FINAL

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Meeks Avenue Historic District

other names/site number

2. Location

street & number 200-331 North Meeks Avenue N/A ☐ not for publication

city or town Muncie N/A ☐ vicinity

state Indiana code IN county Delaware code 035 zip code 47303

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 36CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property ☒ meets ☐ does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant ☐ nationally ☐ statewide ☒ locally. (☐ See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date 7/26/99

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 for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title — Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
☐ 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:)		

Meeks Avenue Historic District — Name of Property

Delaware IN — County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- [x] private
- [ ] public-local
- [ ] public-State
- [ ] public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- [ ] building
- [x] district
- [ ] site
- [ ] structure
- [ ] object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count

Contributing	Noncontributing	
25	1	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
25	1	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC:	Single Dwelling
COMMERCE/TRADE:	Specialty Store

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC:	Single Dwelling
COMMERCE/TRADE:	Specialty Store

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

19th & 20th c. AMER.:	Bungalow/Craftsman
19th & 20th c. AMER.:	Commercial Style
OTHER:	American Foursquare
OTHER:	Cross-Gable

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation	CONCRETE
walls	WOOD: Weatherboard
	SYNTHETICS: Vinyl
roof	ASPHALT
other	BRICK
	STONE

Narrative Description
(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Meeks Avenue Historic District
Name of Property

Delaware IN
County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

☒ A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contriibution to the broad patterns of our history.

☐ B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

☒ C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

☐ D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

☐ A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

☐ B removed from its original location.

☐ C a birthplace or grave.

☐ D a cemetery.

☐ E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

☐ F a commemorative property.

☐ G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE
COMMUNITY PLANNING &

Period of Significance
1904-1939

Significant Dates
1904
1913
1919

Significant Person
(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Unknown

Narrative Statement of Significance
(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography
(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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

Name of repository:
Ball State University, Stoeckel Archives

Meeks Avenue Historic District
Name of Property

Delaware IN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 4.5

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	16	636750	4450520	3			
2				4			

☐ See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description
(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification
(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Joseph P. Saldibar III, Graduate Assistant

organization Muncie Community Development date 12/15/98

street & number 300 North High Street telephone 765-747-4825

city or town Muncie state IN zip code 47305

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative **black and white** photographs of the property.

Additional items
(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name

street & number telephone

city or town state zip code

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 *et seq.*).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

DESCRIPTION

The Meeks Avenue Historic District is located approximately one-half mile northwest of downtown Muncie, Indiana and includes twenty-five houses and one former service station on Meeks Avenue. Meeks Avenue begins at its intersection with White River Boulevard, just north of the Washington Street Bridge, and continues northwest for one block, intersecting with Reserve and North Streets. The district boundaries correspond to those suggested in the 1985 Delaware County Interim Report, Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory, and represent the southeast portion of the former Riverside City, an independent suburb of Muncie in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The Meeks Avenue Historic District was chosen for nomination to the National Register because of its surviving collection of Bungalow and Craftsman-style houses, as well as its contribution to the growth of Riverside City and Muncie.

All but one of the buildings in the district are considered to be contributing. The first home on Meeks Avenue dates from 1904 (319 Meeks Avenue), and all but one of the others were built between 1905 and 1925. The service station, located at the northwest end of Meeks Avenue, was built in 1939. The houses were built as single-family residences and, for the most part, remain so today. Many of the homes feature half-timbering, natural stonework (with stones taken from the nearby White River), and decorative stucco features which are characteristic of the Bungalow and Craftsman styles. There are also a few American Foursquare and Vernacular houses in the oldest part of the district, adding variety and character to Meeks Avenue. In general, the houses are well maintained. Some have been covered with aluminum or synthetic siding, but few have suffered character-destroying alterations.

The district is also characteristic of turn-of-the-century planning in the Muncie area. Meeks Avenue was laid out with a rear alley for each side of the street and detached garages were built behind each house. Housing setbacks have been followed, even in the case of the district's only non-contributing house, built in 1974. At the southern end of the district there are a few vacant lots which are utilized as side yards by neighboring houses.

The Meeks Avenue streetscape has been altered only once. During the 1920s, when a new levee was constructed along the White River, the southeast end of the street was elevated to join the new White River Boulevard. Prior to construction of the levee, the street ran downhill toward the White River, following the natural contour of the land. This alteration, however, was made seventy years ago and is significant in the development of Muncie.

The houses in the district were built as land was acquired for development. Although it is a small district (covering only 4.5 acres), it includes land acquired through three separate land transfers. The first, in 1904, comprises the northwest portion of the district. The second, in 1912, comprises the northeast portion, while the third, in 1916, comprises the southern half of the district. Thus, the houses in the northwest are the oldest, while the houses in the southern part are the newest.

