

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNat. Register of Historic Places
Documentation Form

This form is used for documenting property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (formerly 16B). Complete each item by entering the requested information. For additional space, use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer to complete all items.

☒ New Submission ☐ Amended Submission

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Modern Architecture of Rensselaer, Indiana, c. 1940-1979

B. Associated Historic Contexts

(Name each associated historic context, identifying theme, geographical area, and chronological period for each.)

Mid-century modern architecture in Rensselaer, Indiana (c. 1950-1976)

C. Form Prepared by

name/title Kurt West Garner, KW Garner Consulting

organization Historic Preservation Alliance of Jasper County

date July 31, 2014

street & number 12954 6th Road

telephone 574-936-0613

city or town Plymouth

state IN

zip code 46563

e-mail kwgarner@kwgarner.com

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for the listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation.

(See continuation sheet for additional comments.)



4.21.2016

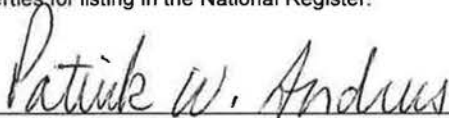
Signature and title of certifying official

Date

Indiana DNR-Division of Historic Preservation & Archaeology

State or Federal Agency or Tribal government

I hereby certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.



Signature of the Keeper

6/01/2016

Date of Action

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Provide the following information on continuation sheets. Cite the letter and title before each section of the narrative. Assign page numbers according to the instructions for continuation sheets in National Register Bulletin *How to Complete the Multiple Property Documentation Form* (formerly 16B). Fill in page numbers for each section in the space below.

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Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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, PO Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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E. Statement of Historic Context: Modern Architecture of Rensselaer, c. 1940-1979

Introduction

Rensselaer is a small, typical Midwestern city with a population just under 6,000, located in Jasper County in northwest Indiana. While the area is a mere hour from Chicago and its outlying suburbs, this county seat-town is situated in the eastern edge of the prairies and flat-tilled lands that continue across Illinois west to the Mississippi River. Jasper County is sparsely populated outside of Rensselaer and a few other smaller villages, and with the exception of some small industry, the population's primary source of income is related to agriculture. A small Catholic-based liberal arts college with an enrollment of 1,200 students is immediately south of the city and has become one of the community's leading employers.

During the late 1940s and into the 1960s, the people of Rensselaer embraced the modern movement of architecture in a way not found in many similar Hoosier communities. This resulted in a concentration of excellent examples of the Modern style constructed among the city's traditional-styled buildings, an anomaly for an agricultural-based, small Midwestern city. Modernism, in various ways, became the language of new, post-war investment in Rensselaer. It gave the city's major institution a new image, guided the design of its first post-war suburban neighborhoods, and put a modest but unmistakable mark on its downtown.

There was a marriage of two factors that became the driving force for this development of Modern architecture in Rensselaer. Responding to the needs of larger enrollment in post-World War II America, Saint Joseph College found itself in desperate need to expand its student dormitory and faculty housing offerings. This occurred at exactly the same time a newly-practicing architect from Chicago by the name of Frank Fischer had made his home in Rensselaer during the 1940s.

Saint Joseph College

Saint Joseph College was established on land that had been used as a Catholic orphanage since 1867. The college was founded in 1889 and is located about one mile south of Rensselaer, though contemporary commercial development has closed the gap between the college and city's residential neighborhoods. A year prior to the college's founding, a large building was constructed near the campus for a Catholic-based Native American Indian assimilation and education program. The building, known as Drexel Hall, is a three-and-a-half story stone and brick building with a central courtyard and was restored in the last decade. Drexel Hall is situated on the east side of Highway 231, while the main college campus is on the west side of the highway. The Saint Joseph College campus is composed of about thirty-five buildings with its older late 19th and early 20th century buildings located just off the highway.

Most of the college's early architecture is designed in the Collegiate Gothic or simplified Neoclassical style between 1888 and 1940. The buildings are two and three stories tall and are constructed of common brick and stone trim or banding. One notable exception is the main chapel building which has a commanding presence off the main entry from the highway. The building was constructed in 1909 in the

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Romanesque Revival style with common brick and stone trim. The building features a tall pair of towers that flank its front gable. An overall sense of architectural unity to these earlier buildings, despite the variation of styles, is made through their use of generally matching brick and stone and massing.

The first real break from more traditional architectural styles on the campus came in 1941 when the Richard Scharf Alumni Field House, a large barrel-vaulted building, was constructed with simple Art Moderne details on its façade. The details were restricted to tall bays of pilaster-like sections of wall and central finial on its parapet. These features have been mostly lost due to a recent expansion on the front of the building that covers the front façade with a new contemporary-styled masonry façade of large red brick and concrete block.

During the 1950s, Saint Joseph College experienced substantial growth due to the federal government's entry into subsidizing higher education which led to the need for dormitory housing for students. The college turned to a local architect named Frank Fischer, who had been schooled in a Chicago firm, to produce plans for adding to the campus's student housing capacity. The contrast between the historic buildings, and even the fieldhouse, could not have been starker. The first two dormitory buildings, Bennett and Noll Halls, were constructed in 1955. The buildings are simple compositions of interconnected one and two-story cubes of brick with stone spandrels and rib-like features that frame vertical rows of windows. Other than their flat roofs, the buildings' scale and composition of materials related little to the other buildings on campus. No doubt, these dormitories were economical to build and followed a general national trend in architectural design, but it is important to note that they were the first of their kind in the broader Rensselaer and Jasper County community. The introduction of Modern architecture had occurred.

Apparently the college administrators, and the community in general, were satisfied with Fischer's work because three years later, two more dormitory buildings were constructed and they again turned to Frank Fischer for the design. Fischer continued in the same basic style by creating three-story cubes with attached three-story stairwell towers. Not only were these larger in scale, but he virtually eliminated stone trim and instead inserted large bays composed of aluminum and glass curtain wall fenestration. The fenestration covered most of the center of the building with massive brick bays serving as bookends.

