

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For NPS use only received JUL 12 1984 date entered AUG 9 1984

1. Name

historic Shelbyville Commercial Historic District

and/or common

2. Location

street & number Roughly bounded by Tompkins Street, an alley between Franklin and Mechanic Streets, Noble Street, and a line between Broadway and N/A not for publication Hendricks Streets

city, town Shelbyville N/A vicinity of

state Indiana code 018 county Shelby code 145

3. Classification

Table with 5 columns: Category, Ownership, Status, Accessible, Present Use. Includes checkboxes for district, building(s), site, object, public/private/both, occupied/unoccupied/work in progress, yes/no, agriculture/commercial/educational/entertainment/government/industrial/military, museum/park/private residence/religious/scientific/transportation/other.

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple ownership

street & number

city, town N/A vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Shelby County Recorder

street & number Shelby County Courthouse

city, town Shelbyville state Indiana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title N/A has this property been determined eligible? yes X no

date federal state county local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town state

7. Description

Condition excellent good fair deteriorated ruins unexposed**Check one** unaltered altered**Check one** original site moveddate N/A

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Shelbyville is located 25 miles southeast of Indianapolis in the center of Shelby County, at the confluence of the Big Blue and Little Blue Rivers. The Shelbyville Commercial Historic District, the center of the original city, is in the northern part of present-day Shelbyville. Growth of the city, bordered on the north by the two rivers, has been mainly to the south.

The district comprises most of the original plat (1823), a portion to the east which was part of the first addition (1823), and a small area at the district's southern edge which was part of an 1871 addition. Approximately a dozen blocks in size, the district is roughly bordered by Tompkins Street on the west, an alley between Franklin and Mechanic Streets on the north, Noble Street on the east, and a line between Broadway and Hendricks Streets on the south.

The central feature of the district is the public square (Photo 75). This is defined by four L-shaped groups of commercial buildings that form the corners of the square (Photos 1-6). Harrison Street bisects the square from north to south, and Washington Street bisects it from east to west. In the center of the public square is an oval-shaped street. A fountain, first installed in the center of the square in 1921, but dismantled and removed in 1965 for lack of upkeep, was returned to its original location in 1980. This was done as part of a landscaping program, assisted by federal funds, in which the main arteries of the district were given renewed life and a facelift. New plantings of trees, shrubs, and flowers line the streets and the square. New light standards were installed and the streets were repaved.

Facing north, on the north side of the oval is a bronze statue of a boy holding two bear cubs. The statue is a memorial to Shelbyville resident, Charles Major (1856-1913), a nationally-known author, and depicts a scene from his book, The Bears of Blue River. Designed by Shelbyville native, Mary Elizabeth Stout, and cast in 1929, the statue was originally placed on Franklin Street in front of Charles Major High School.

Like Harrison and Washington Streets, the other streets in the district are laid out in an east-west and north-south grid. Except for a few open spaces which serve as parking lots, commercial use buildings line both sides of Harrison Street for its entire run through the district (Photos 7-16). The ground floors of most of these buildings serve a retail use, while upper floors serve both warehouse and office uses, with a few buildings containing residential apartments in the upper floors.

The same pattern is repeated on Washington Street except the westernmost block, which features residences facing City Hall and a church. (Photos 17-33). East Washington Street, from the square to Pike Street, is a high density commercial district with its late 19th century and early 20th century buildings in good repair. The north side of the street presents a streetscape scene that typifies the "Main Street" commercial area common to many small towns developed around the turn of the century (Photo 21).

Broadway Street, located two blocks south of Washington, is the primary east-west thoroughfare in the district. It, too, is lined with commercial and institutional buildings on both sides for most of its length (Photos 34-57), but the buildings are on a smaller scale than those on Harrison and Washington Streets.

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1822-1930's **Builder/Architect** Various

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Shelbyville Commercial Historic District is significant as the original and modern-day center of commercial, social, and governmental activity in the city. Also significant for its architecture, the district includes both typical and unusual examples of commercial buildings from most eras of the city's development.

The Public Square, which is the focal point of the district, is a square superimposed on a cross formed by Harrison and Washington Streets. This is a type of square found in only a small number of county seats in Indiana. The square in Shelbyville was the location of the first Shelby County courthouse. It is now a landscaped parking lot and the site of local activities such as the annual "Bears of Blue River Festival," a musical and entertainment event.

Shelbyville was founded as the seat of Shelby County in 1822. The original plat was surveyed by Eber Lucas the same year. The first courthouse, located on the square, was a two-story brick structure completed in 1833. By 1845 another brick building was constructed on the square for county government overflow. There was also a jail and jailer's house, a market building, and a public well on the square. By 1850, the location of the courthouse was moved to a lot in the Toner and Bennett Addition south of the district. The square has been open since that time.

