

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any 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.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Oxford Town Square Historic District

Other names/site number: Oxford Commercial Historic District

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: Roughly bounded by the alley north of Smith Street, the alley east of Howard Street, Benton Street to the south, and the alley west of Justus Street.

City or town: Oxford State: IN County: Benton

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

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 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Applicable National Register Criteria:

A B C D

<p>Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>Indiana DNR-Division of Historic Preservation and Archaeology</u> State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	<p>Date</p>
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Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official: **Date**

Title : **State or Federal agency/bureau
or Tribal Government**

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- ___ entered in the National Register
- ___ determined eligible for the National Register
- ___ determined not eligible for the National Register
- ___ removed from the National Register
- ___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>21</u>	<u>7</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>	<u>0</u>	sites
<u>4</u>	<u>1</u>	structures
<u>0</u>	<u>1</u>	objects
<u>26</u>	<u>9</u>	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: financial institution

COMMERCE/TRADE: department store

COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant

GOVERNMENT: courthouse

EDUCATION: library

GOVERNMENT: post office

RELIGION: religious facility

SOCIAL: meeting hall

DOMESTIC: hotel

LANDSCAPE: park

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: financial institution

COMMERCE/TRADE: department store

COMMERCE/TRADE: restaurant

EDUCATION: library

GOVERNMENT: post office

RELIGION: religious facility

SOCIAL: meeting hall

LANDSCAPE: park

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

LATE VICTORIAN: Gothic

LATE VICTORIAN: Romanesque

LATE 19TH AND 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS: Classical Revival

MODERN MOVEMENT: Moderne

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: STONE

walls: BRICK

METAL

roof: ASPHALT

other: STONE: Limestone

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Oxford Town Square Historic District is the historic commercial district of Oxford in Benton County that is organized around a historic town square, rectangular in shape, surrounded by historic brick streets on all four sides. There are approximately twenty buildings fronting the square. The buildings are brick, two-story examples of Italianate, Romanesque, and Neoclassical architecture. Notable buildings include the historic library in the northeast corner, the Methodist Church & Parsonage, the United States Post Office, and the former Presbyterian Church, listed on the National Register.

Narrative Description

The Oxford Town Square Historic District is a small, mostly commercial district that has a rectangular public square at its center with late 19th and early 20th century commercial buildings on the perimeter, fronting brick streets that surround the square. The public square functions as a town park with a modern gazebo (seen in photo 01), a memorial and flag, benches, and sidewalks. Mature trees, shrubs, and a lawn are features of the park which was originally platted as the courthouse square for Benton County.

The brick streets create a harmonizing, unifying quality to the district's central core and are considered four contributing structures (Smith, McConnell, Justus, and Howard, see photos 09, 19). They form the perimeter of the square which is a modified version of the Harrisonburg Square if taken into consideration its original purpose as a courthouse square. While the Harrisonburg Square is typically square and features streets that intersect the blocks surrounding the square, the Oxford Town Square is rectangular with longer north and south sides, with alleys intersecting the longer blocks on Smith and McConnell Streets. The square has concrete sidewalks and parking around the perimeter.

The district has suffered some loss of commercial buildings around the square, specifically on the north side where two vacant lots are located (photo 14) and on the southwest corner where a vacant lot is located (photo 16). Gas stations were built on two other corners in the mid-20th century and have, over time, become part of the historic commercial fabric that unifies the district (photos 06, 11). The district extends south one block on both Justus and Howard Streets to include two grand brick churches (photos 02, 07) and the town post office (1961, photo 03). These streets are paved with asphalt south of the square. The district also includes the Oxford

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

Public Library (1916, photo 12) on the northeast corner of the square. A modern building on the east side of the square, though non-contributing, maintains the visual character of buildings fronting the square. An adjacent building on the south corner of the east block, constructed in 1967, is considered contributing (photo 05).

A complete list of resources follows:

Public Square

Oxford Town Square, 1843/1874. Contributing (site) Photo 01
Sesquicentennial Gazebo, 1993. Non-contributing (structure) Seen in photo 01.
VFW Soldiers Memorial, 1969. Non-contributing (object)
Brick streets around the square, c. 1925. Contributing (four structures)

The Oxford Town Square, or park, is a rectangular lot in the center of the district with concrete curbs, sidewalks, seating, and several large, mature shade trees. Created as part of the Harrisonburg Square type plan in 1843, the square hosted the Benton County Courthouse until the seat was relocated to Fowler in 1874. Since that time, it has been a public park and features a Soldiers Memorial and a brick gazebo constructed in 1993 to honor the town's sesquicentennial. The square is bounded by four streets that are paved with brick and give the district a distinct character.

Howard Street, east side heading north.

215 S. Howard Street (south). Oxford Methodist Episcopal Church, 20th Century Gothic Revival, 1924. Contributing
Right side of photo 02

The two-story building has a raised basement with walls composed of brown-colored brick. The basement is capped with a stone beltcourse and the building has variations of 1/1 stained art glass windows with stone sills. The building is arranged with gabled parapets and an entry tower on its southwest corner, facing west. The front façade features a projecting entry with pediment, capped in stone, in the raised first story of the tower. The entry is composed of a pair of modern wood doors with full windows and an art glass transom with the words METHODIST EPISCOPAL CHURCH. The transom has a segmental-arched hood with keystone. A pair of art glass windows are in the second story of the tower and features a stone sill and lintel composed of soldier brick with corner blocks. The belfry is trimmed at the top and bottom by a stone belt course and features two pilasters that rise from the bottom beltcourse, flanking a recessed center bay. The pilasters have recessed panels on the belfry level and in the parapet in which they form crenellations. The center bay features two Gothic-arched louvers with brick arches with keystone. A panel of brick rises in the middle of the parapet over the bay and also has a recessed

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

panel. This forms the middle portion of the crenellated parapet. A cornerstone is located in the west wall of the tower, just south of the entrance.

The facade north of the tower features a tall gabled parapet capped with stone. There is a group of three 1/1 art glass windows with a stone sill centered with the parapet on the first story. A 1/1 art glass window is north of the group of windows in the north end of the first story. The first story windows have a stone sill and a lintel composed of soldier brick and corner blocks. The second story features a wide window with Gothic arch centered with the gabled parapet. The window is divided into four Gothic arched sections by wood tracery. The large window has a stone sill and broad brick Gothic arch with keystone. A smaller Gothic arched 1/1 art glass window with stone sill is north of the large window in the north end of the façade. It features a brick Gothic arch with keystone. Simple stone pinnacles surmount the pediment over the entry and the gabled parapet.

The south façade of the corner tower features two single-pane windows with lintels composed of soldier brick with stone corner blocks. The middle section of the tower features two pairs of stacked art glass windows, the upper pair being slightly shorter. Each pair features a stone sill and lintel composed of soldier brick and stone corner blocks. Like the west façade of the tower, the belfry on the south façade is trimmed at the top and bottom by a stone belt course and features two pilasters that rise from the bottom beltcourse, flanking a recessed center bay. The pilasters have recessed panels on the belfry level and in the parapet in which they form crenellations. The center bay features two Gothic-arched louvers with brick arches with keystone. A panel of brick rises in the middle of the parapet over the bay and also has a recessed panel. This forms the middle portion of the crenellated parapet. The center bay of the south façade is divided into four sections by stone capped brick pilasters. Each section features two 1/1 windows in the basement level and a wide Gothic arch art glass window divided into three Gothic arched sections by wood tracery. Each window has a stone sill and broad brick Gothic arch with keystone. The east end of the south façade features a pair of 1/1 windows in the basement level and two pairs of stacked art glass windows, the upper pair being slightly shorter. Each pair features a stone sill and lintel composed of soldier brick and stone corner blocks. The top of the wall rises to a gabled parapet capped by stone.

