

WASHINGTON STREET DOWNTOWN CORRIDOR  
Washington Street between Alabama Street  
and Senate Avenue  
Indianapolis  
Marion County  
Indiana

HABS No. IN-266

HABS  
IND  
49-IND,  
57-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
National Park Service  
Northeast Region  
Philadelphia Support Office  
U.S. Custom House  
200 Chestnut Street  
Philadelphia, P.A. 19106

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

HABS  
IND  
49-IND,  
57.

WASHINGTON STREET DOWNTOWN CORRIDOR

HABS No. IN-266

Location: Washington Street between Alabama Street and Senate Avenue  
Indianapolis, Marion County, Indiana

USGS Indianapolis West, Indiana Quadrangle  
Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates:  
16.572120.4402030

Date(s) of Construction:

In 1821, Alexander Ralston and Elias P. Fordham platted the city of Indianapolis in a one-mile grid of streets using a combination of L'Enfant's design for Washington, D.C. and Thomas Jefferson's plan of regular squares. Within the Mile Square, Ralston clearly designated Washington Street as the principal east-west avenue by its extra width (120'). Structures along this stretch of Washington Street range in construction dates from the Hannaman & Duzan Building (c.1852) to portions of the Circle Centre Mall development project which were completed in 1995.

Significance:

Washington Street is the National Road, or U.S. 40, as it passes through Indianapolis, Marion County, Indiana. This major commercial artery is home to many important nineteenth and twentieth century buildings and forms the southern edge of the potential Circle Center Historic District. As evidenced by the demolitions and new construction for the Circle Centre Mall development project, the area is continually evolving to meet the needs and desires of the central Indiana resident.

The potential Circle Center Historic District is the heart of downtown Indianapolis. The circle was designed as the focus of the 1821 Mile Square town plat. Today, Monument Circle is probably one of the most widely know streets in Indiana. It is symbolically the center of Indianapolis, the state's capital, and hence of Indiana itself. It is also unique as the only street pattern of its shape in the state. The district as a whole represents the growth and change of the downtown commercial center since the late nineteenth century. Included within the district are some of the city's most impressive early twentieth century commercial buildings.

Of the 1821 plat which created Indianapolis, the Circle has always been the central and most arresting feature. In addition, it is one of the few distinctive features of the Mile Square plat which has survived intact. The centerpiece of the potential district is the Indiana State Soldiers' and Sailors' Monument. The monument, constructed 1888-1902, is the design of architect Bruno Schmitz. The oldest structure on Monument Circle is Christ Church Cathedral. While the Circle was once home to four churches, Christ Church Cathedral is the only one which remains. Designed by architect William Tinsley, the 1857 structure is an outstanding representation of the Gothic Revival style. Surrounding the Monument are a variety of buildings important for their architecture and history. The Columbia Club had its beginnings as a political effort to support the campaign of Benjamin Harrison. The Circle Theater opened in 1916 as one of the Midwest's first motion picture houses.

Washington Street, the southern edge of the potential district and the National Road, is representative of a vital commercial artery. The street is home to many important nineteenth and twentieth century buildings. As evidenced by the demolitions and new construction for the Circle Centre Mall, the district is continually evolving to meet the desires of the Indianapolis resident. The project area for the Washington Street Downtown Corridor Improvements actually extends beyond the boundaries of the potential district.

In 1820, a special commission, appointed by Governor Jennings, decided the state capital should be located in the center of the state. The site of what is now Indianapolis was selected due to the presence of a presumably navigable river, its junction at the site of four Indian trails, its central location in the state, the anticipation of the approaching National Road, and for its level and fertile soil. Alexander Ralston and Elias P. Fordham platted the city in a one-mile grid of streets using a combination of L'Enfant's design for Washington, D.C. and Thomas Jefferson's plan of regular squares.

