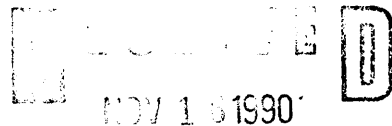


1932

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

NATIONAL  
REGISTER

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

1. Name of Property

historic name Poland Presbyterian Church and Cemetery  
other names/site number Poland Historical Chapel and Poland Cemetery

2. Location

street & number State Route 42 near County Road 56S N/A not for publication  
city, town Poland N/A vicinity  
state IN code IN county Clay code 021 zip code 47868

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>2</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>2</u>	<u>2</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A  
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.  
[Signature] 11-5-90  
Signature of certifying official Date  
Indiana Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet.  
Signature of commenting or other official Date  
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:  
 entered in the National Register. Entered in the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the National Register.  See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register.  
 removed from the National Register.  
 other, (explain:)  
[Signature] 12/18/90  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

## 6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION: Religious structure

FUNERARY: Cemetery

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

FUNERARY: Cemetery

RELIGION: Religious structure

## 7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

MID 19th CENTURY: Gothic Revival

OTHER: Gable-front

LATE VICTORIAN: Gothic

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE

walls WOOD: Weatherboard

roof METAL

other STONE: Marble

STONE: Granite

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Poland Presbyterian Church (Photographs 1-16), now known as the Poland Historical Chapel, is located on the west edge of Poland, Indiana, on a small rise on the north side of State Route 42. To the west of the church lies an adjacent cemetery. The church is a one story frame building built in 1869 in a vernacular Gothic Revival style. The one room rectangular plan is typical of many churches built during this time period in small communities.

The exterior of the 30' by 45' structure is sheathed in poplar clapboards, with simple trim of corner boards, a water table, and a very simple frieze. The church is supported on a stone foundation. A gable roof, with the ridge running parallel to the length of the sanctuary is covered with metal panels. These panels do not appear to be original. Two chimneys that once came through the middle of each side of the roof have been removed at some time in the past, likely during a 1966 renovation (Photographs 1-9).

In 1893, a 7' by 10' vestibule and belfry were added to the south elevation (Photographs 1 & 7). This addition is also wood frame sheathed in clapboards. The ground floor vestibule is slightly larger than the tower located above. A gable roof separates the vestibule from the tower. The tower has a spire roof above an open belfry. At an unknown date, the spire was shortened. This roof protects the church bell and is supported on four columns decorated with brackets. Two double hung one-over-one windows are located on the east and west side of the vestibule. The double entrance doors are a rail and panel design with seven panels per door. Above the doors is a three lite transom in a triangular shape.

The east and west elevations (Photographs 5 & 6) of the sanctuary both contain five double hung four-over-four windows spaced equally across the elevation. The upper sash of each window is peaked in a triangular shape. Each window also has its original wooden shutters. Each shutter has four panels of slats, the bottom two of which are adjustable for control of ventilation and light.

The rear or north elevation (Photographs 5) contains no windows and is simply covered with clapboard. A contemporary chimney is attached to this elevation at about the middle of the east half of the elevation. This chimney was built in 1966.

See continuation sheet

**8. Statement of Significance**

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

nationally     statewide     locally

Applicable National Register Criteria     A     B     C     D

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

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)  
ARCHITECTURE  
SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance  
1869 - 1929

Significant Dates  
1869  
1893

Cultural Affiliation  
N/A

Significant Person  
N/A

Architect/Builder  
Unknown

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

The Poland Presbyterian Church has local significance under Criteria A and C. Architecturally, the church is important as a very intact example of the gable-front vernacular, often used for public buildings in rural areas. Poland Chapel also has social significance since it is the only existing historic semi-public gathering place in Poland, Indiana.

The church satisfies Criterion Consideration A since it is significant mainly for its architecture and history.

The gable-front vernacular, as represented by Poland Chapel, is an important rural building type in Indiana. Commonly used for schools, churches, and other semi-public buildings, the characteristics of this type include rectangular massing, symmetrically placed openings, and simple gable roofs. Details were varied by builders to reflect popular "high styles" during the 1800s. The use of low pitched roofs and simple moldings reflected the influence of Greek Revival architecture, for example. As rural areas in Indiana became more physically and culturally accessible, vernacular forms such as the gable-front were superceded by more "correct" styles for public buildings. The Tudor Revival style was often adopted for churches, while schools and city halls often emulated Neo-Classical Revival urban prototypes. This trend began in about 1900. Such was the deeply ingrained popularity (and practicality) of the basic gable-front form that examples continued to be built until about 1910, especially in very isolated, rural areas.