Building density varies along the west side of Meeks Avenue. At the north end, homes are positioned close to each other while at the south end, large side yards separate the homes. Notable structures on the west side of the street include: 331, a former service station, now a barber shop; 315, a two-story, vernacular cross-gabled home; 301, a two-story American Foursquare house; and 209, 221, and 225, which are all excellent examples of Bungalow architecture.

Building density is uniform along the east side of Meeks Avenue. Notable homes along this side of the street include: 200, 220, and 300, one-story Bungalows; and 216, a simple Craftsman house. The district's only non-contributing building is located at 204. This ranch-style house was built in 1974. Although not a Bungalow or Craftsman-style building, its massing, height, and materials are consistent with neighboring structures.

Following are descriptions of representative buildings and streetscapes along Meeks Avenue:

331 Meeks Avenue: (Photo No. 1)
This property was originally part of Lot #1 of the Charles Blease Addition (1904). The lot was subdivided, and a grocery store operated on this site from c. 1925 to 1931. In 1931 the building became a gas station, and fuel pumps were installed in front. In 1939, the gas station was expanded to a full service station, complete with garage. The Phillips Petroleum Corporation demolished the 1925 structure and built this "Special Model A" type station, designed by Clarence F. Reinardt of Bartlesville, Oklahoma, in 1939. The new station was in business until 1965. Since then, the building has housed a variety of small commercial ventures. It is currently the home of a barber shop.

327 Meeks Avenue: (Photo No. 2)
This Craftsman-influenced Bungalow was built c. 1905. Both the house and its porch, which is nearly the width of the house, have front-gabled roofs with exposed roof beams. The home retains its original siding and windows. Its foundation and porch piers have a stucco finish.

323 Meeks Avenue:
This "Vernacular" Cross-Gabled house was built in 1906. It is typical of many cross-gabled houses of the period with a high-pitched roof and a wood corner porch. Vinyl siding has been applied to its exterior, but the home retains its original massing and floorplan.

319 Meeks Avenue: (Photo No. 3)
Built in 1904, this small, one-story Craftsman house has a decorative entry hood supported by triangular knee braces, and original windows. The porch is built of concrete blocks, and the house has been sided with vinyl. The gabled dormer on the northeast facade is supported by triangular knee braces and has a louvered vent.

315 Meeks Avenue: (Photo No. 4)
This two-story "Vernacular" Upright and Wing house was built c. 1905. It has been sided with asbestos shingles and a non-historic rear ell has been added. Original features include windows, a distinctive steeply-gabled roof, and front porch. According to city directories, auto worker Winfield Morris was the first resident of this house.

311 Meeks Avenue:
This small Craftsman-style home features a brick chimney and a hip roof. The dormer on the northeast facade is low and triangular in shape, with original windows at the center. The porch has been enclosed, and asbestos shingles cover the exterior.

307 Meeks Avenue: (Photo No. 5)
This American Foursquare home was built c. 1905 and retains its projecting bay, attic dormer, and windows, including several upper sashes with diamond-shaped panes. The house has been sided in aluminum and the porch's foundation and posts have been rebuilt with concrete blocks and unfinished lumber.

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Built in 1904, this small, one-story Craftsman house has a decorative entry hood supported by triangular knee braces, and original windows. The porch is built of concrete blocks, and the house has been sided with vinyl. The gabled dormer on the northeast facade is supported by triangular knee braces and has a louvered vent.

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This two-story "Vernacular" Upright and Wing house was built c. 1905. It has been sided with asbestos shingles and a non-historic rear ell has been added. Original features include windows, a distinctive steeply-gabled roof, and front porch. According to city directories, auto worker Winfield Morris was the first resident of this house.

311 Meeks Avenue:
This small Craftsman-style home features a brick chimney and a hip roof. The dormer on the northeast facade is low and triangular in shape, with original windows at the center. The porch has been enclosed, and asbestos shingles cover the exterior.

307 Meeks Avenue: (Photo No. 5)
This American Foursquare home was built c. 1905 and retains its projecting bay, attic dormer, and windows, including several upper sashes with diamond-shaped panes. The house has been sided in aluminum and the porch's foundation and posts have been rebuilt with concrete blocks and unfinished lumber.

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301 Meeks Avenue: (Photo No. 6)
Built c. 1905, and resembling its neighbor at 307 Meeks Avenue, this American Foursquare home has square wood porch posts, some original windows, and a projecting bay supported by decorative brackets. It has been sided with asphalt shingles.