As Ralston and Fordham laid it out, Indianapolis originally resembled a wheel, the Circle being the axis and the four diagonal avenues the spokes. The Circle and radiating, diagonal avenues owed much to surveyor Ralston's experience in surveying for the

Baroque plan of Washington , D.C. in the early 1790's. It is probable that Ralston conceived of the "Governor's Circle" functioning as the principal square or public place of the capital, much as in similar European plans. The importance of the Circle in the town plan is illustrated by Ralston's reservation of the center of the Circle for a Governor's Mansion. Within the Mile Square, most land sales and homes occurred along Washington Street which Ralston had clearly designated as the principal east-west avenue by its extra width (120'). In 1827, the prominence of Washington Street was further enhanced as the National Road (U.S. 40) reached Indianapolis.

With the coming of the first railroad in 1847, distinct land use patterns began to evolve. The railroads ringed the southern edge of the Mile Square, an industrial belt formed in the south, west and southeast around a retail and commercial core developing along Washington Street. Merchants flocked to the area and by the 1860's, Washington Street had evolved into the state's most prestigious shopping district. The lone remaining building from this era is the Hannaman & Duzan Building (c.1852) at 44 East Washington Street.

The post-Civil War years saw expansion and speculation only to be followed by the Panic of 1873. During the recovery years leading up to World War I, the central commercial district underwent solidification and expansion from Washington Street to the Circle and the adjacent blocks. By the turn of the century, retail giants such as Ayres, Wasson, Mayer, and Strauss had moved in. Several significant buildings constructed during this era, providing visible evidence of the varied times, include the Indiana Statehouse (1878-1888) in the 200 block of West Washington Street, the Lombard Building (1893) at 22 East Washington Street, the Marott's Shoes Building (1899-1900) at 18-20 East Washington Street, the McOuat Building (1901) at 14 East Washington Street, the L.S. Ayres & Company Department Store (1905) at 1 West Washington Street, the Merchants National Bank (1907-1912) at 1-7 East Washington Street, the Hotel Washington (1912) at 32 East Washington Street, and the Kahn Building (1915) at 7 North Meridian Street.

The post-war period was again characterized by a peacetime "boom" which was foreclosed by the stock market crash in 1929 and followed by the Great Depression. Buildings reflective of the early prosperity include the Indiana Theater (1927-1928) at 134 West Washington Street. Significant buildings constructed after the Crash of '29 include the H.P. Wasson & Company Building (1936-1937) at 2 West Washington Street and the F.W. Woolworth Building (1938) at 11 East Washington Street.

While the energizing force of World War II brought Indianapolis out of the lingering doldrums of the Depression, the business expansion and real estate developments that occurred after the War greatly impacted the downtown business district. Paralleling the

WASHINGTON STREET DOWNTOWN CORRIDOR  
HABS No. IN-266 (Page 4)

residential shift to the suburbs, a number of the retail and wholesale merchants moved to new locations in the outer reaches of Marion County. The migration out of the city center over a period of the next 40 years assisted in the deterioration of the central business district and the neighborhoods surrounding the downtown business district. With the consolidation of city and county governments in 1970, revitalization efforts were initiated and the city showed signs of revival. Representative buildings of this era include the Merchant's Bank Drive-In Office (1961) at 117 East Washington Street, the City-County Building (1962) in the 200 block of East Washington Street, the Merchants Plaza/Hyatt Regency Hotel complex (1974-1977) at 115 West Washington Street, and the Claypool Court/Embassy Suites Hotel (1984-1985) at 110 West Washington Street.

The most recent chapter in the history of Washington Street involves the development of the Circle Centre Mall. This \$315 million development adversely impacted the historic character of the one hundred block of West Washington Street. Several buildings with frontage on West Washington Street, including three which had been determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, were demolished. Fortunately, Historic American Buildings Survey recordation projects were conducted on the Griffith Block (1872) formerly located at 34-38 West Washington Street (HABS No. IN-214), the Occidental Building (1914) formerly located at 41 West Washington Street (HABS No. IN-211), and the Roosevelt Building (1922) formerly located at 9 North Illinois Street (HABS No. IN-215), prior to their removal. The limestone facade of the Griffith Block, has been re-erected as part of the new retail mall construction on the south side of the block.