215 S. Howard Street (north). Oxford Methodist Episcopal Parsonage/Friendship House, 1902.
Contributing

Left side of photo 02

Garage, c. 1930. Contributing

The two-story double-pile house has a dark, rusticated brick base and orange brick walls. The house features replacement 1/1 vinyl windows with rusticated stone sills and lintels. A trim board is at the top of the second story walls and the hipped roof is covered with asphalt shingles. The house has a porch, c. 1920, with molded concrete foundation and wood posts that support a low-pitched hipped roof. The front façade features a modern storm door and transom covered by wood. Wide wood windows with transoms flank the entry centered in the back wall of the porch. The second story has a small window centered in the wall. It is flanked by 1/1 windows. The side

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

elevations each contain two replacement 1/1 vinyl windows with rusticated stone sills and lintels on the first and second stories.

209 S. Howard Street. United States Post Office, Neo-Colonial Revival, 1961. Contributing
Photo 03

The one-story, brick, gable-front building has fluted posts on its front façade, wood clapboards in the gable, and an incised porch with ramp in its south half. The ramp leads to a wood door that faces south. The door has a window in its top half divided into multiple panes. The door has a wood side-lite on its west side and a wide wood transom; both the transom and side-lite are divided into multiple panes. Two 6/6 wood windows are in the back wall of the porch. The south façade contains two pairs of 6/6 double-hung replacement windows. The north façade is devoid of fenestration.

201 S. Howard Street (south). Fellure Grocery, c. 1955/75. Non-contributing
Second from left side of photo 04

The one-story building has wood planks covering its walls and a mansard style canopy on its façade. The modern materials render the building non-contributing.

201 S. Howard Street (north). Hotel Oxford/Farmcraft Building, c. 1910. Contributing
Main building featured in photo 04, left side

The two-story, corner building has brick walls laid in Flemish bond. The building's doorways and windows have stone sills and segmental arches composed of two header courses. The first story doorways and windows are covered with wood, including the large storefront that wraps the building's cutaway corner and extends south along Howard Street. The second story features rows of 1/1 modern vinyl windows in the historic segmental-arched openings. The cutaway corner features a wide single sash window. The brick cornice is composed of rows of corbels.

105 S. Howard Street. Office Building, 1994. Non-contributing
Left side of photo 05

The one-story modern brick building features metal doors and windows and a hipped roof covered with asphalt shingles.

Howard Street, west side heading north.

206 S. Howard Street. Livery-Garage, c. 1910/1950. Contributing
Left of middle in photo 06

The one-story brick building has stepped parapets along its north and south walls and a parapet capped with stone on its front façade. The front façade features two garage doors. The center door is taller and fills a full-round arched former opening (visible above the door). A steel door is recessed into the wall north of the center door. While the doors are not historic, the changes to the historic livery building were made c. 1950 to convert it to a garage.

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

202 S. Howard Street. Cuppy Building/Gas Station/Pizza King, c. 1950/1975. Non-contributing
Middle of photo 06

The building served as a gas station and has a wide, cutaway corner that faces the intersection. The walls are covered with wood and the building has a false mansard roof covered with asphalt shingles. The modern materials added to the historic gas station building render it non-contributing.

Justus Street, west side heading north.

208 S. Justus Street. Oxford Presbyterian Church, Romanesque Revival, 1902. Contributing
National Register of Historic Places.

W. F. Sharpe, architect

Photo 07, left side of photo 16

The tall, one-story building has a raised basement composed of dark colored, rusticated brick capped with a smooth limestone beltcourse. The building has orange colored brick walls with rusticated limestone trim above the basement. The building is composed of a large central cube (sanctuary) with a tall, hipped roof and central gables facing south and east. A three-story, projecting tower is located on the southeast corner with entries to the south and east. An ell with transverse gable (facing east) extends north from the central cube and features a brick portico. The roof is covered with asphalt shingles.

The tower features rounded corners on its basement and first story; these rounded corners become round pilasters in the second story and belfry and extend above the eave and are capped with stone dome like blocks. The south and east facades of the tower are identical, and a rounded cornerstone is in the southeast corner of the first story. The entries feature stone surrounds composed of columns that carry a full-round arch composed of rusticated stone keys. The entries are each composed of a pair of wood doors and full-round arched transom divided into circular art glass windows by wood tracery. The first story is capped by a beltcourse of stone. The second story features large roundels enframed with rusticated stone. The roundels are divided into multiple panes by wood mullions. The belfry features a large, full-round arched louver with rusticated sill course extending between the corner pilasters and an arch composed of rusticated stone keys. The belfry is capped by rusticated stone which creates a beltcourse around the corner pilasters. The tower is capped with a pyramidal roof covered with slates which is surmounted by a metal ball finial.

The south and east facades of the central cube are nearly identical and feature rows of square windows with stone lintels in the basement and three large, full-round arched windows composed of art glass in the first story. The middle window is taller and wider than the flanking windows. The windows feature rusticated sills and arches composed of rusticated stone keys. Each window is further divided into narrow full round arched art glass sashes with roundel centered at the top by wood tracery. A row of five small, full round arched attic louvers are near the top of the central gables. They have a rusticated stone sill, and each has an arch composed of rusticated stone keys. The top of the gables features patterned, rusticated stonework.

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

The ell and transverse gabled section feature a raised portico with full round arched opening facing east. The opening has a broad arch composed of rusticated stone keys; the arch rests on short, grouped stone columns. A stone molding resembling a cornice with egg-and-dart trim

creates a band around the portico at the bottom of the arch. The front-gabled section of the ell has a large full round arched window composed of art glass. It features a rusticated stone sill and arch composed of stone keys. It is divided into two sections of full round sashes with roundel centered above. An entry near grade with a portico is on the north side of the gabled section and features a full round arched transom over wide wood doors. The portico has a gabled roof supported by corner columns set on piers of molded concrete.

110 S. Justus Street. Messner & Son Block, Romanesque Revival, 1896. Contributing
Second from right side of photo 09

The two-story brick building has a full-width, first story storefront composed of large wood display windows with transoms that flank a recessed entry. The display windows are set on a base composed of recessed panels and the entry features the name Messner & Son in mosaic tiles in the floor. The entry is composed of a pair of wood doors with full windows and transoms. The storefront is flanked by wood pilasters and topped by an entablature. The second story is divided into three bays by brick pilasters supported by corbels at the bottom. The middle bay features two wood windows with transoms. The flanking bays feature a wide wood window with transom divided into three panes. The windows are set on a rusticated stone sill course and feature a tall beltcourse of rusticated stone that forms lintels and the top of the second story. Rising above the beltcourse are two large full round blind arches of brick with tall, rusticated stone key. The brick panels in the arch feature a carved date stone in the south bay and Masonic fraternal lodge stone in the north bay. The middle bay features a large, round panel of brick deeply recessed with a stepped brick surround and rusticated stone keys. The bays are topped by a pressed metal cornice; the flanking bays are taller than the middle bay.

The south façade contains three short full-round arch window openings with header brick arches and rusticated stone sills on the first floor. The second floor features flat arch window openings with rusticated stone sills at each end flanking four full-round arch windows with stone sills and header brick hoods. All the windows in this section of the building are bricked in or filled with plywood. The parapet steps down from east to west and is capped with rusticated stone. The rear section of the building is composed of red brick. The lower portion lacks fenestration. The middle portion features five short, full-round arch window openings with header brick arches and keystones. A rusticated stone beltcourse acts as a continuous sill. The upper portion features four short, full-round arch window openings with header brick arches and keystones. A fifth opening at the western end of the facade matches the full-round brick header arch with keystone and contains a wood plank door. A rusticated stone beltcourse serves as a continuous sill which is broken by the door at the western end. Another rusticated stone beltcourse rests on the keystones of the upper openings. All window openings in the section are filled with plywood. The top of the wall in this section features a pattern of three rows of recessed squares just below the parapet which is capped with stone.