225 Meeks Avenue: (Photo No. 7)
An excellent example of Bungalow architecture, this frame house was built in 1922 for Bessie Blease Ross, a daughter of T.H. Blease. Notable features include triangular knee braces that support the eaves of the low-pitched front-gabled roof, a red brick exterior chimney, a cross-gable with projecting bay, and an integral corner front porch incorporating X-bracing in its railing. Especially notable is the use of both clapboard siding and stucco on the exterior walls. The two treatments are divided with horizontal band boards located at the heads and sills of the windows.

221 Meeks Avenue: (Photo No. 8)
This one-story, side-gabled 1922 Bungalow, designed by Willie Farer, was built for Tom Blease, son and brother of T.H. and Charles Blease, respectively. The house retains its wood clapboard siding, gabled dormer with louvered vent, and triangular knee braces. The home's integral front porch stretches across the front of the house. The home's foundation, battered porch piers, and battered exterior chimney are built of smooth, round cobblestones taken from the White River when it was dredged in the 1920s.

209 Meeks Avenue: (Photo No. 9)
This house, designed by Willie Farer, was built in 1917 for Charles Blease. It is an excellent example of Craftsman architecture. The home, which has an organic, rambling plan, is clad in wood shingle siding and has a low-pitched roof with deep eaves that are supported by exposed triangular knee braces. Other exposed structural beams and braces are found supporting the front porch gable. The home's two chimneys, and front porch foundation, railing, and battered corner pier are constructed of random-coursed sandstone. One of the chimneys has an unusually prominent location on the exterior of the home's street facade. The house was rated as "Outstanding" in the 1985 Delaware County Interim Report, Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory.

200 Meeks Avenue: (Photo No. 10)
This one-story Bungalow, built in 1921, possesses a high degree of integrity. Its features include stucco walls, original casement windows, and a low-pitched, side-gabled roof with exposed rafters, decorative beams, and eaves supported by triangular knee braces. The home's foundation, exterior chimney, and battered porch piers and railings are built of smooth, round stones taken from the White River when it was dredged in the 1920s. Exposed beams and braces, typical of the Craftsman style, are found under the front porch gable.

204 Meeks Avenue: (Photo No. 11)
Built in 1974, this non-contributing Ranch-style home has a front facade clad in stone and vertical wood siding. Its basic massing and profile respects neighboring structures.

208 Meeks Avenue: (Photo No. 12)
This Bungalow was built in 1920. The one-story structure has stucco walls and a very low-pitched, front-gabled roof whose eaves are supported by triangular knee braces. The most notable feature of the house is its porch with a front-gabled roof supported by narrow square wood columns resting on massive piers with sharply battered sides.

212 Meeks Ave: (Photo No. 13)
This one-story, frame Bungalow was built in 1926. Both the house and its porch, which is approximately half the width of the house, have low-pitched, front-gabled roofs whose eaves are supported by triangular knee braces. The front porch gable is further distinguished by exposed roof beams and paired six-pane windows. The porch roof is supported by slightly-tapered square wood columns resting on square brick piers. Aluminum siding is the only alteration made to the exterior of this house.

216 Meeks Ave: (Photo No. 14)
This Craftsman-style home was built c. 1922. Its primary distinguishing feature is its side-gabled roof with clipped ends. Also, the center section of the roof's front slope gradually arches (similar to an eyebrow dormer), extends over the porch, and it supported by triangular knee braces. Two short, square brick piers and an exterior chimney are built of red brick. The one-story home retains its original windows and roof brackets but has been sided in vinyl.

220 Meeks Avenue: (Photo No. 15)
This one and one-half story Bungalow was built in 1919. The eaves of its side-gabled roof and central gabl dormer are supported by triangular knee braces. The ends of its exposed roof beams are cut into decorative shapes. The porch (now enclosed) is contained under the main roof. Two battered brick piers support the roof at the front corners.

224 Meeks Avenue: (Photo No. 15)
This house was built in 1920 and is very similar to 220 Meeks Avenue. In this example of Bungalow architecture, however, the roof is supported by square, tapered, wood columns which rest on square, brick piers. The porch railings and two center brick piers (without columns) are constructed of the same brick. The home's northwest elevation features an exterior chimney and projecting bay with windows.

300 Meeks Avenue: (Photo No. 16)
This one-story, front-gabled Bungalow has low-sloped roofs and is sided with wood clapboards. It was built in 1916. Its front porch (now enclosed) has a shed roof supported by two battered brick piers which extend through the roof. The ends of its exposed roof beams are cut into decorative shapes.

304 Meeks Avenue: (Photo No. 17)
This one-story, front-gabled Bungalow was built c. 1914. Its front porch also has a front-gabled roof. While both roofs are supported by triangular knee braces, the porch is further detailed with exposed beams whose ends are cut into decorative shapes. The home has been sided in aluminum and its front porch has been enclosed. The home's brick foundation, however, remains unaltered.

