

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Education: School

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Vacant: Not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Romanesque: Richardsonian Romanesque

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Brick

walls Brick

Stone: Limestone

roof Asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Mecca School - Description

The Wabash Township Graded School is located on its original site on South Montezuma Street in the small town of Mecca. The school and its front yard are located approximately four feet above the street grade at the southwest corner of the property, where the yard is framed by a concrete retaining wall (photo #1). The 1901/1910 main section of the Wabash Township Graded School building faces west and has two stories and a raised foundation. The 1923 gymnasium addition, attached to the southeast corner of the main building creating an L-shaped plan, has three stories in the westernmost bay of the structure and two taller stories in the rest of the structure. The entire building is of red brick with limestone trim. The architectural style of the 1901/1910 main section of the building shows Richardsonian Romanesque influence, which is evident in the bell tower, rock-faced lintels and voussiors, arched doorways and belfry openings, beltcourses; and in the overall massing and materials. The architectural style of the 1923 gymnasium addition is more subtle and typical of 1920's buildings with minimal decoration. The original 1901 section of the building is rectangular in plan measuring 54' x 58', and facing west. An addition measuring 39' x 54' was added to the north in 1910, which blends with the original structure into a uniform whole (photo #6). The combined rectangular structure has a hipped roof with medium pitch, a dormer on the south facade and a bell tower on the west facade over the main entrance. A second addition was added to the southeast in 1923 measuring 62' x 84'. The 1901/1910 main section of the building originally had a slate roof, which has since been replaced with asphalt shingles. The 1923 gymnasium addition has a flat roof. A playground, enclosed by a Cyclone fence, is located in the northeast space created by the ell.

1901/1910 Main Section

The bell tower rises from the foundation in the ninth bay from the north on the main or west facade of the 1901/1910 main section (photo #2). The bell tower projects from the main facade approximately two feet and extends a full story above the roofline. The foundation rises approximately four feet from the ground and is of rock-faced vitrified paving brick, separated from the upper portion of the building by a dressed limestone watertable. The main entrance is at the ground level of the bell tower. It is an arched opening with rock-faced limestone voussiors of alternating sizes, which rest directly on the watertable. A dressed limestone voussoir parallel to the ground on the north side of the arch is inscribed with the letters "A.D." and a similar voussoir on the south side of the arch is inscribed with the construction date, "1901". The door is recessed from the main facade of the bell tower by approximately two feet. The doors are not

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8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Education
Architecture

Period of Significance

1901
1910

Significant Dates

1901
1910
1923

Cultural Affiliation

Significant Person

Architect/Builder

Allen, Layton
Boswell, J.T.

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

The Wabash Township Graded School, constructed in 1901 and expanded in 1910 and 1923, shows the influence of the Richardsonian Romanesque architectural style adapted to a small town elementary school. The school has local architectural significance as the largest historic building and finest example of public architecture in the township, according to the Historic Sites and Structures Inventory of Parke County. Its contribution to the township's educational history is important in that it was the first brick school building, and is thought to be the first high school in the township.

The school is important within the context of public buildings in Wabash Township from the mid-nineteenth to the early twentieth century. The Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory for Parke County, which was conducted in 1978, listed only two historic public buildings for the township. Both are located in or near Mecca, the only town in this rural township, and both are former schools. The other school is a one story frame structure dating from 1874, which has been moved. Clearly, the Wabash Township Graded School is the largest and most substantial public building in the township, making it a widely recognized fixture in the area. The Richardsonian Romanesque architectural style is evident in the rock-faced stone trim and rock-faced brick on the foundation, wide arched doorways and bell tower openings, banding achieved by darkened mortar, and bell tower. The school is the only local example of this architectural style and the only example of high-style public architecture in the township.

The inventory also indicates that there are only eight historic school buildings remaining in the entire county, only three of them two-story brick. A fourth, which was the only school of comparable architectural styling and integrity, has been demolished since the inventory was conducted, leaving the Wabash Township Graded School as the only school from this era, and the only one with an "Outstanding" rating in the Parke County survey.