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

108 S. Justus Street. Wilmoth Building, 1890. Contributing
Right side of photo 09, middle of photo 10

The two-story, brown-colored brick building features two storefronts composed of cast iron pilasters that flank wood storefront display windows with transoms. Panels of beaded boards are

below the display windows. The windows and panels are c. 2010 installations. The second story has an asymmetrical arrangement with four window openings in the north half and three window openings in the south half. The windows are covered with plywood and have stone sills and lintels. Brick piers, corbelled at the bottom, extend up into the parapet and divide the top of the building into three sections with the middle section off centered to the south. The sections feature rows of corbels; the middle section's row of corbels step up leaving a broad wall of brick below that features a date stone carved with 1890. The parapet is capped with tile coping.

100 S. Justus Street. State Bank of Oxford/Knights of Pythias Lodge Building, Neoclassical, 1904. Contributing

Right side of photo 10

The tall, two-story brick building features a first story storefront composed of five rusticated limestone pilasters that flank the entrance and wood display windows with transoms and support a stone entablature. The display windows, panels below, and transoms are modern, c. 2010 introductions. An entry composed of a pair of modern wood doors and full round arched transom is in the south end of the façade; the transom is covered with wood. A scroll bracket/key is centered in the stone arch above a modern awning. A full round arched entry was located in the north end of the façade but has been filled in with an ATM machine and wood above. A scroll bracket/key is centered in the stone arch. A stone portico fronts this entry and is composed of stone ionic columns on piers that support an entablature. The storefront is topped by a stone entablature with rows of dentils.

The second story is divided into three bays by brick pilasters with stone bases and Doric capitals. The middle bay is wider than the flanking bays and features two full round arched windows with stone sills and arched hoods with keystone. The windows are modern 1/1 replacements with a wood panel in the top. The flanking bays feature one window matching the middle bay's windows. A building stone for the Knights of Pythias fraternal lodge is centered in the top of the middle bay. A wood entablature with a tall frieze board, rows of dentils, and cornice supported by rows of brackets tops the second story. An enclosed pediment is centered over the cornice. The building has a wood balustrade of turned balusters between piers with recessed panels at the parapet.

The north façade rests on a foundation comprised of rusticated and smooth stone. The first floor contains window openings of various heights, all topped by rusticated stone lintels. Some windows have stone sills and others break the upper portion of the foundation. One window opening at the west end of the façade features a full round header brick arch with keystone. There are three door openings in the façade, two of which feature a full-round header brick arch with tall keystone. One contains a modern metal-framed glass door, and the other has been infilled with stone. The third entrance is reached by three concrete steps flanked by a low

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

concrete wall. The entrance features stone Ionic columns that support a stone entablature featuring a dentil design. The original opening has been partially infilled with stone and contains a modern metal-framed glass door. The second floor features flat and round arched window openings randomly spaced along the façade. A rusticated stone beltcourse serves as the sill for the window openings. The flat arch openings have rusticated stone lintels. The round arch openings have brick header arches with brick keystones. All openings feature replacement 1/1 windows in the lower half with a wood panel in the upper portion.

102 N. Justus Street. Garage, 1952. Contributing
Photo 11

The one-story concrete block building features stucco on its front (east) wall that wraps around to the east half of its south wall. A large, corner storefront display window divided into four panes wraps around the southeast corner. It has a concrete sill. A wood door with full window is north of the display window. A vertical band of stucco extends up from the door and a horizontal band of stucco extends south to the display window from the door and to the north end of the façade. It is interrupted by two large garage doors in service bays north of the entry door.

Smith Street, north side heading west.

201 E. Smith Street. Oxford Public Library, Neoclassical, 1916. Contributing
J. Alber Boonstra, architect; Thomas C. Johnson, builder.

Photo 12, right side of photo 13

The one-story, light-brown-colored brick building has a raised basement of brick in rustication, capped by a stone beltcourse, and recessed bays on the first story. The bays feature brick panels at the bottom and wood windows with transom covered by wood. A belt course composed of soldier brick tops the first story. The building has a stone cornice and hipped roof covered with asphalt shingles. A date stone is centered in the west façade. The front façade is symmetrically arranged with two bays of windows that flank a projecting brick portico with a raised entry. The portico has wide pilasters of brick with recessed panels that flank a recessed entry composed of modern glass doors and transom that front original wood doors and transom divided into multiple panes. The entry is flanked by stone Corinthian columns and topped by a course of soldier brick with keystone. The portico has a stone entablature with rows of dentils and an enclosed pediment with brick in the tympanum.

The rusticated brick raised basement capped by a stone beltcourse continues on the west façade. A projecting rectangular entry vestibule is centered in the basement level flanked by square single-pane replacement windows. The rustication continues on the vestibule which is topped by a shallow gabled parapet. The main level of the west façade features a recess panel on each side of the basement-level entrance. A rectangular opening that has been infilled with wood is located above each panel. A stone panel surrounded by header brick is positioned above the entrance between the recessed panels.

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

115 E. Smith Street. Commercial Bank Building, Italianate, c. 1888. Contributing
Left side of photo 13, right side of photo 14

The two-story brick corner building has a rusticated limestone foundation topped by a smooth stone water table. The building features a cutaway corner wall and a smooth stone belt course at the top of its first story. The first story features 1/1 wood windows with stone sills and the belt course acts as the lintel. The south wall has two small 1/1 windows that flank a large 1/1 window. The east wall features two short 1/1 windows and two taller 1/1 windows and two wood doors with transoms. The south door is wood with a window in the top half; its transom is covered with wood. The north door is modern but features a historic wood transom. The cutaway wall features a raised entry composed of a wide wood door with full window flanked by sidelites composed of glass block. The entry door's transom is covered with wood.

The second story features three narrow 1/1 replacement windows with a stone sill and lintel on the south façade and three 1/1 segmental-arched replacement windows on the east façade. A wide segmental-arched opening with two narrow replacement windows is in the cutaway corner wall. The segmental-arched windows have stone sills and brick hoods. The building features a tall brick cornice with short pilasters set on corbels that flank the south wall and cutaway corner wall. The cornice steps down along the east wall and features rows of brick dentils and recessed panels of brick. The pilasters also feature narrow recessed panels of brick.

109 E. Smith Street. Commercial Building, Italianate, c. 1891. Contributing
Second from right side of photo 14

The two-story brick building has a historic cast iron storefront composed of narrow pilasters and modern infill of wood and replacement windows. The entry is recessed with cutaway corners. The storefront is flanked by brick pilasters. The second story has three 1/1 replacement windows with the former openings above the windows covered with metal. The windows have a stone sill course and stone lintel. The building's brick cornice features rows of brick dentils and a recessed panel of brick. It is flanked by brick pilasters set on corbels that also feature recessed panels.

The east façade features a full-round arch opening in the south end of the first floor. It contains non-historic French doors topped by an in-filled transom area. The second floor contains three randomly-spaced rectangular openings that contain non-historic 6/6 sliding windows. The west façade includes a door covered by a shed awning at the north end of the first floor. The second floor features segmental arch door openings at the north and south ends. The southern opening is accessed by a wooden staircase and landing. The north door is infilled with wood and not accessible. Three segmental arch window openings are located between the door openings and feature stone sills.

107 E. Smith Street. Masonic Temple, Neoclassical/Renaissance Revival, c. 1910. Contributing
Right side of photo 15

The two-story brick building features a first story composed mostly of modern brick infill in its storefront. The infill includes three segmental arched 1/1 windows that flank a historic stone entry portico. The elaborate portico features stylized Corinthian columns on piers fronting a stone surround for a wood entry door with full window and transom. The surround is topped by a

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

jack arch composed of keys and a stylized scroll bracket in the center. The portico is topped by an entablature with rows of dentils and an enclosed pediment. The entablature is carried across the top of the storefronts on the outside corners by historic brick pilasters with stone bases and capitals. The entablature's frieze is carved in a scroll pattern. The historic brick pilasters and second story are composed of auburn colored brick.