308 Meeks Avenue: (Photo No. 18)
This Craftsman-style home was built in 1916 and has a hip roof with a triangular dormer facing Meeks Avenue The front porch is recessed into the south corner of the house which is supported by a square wood column resti on a brick pier. The masonry porch piers and foundation, as well as the wood railing, have been painted white. The home retains its original wood windows and siding as well as an exterior brick chimney.

314 Meeks Avenue: (Photo No. 19)
Built in 1920, this Craftsman-style home has been added on to. It has original windows, a brick chimney, decorative brick and wood porch supports, and a distinctive cross gable facing Meeks Avenue. It has been sided in vinyl.

316 Meeks Avenue: (Photo No. 20)
This Bungalow, built in 1916, has been altered. Additions have been made to the building, it has been sided in aluminum, and the front porch has been enclosed. It has a square bay window on the facade.

320 Meeks Avenue:
This one story Bungalow was built in 1912 for William Gants, a principal at Muncie's Washington School. It has been sided in aluminum but retains a square bay window, a dormer with decorative beams and triangular knee braces, some original windows, and tapered brick piers. The porch has been enclosed.

324 Meeks Avenue: (Photo No. 21)
This gable-front and wing Craftsman home has a low-pitched roof and was built c. 1917. The home's foundation, exterior chimney, and battered porch pier and railings are built of smooth, round stones likely taken from the White River. The ends of the porch's exposed roof beams are cut into a tapered shape as is typical of the style. Some of the home's original windows remain, but the house has been altered with the addition of vertical metal siding.

328 Meeks Avenue: (Photo No. 22)
This two-story Craftsman house was built in 1920. Some of its original windows and decorative elements are intact and although the porch has been enclosed, it retains its decorative gable. Alterations have been made to some upper story windows and the siding has been altered.

Meeks Avenue, Northeast Side: (Photo No. 23)
The northeast side of Meeks Avenue can be seen in this photo.

Meeks Avenue, Looking Southeast: (Photo No. 24)
The Meeks Avenue streetscape, including its incline to White River Boulevard, can be seen in this photo taken from the intersection of Meeks Avenue, Reserve Street, and North Street.

INVENTORY

Bldg. No.	Type	Address	Date / Style / Rating
1.	Service Station	331 N. Meeks	1939 / Commercial/ Contributing
2.	House	327 N. Meeks	c. 1905 / Bungalow / Contributing
3.	House	323 N. Meeks	1906 / Vernacular / Contributing
4.	House	319 N. Meeks	1904 / Craftsman / Contributing
5.	House	315 N. Meeks	c. 1905 / Vernacular / Contributing
6.	House	311 N. Meeks	1910 / Craftsman / Contributing
7.	House	307 N. Meeks	c. 1905 / American Foursquare / Contributing

Bldg.No.	Type	Address	Date / Style / Rating
8.	House	301 N. Meeks	c. 1905 / American Foursquare / Contributing
9.	House	225 N. Meeks	1922 / Bungalow / Contributing
10.	House	221 N. Meeks	1922 / Bungalow / Contributing
11.	House	209 N. Meeks	1917 / Bungalow / Contributing
12.	House	328 N. Meeks	1920 / Craftsman / Contributing
13.	House	324 N. Meeks	1915 / Craftsman / Contributing
14.	House	320 N. Meeks	1912 / Bungalow / Contributing
15.	House	316 N. Meeks	1916 / Bungalow / Contributing
16.	House	314 N. Meeks	1920 / Craftsman / Contributing
17.	House	308 N. Meeks	1916 / Bungalow / Contributing
18.	House	304 N. Meeks	1914 / Bungalow / Contributing
19.	House	300 N. Meeks	1916 / Bungalow / Contributing
20.	House	224 N. Meeks	1920 / Bungalow / Contributing
21.	House	220 N. Meeks	1919 / Bungalow / Contributing
22.	House	216 N. Meeks	1922 / Craftsman / Contributing
23.	House	212 N. Meeks	1926 / Bungalow / Contributing
24.	House	208 N. Meeks	1920 / Bungalow / Contributing
25.	House	204 N. Meeks	1974 / Ranch / Non-contributing
26.	House	200 N. Meeks	1920 / Bungalow / Contributing

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Meeks Avenue Historic District is important under National Register Criterion C, as an architecturally significant and distinguishable entity, and under Criterion A as an example of characteristic suburban development. The neighborhood is largely unchanged in form and appearance since the time of its development in the first decades of the twentieth century, and features several types of working-class homes representative of that era.