The Poland Presbyterian Church is a locally significant example of the gable-front vernacular. It is the only example left in town and, according to Clay County Historical Society, it is the only church of its type remaining in the county. The steep roof and triangular upper sashes of Poland Chapel suggest the Gothic Revival style, which is rare in Indiana.

See continuation sheet

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

See continuation sheet

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

**Specify repository:**

National Register Files

**10. Geographical Data**

Acreage of property 6.82

**UTM References**

A 

1	6
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5	0	3	9	4	0
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4	3	6	5	9	8	0
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Zone Easting Northing

C 

1	6
---	---

5	0	4	0	3	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	3	6	5	8	6	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

B 

1	6
---	---

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

4	3	6	5	9	7	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Zone Easting Northing

D 

1	6
---	---

5	0	3	9	1	0
---	---	---	---	---	---

4	3	6	5	8	5	0
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See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

Commencing fifty feet west of the southwest corner of Block No. three (3) in the town of Poland, thence west nine (9) rods, thence north seventeen (17), thence west nine (9) rods, thence north eleven (11) rods, thence east nine (9) rods, thence south eleven (11) rods, thence east nine (9) rods, thence south seventeen (17) rods to the corner of beginning, said lands in the southwest quarter of section  See continuation sheet twenty-seven (27), township twelve (12) north, range five (5) west.

**Boundary Justification**

This is the historic property boundary, inclusive of the contributing cemetery.

See continuation sheet

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Mrs. Roxie Rentschler, Chairman, National Register Nomination Committee  
 organization Poland Historical Chapel Society, Inc date 12/11/89  
 street & number Box 105 telephone 812/835-2225  
 city or town Center Point state IN zip code 47840

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1 Poland Pres. Church and Cemetery

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Moving to the interior, the vestibule is a simple nearly square room with double rail and panel doors leading to the sanctuary. Above the double doors is an operable transom window triangular in shape with four lites of glass. A ceiling scuttle leads to an attic. The ceiling is covered with car siding. The rope for the bell is located in this room. The wood window trim is plain painted boards. The plaster walls are covered with contemporary wood paneling which is expected to be removed in the near future.

The sanctuary is a simple rectangular room (Photographs 10-16). The floors are bare wide plank poplar and ash boards. A carpet runner is located in the main aisle. An 8' wide raised platform is located at the front (north end) of the sanctuary. Walls and ceiling are plaster covered with wall paper. Interior trim consists of plain boards which are painted. The 24 pews, 12 on each side, are a combination of walnut and oak with carved end panels. The pews were purchased in 1904 by the church's Ladies Home Mission Society.

The platform at the front of the sanctuary is carpeted. It serves as an elevated area on which are located the pulpit, chairs for the minister, and chairs for other officials. The original oak and walnut lectern or pulpit is located in the center of the platform.

The structure has a half basement located at the north end of the structure. The dirt floor basement houses a propane forced air furnace. The furnace is serviced by a propane tank located to the north of the structure.

Also north of the structure, nearly to the north property line are located two non-contributing buildings (Photograph 17). The first is a small gable roofed outhouse of unknown origin which is no longer in use. Just to the west of the outhouse is a 10' by 20' shed with a shed roof sloping to the north. The building is sheathed in metal panels. The building houses a storage area, and two small rooms on the east end which each contain outhouse type pit latrines.

To the northwest of the chapel is a small picnic area in a grove of six large maple trees (Photograph 18). Just beyond is the cemetery.

On the western portion of the site is an active cemetery (Photographs 19-31). Just to the west of the chapel is a gravel driveway which runs to the north diverging into two drives that run east and west through the cemetery area. These two drives then connect to another north south drive that exits onto State Route 42. The cemetery was started in 1886 on ground donated by Henry Shults and continues in use today. Some nearly 400 headstones representing the stone cutters art can be found on the 660 graves. The oldest graves are located to the north and east, while the most recent graves are located to the west and south. Most all of the headstones face west.

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## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 8 Page 1 Poland Pres. Church and Cemetery

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In 1893, the vestibule and tower were added. These Victorian Gothic additions both compliment and enhance the original 1869 building, making it a more prominent structure.

The outstanding integrity of the church also contributes to its value as an architecturally significant building.

The Poland Presbyterian Church has historical significance as a social gathering place in Poland, Indiana. Here, as elsewhere, church functions provided an opportunity for the community to come together. Aside from religious ceremonies, classes, meetings, and social gatherings were held in the church. Although two other churches and the school probably also housed community activities like this, those three other historic buildings no longer stand, making Poland Chapel the only reminder of this aspect of the town's history.