Also, the original spatial character of Washington Street, maintained since the Ralston plan, has been compromised by the construction of the "Arts Garden," a steel-and-glass structure hovering atop the Washington Street and Illinois Street intersection. Of a more positive note, the former L.S. Ayres & Company Department Store (1905) at 1 West Washington Street has been sensitively renovated and incorporated into the Circle Centre Mall development.

Description:

A. Streetscape: Like the buildings fronting it, the overall streetscape of Washington Street has also continuously changed and evolved. However, the one remaining constant has been the retention of the original 120' width as platted by Alexander Ralston in 1821.

Though originally a two-way street, changing traffic patterns have converted this portion of Washington Street to one-way westbound. Asphalt pavement bordered with concrete curbing, has replaced the early log and brick paver street surfaces. The adjacent sidewalks

are concrete with the exception of southern side of the 200 block of West Washington Street which has a red brick paver surface. The sidewalk surfaces feature standard-issue parking meters, fire plugs, traffic signals and modern aluminum poles with cobra-style light heads. The brick-paved sidewalk on the 200 block of West Washington Street contains several openings for trees set into cast-iron sidewalk grates. Finally, an array of trash receptacles and vending stands are distributed throughout the area.

B. Buildings: As described above, the architecture of Washington Street has evolved over the past 150 years. The street is still home to many important nineteenth and twentieth century buildings. Of the thirty-six buildings located within the boundaries of this documentation, nine are individually listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Also, four of the buildings have been the subject of previous Historic American Building Survey recordation projects. The chronology of commercial architecture in the State of Indiana can be traced through the collection of buildings.

The oldest recognizable building within the boundaries of this survey is the Hannaman & Duzan Building (c.1852) at 44 East Washington Street. It is probably the oldest retail building in the city. It is one of only a handful of pre-Civil War buildings surviving in the Mile Square. Originally part of a larger nine-bay block, the remaining three-bay, brick structure is a rare example of the Greek Revival style adapted to commercial architecture. The simple, Greek Revival window lintels are still visible on the upper stories. The building also exhibits the slanted roof construction which was used for most pre-Civil War commercial buildings along Washington Street.

The Griffith Block, constructed in 1872, was originally located at 34-38 West Washington Street. The building was one of the few surviving examples of the Venetian Commercial Italianate style of architecture. As a precursor to the Circle Centre Mall construction, the building was demolished in 1990. However, the ornate limestone facade was salvaged and has been re-erected on the south side of the block as part of the Circle Centre Mall construction. Prior to its demolition, the building was documented via the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS No. IN-214).

The Indiana State House (1878-1888) in the 200 block of West Washington Street, designed by Edwin May and Adolph Scherrer. The four-story, Greek-cross plan building is sheathed in native Indiana limestone and sits atop a rock-faced granite plinth. The entrance and corner pavilions are pedimented with decorative frieze bands. The rest of the exterior of the building features engaged Corinthian columns, sculpted entablatures, projecting beltcourses and decorated, bracketed windows hoods. Atop the intersection of the main axes is a dome and cupola sheathed in gold leaf. The building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on August 28, 1975.

WASHINGTON STREET DOWNTOWN CORRIDOR  
HABS No. IN-266 (Page 6)

The Lombard Building (1892) at 22-28 East Washington Street is a striking example in brick and terra cotta of late Renaissance Revival design. Designed by the Indianapolis architectural firm of R.P. Daggett and Company, the Corinthian pilasters adorning the fourth and fifth stories are especially finely worked. The building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on June 1, 1982.

The Marott's Shoes Building (1899-1900) at 18-20 East Washington Street was one of the first buildings along Washington Street in which terra cotta was employed as a primary facade material. Heraldic sculptural details frame a facade of plate glass windows. The building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on May 9, 1983.