Muncie was laid out in 1826 along the banks of the White River by three pioneers: Goldsmith Gilbert, Lemuel Jackson, and William Brown. The land to the north of the river was owned by Rebecca Hackley, a half-Indian woman who had received land from the government. This area, known as the Hackley Reserve, was in time to become the suburb of Riverside. Growth in Muncie was slow, hampered by lack of a navigable river or railroads to ship goods. The town was incorporated in 1854, and at that time had a population of 900. Rapid growth did not occur until 1886, when natural gas was discovered in east-central Indiana. The "Gas Boom", as it was called, brought economic prosperity to many communities as companies sprung up to take advantage of the cheap, plentiful fuel. Muncie became the largest and most successful of these towns, and was able to continue to grow even after the gas was depleted. Industrial manufacturing, wartime production, and a growing automobile parts industry allowed the city to continue growing.

Like many cities, Muncie developed its first suburbs at the end of the nineteenth century. The town grew four-fold from 1880 to 1900, rising to 20,942 [1]. The resulting crowding in the city center drove many people to seek housing in new suburban developments north of the river. The first suburbs in the area later known as Riverside began in 1887, a year after the gas boom. The Riverside Addition was platted in 1893; it was bounded by Riverside Avenue, Light, Main and Reserve Streets. This area is just west of the Meeks Avenue District. At the time, the Wheeling Pike bridge was the only bridge connecting Riverside to Muncie. It was accessed via Riverside Avenue. A second bridge on Jackson Street connected Muncie to Normal City, another developing suburb.

Riverside remained a suburb until 1903, when it incorporated as Riverside City. This allowed residents to pay for street and other improvements, while remaining independent of Muncie. Meeks Avenue, although not developed yet, was included in the incorporation [2].

The first subdivision along Meeks Avenue occurred in 1904, when Charles F. Blease purchased a tract of land from Elizabeth Claypool. The land had formerly been used as part of Claypool's Alameda Stock Farm. That same year, Blease platted the C.F. Blease Addition, a nine-lot subdivision which now makes up the northwest corner of the district. James Corbin bought the first lot in June of 1905. Blease was the owner of the Washed Sand and Gravel Co., of Muncie, and helped to build several of the homes along the street [3].

The second subdivision occurred in August of 1912, when Elizabeth Claypool platted a portion of her stock farm as "Alameda Subdivision #3." This was the third of five such subdivisions. This was a ten-lot subdivision and the first lot was purchased by William Gants in October of that year.

The Flood of 1913 caused much damage to the Meeks Avenue neighborhood. In March of that year, severe thunderstorms swept through the Midwest and dumped record levels of rain on Muncie. This rain combined with melted snow to create the worst floods in city history. Meeks Avenue, located so close to the river, was quickly flooded. Contemporary accounts document that the water on Meeks Avenue was several feet deep, and that two

inches of sediment were left behind in the recently-built Bungalows of William Gants and Robert Maggs. There were six houses on the south side of Meeks Avenue at that time; the damage to these homes was uncertain. The houses were owned by Thomas H. and Charles F. Blease and rented to tenants [4].

In the aftermath of the flood, and over a period of twenty-five years, several changes were made to the White River corridor that affected Meeks Avenue. A new levee was built to protect homes north of the river from future floods. The river itself was dredged from Muncie to Yorktown, lowering it by several feet. The earth from this dredging was added to the top of the levee where a new road (White River Boulevard) was built. Meeks Avenue, which had run downhill towards the water, was now altered to rise towards the levee. The effects of this landscaping are best seen at 200 Meeks Avenue, where the original lot is edged on two sides by the levee.

The dredging of the river also allowed creative builders a chance to secure raw materials. Several of the houses in the district have front porches constructed of stones taken from the White River during this period [5]. Many of these attractive stone-fronted houses were built on the third and final plat of the district. Charles F. Blease and his father, Thomas H. Blease, platted the C.F. and T.H. Blease Addition in February of 1916. Tom Blease, Charles' brother, was the first buyer in April 1916. Charles and Tom built houses for themselves in the subdivision; these are at 209 and 221 Meeks Avenue [6].

Riverside City remained an independent municipality until 1919, when it was annexed by the City of Muncie. General Motors had opened a new factory in Muncie that year, and the city wanted to annex all surrounding suburbs in an attempt to deal with the expected rise in population the plant would bring. Annexation, naturally, would also increase the city's tax base [7]. Normal City, Whiteley, Industry, and other suburbs were annexed in March 1919. Riverside City, however, waged a three-month battle with the city, declaring itself a solvent and healthy town. It did not want to be absorbed by the debt-ridden, higher-taxing city. In the end, however, the courts declared Muncie's annexation to be valid, and in June of 1919 Riverside City ceased to exist [8].