Up until this time, Fischer's designs were regulated to the west edge of the campus, some distance from the day-to-day travel of visitors and well out of eyesight of passers-by. However, when the college embarked on probably its most important building since the main chapel was built in 1909, they turned to Fischer. This time, his design would occupy a prominent location and a central role in campus life. In 1962, the college constructed the Charles Halleck Student Center, named for a long-time member of the United State House of Representatives and native of Rensselaer. So important was the building to both the college and community of Rensselaer, that former President Dwight D. Eisenhower laid the cornerstone for the building's dedication. The Halleck Student Center design was unlike Fischer's previous more cube-like designed dormitories. Instead, the building became very angular in its siting on campus, and featured large expanses of aluminum and glass fenestration. The design for vertical circulation in the building's entry became the venue for an impressive interior space with floating, open staircases and large open landing areas outside the building's core rooms. The building included a large central grand hall for events that featured a folded roof design complete with small clerestory windows for

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natural light. The building became almost a marvel on the landscape as terraces and steps intersected the building and grounded its aeronautical-like design to the flat terrain. With this building, the public became far more engaged as users of the modern design than they ever had with Fischer's dormitory designs. The building became a focal point of activity on campus, as well as in the literal sense as it was surrounded by college drives and axially positioned at the end of the main drive onto campus.

The following year, Fischer was again retained by the college to design Schwietermann Hall, a large dormitory for priests. It is positioned on the south edge of the campus, a prominent location for travelers on the main highway heading north into Rensselaer and the college. Schwietermann Hall's plan is Y-shaped, but with wide-curving exterior walls. Again, Fischer used the circulation pattern to provide quiet common areas on each level's intersection of the stems of the Y. The common brick color was again used, with limited stone trim that enframed the large expanses of brick. Narrow vertical bays of glass curtain walls create drama and a ribbed-effect on the exterior.

Concurrently with the commissions Fischer received from the college for buildings on campus, Saint Joseph College also contracted Fischer to design an unusual development of professionals' housing in a 25 acre tract of wooded land the college owned in its southwest corner. Stemming from the need for middle-income housing in the community, the college received a grant to produce new housing for its professors between 1956 and 1968. Fischer became the architect for the "College Woods Subdivision" and its housing during this period. The subdivision is fairly well removed from the campus and separated by expanses of open land. The wooded topography of the subdivision is slightly rolling, which allowed Fischer some interplay between the landscape and the eight house designs he produced. The meandering drive named "Winding Road" adheres to the rolling topography and bisects the subdivision with an entry off its west and south sides. The subdivision was the first truly suburban post-war neighborhood, well-removed from city limits, and made a strong break from the rigid street grid.

While some of the house designs in the subdivision followed Fischer's proclivity for horizontal and cube-like forms, he also introduced designs with the bold diagonal lines of steeply-pitched shed roofs. These compact plans, sometimes nestled into their hillside lots, had to be economical. Standardized materials like concrete block and vertical wood siding were used by Fischer. One of the last houses designed by Fischer in the subdivision is the Rank House, built in 1964. The house made a stark break from his earlier designs due to the plan's organic form, which wraps around an interior courtyard. While the plan was unlike his other work, the types of materials utilized and its flat roof design were characteristic of most of his other College Woods work.

Architect Frank Fischer, 1914-2008

Frank Fischer was born in Chicago in 1914. He attended Loyola Academy and graduated from Northwestern University in 1936 as a theater major. Fischer met his future wife, Mary Ellen Kirk, in Chicago and the two were married in 1940. While he was enlisted during World War II, Fischer worked for the U.S. Army Corp of Engineers in the design and construction of large convalescent hospitals. Upon returning home, Fischer began working in the drafting room for a Chicago architectural firm. Wanting to continue in the architectural profession, Fischer passed the required licensing tests and established his

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practice in Chicago. Mary Ellen (Kirk) Fischer was a native of Rensselaer and wanted to make their new home in her community, though Frank continued to keep an office in Chicago, about an hour away. This connection to Chicago provided ample influence on Fischer of contemporary design, while his proximity to Saint Joseph College by virtue of their residence in Rensselaer made him the natural choice for the college's new design projects.

Fischer was an admirer of Frank Lloyd Wright, and was also certainly influenced in his larger civic commissions at Saint Joseph College by European functionalists who came out of the Bauhaus. However, he cited West Coast designer Richard Neutra for the influence in his residential architecture. Neutra was a Viennese immigrant, well-versed in emerging European architecture influenced by the Bauhaus, but connected to the design principles often labeled as "organic" due to an apprenticeship he completed under Frank Lloyd Wright. Fischer applied many of the design principles Neutra was established in for the custom designs he completed in the College Woods neighborhood. This included his last work in the subdivision, an organic design centered on supporting the life of his clients, as well as the over-riding visual principles of design that hold the homes to the ground by virtue of their horizontal flat roofs, or shed roofs when inserted into the hillsides, rows of windows, and placement of the basic box into the landscape.

Architecture of Rensselaer

The area that would become Jasper County was opened for settlement in 1832; the town of Rensselaer was platted in 1839 and became the county seat of government. The architecture throughout Jasper County reflects its simple agrarian roots represented by several forms of vernacular houses and farm buildings. Simple gable-front and side-gabled houses from the mid-to-late 19th century gave way to slightly more complex gabled-ell and T-plan houses of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. The prevailing material and method for home construction was wood balloon-frame structures and wood clapboards. By the early 20th century the corn-belt cube, or American Four Square, house began to make an appearance in both town and country, followed by simple forms of the Bungalow.

For the most part, the architecture of Rensselaer mirrored that of its surrounding countryside. Where architectural styles were followed, the features were mostly carpenter-applied on vernacular forms. This was most true through the settlement period to the end of the railroad era, or the first decades of the 20th century. Brick was more common in town than the countryside, particularly when commercial blocks were being built in the city.