The first road out of Shelbyville to another community was built in 1822. This ran from the Public Square north to Marion, a small town in Shelby County. Within a few years, roads were built to Franklin, Rushville, and Columbus, all county seats in adjacent counties. Later, roads were built to Indianapolis and Lawrenceburg. The Michigan Road, which ran through Shelbyville from Lake Michigan to the Ohio River, was constructed in the 1830's.

In 1856, three railroads passed through Shelbyville. The establishment of these transportation routes made it possible for Shelbyville to develop as an industrial center. Early industries included a stove factory, soap factory, woolen mill, distilleries, flour mills, and saw mills. The Conrey, Wallar and DePrez furniture manufactory was established in 1874. This was one of the most important furniture factories in a city that was to become closely associated with that industry. By 1909, the Indianapolis Star reported Shelbyville as "furniture city," with eleven large furniture factories. At one time or another, there have been 37 furniture factories in the city. The furniture factories of Shelbyville, many of which still operate, were largely responsible for the prosperity that allowed development of the downtown area, the subject of this nomination.

The businesses in the district have served both the city residents and the farming community of the county, as well. Aside from the necessary personal and business products that could be acquired, the entertainment needs of the community have long been satisfied in this district. There was an opera house on the second floor of the J. G. DePrez Hardware

9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property Approx. 41.5 acres

Quadrangle name Shelbyville, Indiana

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

UTM References

A

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

B

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

C

1	6	6	0	5	5	0	0	4	3	7	5	2	4	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

D

1	6	6	0	4	9	5	0	4	3	7	5	2	3	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

E

Zone	Easting				Northing									

F

Zone	Easting				Northing									

G

Zone	Easting				Northing									

H

Zone	Easting				Northing									

Verbal boundary description and justification

See continuation sheet

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
N/A			

state	code	county	code
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jack Warble and Robert T. Thopy

organization Home Towne Heritage, Inc. date January, 1981

street & number 15 Public Square telephone 317/835-7727

city or town Shelbyville state Indiana 46176

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature John T. Lott

Deputy Director, Department of Natural Resources title date 7-5-84

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I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

John A. Lott
Keeper of the National Register

Entered in the
National Register

date 8/9/84

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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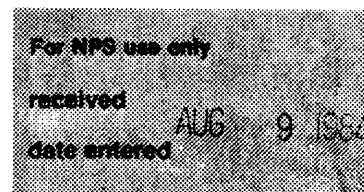
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Other east-west streets in the district are Franklin and Jackson Streets, both of which are more like alleys than streets. Both are fronted by the rear facades of buildings facing the more major streets, and have few buildings actually facing on them. (Photos 58-70).

North-south streets, besides Harrison, include Tompkins, Pike and Noble. Tompkins forms the west edge of the district, butting up against a proposed residential district, and features some houses and a church (Photos 71-74). Pike is interior to the district, with no buildings facing onto it. Noble Street, also with no buildings facing it, forms the east edge of the district.

A number of historic institutions are included in the district. The Shelbyville Central Schools Administration Office is in the old high school (Photo 89). It was built in 1896 and remained the city high school until 1912. Across Broadway Street from the old high school building is the Carnegie Library, built in 1902 (Photo 44). Down the street to the east of the library is the First Baptist Church (Photo 76). The present Baptist Church building was built in 1903 on the site of the prior structure, which was destroyed by fire the year before. Farther east along Broadway Street is the Saint Joseph Catholic Church and School (Photo 91). The church was completed in 1908. It has the largest congregation of any church in the county. The Civic Center (Photo 30), located on East Washington Street, was originally built as the National Guard Armory in 1932.

Significant and representative buildings in the district include the following:

Sheldon-Fleming Building, 13 Public Square, 1881. (Photo 77). Two story, elaborate cast-iron facade with clock at top, altered first story. Built for Frank Sheldon, a local jeweler. Currently used as office space.

Melton Jewelry Store, 3 Public Square, 1886. (Photo 78). Italianate, two-story, brick, three-bay facade, segmental - and flat-arch windows, decorative brickwork, pressed-metal bracketed cornice, vitrolite first-story facade with metal awning and clock.