Following the annexation, the majority of the homes at the southern end of Meeks Avenue were built, and empty lots in the older (northern) section of the district were filled in with new homes. The Bungalow and Craftsman styles remained the preferred style. The neighborhood continued as a mix of middle and working class families including salesmen, teachers, draftsmen, engineers, and electricians. The southernmost lots were purchased by the city in July, 1923, and became part of the new levee system.

Meeks Avenue is a typical early 20th-century suburban development. Muncie, like many industrial cities across America, was faced with unprecedented growth and expansion in the years following the Civil War. Foreign and native-born Americans flocked to the cities to take advantage of this growth. With their arrival, more affluent residents began to move to the suburbs. At first the suburbs were exclusively wealthy; as time progressed, more developments were within reach of the average man. Meeks Avenue represents this trend. It consisted of small houses, and was located at the southeast edge of Riverside City. It was the closest neighborhood to the city center, and perhaps the only one from which a man could walk to work in a reasonable amount of time. It, therefore, represented a compromise between the "country living" of the suburbs and the conveniences of the city. The small, city-like house lots, complete with alleys, represents a transition from city planning to the wide-open "garden suburbs" that became popular later in the century.

The majority of the homes in the Meeks Avenue Historic District are either Bungalows or Craftsman-style homes. The Bungalow style has its earliest origins in the Bengal region of India. During British rule in India, the style was developed for use in Great Britain. It quickly moved to America and became one of the most popular residential building styles. Along with the Colonial Revival style, it dominated house construction from 1900 to 1930. Because of its small scale, it was especially popular for small, working-class housing and tied-in nicely with the Craftsman Movement, which was being advocated during the same period by well-know authors like Gustave Stickley. Stickley and others believed that homes should bear the marks of their builders, and that the basic elements of construction should be seen, rather than covered over. Many small Bungalows were built with roof brackets, decorative woodwork which imitated functional frame members, an abundance of natural materials and hand-crafted workmanship, and organic styling. These features can be found in houses located at 209 and 221 Meeks Avenue, as well as, but to a lesser extent, the other Bungalow houses in the district. The Craftsman-style homes in the district are characterized by small, simple front porches, often with decorative columns, and simple roof brackets, also utilizing natural materials. The varied facades and porches demonstrate the range of stylistic options available within these two styles.

The district has retained much of its architectural integrity. The street looks very much as it did in the late 1920s, when the levee was finished and nearly all of the houses had been built. The homes at the south end of the district are among the best examples of the Bungalow Style in Muncie. Throughout the district, exterior materials (stucco, wood, and brick) have largely been retained. Even homes which have been altered by the addition of metal or vinyl siding retain such features as knee braces, front porches, and squared-bay windows. These details contribute to the district's historic character. The open front porches and backyard garages (driveways came later) refer to an earlier time.

Meeks Avenue has very well-defined boundaries. Open spaces border the neighborhood on its east and west sides. The White River forms the southern border, and the eastern fringes of Riverside form the northern edge. The unique layout of Meeks Avenue (running northwest on a compass-oriented grid system) and the stylistic similarities among the houses help to contribute to its distinctiveness.

Meeks Avenue deserves recognition for its unusual collection of architecturally-significant homes. Several excellent examples of early 20th century architecture have survived intact to the present day. The neighborhood is a distinct unit which represents the growth of middle and working class suburban housing in Muncie. With relatively few inappropriate additions and no demolitions, no other part of the former Riverside City can claim the same degree of architectural heritage and integrity. For these reasons, Meeks Avenue deserves the protection and honor of listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

NOTES:

1. Hoover, Magic Middletown, p. 2.
2. "Now 'Riverside City,' Incorporation Wins," Muncie Morning Star, 19 May 1903, p. 3.
3. "Businessman Tom Blease Dies," Muncie Morning Star, 10 March 1989, p. 22.
4. "Sediment is Left in Houses," Muncie Morning Star, 27 March 1913, p. 6.
5. "Tom Blease's Memories," Muncie Morning Star, 7 April 1986, p. 1.
6. "Businessman Tom Blease Dies," Muncie Morning Star, 10 March 1989, p. 22.
7. "General Motors Concern Buys Inter-State Plant," Muncie Morning Star, 3 February 1919, p. 3.