Following those of national popularity, Rensselaer's most prominent architectural styles leading up to the turn of the 19th century include Italianate, Queen Anne, and Free Classic examples, with the majority of those being Queen Anne examples. Combined, there are approximately eighty examples of these styles in Rensselaer, plus a few examples of other styles popular during this period including Second Empire, Greek Revival, and Romanesque Revival. In the first decade of the 20th century, approximately ten examples of the Neoclassical style were built in and around the downtown. During the 1910s-1930s, Bungalow/Craftsman homes became popular in the city, as did the minor use of Classical and Colonial Revival styles. Almost 120 buildings were constructed in these styles, with the highest majority of those examples being variations on the bungalow.

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Rensselaer has two primary historic districts, the Rensselaer Courthouse Square Historic District and the Milroy Park Historic Residential District on the southwest side of the Iroquois River one block from the downtown. The downtown courthouse square district is centered on the traditional county seat courthouse's public square. Most of the buildings are two-story brick with parapet walls. Features of the Italianate style are found on several of the buildings built prior to 1900, while features of the Neoclassical style are found on a few buildings built after 1900. For the most part, though, the application of styles is restrained and focused on window treatment and cornice embellishments. Notable exceptions are the

Late Gothic Revival-styled Jasper County Courthouse built of limestone in 1896. Another exception is the three-story Iroquois Lodge of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows. The cream-colored brick and stone-trimmed building was built in 1895 with Sullivanesque features in the Romanesque Revival style. One other building, a bank constructed in 1927, was built of limestone in the Neoclassical style with exceptional attention to details. These three buildings show the hand of a trained architect or designer. Similarly, the Milroy Park district contains a few exceptional houses from the same period that reflect more high-style design. These include the Alfred Thompson House (116 Park Avenue), a Second Empire home built in 1879 and the Oren Parker House (102 Park Avenue), a Craftsman Bungalow with Tudor influences built in 1917. Both houses are brick with stone trim and are well-articulated with features of their respective styles. One other Rensselaer building of note from this period is the city's Carnegie Library, designed by Charles Weatherhogg, a partner in the same firm that designed the courthouse. The 1905 Neoclassical building is brick with stone trim and is located at 301 N. Van Rensselaer St.

As the economy waned during the 1930s, little construction occurred in the community. Once the economy began to rebound, architectural design, particularly residential design, returned to its traditional roots during the late 1930s and in post-World War II development of the 1940s. This is probably best evidenced in the College Park neighborhood on the south edge of the city. The development was platted in 1938 and most of the homes embrace the small-house movement of the mid-20th century. Styles in the district are largely variations of Colonial precedents including Cape Cod, English Cottage, and Williamsburg styles. Exceptional examples of residential architecture of this period and/or style are found in the Milroy Park district at 202 Home Avenue and 126 Park Avenue. The example on Home Avenue is a large example of the English Cottage style built in c. 1925 and the Park Avenue example is a nicely-apportioned Colonial Revival example from c. 1914. Similarly, religious architecture also returned to the revival styles of the era. The First Christian Church (1938) and St. Augustine's Church (1939) were built in the Late Gothic and Tudor Gothic Revival styles.

A few other notable civic buildings were built during this time, aided by federal relief programs. These include a state highway garage (1936), the post office (1937), and the municipal power plant (1939). The post office was constructed in the Colonial Revival style, with a restrained design for stylistic features. However, both the power plant and highway garage were designed in styles from the modern movement of architecture, as were two commercial buildings in the city's downtown. Simple details of the Art Deco or Art Moderne styles were used in the construction of these 1930s-era buildings. While none of these are exceptional examples of the styles, they do demonstrate the first break from traditional revival styles and vernacular design that had been popular for nearly 100 years.

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Most of the Rensselaer's immediate post-war housing followed the American small house design and lined existing platted streets or extensions of those streets in new grids adjacent to historic neighborhoods. Small groupings of these houses built between the mid-1940s and 1950s line Milton Street and Abigail Streets north of Highway 114, and line Grove Street west of Highway 231. There are approximately seventy of these types of houses scattered in town. One exception to the simple extension of the street grid during this time was a post-depression development known as College Park that was platted on the south side of Rensselaer in 1938 but realized its largest expansion after the war. The neighborhood plat breaks slightly from the strict street grid and has modest homes in variations of Colonial Revival architecture except toward the south end of the district where the ranch house became popular during the 1950s-1960s. There are over 100 houses in this development.

The 1950s ushered in the popularity of the ranch house in Rensselaer at its fringes. The massed house plan sheltered beneath a low-pitched hipped roof was popularized in the Midwest from the type's roots in the western United States. The style became the common house type for the following decades into the 1970s and marked a strong break between traditional architectural styles of the previous fifty years, as the Bungalow had in the first decades of the 20th century. Most of Rensselaer's post-war housing was in the form of modest frame Ranch houses. A number were more sophisticated, architect designed or pattern book-inspired. A small development of Ranch houses with mostly side gables are found lining Monnett Street south of the Grove Street development of small houses. More modest Ranch houses are found in the small diamond-shaped neighborhood lined by Park, Emmett, Fleming and Kanna Streets. These homes, about twenty total, have larger and sometimes wooded lots and were built during the 1950s-1960s. Another nicely apportioned development that began in the early 1950s and continued to expand eastward in stages through the 1960s and 1970s is on the south side of Highway 114 lining Thompson Street. The neighborhood is lined with modest and large Ranch houses, some styled with Colonial or Tudor details, and feature mostly hipped roofs. During its roughly 25 year expansion, over fifty houses were built in the neighborhood. The growth may have been spurred by the construction of the city's hospital in 1963 and high school during the mid-1960s on the north side of Highway 114 on the east side of town.

Influence of the Modern Movement of Architecture

Modern architecture is largely an outgrowth of ideas made popular by Europe's leading architects of the early to mid-twentieth century. Le Corbusier, Gropius, and Mies van der Rohe were all pioneers and well-known purveyors of modern architecture, particularly the International Style. The style came to the United States during the 1930's with practitioners who emigrated to escape turmoil in Europe. In 1932 the Museum of Modern Art in New York City first exhibited the style to the American public. The companion book to the exhibit, *The International Style: Architecture Since 1922*, was likely the first to coin the style and its features for the U.S. public. The return to construction after World War II and émigrés before, during and shortly after the war fostered the development of Modern architecture in the United States.