The Wabash Township Graded School is also important to the development of education in the township, from the time of its first settlers in 1818 until the early 20th century. The earliest known schoolhouse in Parke County was built in Reserve Township in 1825,¹ and by 1844 there were 79 schools in the county.²

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9. Major Bibliographical References

"Annual homecoming is held at Mecca." The Parke County Sentinel. October 22, 1986.
Assessor's Sheet, 1985, Assessor's Office, Rockville, Indiana.
Atlas Map of Parke County. Chicago: A. T. Andreas Company, 1874.
Beckwith, Hiram W. and J. H. Beadle. History of Vigo and Parke Counties Together with Historical Notes on the Wabash Valley . . . Chicago: H. H. Hill and N. Iddings, 1880. Reprint: Evansville, Indiana: Unigraphic, Inc., 1974.
Branson, George. "Archaeological and Historical Survey of Parke County." Indiana History Bulletin, Vol. 4, Extra No. 4. August, 1927.

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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

Specify repository:

Indiana Historic Sites & Structures Inventory

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of property Approx. 1.07 acres

UTM References

A

1	6	4	7	1	5	6	0	4	3	9	7	0	7	0
Zone				Easting				Northing						

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

B

Zone				Easting				Northing						

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--	--

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Verbal Boundary Description

Ferguson 2nd addition to the town of Mecca. Beginning at the northeast corner of South Montezuma Street and College Street; thence 267 feet east along College; thence 175 feet north along an alley; thence west 267 feet along an alley to Montezuma; thence 175 feet south along Montezuma to the place of beginning.

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Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the school building and playground.

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mrs. Russell Sanders
organization Mecca Historical Society date 3-25-86
street & number R.R. #1, Box 83 telephone 317/569-3752
city or town Montezuma state IN zip code 47862

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original. They are double leaf metal doors, each leaf having a two-light window in the upper half. The original door was a double leaf door of wood, each door having nine wood recessed panels below, a twenty-light window above and a single wood recessed panel above the window (photo 6). There is a semi-circular multi-light transom above the door, which is original.

Most of the remaining surface of the bell tower above the watertable is of red brick. Above the arched entranceway and in line with the first floor lintels and beltcourse of the rest of the main facade, is a limestone beltcourse, into which is incorporated a limestone plaque with "WABASH TOWNSHIP GRADED SCHOOL" inscribed in it. To the left of this larger plaque is a smaller one with "LAYTON ALLEN ARCHITECT" inscribed in it; and to the right is a similar plaque with "A.H. BRADFIELD TRUSTEE" inscribed in it. At the second story level there is a paired window which has double-hung, one-over-one, wood sash; a dressed limestone sill; and a rock-faced limestone lintel. Brick beltcourses, which incorporate the sill and lintel of this paired window, are created by darker mortar (photos #2 and #6). The lintel and its beltcourse are directly in line with the cornice of the main facade, which is interrupted by the bell tower. Above the window is a glazed oculus. The belfry begins just above the oculus and is underscored by corbeled brick dentils and two narrow stone stringcourses. The belfry has brick arches open on all four sides. The arches have rock-faced limestone keystones. Narrow brick stringcourses define the impost of the arches, the archivolt of the arches and the top of the belfry just under its cornice. Two metal rails span the lower half of each of the belfry's arched openings. A simple wood molding forms the cornice of the belfry. The bell in the tower is the original bell, made by O.S. Bell Company of Hillsboro, Ohio, and has the number 28 on it. The bell is still in good condition and rings well. The tower roof is hipped with a steep pitch, sheathed in asphalt shingles, and is topped with a lightning rod. The belfry roof was originally sheathed with slate shingles and topped with a finial as well as a lightning rod (photo #6).

The main or west facade of the 1901/1910 main section has eleven bays (photo #2). The foundation rises approximately four feet from the ground and is the same as on the bell tower. There are window openings at the foundation level in the first bay from the north, between the second and third bays, and in the seventh, eighth and tenth bays (photos #2 and 6). The windows are double-hung, one-over-one, wood sash, with limestone sills, and lintels which are incorporated in the watertable. Above the limestone watertable, most of the remaining surface of the main facade is of red brick. In the sixth bay at ground level is a secondary entrance. It is a rectangular opening with a rock-faced limestone lintel. The door is an original, double leaf, wood door with two horizontal recessed wood panels below and a nine-light window above on each leaf. There is also a ten-light transom above the door. On the first floor level there are rectangular window openings in the 1st through the 5th, 7th, 8th, and 10th bays (with the main and secondary entrances in the 6th and 9th bays). The windows are all double-hung, one-over-one, wood sash with a dressed limestone sill and a rock-faced limestone lintel. Brick beltcourses, which were once more visible than today (photo #6), run around the entire building and incorporate the first floor window sills, lintels and second floor window sills. The beltcourses

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are flush with the wall, defined only by a darker mortar between bricks. There is one window, similar to the first floor windows, in the eleventh bay between the first and second floor levels. On the second floor level there are rectangular window openings in the 1st through 10th bays. These windows are similar to the first floor windows except that they have no lintels. A simple wood molding forms the architrave, which rests directly at the top of the second floor windows, followed by a coved frieze and boxed cornice; this cornice treatment continues on all sides of the building.