The second story features two recessed bays with a row of three 1/1 wood windows with segmental arched transoms. The bays have stone sills and carved blocks from which the arches spring. The arches feature carved stone keys. Panels of patterned brickwork are located at the top of the bays between the arches. A large stone carved with masonic symbols is centered in the second story. The second story is topped by a large metal cornice composed of a brick frieze and metal scroll brackets and corbels that carry the cornice. The brick parapet features rows of recessed panels and is flanked by corner piers, capped with stone. A building stone is centered in the parapet and is carved with the words MASONIC TEMPLE.

The east façade includes segmental arch window openings that have been infilled with brick at the basement level. The first floor features a tall segmental arch opening at the south end. The lower portion has been infilled with brick and is topped by a pair of 1/1 replacement windows with a stone sill. The upper portion of the opening has been filled with wood. Three square window openings with segmental arches and stone sills are located in the center of the first floor followed by a door opening in the east end. The second floor features five segmental arch window openings with stone sills. Four of the openings contain 1/1 wood windows and one opening is filled with wood. A lower section at the rear of the building contains a segmental arch doorway in the first floor and two square window openings with stone sills in the second floor.

105 E. Smith Street. Buckeye Block, c. 1900/1950. Non-contributing
Left side of photo 15

The three-story brick building features a modern storefront covered with vinyl siding and metal windows and a wood door. The storefront is topped by a shed roof canopy with asphalt shingles. A panel of brick, enframed with tan-colored brick, is above the canopy (and partially covered by the canopy at the bottom). The building has two pairs of 1/1 metal windows in its second and third story. The parapet is covered with modern metal panels.

McConnell Street, north side heading west.

201 E. McConnell Street. Tullis Building, 1967. Contributing
Right side of photo 05

The long, narrow, brown-colored brick corner building is one-story and features a gabled roof covered with asphalt shingles. It has a row of large wood windows with stone sills and a wood entry door on its south façade. The west façade features two large wood windows with stone sills and a wide-overhanging eave return from the south façade. The gables are covered with wood.

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

McConnell Street, south side heading west.

126-130 E. McConnell Street. William Scott Building, c. 1879. Non-contributing
Left side of photo 20

The two-story brick building is divided into two sections, both with modern storefronts of brick (east section) and stucco (west section). The second story features two 1/1 replacement windows

with stone sills and the upper part of the original opening covered with wood. A tall opening, also covered with wood, is between the sections. The west section is covered with stucco and features three 1/1 replacement windows. The east section's brick parapet features a row of four recessed panels. The west section's parapet is covered with stucco.

124 E. McConnell Street. Commercial Building, c. 1890/2000. Non-contributing
Middle of photo 20

The one-story brick building's façade is covered with modern stucco and has modern storefront windows and door which render it non-contributing.

122 E. McConnell Street. Commercial Building, c. 1910. Contributing
Right side of photo 20

The one-story brick building features a parapet that steps down along the west alley wall. The front façade is composed of red-colored rusticated brick and is topped by a stone parapet cap. The façade features a wide display window opening with stone sill that has been filled in with vinyl siding and two small replacement windows. A modern steel entry door is west of the display window and features a wood transom.

114-118 E. McConnell Street. Scott Building, Italianate, c. 1890. Contributing
Left side of photo 18

The two-story brick building is divided into two equal sections, each with storefronts covered with modern wood and display windows. The storefronts seem to follow a historic design divided by pilasters and a stairway door at the east end. The second story features three 1/1 replacement windows with stone sills and segmental arches in each section. A projecting belt course composed of two courses of brick extends across the second story at the base of the window arches. Pilasters set on corbels divide the second story into two sections. The pilasters have recessed panels and extend up above the parapet. Rows of brick dentils are between the pilasters and just below the brick cornice which features rows of corbels.

110 E. McConnell Street. Ross Building, Italianate, c. 1881. Contributing
Right side of photo 18

The two-story brick building has a storefront that is covered with modern wood but features a center entry that is flanked by historic, cast-iron rope columns. A modern stairway door with wood transom is at the west end of the façade. The second story features three 6/6 replacement windows with stone sills and pressed metal hoods. The upper part of the window is covered with wood. The building features a pressed metal cornice with a row of brackets flanked by larger end brackets.

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

106 E. McConnell Street. Zeis Building, Italianate, c. 1872. Contributing
Second from right in photo 17, a portion is seen on the right side of photo 18
The two-story brick building features a historic wood storefront with two wide display windows that flank a recessed entry. Iron pipe columns are on the corners of the recessed entry which features a wood door with full window and transom. The transom area of the storefront is partially covered with wood. The second story features two segmental-arched windows with stone sills. The windows are modern 1/1 replacements. The cornice is composed of rows of brick corbels.

102 E. McConnell Street. Sargent Building, Art Moderne, c. 1950. Contributing
Right side of photo 17
The two-story, tan-colored brick building features two storefronts with deeply recessed modern entry doors near the center of the façade. Each storefront has a display window with brick sill that has been replaced by a modern three-sided projecting bay window with hipped roof. A wide band of red-colored brick enframes the first story façade/storefront area. The second story features two 1/1 replacement windows with red-colored brick sills. The parapet is capped with tile coping. A band of metal creating a sign board wraps around the front façade to the west façade across the top of the storefront in the wide band of brick.

A large rectangular opening is located on the north end of the first floor of the west façade. It has been partially infilled with brick and contains two pairs of single-pane square windows. A door is located in the south end of the façade. The second floor features three 1/1 replacement windows.

106 W. McConnell Street. Doctor Bloom's Office, c. 1890. Contributing
Right side of photo 16
Garage (at rear of property), c. 1990. Non-contributing
The one-story brick building was attached to a two-story corner building which was razed and thus, has a tall east wall. The front façade features three steps to a raised wood entry door in its east half and a large wood window in its west half. The door and window have rusticated stone sills and lintels. The brick cornice appears to have been reconstructed and is composed of rows of dentils.

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, 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 contribution 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.)

- 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

c. 1872-1967

Significant Dates

1874

c. 1925

Significant Person (last name, first name)

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder (last name, first name)

Boonstra, J.

Sharpe, W. F.

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance begins c. 1872, when the earliest building, the Zeis Building, was constructed in the district on the south side of the square. While the square was platted in 1843 as the courthouse square for Benton County, the county seat was relocated to Fowler in 1874, which marks a pivotal year that would permanently affect the character of the district. Another important event occurred c. 1925 when the streets surrounding the public square were paved, which has provided a distinguishing character to the district over the last century. The last contributing resource is the Tullis Building at 201 E. McConnell Street, built in 1967. That year closes the period of significance.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

N/A

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Oxford Town Square Historic District is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places using criterion C/architecture for the community's exceptional commercial examples of Neoclassical, Italianate, and Romanesque design. The district also features three public buildings, the library and two churches, built in Neoclassical, Romanesque, and Gothic Revival styles. Toward the end of the period of significance, the Oxford Post Office was constructed in 1961 in a standardized design popular during the Kennedy administration. Several buildings are very good examples of their styles, well-executed, with exceptional features.

The district also qualifies under criterion A/commerce. Not only was the district an important commercial center for the region, but it was also established around a town square due to Oxford's original designation as the Benton County seat of government. This organizing feature for a commercial district is unusual in Indiana for a community that does not host a courthouse. Furthering the town's unusual town square character are the brick-paved streets completed during the early 20th century that surround the square. This provides an important historic quality to the perimeter of the square and setting for its buildings and the square itself which has functioned as a public space since 1874.

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

ARCHITECTURE

The Oxford Town Square Historic District is composed of some of the town's finest examples of architectural styles, nearly all brick construction, from the second half of the 19th century and early decades of the 20th century. Examples of the Italianate, Romanesque, and Neoclassical styles dominate the area around the public square. Public buildings are also represented by these styles such as the Presbyterian Church (1902, photo 07) built in the Romanesque Revival style, Oxford Public Library (1916, photo 12) built in the Neoclassical style, and Methodist Episcopal Church (1924, photo 02) built in the district's only example of the Gothic Revival style. The large commercial buildings relate to each other in scale and design, providing a cohesive backdrop to the square. These include three fraternal lodge buildings, two on the west side and one on the north side of the square (photos 10, 15). These are built in the Romanesque and Neoclassical styles. Masonry details of these buildings are also seen in some of the late 19th century and early 20th century vernacular and Italianate buildings that front the square, likely indicating one or two builders working over the course of one or two decades.