While Americans were building in styles revived from early European precedents, European architects were experimenting with new and innovative building materials. The structural capabilities of concrete, steel, and glass were tested during this period. This led to the design of buildings with simple skeletal

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frames and walls that were hung like mere structural skin between the floors (the curtain wall).¹ Mies van der Rohe was possibly the best known architect to popularize this building technique, particularly related to the glass box appearance of his designs. Mies was one of the primary proponents of the International Style in the United States after his emigration to the country. His design philosophy was largely disseminated during the 1940s and 1950s from the Illinois Institute of Technology campus, which he redesigned to fit this new architectural style.²

Modern architecture often celebrated the structural frame and paid careful attention to the treatment of windows and the interaction glass walls had with the landscape outside the building. Windows were considered the most conspicuous features of modern exterior design. By treating windows with light, simple frames the window became less "a mere hole in the wall" than a related expression of the structure and wall curtain the style promoted.³ Terraces and roof planes were used to extend the buildings beyond their walled boundaries. Modern architecture's plans often treated interior walls as mere screens to allow the plan to be compliant to the function of the building. The concept of a flowing interior space, versus enclosed singular rooms, was a part of the movement. Separation could be achieved with screening, and the screening, depending on the use of materials or sheer size, could provide a hierarchy for use of the space.⁴

The first introduction of the modern movement of architecture in Rensselaer are simple details designed into facades of a few commercial and civic buildings constructed during the mid-to-late 1930s and early 1940s. These were the exception to the architectural landscape of Rensselaer since Art Deco and Art Moderne stylistic details were not frequently used in the community and no high examples of the style were undertaken.

No doubt, Rensselaer's citizens learned about Modernism through media exposure. Newspapers, builders' magazines, and even the new medium of television offered images of modern architecture. But Rensselaer became more familiar with Modernism in the same way most Midwest small towns did: through a few large commissions that required outside services, and, ultimately, by having its own local practitioner. In 1949, two buildings were expanded upon or built that followed the much more significant transition from traditional to modern architecture. The Rensselaer Municipal Power Plant, constructed in the Art Moderne style in 1939, received an addition in 1949 that began to bridge the gap between the Moderne style and the International Style through the use of large glass and steel curtain wall fenestration. Also in 1949, a new facility for the Church of the Nazarene in Rensselaer was constructed with details of the International Style. Five years later, in 1954, the St. Augustine Church Rectory was also constructed in Rensselaer with details of the International Style. In this later design, the congregation broke from the more traditional Tudor-Gothic style in which they had constructed their church building in 1939. Broader than an individual's acceptance of modern lines applied to their residences, these three examples occurred in the public forum and demonstrate community-based support for the introduction of the

¹ McAlester, pg. 469-470

² Curtis, pg. 261

³ Hitchcock, pg. 46-47

⁴ Hitchcock, pg. 87

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International Style. While it is unknown if Frank Fischer was responsible for these designs, he had already relocated to Rensselaer during this time.

With respect to residential design, the modern movement gained its greatest foothold with the introduction of Frank Fischer's designs for the College Woods subdivision, southwest of Saint Joseph College, in 1956. The 25 acre subdivision commission was given to Fischer by Saint Joseph College to supply economical homes for professionals, most notably to fill a housing need by its own faculty. Between 1956 and 1968, Fischer designed nine homes in the subdivision, as well as the plat for the development itself. The designs in College Woods followed two primary types: the flat-roofed cube design and the angular shed-roof design. The flat-roofed cube designs are simple one story boxes with large expanses of glass curtain walls, roofs with wide-overhanging eaves, and balconies or terraces that appear to emphasize the horizontal lines of the roof. Slightly later were Fischer's shed-roof designs that function like a gable-roofed house that is cut along its ridge and slipped down and to the side of each other allowing for clerestory windows and obscured entries. Both types used scored concrete block (16" x 8" block scored to appear like stacked 8" x 8" block) and vertical wood siding. The Rank House, located at 975 Winding Road and built in 1964, was one of Fischer's more unusual designs. The house, while similar to his other designs with flat roofs and choice of materials, falls more into the category of organic architecture as it has a number of curved wall planes, sometimes coming to a point, and wrapping around an interior courtyard. Fischer created a new language for residential design in the community with the introduction of these house types and his choice of exterior materials.

Fischer also designed several houses in the City of Rensselaer during the late 1950s into the early 1960s. These include his own home (1960) where the flattened design stands out in marked contrast with the other homes. The two-story box is inserted in the hillside berm on Milroy Avenue, which gives the impression of a one-story house with flat roof along the road. The back of the house which faces the river, exposes two floors of wood and glass. The architect's house is more similar to his designs in the College Woods subdivision, with respect to materials and flattened roof, than the other residences he designed in town. Three of the other houses have very low-pitched hipped roofs, clearly a comfortable parallel with the Ranch house, and feature stone ashlar or brick over concrete block, similar to more conventional ranch houses. However, their general composition of rectangular boxes, wing-like pillars of masonry, and vertical wood siding is similar to his other work. One large Fischer residential design is located on the city's near southeast side. The tri-level Teyber House (1957) features flat roofs on intersecting cubes with jetties of top floors over their lower floors. The house has stone ashlar wainscot, bays and terrace walls and vertical wood siding. Most of these in-town examples are located in subdivisions of period homes, designed in more traditional ranch forms, except for Fischer's own house built in the Victorian-era Milroy Park Historic District.