The south facade of the 1901/1910 main section has eight bays (photo #1). The foundation is identical to the main facade's. There is a secondary entrance in the westernmost bay at the ground level. It is an arched opening with brick voussoirs and archivolt; rock-faced limestone impost and keystone; a recessed door; a door that is similar to the secondary entrance door on the main facade; and a rectangular, multi-light transom. There are five window openings at the foundation level between the second and eighth bays, which are similar to the foundation level windows on the main facade. Above the watertable the surface is red brick. There are windows on the first floor level in the 2nd through 8th bays, which are identical to the first floor windows on the main facade. There is one window above the entrance in the first bay between the first and second floor levels, which is identical to the first floor windows on the main facade. There are windows on the second floor level in the 2nd through 8th bays, which are identical to the second floor windows on the main facade. There are also beltcourses like those on the main facade. There is a south-facing dormer which extends from the roof above the third and fourth bays. It is faced with brick and has a paired window with double-hung, 10-over-10, wood sash; a limestone sill course; and a simple wood molding cornice which rests directly on the top of the paired window and extends around both sides of the dormer. The sides of the dormer are faced with slate shingles. The roof of the dormer was once also sheathed with slate shingles, but is now covered with asphalt shingles.

The east or rear facade of the 1901/1910 main section has twelve bays (photo #5). The foundation is identical to the main facade's. There are seven window openings at the foundation level in the 1st, 2nd, 4th, 5th, 6th, 8th and 10th bays, which are similar to the foundation level windows on the main facade. The windows in the 2nd, 4th and 5th bays are boarded up. Above the watertable the surface is red brick. There were originally windows on the first floor level in all of the bays, which were identical to the first floor windows on the main facade. All remain except in the sixth bay from the south where the lintel remains, but the opening has been bricked in and a door has been inserted, which is wood with three wood recessed panels below and a nine-light window above. A metal platform and stair to the ground level has also been added at the door. On the second floor level there were also windows which were identical to the second floor level windows on the main facade, in all but the seventh bay. All the windows remain except in the sixth bay where a smaller double-hung, one-over-one, wood sash window has replaced the original; and in the ninth bay where the opening has been completely bricked in. In the seventh bay there is a large wood single leaf door with several wood recessed panels and a rock-faced limestone lintel, which appears to be an original fire door. There is a metal platform

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and stair leading from the door down to the ground level. Visible from this rear or east facade is a large brick chimney which has been stripped of all decoration and which protrudes from the roof, slightly to the south of the southernmost bay of the east facade.

The north facade of the 1901/1910 main section has six bays (photo #5). The foundation is identical to the main facade's. There are four window openings at the foundation level which are similar to the foundation level windows on the main facade. Above the watertable the surface is red brick. There are six original windows on the first floor level which are identical to the first floor windows on the main facade. They are organized into groups of three with a blank wall in the center. On the second floor level there appear to have been windows in each of the six bays, but all have been completely bricked in. There is a large brick chimney visible from the north facade. The three-tiered, stepped-back brick top of the chimney is underscored with corbelled brick dentils.

