospered throughout the period of significance although construction slowed somewhat after the gas boom subsided. Population in Portland continued to grow slowly from 4,798 in 1900 to nearly 6,000 in 1945. The district remained the heart of the town. People came by horse and wagon, train, and automobile to transact business, to work, to socialize, and to be entertained. The district architecture created a cohesive environment for these activities and maintains much of the character of that day. It thereby conveys an excellent sense of the community's rich history from 1870 to 1945.

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Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at the northwest corner of the district at the intersection of the south right-of-way of Arch Street and the north-south alley west of 320 North Meridian Street, proceed eastward across North Meridian St. to the southeast corner of the intersection of Arch and Meridian Streets. Turn north on Meridian St. and proceed to the northern property line at 401 North Meridian Street. Turn eastward and proceed to the intersection of the north property line and the north-south alley between North Meridian St. and Harrison St. Proceed south along the west side of the alley crossing Arch St., High St., Walnut St., Main St., and Water St. Continue southward to the southeastern property line of 229 South Meridian St. Turn west to the east walkway of the South Meridian Street Bridge. Proceed south across the bridge, turn west across South Meridian Street, turn north across the bridge and proceed to the southeast property line of 240 South Meridian St. Proceed westward along the south property line of 240 South Meridian St. to the north-south alley behind the west side of the 200 block of South Meridian St. Turn northward along the east side of the alley and proceed across Water Street to the east-west alley between West Main St. and West Water St. Proceed along the south side of the alley across South Commerce and South Ship streets and follow the southern property line of 309 West Main Street to the north-south alley west of Ship Street. Turn north and proceed along the east side of the alley to the north side of Main Street. Turn east and proceed to the southwestern property line of 216 West Main Street. Turn north and proceed along the west property line of 216 West Main St. to the east-west alley between West Walnut and West Main streets. Turn east and proceed to the east-west alley between Commerce and Ship Streets. Proceed north in the alley behind North Commerce Street properties to the alley between Walnut and High streets. Proceed east to the north-south alley west of North Meridian St. Turn north along the east side of the alley and return to the starting point.

Boundary Justification

Portland Commercial Historic District is distinct from the surrounding area. To the north the historic commercial district gives way to new commercial construction. To the east there is a mixture of residential and modern commercial buildings as well as a school and parking lots. The Salamonie River forms the southern boundary separating the commercial district from a more residential setting. The area beyond the western boundary is primarily residential although there are a few later commercial buildings.