The structure is also significant for its contribution to the dreams and aspirations of the local community. The church, as a spiritual body, was founded in February of 1866 by fourteen local residents. The first minister was the Rev. Thomas L. Milligan of the Greencastle Presbytery. He served as the minister from 1866 until his death in 1876. The church structure was dedicated in November of 1869. In 1893, the vestibule and bell tower were added.

One of the founders of the church and for over 20 years an elder in the church, a Colonel John B. Nees was instrumental in founding the community of Poland. The city of Poland was founded in 1841 in an area of about 50 homes in the northeast section of Clay County. A James Alexander Poland was making his way westward in 1839. He liked the area and set up shop as a store, woodworking shop, and shoe making shop. A log school house was also built about this time.

Colonel Nees settled on 160 acres at Poland in 1836. He later purchased an additional 80 acres. He was instrumental in assisting settlers select tracts of land in the area around Poland. Speaking both German and English he offered hospitality at his home and assistance to the new largely German settlers coming to the area. In 1841-1844 he represented the area in the Indiana Legislature for two terms.

The church history gives indications that the ministers over the years provided not only sermons and moral direction but a great deal of education. Lectures on various topics were given, music lessons, and social gatherings provided a sense of community in this rural area.

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**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 2 Poland Pres. Church and Cemetery

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In 1885, a Ladies Missionary Society was organized within the church. The Society conducted various activities to assist the Presbyterian missions. The wife of a minister organized a Mission Band in the late 1880s to teach the local children about music. By 1897, the church benefited from a resident minister. Prior ministers had often lived outside of the community, being responsible for more than one congregation.

In 1886, Henry Shults donated the ground for the cemetery. Many of the founders and later members of the church are buried in the cemetery. Including Henry Shults and founding members Adam Tressel, John Ralston, John McCreery, and each man's wife. In addition, the parents of Governor and Senator Samuel M. Ralston, John and Sarah Ralston, were original members of the church and are buried in the cemetery. Some of the head stones are attributed to the work of Clay County stone carvers George F. Weber and Ernst Muehler.

The cemetery, while still in active use, is a contributing element to the over all church property.

During the time of its use as a Presbyterian Church, it was one of three churches in Poland. The other two denominations represented were Methodist and Zion Luthern Reformed. Today only the Zion Luthern Reformed remains, now called the United Church of Christ. Both of the other churches burned during their histories. Today the United Church of Christ is now housed in a modern structure.

Over the history of the church, the total number of members enrolled was 244, beginning with the first 14. By 1929, the population of the congregation dwindled such that the church was discontinued by the Indianapolis Presbytery. This date marks the end of the period of significance. In 1938, remaining members of the church organized a committee to see to the upkeep of the structure. The group renamed the structure the Poland Chapel. Through the present day, the Chapel has served for weddings, religious gatherings, and memorial services.

In the summer of 1966 a group of local residents gathered and through volunteer efforts restored the church making necessary repairs, fixing the bell tower, and rehangng the bell. The chapel was rededicated in October of 1966 as the community of Poland's contribution to Indiana's Sesquicentennial celebration. Also, at this time, the name of the chapel was changed to Poland Historical Chapel.

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National Park Service**

## **National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet**

Section number 8 Page 3 Poland Pres. Church and Cemetery

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Today, the Chapel is the only remaining historic worship structure in Poland. While Clay County has not yet been surveyed as part of the Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory, Robert Moore, of the Clay County Historical Society indicates that the Poland Chapel is the only structure of its type remaining in the county.



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 9 Page 1 Poland Pres. Church and Cemetery

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## Bibliography

Blanchard, Charles, ed. County of Clay, Indiana: Historical and Biographical Illustrated. Chicago: F. A. Battey & Co. Publishers, 1884.

Church History from the Presbytery Office in Indianapolis, Indiana. (Miscellaneous records, letters, and other documents concerning the Church.)

Clark, Dorothy. "Nees Family Led Early Clay County Settlement." Terre Haute Tribune, 30 October 1966.

McCullough, Anna. Personal interview conducted by Roxie Rentschler. 11 January 1989. (Mrs. McCullough, age 101 at the time of the interview, attended the church as a child.)

"Poland Will Restore Old Chapel." Brazil Times, 12 July 1966, p. 1.

Smith, Dan. "Restored Church Attracts Visitors to See Small Glimpse of Yesteryear." Brazil Times, 9 July 1976, p. 41.

Travis, William. A History of Clay County, Indiana. 2 vols. Chicago: Lewis Publishing Company, 1909.