The most notable example of modern commercial architecture in Rensselaer is the former Tonner Cleaners building (1959), also designed by Fischer in the International Style. The building is located one block off the city's commercial historic district. Its flat roof is exaggerated by its outward extension from the building that creates a wide canopy under which vehicles may park. This feature moves the building from a simple brick and glass cube to those embraced by designers of roadside architecture. The building has distinctive bays of solid masonry composed of Roman brick, expressing the horizontal, and large expanses of glass. The entry is cutout of its front corner and is all glass. Another building to note is

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the State/PNC Bank Building (1966) constructed on the northeast side of the courthouse square. The building is an oblong brick box with a flat pre-cast, waffle-style concrete roof with a wide overhang supported by pilasters of precast concrete. The roof style was popular during the 1960s. Large bays of glass are cut into the box for windows and entries. The building was designed by Mayes Architects of Chicago.

A few architectural features are common among the concentration of modern architecture in Rensselaer. Most notable is the cube design present in nearly every example of the style. The cube's European, Bauhaus roots was brought to the United States during the 1930s. The cube, or box, was thought to be the most economic, efficient, and therefore the most "machine-like" form in which to live and function for human habitation. While basic commercial boxes were being created in Rensselaer during the first half of the 20th century, their exterior walls were still being decorated by traditional or artistic features. The Modern cube's walls expressed more plainly the *cube* as the architecture, without any applied detail for the sake of style.

Excellent representations of the cube form are found in the four modern dormitory buildings constructed on the campus of Saint Joseph College between 1955 and 1958. The buildings are two and three stories tall and appear as one solid, oblong cube with smaller intersecting cubes. The Paulsen and Scharf homes, located in College Woods, are excellent representations of the cube form applied to residential design.

Building off of this basic cube, and further enhancing the horizontal nature of the cube, was another common architectural feature of modern examples in Rensselaer: the flat roof. The flat roof, sometimes expressed by its far extension from the building's walls, accentuated the horizontal line of the building and grounded it to the flat terrain of its site. The flat roof was one of the strongest signals that this new architectural style was breaking from traditional styles; unornamented parapets obscured the flat roof of most Modernist buildings. The gabled and hipped roofs, tracing their roots to some of the earliest examples of human habitation, were replaced by flat or shed-roof planes. Additional horizontal planes were frequently introduced in the examples by the use of terraces and balconies.

The former Tonner Cleaners in downtown Rensselaer has a long roof extended from the building's façade that acts as a canopy under which to park. The roof extension makes a strong horizontal architectural gesture, as important as the whole massing of the remaining building. Several of the residential examples use extensions of the roofs to connect to exterior storage compartments and create carports. These include the Fendig House in Rensselaer and the Quebeck and Barton Houses in College Woods.

The final notable feature common among the examples of modern architecture in Rensselaer is the design and composition of fenestration. The treatment of window openings in the exterior walls of the cube is a strong tie to the style's 20th century European precedents. The large expanses of glass and steel that compose building windows and entries are frequently arranged in vertical or horizontal continual bands, at times with rows of steel panels inserted between rows of glass panes. These continuous bands

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or large openings in the exterior walls contrast the very solid, monolithic mass of masonry that compose the exterior walls.

The Saint Joseph College dormitory buildings constructed in 1958 probably best express the idea of glass and steel curtain wall fenestration. Three-story bays composed of rows of glass and steel windows and steel panels are divided by narrow brick pilasters. The Halleck Center (1962), also located on campus, has large expanses of glass and steel on its entry corner, cutting away at the structural qualities associated with the cube all-together. Frank Fischer did something similar with his own home; one back corner is cutaway and in its place a two-story glass bay wraps the house to provide an impressive view of the natural terrain of the river valley.

Modern architecture in the Rensselaer community, more specifically in the College Woods subdivision, began to move away from the more conventional organizational principles of the International Style to two later styles that would gain popularity during the 1960s-1970s. Some discussion about the styles is important because the examples located were designed by Frank Fischer and they precede the national trend by several years. Fischer designed three houses in College Woods in what Virginia Savage McAlester describes as the "Shed" style in *A Field Guide to American Houses*, second edition. McAlester traces the popularity of the style to two 1963 developments in California called Sea Ranch Condominiums and Hedgerow Houses. The developments provided a new way to engage the house in the native landscape, and their most stylistic feature became the large shed roof that offered the opportunity to create bands of clerestory windows at the top of the walls. The form itself can be traced to non-residential buildings of farmsteads and western mines, however, the organization of multiple boxes places side-by-side with large planes of angular roofs, was new.

Fischer's three Shed houses are the Qubeck House (1957, 750 Winding Road), Baumann House (1968, 850 Winding Road, and the Barton House (1957, 730 Winding Road). The designs include alternating shed roofs over intersecting boxes, bands of windows, and wide carports covered with shed roofs. Two of the designs were completed a full six years prior to the developments in California demonstrating their true non-conformity to any housing trends of the era, let alone the architecture of the region. The houses did, however, use the materials Fischer found to be economical for construction with scored concrete block and vertical wood siding, although the Barton House has brick instead of concrete block. Fischer engaged the same principles he used in his other residential design by using bays of masonry broken up by bays of wood siding or windows.

The other style Fischer experimented with in College Woods was demonstrated by the Rank House, located at 975 Winding Road and built in 1964. The Rank House followed organic design principles that engaged the building into the landscape and broke the flat qualities of its walls with broad sweeping curves. The Rank House wraps around a central courtyard, adding some privacy for the family, but opens on its back side to the natural wooded lot on which it sits. Two broad curving walls come to a single point, almost like a ship's bow on its front corner. Fischer's Dumas House in Rensselaer also loosely followed the Organic style. The house (1965, 450 Emmett Ave.) has wide wings off either side of the central part of the house that wrap around a driveway/courtyard. The back of the house takes advantage of views of the natural landscape of the yard. Organic houses trace their roots to Frank Lloyd

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Wright, whom Fischer admired, and his Prairie designs which broke down the inside and outside boundaries of traditional homes. Wright's most famous Organic house was Falling Water, built in 1936, literally built over a stream in a woods of southwest Pennsylvania. Fischer continued the use of a flat roof, and scored concrete block and vertical wood siding on the Rank House, but the plan itself is unlike anything else in Rensselaer.