1923 Gymnasium Addition

The main or west facade of the 1923 gymnasium addition is attached to the 1901/1910 main section at the older building's southeast corner (photo #3). The foundation rises from the ground approximately four feet, to the same level as the foundation of the 1901/1910 main section. There is a small portion of the concrete foundation visible, then red brick separated from the upper portion of the building by a dressed limestone watertable. The ground floor has three bays, the northernmost being an entrance defined by two brick piers, which project westward approximately two feet and incorporate an extension of the above-mentioned watertable. Resting on the piers is an entablature with a "GYMNASIUM" sign of raised letters in the frieze. Above this and flush with the facade is a dressed limestone lintel. In the other two bays on the first floor are nine-light metal sash windows with the lower three lights as a tilt panel, and with brick soldier course lintels. The watertable serves as a sill for these windows. Between the windows on the first floor are two inscribed stones just above the watertable. Above the watertable the rest of the facade is also red brick. There are three windows per floor identical to the first floor windows, but also having limestone sills; these windows are not aligned with the ground floor bays, however. At the lintel level of the third floor windows there is a narrow projecting brick stringcourse, which continues around the rest of the building. Above the stringcourse there is a flat brick parapet topped with a limestone coping. At the southwest corner of the 1923 gymnasium addition is a brick pilaster which projects outward from the facade slightly and terminates just above the upper stringcourse.

On the south facade there are five broad bays. The foundation runs the length of the facade and is identical to the foundation on the west facade. The first bay has three stories. There is one window at each floor level identical to the windows on the west facade. The bay is framed with brick pilasters identical to the above-described pilaster on the west facade. The stringcourse, parapet and coping in this first bay are identical

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to those on the west facade. The 2nd through the 5th bays on this side are almost the same height as the first, but have only two stories accommodating the gymnasium below and classrooms above (photo #4). Brick pilasters separate each of the bays and are similar to the pilasters which frame the first bay. In each bay at the first floor level there is a twelve-light, metal sash window with a central six-light tilt panel, a limestone sill and a brick lintel. Between the first and second floor levels there are two metal vents in each bay (directly below the second floor windows). In each bay at the second floor level there are two twenty-light, metal sash windows with central four-light tilt panels, limestone sills and brick lintels which are incorporated into the projecting brick stringcourse running the length of the four easternmost bays (and across the brick pilasters as mentioned above). The pilasters terminate at a simple metal gutter approximately two feet below the level of the coping in the westernmost three-story bay.

The rear or east facade of the 1923 gymnasium addition is virtually a blank brick wall. The same watertable detailing found on the west and south facades is found on the east facade for approximately eight feet at both corners. There are two metal doors at the ground level located approximately ten feet in from both ends of the facade. Between the two doors is a large garage-door-sized opening in the brick, which has been filled in. At the second story level, approximately two-thirds over from the south end of the east facade, is another metal door. A metal platform and staircase with a landing leads from this door to the ground level. At both ends of the east facade there are brick pilasters similar to the pilasters which separate the bays on the south facade. The same simple metal gutter that is found on the south facade also runs the length of the east facade.

The north facade of the 1923 gymnasium addition is five broad bays wide and has two stories (photo #5). The foundation, pilasters, fenestration and detailing within the first through the fourth bays are identical to the second through the fifth bays on the south facade. The foundation and stringcourse continue across the fifth bay. However, the fifth bay has, at the first floor level, one entrance and two windows identical to the other first floor windows. The second floor level has two windows directly above and identical to the first floor windows.

Interior

The main entrance is towards the south end of the west facade. Inside, a small flight of stairs leads into an entrance hallway (photo #7). The secondary entrance on the south facade also leads into this entrance hallway. The main staircase accessing the upper floors is located in the southwest corner of the entrance hallway. The original 1901 section was built with a basement, four large rooms, each with a cloak room and a teacher's private bookcase, a principal's room, a class room and a small library. The 1910 addition provided additional classrooms. The 1923 addition provided a gymnasium, an assembly room and additional classrooms. Throughout the entire building the floors are of pine, in some areas

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being covered with tile. The basement has a concrete floor. There is oak wainscoting, trim and doors throughout the 1901/1910 main section (photos #8-11). The main stairway is also of oak, with massive posts and a spindled balustrade. The walls in the 1923 addition are stucco (photos #12-14). In the gymnasium there is a large horizontal mural (photo #14).

The building was in continuous use as a school until 1986 when the Riverton Parke High School opened and gradeschoolers were dispersed to other elementary schools. The building is in good condition and, except for the addition of fire doors, fire and smoke alarms and electrical conduits, the building retains much of its integrity. Although currently owned by the Town of Mecca, there is a movement afoot to form a corporation to purchase and maintain the building.

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A system of free public schools came into existence in Indiana in 1853, with the adoption of a new state constitution. Also in that year, the Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction provided the earliest available figures on Wabash Township schools: the report indicated that there were six schools in the township. A seventh was built around 1863 and an eighth around 1876, all of them wood frame.³ Only two of these early schools remain.