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 10 Page 1 Poland Pres. Church and Cemetery

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### Verbal Boundary Description (continued)

Also, commencing one hundred and ninety-eight and one-half feet (198 1/2) west of the southwest corner of Block No. three (3) in the town of Poland, thence west nine and one-half (9 1/2) rods, thence north seventeen (17) rods, thence east nine and one-half (9 1/2) rods; thence south seventeen (17) rods to the corner of beginning. Said lands in the southeast quarter of the southwest quarter of section twenty-seven (27), township twelve (12) north, range five (5) west.

Also, commencing two hundred and sixty-six and one-half (266 1/2) feet west of the northwest corner of Block No. four (4) in the town of Poland running thence south two hundred and two (282) feet, thence west eighty (80) feet, thence north two hundred and two (202) feet, thence east eighty (80) feet to the place of beginning. The above described tract of land is apart of the northeast quarter of the northwest quarter of section thirty-four (34) township twelve (12) north, range five (5) west.

Also commencing at a point seven hundred eighty-seven and thirty-one hundredth feet (787-31/100) west of the southeast corner of the southwest quarter of section twenty-seven (27), township twelve (12) north, range five (5) west, in Clay County, Indiana, thence north four hundred sixty-two and three tenths (462-3/10) feet, thence south one hundred eighty-one and five tenth (181-5/10) feet, thence east one hundred ninety-eight and five tenths (198-5/10) feet, thence north four hundred twenty-three and eighty-four hundredths (423-84/100) feet, thence west five hundred ninety-three and twelve hundredths (593-12/100) feet, thence south seven hundred twenty-three and eighty-nine hundredths (723-89/100) feet, thence east two hundred forty-six and sixty-nine hundredths (246-69/100) feet to the place of beginning containing six and eighty-two hundredths (6-82/100) acres more or less.

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National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Photographs  
Page Photographs.1

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The following information is the same for all photographs:

- 1) Name of Property: Poland Presbyterian Church; Poland Historical Chapel
- 2) Location: Poland, Indiana
- 3) Photographer: Rodney J. Deuster
- 4) Date of Photographs: March 1989
- 5) Location of Negatives: Poland Historical Chapel
- 6) Description: See below for each photograph.
- 7) Number: See below.

Photograph No. 1 Direction of camera: Northeast  
Reprint of historic photograph of the church looking toward the northeast from the road in front of the church.

Photograph No. 2 Direction of camera: Northeast  
Present day view of church looking toward the northeast showing south and west facades and relationship to the road.

Photograph No. 3 Direction of camera: Northeast  
Close up view of south and west sides of the church. Shutters are original to the building.

Photograph No. 4 Direction of camera: East  
View of the west facade of the church.

Photograph No. 5 Direction of camera: Southeast  
View of the north and west facades. Note frieze boards, corner boards, and water table. Hatch below second window leads to basement. Chimney was added to serve a propane furnace.

Photograph No. 6 Direction of camera: Northwest  
Close up view of the west side of the church.

Photograph No. 7 Direction of camera: North  
Close up view of the vestibule and entrance doors.

Photograph No. 8 Direction of camera: East  
Close up view of window and shutters located on the west side of the building.

Continued

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National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Photographs

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page Photographs.2

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Photograph Descriptions - Continued

Photograph No. 9 Direction of camera: Southwest  
Close up view of water table and stone foundation at northwest corner of the building.

Photograph No. 10 Direction of camera: North  
View of the interior of the building looking from the vestibule toward the north and the pulpit. Light fixtures are not original to the building.

Photograph No. 11 Direction of camera: Northwest  
View of the interior looking toward the northwest from the rear of the sanctuary.

Photograph No. 12 Direction of camera: Northeast  
View of the interior looking toward the northeast from about the middle of the sanctuary.

Photograph No. 13 Direction of camera: South  
View of the interior looking toward the vestibule. Note the entrance doors and transom window.

Photograph No. 14 Direction of camera: n.a.  
Close up view of typical pew found in the sanctuary.

Photograph No. 15 Direction of camera: n.a.  
Close up view of floor found in the sanctuary.

Photograph No. 16 Direction of camera: Northeast  
View of the grounds to the north of the church showing non-contributing storage shed and outhouse.

Photograph No. 17 Direction of camera: West  
View out of a west window showing relationship of church to adjoining cemetery.

Photograph No. 18 Direction of camera: East  
View from cemetery toward church showing relationship between the two.

Continued

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Continuation Sheet

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Photographs \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_ Photographs.3

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Photograph Descriptions - Continued

Photograph No. 19 Direction of camera: Northwest  
View of the grove of trees located northwest of the church used as a picnic area.