Italianate Style

The district's earliest buildings are examples of the Italianate style. The style was popular between 1850 and 1890, particularly in Midwestern towns where the expansion of railroads brought wealth to communities and created a building boom during the period. The style traces its roots to England as part of the Picturesque Movement; the movement rejected formal classical ideas of art and architecture that were popular for 200 years. The Picturesque Movement emphasized rambling informal Italian farmhouses, but as the style entered the United States it was often modified and embellished into a truly Americanized style. The first Italianate house was constructed in the United States in the late 1830s. The style was popularized by house pattern books by Andrew Jackson Downing during the middle part of the 1800s, but its popularity began to wane as it was replaced by the Queen Anne Style in the last decades of the 19th century. Its impact in commercial districts is typically seen in window configurations, arches, hoods or crowns, and cornices.

There are five examples of the Italianate style in the district, from the earliest extant building, constructed c. 1872 at 106 E. McConnell Street (second from right in photo 17) to the last building constructed in the style c. 1891 at 109 E. Smith Street (second from right side of photo 14). All the examples are brick and typically feature arched windows and brick cornices composed of corbels and recessed panels. The earliest example is most restrained in its features but includes full-round arched second story windows. The example at 110 E. McConnell Street (c. 1881, right side of photo 18) features pressed metal second story window hoods and cornice, and cast-iron columns in the storefront. The former bank building on the northwest corner of Smith and Howard Streets (c. 1888, right side of photo 14) shows transition in styles in its details

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

away from Italianate to Romanesque in its south storefront façade, and Neoclassical in its brick cornice.

Romanesque Revival Style

Two significant examples of the Romanesque Revival style are in the district. The style was made popular by architect Henry H. Richardson, particularly on public buildings located along the east coast. Buildings in this style often have large, rusticated stone blocks or belt courses for wall construction. Wide arched windows and towers or turrets were also frequently used.

The Messner & Son Block, located at 110 S. Justus Street (right side of photo 09) shows the adaptation of the Romanesque Revival style to a commercial building. The building, constructed as a commercial storefront and fraternal lodge in 1896, is symmetrically arranged with two large full-round arched bays in the second story that flank a middle bay with a large round recessed panel of brick. The arches and round panel feature long, narrow stone keys. Belt courses of rusticated stone divide the façade horizontally into the first and second stories. The former Presbyterian Church located at 208 S. Justus Street (photo 07) was built in the style in 1902 with impressive features including a corner tower with rounded columns of brick, full-round arched windows trimmed with rusticated stone, and impressive stone entries with columns and full-round arches. The building's side entry, on Justus Street, features a porch with a wide, full-round arched opening. The arch rests on groups of short columns. Rows of small full-round arched attic vents are in the top of the gables. A nearly identical Presbyterian church, currently a Baptist church, is located at 2200 North Park Avenue in Indianapolis.

Neoclassical Style

A few significant examples of Neoclassical architecture are also in the district. The style emerged at the turn of the 20th century and continued into the 1930s in American cities. Several events and trends fed the movement toward Classicism. Planners of the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 embraced classicism for most of the fair's major buildings. The style coincided with America's political and economic rise, as well as the coming of age of American cities. By the late 1910s and into the 1920s, as a robust American economy permitted, the style was being executed with greater attention to classical styling.

The district's three significant examples of Neoclassical architecture are two large commercial/fraternal lodge buildings and the town's public library. The State Bank of Oxford built a substantial building in 1904 at 100 S. Justus Street (right side of photo 10). The building included a Knights of Pythias lodge on the second story. The building has a front façade with a rusticated stone first story and brick second story, divided by pilasters. The entries and second story windows feature full-round stone arches with keys or scroll-like keys, and the building is topped by a tall entablature with rows of dentils and a center pediment. The construction of the Knights of Pythias Lodge may have influenced the construction of the Masonic Temple at 107 E. Smith Street c. 1910 (right side of photo 15). The building has a nicely detailed stone entablature at the top of its storefront and an impressive portico with pediment centered on its first story. The

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

building is topped with a large metal cornice with brackets and brick parapet wall with recessed panels. The building hints at the then-popular Renaissance Revival style with its stylized portico columns and rows of segmental-arched windows in the second story in recessed bays of patterned brickwork. The town also turned to the Neoclassical style when it constructed its Carnegie Library in 1916 on the northeast corner of the public square (photo 12). The building has a raised base of brick in rustication and a projecting portico centered on its front façade. The portico features an entry recessed between a pair of tall stone columns that support a stone pediment with brick typanum.

Gothic Revival Style

While just one example of Gothic Revival architecture exists in the district, in a 20th century interpretation, the Methodist church represents the importance the community continued to place on the design of its public buildings. The style was popularized by house pattern books like the Italianate style but gained its greatest popularity with religious architecture. This continued well into the 20th century in later versions of the style such as 20th century Gothic Revival. The Methodist Episcopal Church was built in 1924 on the northeast corner of Howard and Benton Streets (right side of photo 02). The brick building features a corner entry tower with a projecting vestibule topped with a pediment and crenelations atop its belfry, which features a pair of Gothic-arched louvers. The building has wide, Gothic-arched windows in each of its front-gabled sections, divided by wood tracery to form lancet windows composed of stained art glass. The building has gabled parapets capped with stone with stone pinnacles that surmount the gable.

Modern Movement

The remaining examples of architecture are from a late period of growth and reflect styles related to the modern development of architecture from the late 1930s into the early 1960s. These are significant because the buildings demonstrate a sustained vitality of commerce in the district. While none of these are considered high style modern design, like Art Moderne or Art Deco, they exhibit the simple, horizontal, stream-lined approach to commercial construction that began in the 1930s and continued into the 1960s.

Two buildings have features of the Art Moderne movement. These are located at 102 N. Justus Street and 102 E. McConnell Street. The building on Justus Street (photo 11) was built in 1952 as an automotive garage and has stucco walls with some vertical and horizontal banding extending up from the entry door and over the tops of garage and display window bays. The building on McConnell Street (right side of photo 17) was constructed c. 1950 and features dark-colored brick banding on the predominantly tan-colored brick building. A metal signboard wraps the corner building's street facades, typical of the style. The district's post office, built in 1961 in a form of Neo-Colonial architecture (photo 03), represents modern architecture in the federal government's interpretation of styles during the mid-20th century. The building has the simple composition of a low-pitched front gabled Ranch but features rows of fluted pilasters across the façade and 6/6 wood windows recessed into an incised porch.

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

COMMERCE

Town Founding & Early Commerce

The historic commercial endeavors at Oxford were inextricably tied to the origins of the town as the first-established village and county seat in Benton County. The county was formed from Jasper County in 1840 and Henry Ellsworth and David Atkinson donated land platted for the town of Oxford, originally named Milroy. The Indiana General Assembly established it as the county seat of Benton County and the name was changed to Hartford, then to Oxford, in 1843. The original plat included a public square, 252 feet running east/west and 120 feet running north/south. A two-story wood courthouse, designed and built by Francis Boynton, was built on the west end of the block north of the square and became the first building in the new town. The building was soon moved to the public square, then to the lot occupied by the Zeis building in 1855 after a new brick courthouse was constructed. The old building was then moved to a lot owned by James Conley and used as a saloon. The second building was constructed as a hotel by town founder Henry Ellsworth and was operated by James Hatton. The first dwelling, which fronted the square, was constructed by Aaron Wood who also ran a small shop of goods on a lot that became a jewelry store operated by John Carnahan.¹

While several lots were sold by the end of 1843, growth in the new town was slow and prompted the county commissioners to offer two lots to any person erecting a home valued at \$200 or more in 1847. Commercial buildings and residences followed. Aaron Wood's house doubled as a store with groceries, beer, and whisky sales. Earl & Carnahan opened the first dry goods store, and Barnes & Dailey opened the first drug store. Professionals and tradesmen included a blacksmith named Dailey, a lawyer named Jacob Benedict, a physician named Dr. Mayo, and a newspaper editor named Joseph Jackson who published the *Oxford Evening Mail*. The first bank was established in Oxford in 1873 by stockholders from Lafayette.² The town had grown enough to justify several small plat additions to Oxford beginning in 1852 through the early 1870s.