The L.S. Ayres & Company Department Store (1905/1914) at 1 West Washington Street was Indiana's pre-eminent department store for nearly one hundred years. The original portion of the building, on the southwest corner of the Washington Street and Meridian Street intersection was designed by the prolific Indianapolis architectural firm of Vonnegut and Bohn. In 1914, an addition, designed by Vonnegut, Bohn and Mueller, doubled the size of the building. The handsome dark brick walls with terra cotta trim, etched glass windows, and pressed metal cornice with "A" shields have remain virtually unchanged since the store's construction. The bronze clock, designed by Indianapolis architect Kurt Vonnegut, Sr., was added to the corner of the building in 1936. It has become a local landmark in itself. The building has been determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places and has been documented via the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS No. IN-253).

The Merchants Bank Building (1907-1912) at 1-7 East Washington Street is one of the architectural landmarks of Indianapolis. It is the city's prime example of a turn-of-the-century skyscraper and was the tallest building in Indianapolis from 1912 to 1962. Moreover, it is the only surviving commission of a member of the Chicago School of Architecture in the city. The architect, Daniel H. Burnham of Chicago, was one of the leading architects and city planners in the county at the turn of the century. The building is designed in the "tripartite" form of many skyscrapers of the period: limestone-faced and sculpted three-story base, stream-lined red-brick shaft of twelve stories, and top story and cornice adorned with stone and terra cotta sculptural motifs. The building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on February 19, 1982.

Completed shortly after the Merchants Bank Building, the Hotel Washington (1912) at 32 East Washington Street, was built as a first-class hotel. Designed by the Indianapolis architectural firm of R.P. Daggett and Company, the building exhibits the same "tripartite" skyscraper design concepts. The building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on July 17, 1980.

The Kahn Building (1915) at 7 North Meridian Street is one of the most outstanding terra cotta edifices along Washington Street. As was the case with the Roosevelt Building, formerly located a block to the west, the character of the Kahn Building is established by the lavish, pre-cast, terra cotta sculptural details which completely cover its west (Meridian Street) and south (Washington Street) elevations. The architects, Vonnegut, Bohn and Mueller, exploited the aesthetic qualities of terra cotta in many of their commercial commission along Washington Street. The building has been determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

One of the most extravagant movie palaces built in the Midwest during the 1920's and certainly the most lavish movie theatre ever built in Indiana, the Indiana Theatre (1927-1928) at 134 West Washington Street exhibits an exuberant Spanish Churrigueresque facade and an interior which evokes fantasies of the Spain of Ferdinand and Isabella. The building was designed by the Indianapolis architectural firm of Rubush and Hunter, the exterior terra cotta sculptural work was completed by Alexander Sangernebo and the interior plaster ornament was completed by Joseph Willenborg. The building was listed in the National Register of Historic Places on January 29, 1979 and has been documented via the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS No. IN-101).

The original portion of the former H.P. Wasson and Company Department Store at 2 West Washington Street, designed by the Indianapolis architectural firm of Rubush and Hunter, was constructed in 1936-1937. The existing limestone facade was completed in 1948. The addition, designed by the Chicago architectural firm of Graham, Anderson, Probst and White matched the original monumental Art Deco design. The building has been documented via the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS No. IN-224).

The facade of the former F.W. Woolworth Company Building (1938) at 11 East Washington Street covers two Victorian "blocks" behind its Art Deco facade. The limestone facade, design attributed to Phillip A. Weisenburgh of Indianapolis, was added and the interiors of the two structures were combined and remodeled for the F.W. Woolworth Company "5 and 10" store. The building has been determined to be eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

Merchants Drive-In Office (1961) at 117 East Washington Street, designed by the Indianapolis architectural firm of Lennox, Matthews, Simmons and Ford, Inc. The modernistic, three-story building is constructed on the triangular plot of land created by the intersection of Virginia Avenue, Pennsylvania Street and Washington Street. The exterior of the building is clad in black granite and white Georgian marble cut in unusual and dramatic hexagons.