Conclusion

The concentration of well-executed examples of modern architecture in the Rensselaer area, and the distinctive characteristics of the examples, provide for an excellent study of the development of modern architecture in rural Indiana. The collaborative effort of Saint Joseph College and their architect, Frank Fischer, who guided its physical development in the middle part of the 20th century, culminated in this work. Fischer's other commissions in the community give evidence to the town's embrace of Modernism. Non-Fischer examples of Modern architecture in Rensselaer during the post college development period also demonstrate the community's embrace beyond that of one architect-led style.

F. Associated Property Types

There are four categories of associated property types defined for the purpose of this document. The four are residences, residential districts, commercial, and institutional. The examples of modern architecture were constructed from 1949 through 1968. While not exclusive to the work of local architect Frank Fischer, most examples of modern architecture in the subject area were designed by Fischer.

Residences

Rensselaer's housing from the 1940-1979 period consists mainly of detached single-family houses in varying contemporary styles. The residential examples addressed in this document generally fall into three styles: International, Shed, and Organic. Examples of the International Style feature flat roofs and cube forms. Shed style examples emphasize angular roofs on intersecting boxes, and the placement of the house into the landscape. The examples of the Organic style have very low-pitched hipped or flat roofs and demonstrate an exceptional engagement of the building into the landscape by wrapping the house around courtyards or landscapes on the site. The design integration of entry door location, materials, and use of fenestration are all important features that contribute to the architectural integrity of the residences regardless of style. A unique collection of modern residential architecture is located in the College Woods subdivision southwest of Rensselaer. This small subdivision contains sufficient integrity of its collection of architecture, as well as its unusual organic plat and natural landscape, to be considered a potential district. The other examples of modern residential architecture in the subject area are not concentrated together in any large degree to constitute districts, but with sufficient integrity are individually eligible.

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Residential District

One planned residential neighborhood located in Rensselaer has a high concentration of modern architecture and qualifies as a district. The College Park neighborhood was platted in 1957 and retains significant architectural integrity among its 1950s-1960s houses. The subdivision was designed by Frank Fischer and features winding roads and twenty-one wooded and hilly lots. Eighteen houses are located in the subdivision, ten of which were built between 1957 and 1968. The remaining houses were built between 1979 and 2003. Two were built in 1979, two in 1985, three during the 1990s, and the most recent was built in 2003. Most of the early houses were designed by Fischer in all three styles in which he practiced: International, Shed, and Organic. One Ranch house was also built during this period. The later houses were built in contemporary styles. The two houses built in 1979 sought to compliment the earlier styles by following a simple Ranch and Shed design. For that reason, the district's period of significance should be 1957-1979.

Commercial

Only two examples of purpose-built modern commercial architecture exist in the subject area. Examples located near the Rensselaer Courthouse Square Historic District, listed on the National Register of Historic Places, are in close proximity to the boundaries of the district and may be considered for incorporation into the district on the basis of architecture and commerce. In order to accommodate the inclusion of both buildings, the period of significance of the downtown district would need to be extended from 1868-1960 to 1966. The examples are the former Tonner Cleaners and PNC Bank, built in 1959 and 1966 respectively. Both were designed to be commercial buildings and both reflect tenants of the International Style.

Institutional

A significant collection of modern architecture is concentrated on the campus of Saint Joseph College south of the City of Rensselaer. The six buildings were built in the International Style and are all education-related, though five are dormitories. This concentration of examples is largely located in the west half of the campus, but should be considered a part of a broader campus-wide historic district that would include the college's late 19th and early 20th century buildings. The modern examples may be individually eligible depending on sufficient architectural integrity. The examples are the Halleck Student Center, Schwietermann Hall, and the following student dormitories: Noll Hall, Bennett Hall, Halas Hall, and Gallagher Hall. Rensselaer had developed public schools that likely had additions or new buildings in the 1950s and 1960s. All of the public schools in town were radically changed and rebuilt after the time frame of this MPDF. Churches are another class of institutional buildings. The two religious buildings constructed within the time frame of this MPDF are both examples of International Style, the Church of the Nazarene (1949) and St. Augustine's Rectory (1954). Both examples in this category were built in the International Style and depending on their interior architectural integrity, they may also be individually eligible.

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While the following may not be a complete list of designs associated with modern architecture in Rensselaer, it does reflect all twenty-seven of the buildings recorded by field documentation and interviews. Of all buildings constructed in Rensselaer between about 1940 and 1970, these have obvious high-style elements of Modernism and/or were architect-designed. Properties with a Winding Road address are located in College Woods subdivision.

Name	Address	Architect	Year Built	Use	Style
City Power Plant addn.	425 Van Rensselaer	unknown	1949	public	International
Church of the Nazarene	200 S. McKinley	unknown	1949	religious	International
St. Augustine Church					
Rectory	320 N. McKinley	unknown	1954	religious	International
Bennett Hall	St. Joseph College	Fischer	1955	dormitory	International
Noll Hall	St. Joseph College	Fischer	1955	dormitory	International
Phil Wood House	210 E. Thompson	Fischer	1956	residence	International
Shemky House	720 Winding Rd.	Fischer	1957	residence	International
Cowdin House	800 Winding Rd.	Fischer	1957	residence	International
Edward Teyber House	128 S. Home	Fischer	1957	residence	International
Qubeck House	750 Winding Rd.	Fischer	1957	residence	Shed
Scharf House	751 Winding Rd.	Fischer	1957	residence	Organic
Barton House	730 Winding Rd.	Fischer	1957	residence	Shed
Farrell House	731 Winding Rd.	Fischer	1957	residence	International
Halas Hall	St. Joseph College	Fischer	1958	dormitory	International
Gallagher Hall	St. Joseph College	Fischer	1958	dormitory	International
Russell Grant House	315 S. Home	Fischer	c. 1958	residence	International
Floyd "Snook" Hoyes House	523 Jackson	Fischer	c. 1958	residence	Shed
Ralph Fendig House	126 Van Rensselaer	Fischer	1958	residence	International
Tonner Cleaners	129 Van Rensselaer	Fischer	1959	commercial	International
Frank Fischer House	848 W. Milroy	Fischer	1960	residential	International
Halleck Student Center	St. Joseph College	Fischer	1962	education	International
Schwietermann Hall	St. Joseph College	Fischer	1963	dormitory	International
Paulsen House	900 Winding Rd.	Fischer	c. 1964	residential	International
Rank House	975 Winding Rd.	Fischer	1964	residential	Organic
Thomas Dumas House	450 Emmett Ave.	Fischer	1965	residential	Organic
PNC Bank	125 S. Cullen	Mayes	1966	commercial	International
Baumann House	850 Winding Rd.	Fischer	1968	residential	Shed