However, in 1874, the county seat was relocated to newly-platted Fowler which had a significant impact on the sale of lots and future commerce in Oxford. It also left the town with a square platted for public use. The square featured a two-story bandstand in the center in the early 1900s. The fire department used the enclosed first story of the bandstand as its hose house and department building into the early 1920s. The park now features a modern brick gazebo built in the style of early 1900s park pavilions and a small monument and flag donated by the Veterans of Foreign Wars in 1969. The removal of the county seat to Fowler was prompted by its more central location for the population of Benton County, but also by findings in 1873 that the second courthouse built at Oxford, a brick building constructed 1855-1856, was unsafe and should be replaced. G. P. Randall, an architect from Chicago, was hired to complete the study and consequently would design the new courthouse at Fowler. The building materials composing the old courthouse were ordered to be disassembled on the public square and offered for sale.³ These

¹ F. A. Battey & Co., Pg. 306

² F. A. Battey & Co., Pg. 307

³ F. A. Battey & Co., Pg. 244

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

materials likely found their way into buildings constructed around the square soon after the county seat relocation to Fowler. The former county jail was used by the town of Oxford as a holding cell for a period of time into the late 1800s.

Coming of the Railroad and Late 19th Century Period of Growth

While the town lost its designation as the county seat in 1874, commerce remained strong into the early 1880s which is demonstrated by the number of commercial establishments located in the town by 1883. No doubt, this was the result of wealth amassed in the community from commerce and trade afforded by construction of the Lake Erie & Western Railroad in 1872, which was later crossed by the Chicago & Indiana Coal Road in Oxford. The earliest building in the district dates to the year the railroad was constructed, the Zeis Building located at 106 East McConnell Street (second from right side of photo 17).

The Commercial Bank was established by the Dwiggins family in Oxford in 1879 and by 1883, the town had four grocery stores operated by Conrad Zeis, James Bryant, William Kelly, and Charles Green. There were dry goods stores operated by John Ripple, Smith & Messner (precursor to Messner & Sons, right side of photo 09), and Heth & Company. Conrad Zeis also operated a bakery from his building. In 1883, there was a boots and shoes store operated by Winfield Menefee, a furniture and undertaker shop operated by John Ross, two druggists named Dr. McConnell and William Scott, two butchers/meat markets owned by Jacob Albaugh and Smith & Ambler. James Conley's saloon operated from the original county courthouse and a second saloon was operated by Micahel Kelly. Oxford also had a few barbers, milliners, a carriage shop, grain dealers, and hardware and tin shops. A hotel named the Ohio House was operated by James Bell. Combined, by 1883, there were nearly sixty commercial establishments or professional offices located in Oxford.⁴ The town's population had grown from 318 in 1860 to 808 by 1890.

Several commercial buildings located on the north and south sides of the public square date to the late 19th century growth of Oxford. The former bank building and portion of the opera house block, located in the east half of the block north of the square, were built between about 1888 and 1891 (photo 14). These two buildings, which had the large two-story opera house between them, were used as a bank and telephone exchange office into the 1950s (under the name Benton Federal Savings & Loans, 115 E. Smith Street) and a boots and shoes store and later a pool room in 1905 and 1919, respectively (109 E. Smith Street). The 19th century buildings in the block south of the square included a drug store and restaurant located at 126/130 E. McConnell in 1905 (Wm. Scott Building, c. 1879, left side of photo 20). The same building would later have an automobile sales and jewelry store by 1919. The Scott Building at 114/118 E. McConnell was built c. 1890 (left side of photo 18) and had a meat market and restaurant by 1905 which operated into the early 1920s. The Ross Building was constructed c. 1881 at 110 E. McConnell (right side of photo 18) and had a jewelry store by 1905, then a drug store by 1919. The Zeis Building, previously mentioned as the oldest building in the district, was constructed c. 1872 at

⁴ F. A. Battey & Co., Pgs. 307-308

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

106 E. McConnell (second from right side of photo 17) and had a drug store in 1905, followed by a grocery store by 1919. The Wilmoth Building, centered in the block west of the square (middle of photo 10), was built in 1890 and featured a large hardware, implement, and tin shop during the 1890s into the early 1920s. Oxford physician, Dr. Harvey Bloom, had his office in a small one-story storefront building constructed c. 1890 at 106 W. McConnell Street during the early 1900s (right side of photo 16). The building had been attached to the former I.O.O.F. Hall built at the corner in 1874.

The Golden Era of Early 20th Century Growth

The construction of three large commercial buildings that also featured lodge halls on the second story gave rise to some exceptional architecture around the square at the turn of the 19th century into the first decade of the 20th century. This began with Messner & Sons dry goods and boots and shoes store built in 1896 at 110 S. Justus Street (right side of photo 09). The building hosted a lodge hall for the Masons on the second story. The building's wide storefront operated as a general store into the late 1970s. The second of the three large buildings constructed in the early 1900s was the State Bank of Oxford, built in 1904 at 100 S. Justus Street (right side of photo 10). The building had a large second story lodge hall for the Knights of Pythias. While the bank operated from the corner storefront, a grocery store and later a clothing, boots, and shoes store operated from the south storefront into the 1920s. The third large building was constructed as the third location for the Masonic Temple about 1910 at 107 E. Smith Street (right side of photo 15). The Masons established a lodge in Oxford in 1855 and constructed their first hall in 1874. By about 1910, they relocated to the second story of this substantial building. The building had both a drugstore and grocery store on the first story into the 1920s.

Another important building constructed for commercial purposes was Hotel Oxford, built at 201 S. Howard Street c. 1910 (photo 04). A frame hotel building was located just east of the brick building in 1905. The brick building was connected to the frame building and had a hotel office on the first story at the east end on McConnell Street and hotel rooms on the second story. The first story had an automobile accessories store on the corner and a dining room for hotel guests between the store and office. The building became home to Farmcraft Seeds by the middle part of the 20th century, then was joined by a modern grocery building the became Fellure Foods, c. 1965 (right side of photo 04). A one-story brick building (c. 1910) served as a livery and later as the L. C. Garage across the street from the hotel at 206 S. Howard Street (left side of photo 06). Also supporting residents and travellers alike was a small café built about 1910 on the south side of the square. It had been used as a barber shop into the 1920s, but was converted to a café that offered steaks and sandwiches and sold Coca Cola products by the 1940s.

A few other exceptional public buildings were constructed near the square between 1902 and 1924 including the Presbyterian Church (1902), Methodist Episcopal Church (1924) & Parsonage, and the Oxford Public Library (1916) demonstrating the priority the community placed on religion, education, and their centrality to public life. The Presbyterian congregation organized at the courthouse in Oxford in 1853 and had constructed a frame building by about

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

1870.⁵ It was replaced by the substantial brick building in 1902 (photo 07). The Methodist Episcopal congregation organized in Oxford in 1852 and constructed a church building in 1865 and a parsonage in 1873.⁶ The original church was moved back on the lot to make way for a new building in 1893, which was subsequently replaced by this building in 1924-1925. The cornerstone was laid on August 30, 1924.⁷ A new parsonage was constructed in 1902 (photo 02).