City-County Building (1959-1962) at 200 East Washington Street, designed by the Indianapolis architectural firms of Wright, Porteous & Associates and Lennox, Matthews, Simmons and Ford, Inc. was the tallest building in the state at the time of its construction. The entire structure consists of four parts: the 26-story center tower; two flanking 6-story wings; and a three-level underground parking garage. The curtain-wall exterior of the building is of gray, heat-resisting double-glazed windows and glass spandrels in aluminum sash. Architectural critics of the time described the skyscraper as “faceless and anonymous” which soars “with unrelieved tedium to the sky.”

At the time of its construction, the Merchants Plaza (1974-1977) complex, at 115 West Washington Street, was the largest privately developed project in Indiana. The mixed-use complex, consisting of twin, trapezoidal towers was designed by JV III Architects of Houston and Browning Day Pollak Associates Inc. of Indianapolis. Built on the site of the Lincoln Hotel and the vacated right-of-way of Kentucky Avenue, the angular exterior walls reflect the former diagonal flow of traffic. The facades are distinguished by windows set at an angle in triangular bays that project from the brick walls. The 20th floor of the hotel is a revolving, circular restaurant.

The Claypool Court/Embassy Suites Hotel (1984-1985), at 110 West Washington Street, is located on the site of the Claypool Hotel, a landmark of the early 20th century, demolished in 1969. The mixed-use development, designed by Indianapolis' CSO/Architects, Inc. with D.I. Design of Baltimore, employs white precast concrete panels and green glass glazing. The rooftop's architectural gymnastics were inspired by the Post Modernism movement. On the exterior, the shopping function of the lower three floors are denoted by green glass projections while the hotel is expressed by bands of windows. Critics have decried the building's diagonal orientation to Washington Street and Illinois Street.

The new Artsgarden (1994-1995), which spans the intersection of Washington and Illinois Streets is expected to become the centerpiece of tourism activity in downtown Indianapolis. The focal point of the Circle Centre Mall development project was designed by the New York City office of Ehrenkrantz & Eckstut Architects, P.C. The new facility, built on an Indiana limestone base, features a lacy glass structure that arts patrons say resembles a giant Ferris wheel. Rising 95 feet above the street level, the Artsgarden is 118 feet in diameter. It will feature wood flooring, neon and theatrical lighting, tempered glass and painted steel.

Sources:

- A. Architectural Drawings: Numerous architectural drawings pertaining to

Washington Street exist in the collections of the Indiana Historical Society Library, the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission, and the Architectural Archives at the College of Architecture and Planning at Ball State University. These drawings depict city or street planning designs as well as the original construction and/or subsequent additions and renovations of the individual buildings.

B. Historic Views: Literally hundreds of historic photographic views of Washington Street exist in the collections of the Indiana Historical Society Library and the Indianapolis Historic Preservation Commission. These views depict both general street views as well as views of individual buildings.

C. Bibliography:

"A Washington Street Chronology." The Bracket and Trowel, Indianapolis: Winter/Spring, 1994-1995.

"Circle Center Historic District." Center Township, Marion County Interim Report, Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory, Indianapolis: July, 1991.

Department of Metropolitan Development., "Indianapolis 1980-2000: Regional Center General Plan." Indianapolis: August, 1981.

Gadski, Mary Ellen, edit., "Indianapolis Architecture: Transformations Since 1975." Indianapolis, 1993.

Indiana Architectural Foundation., "Indianapolis Architecture." Indianapolis, 1975.

Sanborn Map Company. Insurance Maps of Indianapolis, Indiana. New York: Sanborn Map Company, 1898, 1914 and 1914-15 corrected to 1954.

Project Information:

This documentation project was undertaken by the City of Indianapolis in compliance with the Memorandum of Agreement with the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation as a mitigative effort due to substantial rehabilitation of the streetscape within this section of Washington Street.

Prepared By: David A. Kroll  
Ratio Architects, Inc.  
Suite 100, Schrader Building  
107 South Pennsylvania Street  
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204-3684  
April, 1996

WASHINGTON STREET DOWNTOWN CORRIDOR  
HABS No. IN-266 (Page 10)