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Registration Requirements for All Property Types

The modern architecture examples' eligibility for the National Register of Historic Places may be weighed against the Register's seven aspects related to integrity: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Only one of the twenty-seven buildings listed, the Scharf House at 751 Winding Road, has been so substantially altered with a new steeply-pitched hipped roof, change in exterior materials, and new windows that it does not sufficiently meet the aspects listed to make it eligible. The most important aspects associated with the modern examples in Rensselaer are design and materials, though all should be considered.

The following aspects should be retained by the examples of modern architecture for eligibility:

Location

The examples generally must remain in their historical location. Most notable are the way in which the residential examples fit into their natural landscape in the College Woods subdivision. This building-to-site design often dictated interior floor plan designs and views out from the building. This intimate design philosophy did not wholly translate to commercial/religious and educational-related examples of modern architecture. In both of these situations the landscape did not warrant organic design. Therefore these examples may meet eligibility requirements if placed on a site suitable to the SHPO.

Design

Buildings that clearly demonstrate key Modern design tenants, or can be shown to possess key features of any Modernist subtype, such as International Style, etc. will qualify for listing. Additions from outside of the period of significance that obscure main or side elevations or that overwhelm the massing of a building will jeopardize the eligibility of a resource. Conversely, an architect-designed addition or one that emulates a mode of Modernism, dating from within the historic period, can contribute to the significance of the property. To meet eligibility, the examples of modern architecture should retain sufficient plan and exterior wall configuration as originally designed. Interior and exterior pathways and volumes should not be compromised in such a way as to prevent the original intent for spatial experiences. In residential properties, the remodeling of bathrooms and kitchen areas, in and of themselves, will likely not jeopardize the eligibility of a house. Significant changes to fenestration or rooflines, eaves, or overhangs would likely make the building ineligible. For example, replacement of a residential sliding door with a new unit might not jeopardize eligibility, but, a change in a distinctive window pattern on a primary elevation would likely result in an ineligible house. Residential designs include open areas such as terraces, carport-like features, and courtyards. These areas should remain open, or at least identifiable as volumes or bays with respect to carports. A few of Fischer's residential designs originally had flat roofs, but they have been covered with very low-pitched hipped roofs. The overall feeling and effect of the horizontality of the design is not so negatively affected by the change in these roof lines to make the houses ineligible. While impossible to quantify, a rule of thumb should be that the roof line as viewed from the main public street should be reasonably maintained by the newer pitched roofed.

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Notable circulation design is present in both the Halleck Student Center and Schwietermann Hall; these are key features of the design, as are the large public spaces in both buildings and they should remain open and functioning as designed.

Many of the designs include cube-like or box forms divided by bays of specific materials or glazing. Changing the bay pattern by infilling or covering the bays, or removing materials that compose bays, would negatively impact the design and if undertaken on a large scale that would affect the overall appearance, the changes would make the building ineligible.

Design of characteristic spaces should remain intact and undivided by partitions:

- Open, angle-ceilinged common rooms
- Open plan of common areas
- Dramatic elements, like open-sided stairways

In residential districts, integrity of design should be present in both overall subdivision layout and in contributing houses. Integrity of the street pattern and provisions (or lack thereof) for public walks and public spaces in districts should be demonstrable. More importantly, the subdivision's design should reflect Modernist housing and planning concepts, such as those promulgated in period FHA publications. Districts should include a preponderance of houses that date to the post-war period that are obvious examples of Modern design, were designed by an architect, or, otherwise are examples of period house types. Generally, the level of integrity explained for individual houses in this document will apply to exterior integrity for contributing buildings in residential districts. A degree of change to rooflines may be acceptable for houses that contribute to districts.

In addition to the Modernism of Bauhaus-influenced architects, Modernism came to, and evolved, in the U.S. as part of different design trends. Neo-Expressionism, Brutalism, and New Formalism are some examples of these trends. While this document cannot provide a complete distillation of all these influences, individual and district nominations under this MPDF should define these trends as related to the nominated resource.

Setting

This aspect is related to *Location*. Most of the examples of modern architecture in Rensselaer are related to their setting in one of two ways. Either they have emphasized horizontal lines that ground them to the flat grade of their environment, or they are situated into grade such as a hillside. The basic integrity of the examples natural landscape should be intact. Specifically this would relate to grade changes around buildings, not necessarily vegetation. Given the non-permanence of vegetation, only the intent of the design's relationship to vegetation should remain extant. For example, if a building is situated on a naturally wooded area, particularly the College Woods development, depleting native vegetation on the site may reduce the overall integrity. Significantly altering grade around a building would also have a negative impact on the site's integrity. While the commercial examples of Modern architecture may not be subject to *Setting* as a qualifying aspect, most of the remaining examples including those on the campus of Saint Joseph College, relate to their general setting as part of a campus design.

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Materials

Straightforward use of materials was a significant tenant of Modernism. A few materials feature prominently in the examples of modern architecture in Rensselaer. These include scored concrete block and vertical wood siding with respect to residential examples, and brick and aluminum and glass fenestration with respect to residential, education-related and commercial/religious examples. Generally the exterior and interior materials should remain intact and unaltered. Acceptable changes that would not greatly reduce eligibility would be replacement of materials with similar or matching products, specifically wood siding for wood repairs, when majority is still in place. Roofing replacement is generally acceptable, i.e., a "built-up" felt, tar and gravel roof for rubber membrane or asphalt shingle for asphalt shingle. New materials that obscure or replace historic siding with unlike material would generally not be acceptable. For example, artificial siding over a wooden exterior or wholesale replacement of masonry for a different type of masonry would disqualify a building. Distinctive interior finishes, particularly as they relate to large public buildings, should remain intact. In some cases, loss of wear-prone finishes, such as flooring and suspended tile ceiling systems, is inevitable and should be acceptable so long as the replacement material still conveys the architect's intent.