Oxford had both a literary society and lecture association develop during the 1850s through 1882 under the names Oxford Lyceum Organization and Oxford Lecture Association. These educational organizations may have been forerunners for the desire to have a public library. In 1912, the first Oxford Library Board formed and by 1916, the board became the recipient of an Andrew Carnegie grant of \$8,000 to construct a building at 201 E. Smith Street (photo 12, right side of photo 13). The library was finished and officially opened on October 6, 1917.⁸

It was also during the early 1900s that Oxford gained notoriety as the home of Dan Patch, a champion racehorse owned by Dan Messner, Jr., the dry goods merchant in Oxford. Dan Patch dominated the field of harness racing, setting a world record for the fastest mile by a harness horse in 1905 that he subsequently broke in 1906. Patch, who died in 1916, is honored with a plaque at the town square and has his name on the town's water tower just outside the district, but forms the backdrop to the downtown (photos 04, 20). By 1910, the population in Oxford had climbed to 1,010, a tally that it would not regain from losses in population during the remaining part of the 20th century until 1960, when it climbed back to 1,108, the largest gain being a growth of nearly 25% between 1950 and 1960.

Connection to the Highway System and Mid-20th Century Period of Growth

Oxford remained a center for trade and commerce into the 1960s even as transportation changed from the railroad to automobile era and gas stations were built off the public square by the mid-20th century. These included a Phillips 66 Station operated by Ed Thomas in the northwest corner and a Sinclair Station near the southeast corner (middle of photo 06, photo 11). The town had the advantage of being part of the original Indiana State Highway system in 1919 with the route designation of Highway 29 leading from Lafayette, through Oxford, to Fowler by way of Highway 9. This route follows the path of McConnell Street through Oxford and later became Highway 152 by 1932, even as a more direct northwesterly route was built from Lafayette to Fowler (today's Highway 52). The route through Oxford was designated Highway 352 by 1940. By 1945, Highway 55 was extended north through Oxford, overlaying Highway 352 through the district. These highway designations allowed Oxford to maintain transportation connections to the county seat at Fowler and to larger markets in Lafayette as well as remain a relevant local shopping district.

⁵ F. A. Battey & Co., Pg. 303

⁶ F. A. Battey & Co., Pg. 297

⁷ "Methodism in Oxford" *Journal and Courier* (Lafayette) 06 Feb 1925. Pg. 4, cols. 1-2

⁸ Oxford Public Library website: <https://oxford.lib.in.us/our-history/>, accessed September 6, 2023

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

A few buildings constructed during this later period of sustained vitality, including the post office in 1961, demonstrate the role commerce continued to have in the district during this time. A large, two-story building on the southeast corner of McConnell and Justus Streets was built about 1950 and included two storefront offices and rooms upstairs. The post office had long been located in a two-story brick building at the south end of the block east of the square from the late 1890s into the 1920s. It was relocated to its present location when a building was constructed at 209 S. Howard Street (photo 03). The building is similar to federal guidelines for post office construction, based off of plan #21 in standards published in 1959. The building was dedicated in July 1961. The old post office building was either fully razed or significantly renovated into the Tullis Office Building at 201 E. McConnell Street in 1967 (right side of photo 05). This is the last contributing building constructed in the district and serves as professional offices.

Developmental History/Additional historic context information

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

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United States Population Census for Oxford, IN: 1860-1970

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 # _____
- recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): 007-218/626-41025, 007-626-43051-53,
007-218-42018

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of Property Approximately 8 acres

Use the UTM system

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|-------------|-----------------|-------------------|
| 1. Zone: 16 | Easting: 478953 | Northing: 4485576 |
| 2. Zone: 16 | Easting: 478949 | Northing: 4485344 |
| 3. Zone: 16 | Easting: 478772 | Northing: 4485341 |
| 4. Zone: 16 | Easting: 478759 | Northing: 4485574 |

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

Beginning on the northwest corner of South Justus Street and Indiana State Highways 352/55, face west on the north side of Highways 352/55 and follow a line to the north/south alley west of Justus Street. Turn north and follow the east side of the alley, crossing McConnell Street, to the south side of Smith Street. Turn east and follow the south side of Smith Street to a line extended south from the west property line of 102 North Justus Street, then turn north and follow the west property line of 102 N. Justus to the south side of the east/west alley north of Smith Street.

On the south side of the east/west alley north of Smith Street, turn east and follow the south side of the east/west alley, crossing Justus and Howard Streets, to the east property line of 201 East Smith Street. Turn south and follow the east property line of 201 East Smith Street to the south side of Smith Street. Turn east and follow the south side of Smith Street to the west side of the north/south alley east of Howard Street. Turn south and follow the west side of the north/south alley, crossing McConnell Street, to the north side of Benton Street, then turn west and follow the north side of Benton Street to the east side of Howard Street.

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

Turn north and follow the east side of Howard Street to a line extended east from the north side of the east/west alley south of McConnell Street. Turn west and follow the north side of the east/west alley, crossing Howard and Justus Streets, to the west side of Justus Street. Turn south and follow the west side of Justus Street to the north side of State Highways 352/55, or the place of beginning.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries of the Oxford Town Square Historic District compose the historic commercial center of the town, organized around the public square platted in 1843. The boundaries extend south one block on Howard and Justus Streets to include two historic churches and the town post office, all of which represent continued vitality of the district to the small Benton County community. The district is surrounded by residential neighborhoods though a few 20th century commercial buildings dot Highways 352/55 as the route cuts through the district in an east/west path (known as McConnell Street on the square).

11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Kurt West Garner
organization: Discover Oxford, Inc.
street & number: 12954 6th Road
city or town: Plymouth state: IN zip code: 46563
e-mail: kwgarner@kwgarner.com
telephone: 574-780-1423
date: September 7, 2023

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A USGS map or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)
-

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 3000x2000 at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property: Oxford Town Square Historic District

City or Vicinity: Oxford

County: Benton State: Indiana

Photographer: Kurt West Garner

Date Photographed: July 1, 2023

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking southwest toward the public square from the intersection of Howard and Smith Streets

1 of 20.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking northeast at Methodist Episcopal Church

2 of 20.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking east at Post Office

3 of 20.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking southeast from public square toward intersection of Howard and McConnell Streets

4 of 20.

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking east from public square

5 of 20.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking southwest toward intersection of Howard and McConnell Streets

6 of 20.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking north at former Presbyterian Church

7 of 20.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking north on Justus Street from south of McConnell Street

8 of 20.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking southwest along Justus Street from public square

9 of 20.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking southwest at the intersection of Justus and Smith Streets

10 of 20.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking northwest at the intersection of Justus and Smith Streets

11 of 20.

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking northeast at front of Oxford Public Library

12 of 20.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking northeast from the public square at the intersection of Howard and Smith Streets

13 of 20.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking northwest at the intersection of Howard and Smith Streets

14 of 20.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking northwest at Oxford Masonic Temple on Smith Street

15 of 20.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking south across McConnell Street from Justus Street

16 of 20.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking southeast from the intersection of Justus and McConnell Streets

17 of 20.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking south from the public square across McConnell Street

18 of 20.

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Name of Property

Benton County, IN
County and State

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking west on McConnell Street from near Howard Street