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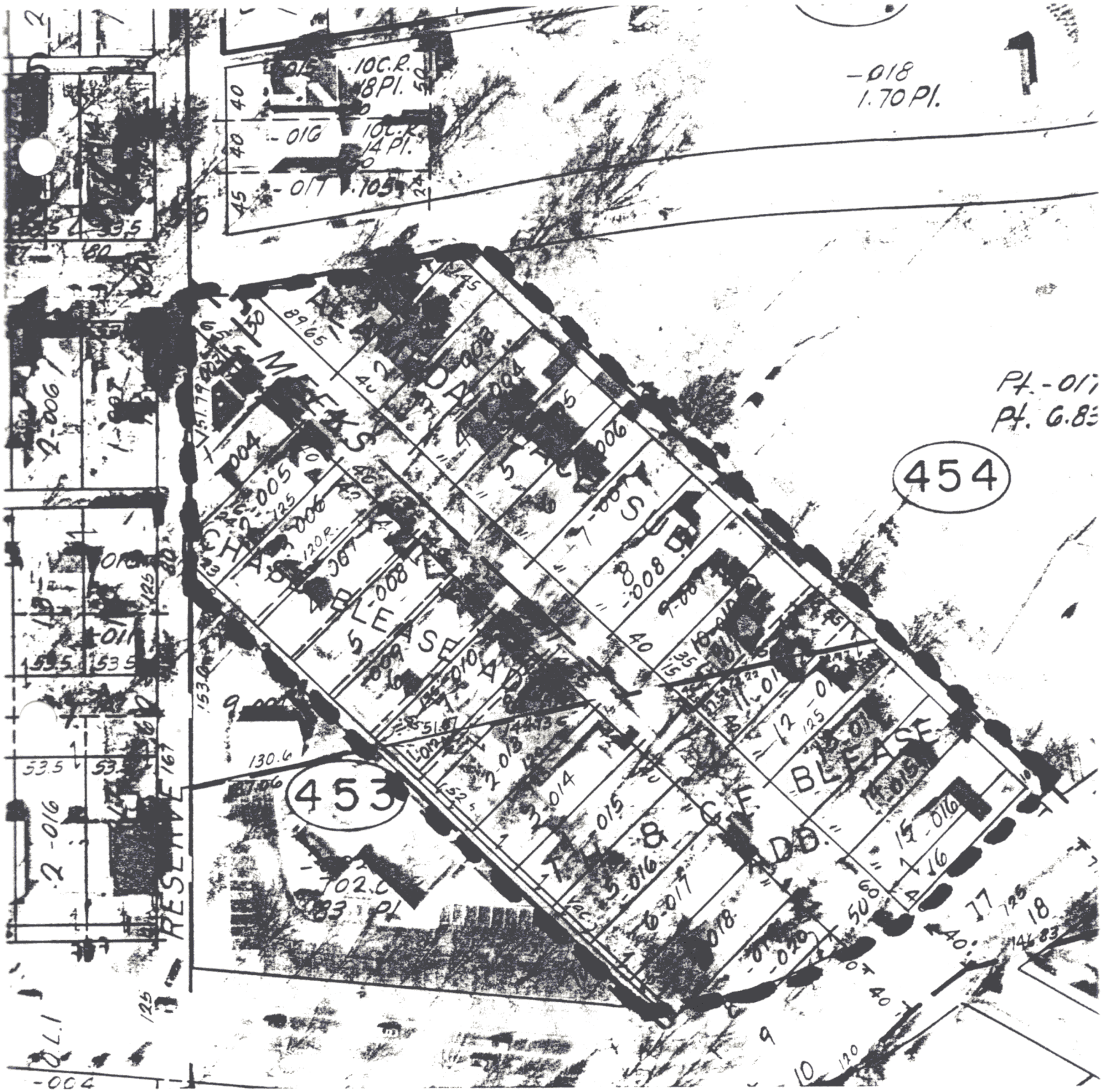
The following information is common to all photographs:

1) ..., Meeks Avenue Historic District
2) Muncie, Delaware County, Indiana
3) Joseph P. Saldibar III
4) April 1997
5) Muncie Community Development, 300 North High Street, Muncie, Indiana 47305