The change of fenestration may not disqualify buildings, however, a change that would enlarge or reduce the original openings in scale or size, would make the building ineligible. Several of the examples include large bays of aluminum and glass windows; the bays must remain intact and generally in their original size, though new windows may be acceptable.

Workmanship

Providing general adherence to the other aspects outlined for integrity, specifically *Design* and *Materials*, the examples of modern architecture will meet workmanship standards for eligibility. Features such as woodwork as it relates to light boxes, doors, and wood plank ceilings with exposed rafters demonstrate exceptional workmanship and provides significance to the buildings and architect-designed features. Additionally, staircases composed of terrazzo steps and refined aluminum and wood balustrades are important features that add to the elegance and open feeling of public spaces. Unusual ceiling treatments like the folded ceiling in the Halleck Student Center at St. Joseph College also demonstrate great skill in the completion of an unusual design feature.

Feeling

The designs of modern architecture in Rensselaer often relied on experiencing the building as an object from the exterior, and room volumes on the interior. Providing general adherence to *Design* and *Setting*, examples of modern architecture will meet the aspect of *Feeling*.

Association

Association with the unusual grouping of modern architecture in Rensselaer is determined by architectural characteristics, time period (dating to the c.1940-c.1979 period), and geographic location.

Buildings designed by architects will most readily reflect the tenants of Modernism. Every attempt should be made to identify the architect of an individually eligible building. While it was not possible for this document to include a comprehensive history of the various influences and trends in American architecture since the 1940s, authors of individual nominations should note such influences in

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nominations. The individual form should explain how the building represents a recognized type or style of Modern design, such as Brutalism or New Formalism.

Properties that meet registration requirements will likely meet National Register Criterion C, for their place in local architectural history. Properties included within this study may meet other National Register criteria, mostly related to education or commerce. Each individual nomination should make a case for eligibility under other criteria in consultation with the Indiana Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology. The examples identified from site surveys and archives are all still being used for their designed purposes, i.e. residential, dormitory, commercial, religious, and education-related.

G. Geographical Data

The geographical location identified is generally the greater area of Rensselaer, Jasper County, Indiana. This area includes the corporate limits of the city, its near suburbs including the College Woods subdivision development, and the campus of St. Joseph College south of the city.

H. Summary of Identification & Evaluation Methods

This study relied on interviews with architect Frank Fischer's son, Joseph Fischer and the thesis work by Mr. Kent Abraham entitled *California Contemporary on the Midwest Prairie: The Residential Architecture of Frank Fischer in The College Woods Commission and at Rensselaer, Indiana* (2003), for which interviews were conducted with Frank Fischer. The Jasper County Interim Report (2002) was consulted to help determine the geographic subject area boundaries for the document. Finally, site surveys of the general subject area and interviews were also undertaken with local preservationist and former professor, Robert Lewis, to determine the extent of modern architecture located in and around the City of Rensselaer. Lewis was a novice local architectural historian well-versed in the modern movement.

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Modern Architecture of Rensselaer, Indiana

I. Major Bibliographical References

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Personal interviews with Joseph Fischer, the son of architect Frank Fischer: May-June, 2014.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: COVER DOCUMENTATION

MULTIPLE Modern Architecture of Rensselaer, Indiana, c. 1940-1979 MPS
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: INDIANA, Jasper

DATE RECEIVED: 04/22/16

DATE OF PENDING LIST:

DATE OF 16th DAY:

DATE OF 45th DAY: 06/07/16

REFERENCE NUMBER: 64501265

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL:	N	DATA PROBLEM:	N	LANDSCAPE:	N	LESS THAN 50 YEARS:	N
OTHER:	N	PDIL	N	PERIOD:	N	PROGRAM UNAPPROVED:	N
REQUEST:	Y	SAMPLE:	N	SLR DRAFT:	N	NATIONAL:	N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

☒ ACCEPT ☐ RETURN ☐ REJECT 6/1/2016 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept cover

REVIEWER Patrick Andrews DISCIPLINE Historian

TELEPHONE _____ DATE 6/1/2016

DOCUMENTATION see attsched comments Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

DNR

Indiana Department of Natural Resources

Michael R. Pence, Governor
Cameron F. Clark, Director



Division of Historic Preservation & Archaeology • 402 W. Washington Street, W274 • Indianapolis, IN 46204-2739
Phone 317-232-1646 • Fax 317-232-0693 • dhpa@dnr.IN.gov • www.IN.gov/dnr/historic

April 22, 2016

Dr. Stephanie Toothman
Keeper of the National Register
National Park Service 2280
National Register of Historic Places
1201 "I" (Eye) Street, N.W.
Washington D.C. 20005

RECEIVED 2280
APR 22 2016
Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

Re: Modern Architecture of Rensselaer, Indiana Multiple Property Documentation Form

Dear Dr. Toothman,

Enclosed is a Multiple Property Documentation Form for the Modern Architecture of Rensselaer, Indiana. All procedural requirements have been met in the processing of this application. I believe the application to be adequately documented, technically and professionally correct and sufficient.

The enclosed disk contains the true and correct copy of the nomination for the Early Community Mausoleum Movement in Indiana MPDF to the National Register of Historic Places.

In my opinion, this MPDF and the four accompanying individual nominations meet all applicable standards for evaluation, and the four properties are eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The Indiana Historic Preservation Review Board reviewed the application and voted to recommend its approval to the National Register of Historic Places.

Please address any questions you or your staff may have about this nomination to my National Register staff, Paul Diebold or Holly Tate.

Sincerely,

Cameron F. Clark
State Historic Preservation Officer

CFC:PCD:pcd

enclosure: nomination package