Blessing-Deprez Building, 18 Public Square, 1869. (Photo 79). Italianate, three-story, brick, six-bay facade, round-arch window openings and frames, double-hung sash with four lights in each sash, pressed-metal bracketed cornice, altered first floor. Built for John Blessing. The second floor was used as a theater and the building was known as Blessing's Opera House from 1869 to 1906. The third floor was occupied by the Free Order of Masons in the 1880's. The ground floor has always been a hardware store which was first run by John Blessing and sold in 1880 to J. G. Deprez. This was the first building in Shelbyville to be lighted with gas (1869). High school graduation exercises were held in the building for many years. Frederick Douglas spoke at the Opera House under the sponsorship of a local lecture organization established in 1870.

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Bower and Son, 26 Public Square, 1854. (Photo 80). Italianate, three-and-one-half-story brick, four-bay facade. segmental arch second store and round-arch third story windows, round attic windows flanking an ornate central arch, decorative brick - and stone-work, pressed metal cornice, altered first-story. It was built jointly by the Free Order of Masons and the International Order of Oddfellows.

Chillon Lodge, Knights of Pythias, 31 Public Square, completed 1901. (Photo 81). Tudor Revival, three-and-one-half story brick, three-bay facade, double-hung windows with stone window surrounds, round attic window, turret, battlements, decorative brick - and stone-work, altered first story. Built for Knights of Pythias Lodge No. 129. Upper floors were used by the lodge and the first floor was leased for commercial use. The building is now part of the G. C. Murphy Company.

Cherry Building, 31½ Public Square, 1889. (Photo 81). Italianate, three-story brick, seven-bay facade, hip roof, round compound arch window openings and frames second story, pointed compound arch windows and frames third story, windows double-hung with one light in each sash, bracketed cornice, altered first story. G. C. Murphy since 1949.

Major-Hunker Building, 27-29 Public Square, 1869-70. (Photo 82). Italianate, two-story brick, six-bay facade, round-arch window openings and frames, double-hung windows with one light in each sash, elaborate round-arch pressed-metal window heads. Side of the building has the same type of windows, pilastered entry, and pressed-metal entablature. Altered first story facade. Third story removed following storm damage in 1942. Built for Alfred Major, a prominent local attorney. Third floor was occupied by Pocahontas Lodge. Architect: D. H. Bohlen; contractor: J. R. Stewart.

Bonner Building, 110-112 South Harrison, 1886. (Photos 83, 84). Italianate two-and-one-half-story brick, seven-bay facade, windows on second floor shuttered, round attic openings with stone surrounds, stone banding, elaborate bracketed pressed-metal cornice, altered first story. Constructed for use as a distributorship of buggies and farm implements. Second floor was used for office space. First floor now occupied by retail establishments.

Hayes Building, 118 South Harrison Street. (Photo 85, center) Italianate, two-and-one-half story brick, three-bay facade, double-hung windows with one light in each sash on second story, round attic openings with stone banding above, altered first story, pressed metal cornice removed. Now part of clothing store.

Hub Shoe Store Building, 101 South Harrison, 1872. (Photo 86). French Second Empire, two-and-one-half story brick, four bay ground floor, mansard roof. Second story windows have round compound-arch openings and round-arch frames, windows are double-hung with one light in each sash, segmental arch dormers with double-

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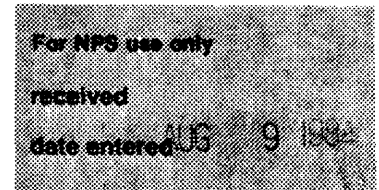
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hung windows with four lights in each sash, bracketed pressed-metal cornice, pressed metal curb, altered first story. Built by Sam Hamilton. Renovated 1977.

Alhambra-Major Building, 117 South Harrison, 1911. (Photo 87). Arts and Crafts, two-story brick, three by six bays wide, one bay square three-story tower with hip roof at corner, stone trim, grouped second-story windows with stone heads. Openings on first story of secondary facade bricked in, first floor alterations on principal facade. Large aluminum signs on each street facade and at corner of building. Housed the Alhambra Theater until 1951, when Major's 5 & 10 moved in.

I.O.O.F. Building, 14 West Broadway, 1895. (Photo 88). Three-story brick, three-bay facade, large first story openings with alterations, first story stone cornice. Flat-arch second story windows with stone drip mold and sills, elliptical-arch third story window openings and frames with stone trim, stone cornice, parapet, decorative brickwork, "I.O.O.F." at top of facade. Built for the International Order of Odd Fellows. Lower stories were rented for commercial use. Third story was used by lodge.

Old High School Building, 54 West Broadway, completed 1886. (Photo 89). Victorian eclectic, monumental, two-and-one-half-story brick with central three-story tower, raised basement, variously sized and shaped windows, round-arch entry, elaborate stone trim, hip roof with dormers, decorative grillwork in second story window transoms. Built as City High School. Now used as School Administration Building.