Photographs 20-24 Direction of camera: East  
Views of typical tombstones from the mid 1800s through the turn of the century. The tombstones in the cemetery face west.

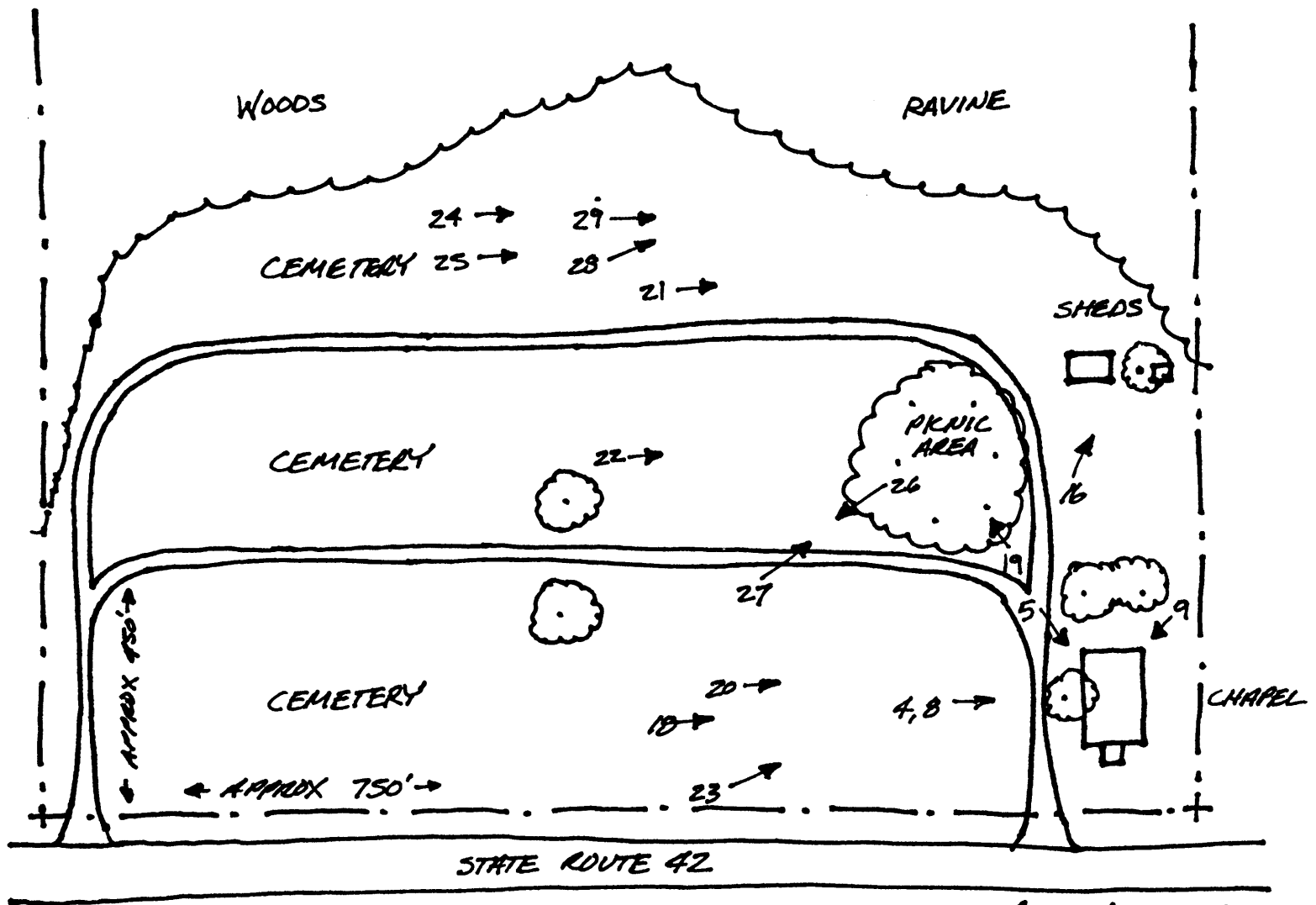
Photograph No. 25 Direction of camera: East  
Tombstone of the parents of Governor Ralston.

Photographs 26-27 Direction of camera: East and West  
Views of the front and rear of an unusual tombstone carved to resemble a tree trunk. Note also the individual headstones carved to resemble logs.

Photographs 28-29 Direction of camera: East  
View of tombstone carved by a local stonecarver.

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Section number MAP Page 1



↑  
NORTH  
NOT TO SCALE

POLAND HISTORICAL CHAPEL  
CLAY COUNTY, INDIANA