When the Wabash Township Graded School was built in 1901, it was the ninth school built in the township, and first to be built of brick. It housed grades 1 through 8 until the time of the 1910 addition when the high school grades were added. It is believed that this was the first time high school grades were offered in the township.

The 1901 brick school at Mecca was built on the site of school Number 8, which was purchased and moved two lots east by the United Brethren Church. (The building is still being used, now by the Wesleyan Church.) School Number 3, which was built southwest of Mecca in 1874, was in use as a school until 1923 when the second addition was built onto the Wabash Township Graded School and students were consolidated into the newly expanded structure. School Number 3 was donated in 1965 to the Mecca Historical Society, who moved it to a site near school Number 5 in East Mecca and restored it. School Number 5 was closed in 1939 and is no longer standing. School Number 2 was closed in 1920 and is also no longer standing. None of the other original eight wood frame schoolhouses remain.

Newspaper accounts of the new 1901 brick structure touted the school building as "a credit to Wabash Township and the entire county."⁴ The original specifications called for "cherry red sand brick, with Bedford stone trimmings and belt courses laid in red mortar."⁵ There were four school rooms, each with a capacity of 50 pupils, cloak rooms, a teacher's book case and space for blackboards to be fitted with "Olmsted artificial stone."⁶ There was a principal's room, class room, library and, in the basement, a hot air furnace and "a complete modern system of dry closets."⁷

The bid for construction went to J.T. Boswell of Bloomingdale for \$9,500. Boswell also constructed school buildings at West Union and Yeddo, Fountain County, neither of which is still standing. Layton Allen of Irvington, formerly of Parke County, was the architect.

In 1910 the Advisory Board of Wabash Township approved funds in the amount of \$6,300 to build an addition onto the 1901 structure. This was completed in the same style and with the same building materials as the original, which produced a very unified structure. In 1923, the Advisory Board approved funds for another addition to the school. The new addition included a gymnasium assembly room, and class rooms. At the same time, new toilets and a steam heating system were added to the older structure. The contract was let to J.F. Wilkersham of Logansport for \$21,906. The addition was done in a simple 1920's style of architecture, of red brick, and with minimal decoration.

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The Wabash Township Graded School housed all twelve grades until 1963, when under the Southwest Parke Metropolitan School Corporation, high schoolers were given the choice of attending either the Rockville High School or the Montezuma High School. Kindergarten through eighth grade and special education were taught at the Wabash Township Graded School from 1963 until the school's closing in 1986. Since the closing of the Wabash Township Graded School, grade schoolers have been split between the Rosedale and Montezuma grade schools.

At present, a corporation is being formed to purchase the school building from the Town of Mecca (deeded to it by the Southwest Parke Community School Corporation). The Mecca Historical Society has plans to restore and maintain the building. The building is in very good repair and the planned restoration will be primarily interior improvements as money allows.

Footnotes:

¹History of Parke and Vermillion Counties, Indiana (Indianapolis: B.F. Bowen and Company, 1913) p. 136.

²Report of the Superintendent of Public Instruction for the State of Indiana to the General Assembly (Indianapolis: State Printer, 1844) Statement A.

³Ibid., reports from several years.

⁴"Mecca's handsome new school house," The Rockville Republican, July 24, 1901.

⁵"The new school building for Mecca," Rockville Tribune, July 24, 1901.

⁶Rockville Republican, op. cit.

⁷Rockville Tribune, op. cit.

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"Educational Notes." The Rockville Republican. May 16, 1923.

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Lewis, Reva and Hazel Sanders. "Mecca School-A Photo Essay by Pat Hilton and An Historical Review." Contemporary Education. Vol. LVI, No.1, Fall 1985, pp. 48-51.

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Maps of Indiana Counties in 1876. Reprinted from Illustrated Historical Atlas of the State of Indiana by the Indiana Historical Society in 1968.

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"Record crowd attends homecoming at Mecca." The Daily Clintonian. October 16, 1986.

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Sanders, Hazel. Phone conversation February 6, 1987.

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"The new school building for Mecca." Rockville Tribune. July 24, 1901.

Wabash School Township Bond Issue for the Grade and High School Building. May 15, 1923

Wabash Township Advisory Board meeting minutes. July 19, 1906, April 13, 1901, April 11, 1910, May 21, 1910.