Adams and Kramer Law Office, 33 West Washington. (Photo 90). Queen Anne House, two-and-one-half-story brick, raised basement, gable/hip slate roof, wood porch with carved posts, turned spindles and brackets, transomed double door with segmental-arch window openings with rectangular sash, smooth stone sills and water table, decorative brickwork, scrollwork in gables. Attached carriage house. Used since 1957 for law office.

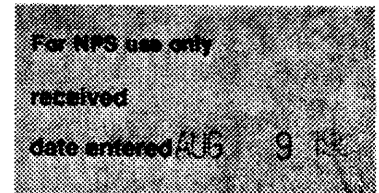
St. Joseph Roman Catholic Church, 129 East Broadway, 1903-1908. (Photo 91). Beaux Arts, monumental, brick with stone trim, pedimented central pavilion flanked by towers with domed belvederes, large round-arch door, elaborate stone trim, round-arch windows, raised basement. Architect: C. A. Curtain.

Metzger Building, 28-30 East Washington Street, 1878, 1894. (Photo 92). Italianate, three-story brick, four-bay facade, variously arched stone window heads, pressed-metal cornice with date, "1894," and "Metzger's," altered first story facade. Built as a two-story structure in 1878, as the home of Silas Metzger. Third story added in 1894. Now part of J. G. Deprez Hardware Store.

Russell Fleming Building, 17 North Harrison. (Photo 93). Italianate, two-story brick, three-bay facade, segmental-arch window openings with segmental-arch heads, box cornice, altered first floor facade. Used as a drugstore until 1966. Now used as a clothing store.

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Worland and Eagan, 149 East Washington Street. (Photo 94). Two-story brick, three-bay facade, hip roof, segmental-arch window openings with unarched frames second floor. Round-arch openings first floor. Used as a saloon in early 20th century. Became livery stable 1915. Recently renovated. Now data processing center for a local bank.

Shelby County United Fund/Fuller Center Building, 126 North Harrison. (Photo 95). Queen Anne house, two-and-one-half-story brick, segmental-arch window openings, wood porch with turned posts and spindles, pedimented dormers, gable/hip roof, polygonal bay at southwest corner, iron fence. Built as residence of J. G. Deprez, for which the hardware store and public square were named. Donated in 1962 by Mr. and Mrs. Parrish Fuller to the local United Way organization.

Facades of many of the commercial buildings in the district have been altered. While a few have panels over the entire front, most alterations have resulted in modernization of the first floor, only. Generally, the commercial buildings in the district are well maintained, although there are exceptions.

Recent efforts have been made to heighten awareness in the community of the importance of the area's architectural heritage. The results are beginning to show. Several buildings have been restored and another building is soon to be rehabilitated for use as a retail banking center.

LIST OF INTRUSIONS

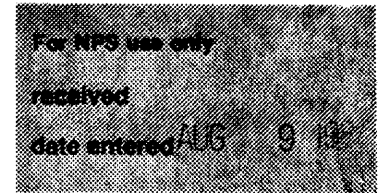
12 E. Franklin Street
Property at southwest corner of Franklin Street and alley between Pike and Noble Streets.

- 34 West Washington Street
- 23-25 West Washington Street
- 29 East Washington Street
- 41-47 East Washington Street
- 49 East Washington Street
- 54 East Washington Street
- 58-60 East Washington Street
- 123-129 East Washington Street
- 126 East Washington Street

- 21-27 West Jackson Street
- 24-28 West Jackson Street
- Property on west side of alley between Harrison and Pike Streets between Jackson Street and Broadway
- 123-127 East Jackson Street

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Intrusions, continued

52 West Broadway
50 West Broadway
34 West Broadway
33 West Broadway
32 West Broadway
9-11 East Broadway
17-19 East Broadway
36-42 East Broadway
39 E. Broadway
147 East Broadway
158 East Broadway

116 North Harrison Street
111 North Harrison Street
Property at southeast corner of Harrison and Franklin Streets
12-14 North Harrison Street
12-14 South Harrison Street
102 South Harrison Street
109-113 South Harrison Street
201 South Harrison Street
203 South Harrison Street

North side of Public Square east of Harrison Street
40-44 Public Square
47-49 Public Square
7-11 Public Square

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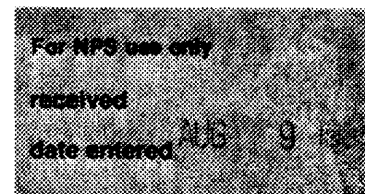
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Company in the latter part of the 19th century. The first motion picture theater was located on the south side of the town square. In the 1930's and 40's, the Ritz Theatre, on East Broadway, and the Alhambra Theatre, at the corner of Broadway and Harrison Streets, entertained many with the silver screen. The Ritz site is now a parking lot, and the Alhambra has been converted into a five-and-dime store (Photo 87).