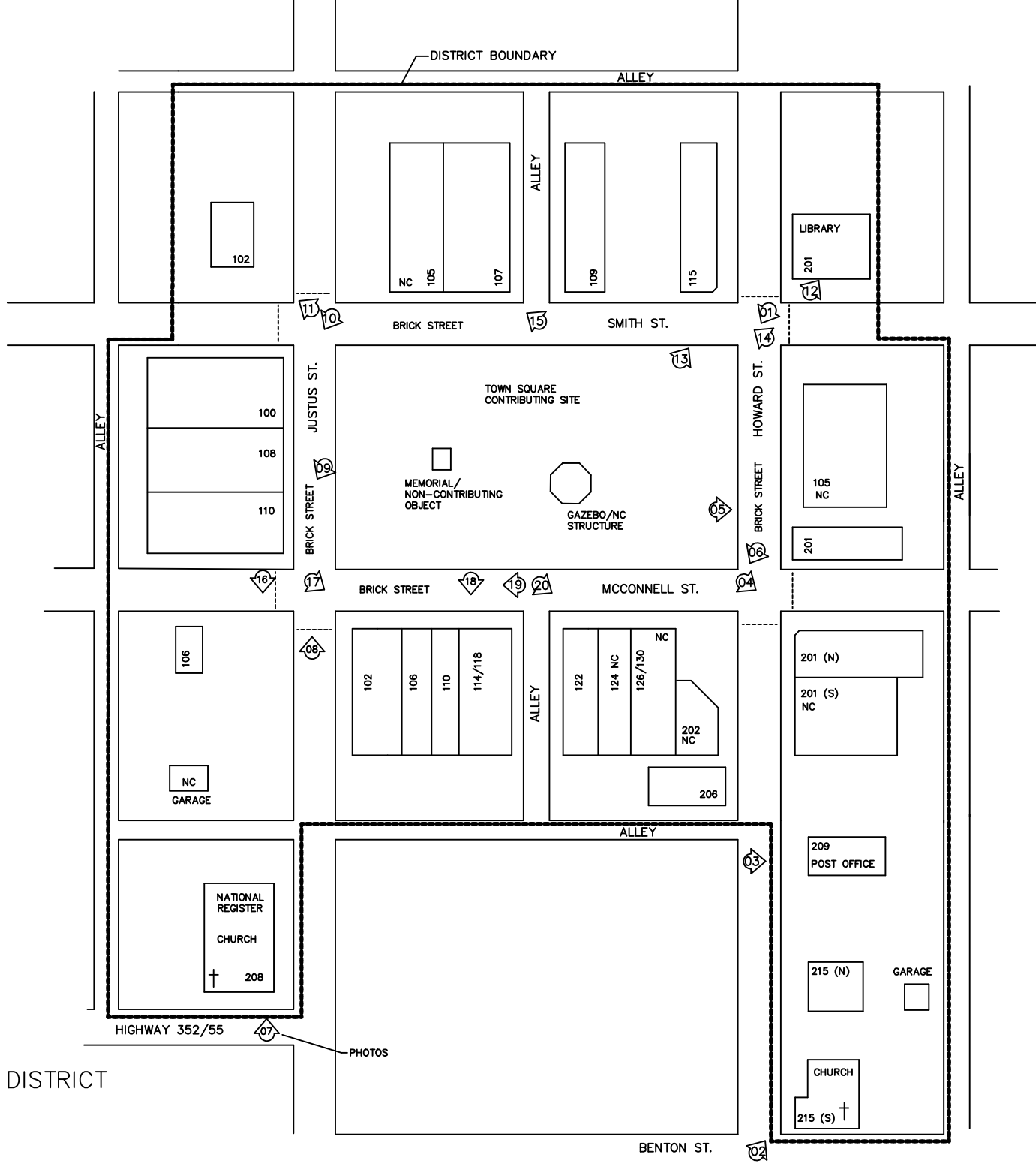
19 of 20.

Description of Photograph(s) and number, include description of view indicating direction of camera: Looking southeast on McConnell Street from the public square

20 of 20.

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.460 et seq.).

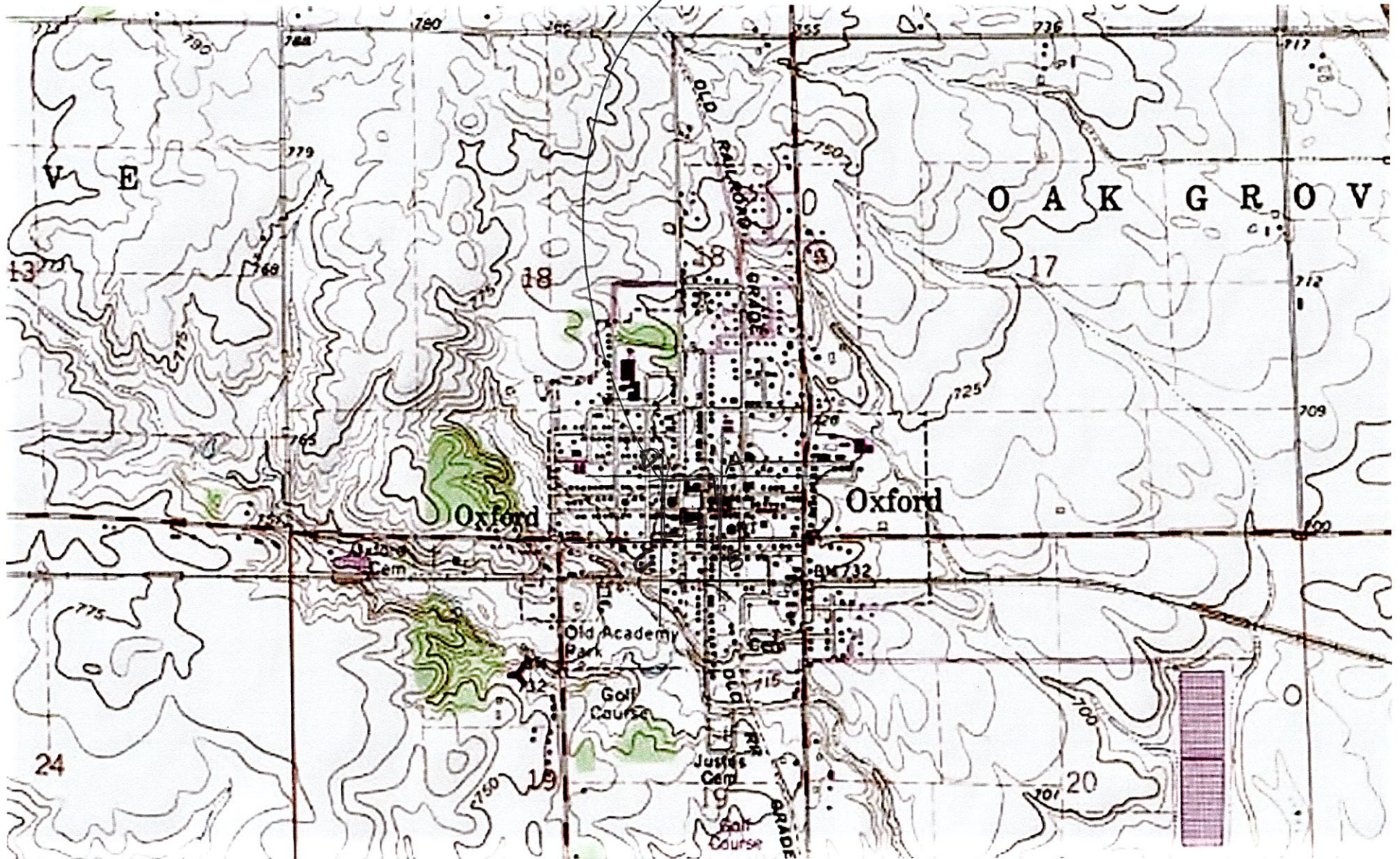
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



- 22 CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS
- 7 NON-CONTRIBUTING BUILDINGS = NC
- 1 NON-CONTRIBUTING OBJECT (MEMORIAL)
- 4 CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURES (BRICK STREETS)
- 1 CONTRIBUTING SITE (TOWN SQUARE)
- 1 NON-CONTRIBUTING STRUCTURE (GAZEBO)

OXFORD TOWN SQUARE HISTORIC DISTRICT
 NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
 BENTON COUNTY, IN

Oxford Town Square Historic District
Benton Co. IN
NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES



NAD 83 UTM
ZONE 16

A	478953	4485576
B	478949	4485344
C	478772	4485341
D	478759	4485574



IN_BentonCounty_OxfordTownSquareHistoricDistrict_0001



IN_BentonCounty_OxfordTownSquareHistoricDistrict_0002



IN_BentonCounty_OxfordTownSquareHistoricDistrict_0003



IN_BentonCounty_OxfordTownSquareHistoricDistrict_0007



IN_BentonCounty_OxfordTownSquareHistoricDistrict_0010



IN_BentonCounty_OxfordTownSquareHistoricDistrict_0013



IN_BentonCounty_OxfordTownSquareHistoricDistrict_0015



IN_BentonCounty_OxfordTownSquareHistoricDistrict_0017