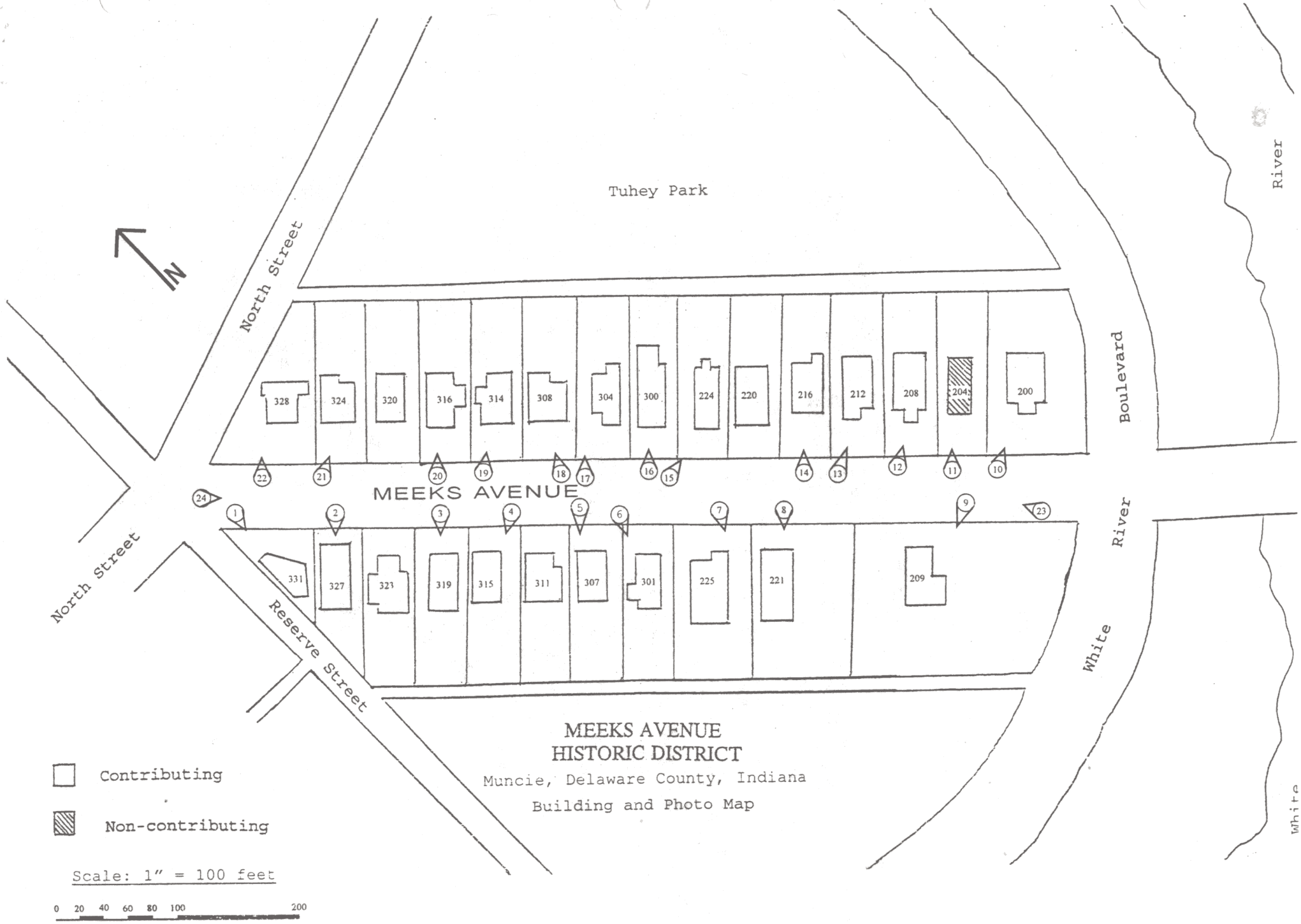
Items 1, 6, and 7 vary as described below, starting with the photo number:

#1 331 Meeks Avenue, northeast elevation, looking southwest
#2 327 Meeks Avenue, northeast elevation, looking southwest
#3 319 Meeks Avenue, northeast elevation, looking southwest
#4 315 Meeks Avenue, northeast elevation, looking southwest
#5 307 Meeks Avenue, northeast elevation, looking southwest
#6 301 Meeks Avenue, northeast elevation, looking southwest
#7 225 Meeks Avenue, northeast elevation, looking southwest
#8 221 Meeks Avenue, northeast elevation, looking southwest
#9 209 Meeks Avenue, northeast elevation, looking southwest
#10 200 Meeks Avenue, southwest elevation, looking northeast
#11 204 Meeks Avenue, southwest elevation, looking northeast
#12 208 Meeks Avenue, southwest elevation, looking northeast
#13 212 Meeks Avenue, southwest elevation, looking northeast
#14 216 Meeks Avenue, southwest elevation, looking northeast
#15 224 and 220 Meeks Avenue, southwest and northwest elevations, looking east
#16 300 Meeks Avenue, southwest elevation, looking northeast
#17 304 Meeks Avenue, southwest elevation, looking northeast
#18 308 Meeks Avenue, southwest elevation, looking northeast
#19 314 Meeks Avenue, southwest elevation, looking northeast
#20 316 Meeks Avenue, southwest elevation, looking northeast
#21 324 Meeks Avenue, southwest elevation, looking northeast
#22 328 Meeks Avenue, southwest elevation, looking northeast
#23 Meeks Avenue, northeast side, looking north
#24 Meeks Avenue, looking southeast



AERIAL MAP OF MEEKS AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT (1997)
Muncie, Delaware County, Indiana
Scale: 1" = 100'
Boundary: - - - - - -

N



MEEKS AVENUE
HISTORIC DISTRICT
Muncie, Delaware County, Indiana
Building and Photo Map