Several of the buildings in the district were built by fraternal orders. One local historian¹ suggested that at the turn of the century Shelbyville had more fraternal societies than any city of comparable size in the country. Twenty-five such organizations were counted. A number of these groups constructed buildings with the upper floors devoted to lodge functions, and the lower floors used for commercial purposes. The commercial uses, of course, provided revenue to help maintain the building and support the lodge. There are no active lodges within the district today, but several buildings remain, such as the Blessing-DePrez Building (Photo 79), Bower and Sons (Photo 80), the Chillon Lodge (Photo 81), and the Major-Hunker Building (Photo 82), which housed lodges at one time.

Architecturally, the buildings in the district cover a full range of dates and styles. Most predominant is the Italianate style, represented by several commercial buildings. Perhaps the two best examples are the J. G. DePrez Company building and the Bower and Son building, located side by side on the east side of the square (Photos 79 and 80). Another Italianate structure is the Cherry Building (Photo 81), which features the usual arched windows and bracketed cornice, but with an unusual twist: its third story windows have pointed, Gothic arches. Next to the Cherry Building is the Chillon Lodge, an unusual design resembling a medieval castle.

Illustrating the French Second Empire style are the Hub Shoe Store building, and the building just east of the Metzger building on Washington (Photos 86 and 92). Both feature the familiar mansard roof, with arched windows and dormers and a bracketed cornice. The Craftsman style is represented by the Major five and dime store, formerly the Alhambra Theater. The Beaux Arts style is also represented in the district by St. Joseph's Church (Photo 91), and the much later Art Deco can be seen in the Methodist Building on the square (Photo 6). City Hall and the Public Library provide the city with good examples of the Classical Revival (Photos 17 and 44).

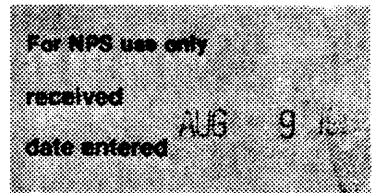
Residences located within the commercial district also represent a broad range of styles, including the Queen Anne (Photos 45 and 95), and American Foursquare (Photo 25).

In the 1960's the retail merchants of the district experienced problems similar to those faced by central area merchants in other towns, small and large alike. A shopping district on the outskirts of Shelbyville with large national chain stores drew away some of the central district's trade. Additionally, large regional shopping centers developed in the 1960's and 70's in the nearby suburban areas of Indianapolis have had an adverse impact. In an effort to combat this competition, downtown merchants and building owners

¹Chadwick, History of Shelbyville, (1909).

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have made a concentrated effort to refurbish their property to make it attractive to the consumer. Many have painted and renewed the upper facades to near original condition. Some, not in keeping with the architectural style of the structure, have utilized false fronts, glass and various metal coverings on the ground floor.

Item Number 9

Banta, R. E., compiler. Indiana Authors and Their Books 1816-1916. Crawfordsville: Wabash College, 1949.

Boetcker, Rev. William J. H. Picturesque Shelbyville. 1902.

Chadwick, Edward H. Chadwick's History of Shelby County, Indiana. Indianapolis: B. F. Bowen and Company, 1909.

Indianapolis Star, November 11, 1909.

McFadden, Marian. Biography of a Town. Shelbyville: Tippecanoe Press, 1968.

Shelby County, Indiana Sesquicentennial 1822-1972. Commemorative Album.

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Beginning at the Southeast corner of Tompkins and Franklin Streets; thence East along the South curbline of Franklin to the West property line (extended) of the property at 24 West Franklin; thence North along that property line to an East-West alley between Franklin and Mechanic Streets; thence East along that alleyway to Harrison Street; thence North along the East curbline of Harrison to Mechanic Street; thence East along the South curbline of Mechanic Street to the East property line of the property at 126 North Harrison; thence South along that property line (extended) to Franklin Street; thence East along the South curbline of Franklin to a North-South alley between Pike and Noble Streets; thence South along that alleyway to Washington Street; thence East along the South curbline of Washington to the East line of the property at 149 East Washington; thence South along that line (extended) to Jackson Street; thence East along the South curbline of Jackson to Noble Street; thence South along the West curbline of Noble to the South line of the property located on the Southwest corner of Broadway and Noble Streets; thence West along the South property lines of properties facing Broadway, continuing in a straight line across Pike and Harrison Streets, as shown on the map, to Tompkins Street; thence North along the East curbline of Tompkins to the point of beginning.