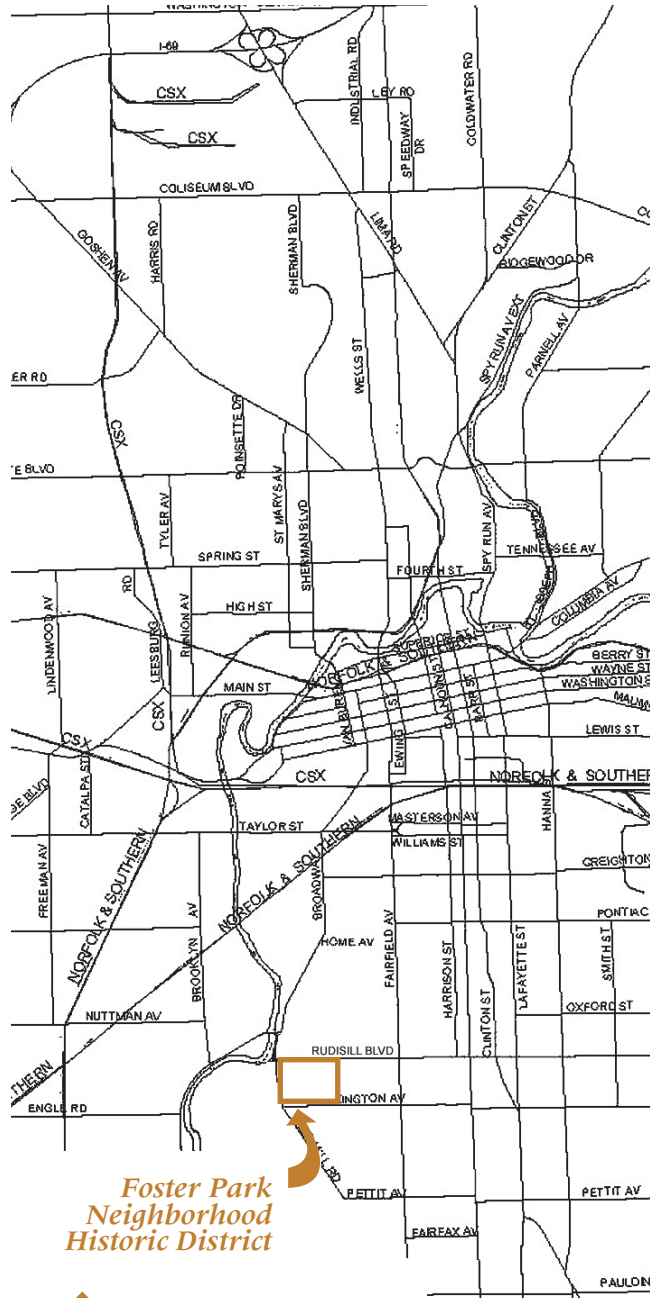


## Location



*Foster Park  
Neighborhood  
Historic District*



## Acknowledgements

City of Fort Wayne  
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Pam Holocher, Director

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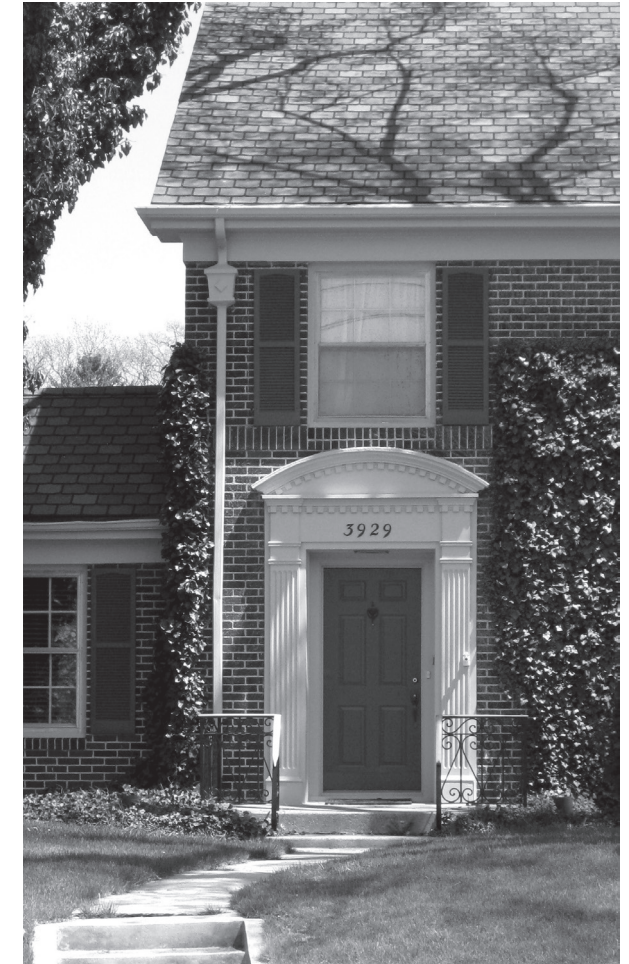
John Warner, Consultant

For more information about historic preservation  
in Fort Wayne, call [260] 427-1127 or visit  
[www.cityoffortwayne.org](http://www.cityoffortwayne.org)



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# Foster Park Neighborhood Historic District



Fort Wayne, Indiana

## Introduction

The Foster Park Neighborhood Historic District is significant as an example of suburban subdivision design during the early decades of the 20th century and as an example of architectural style choices popular in the 1920s–1950s. A Hilgeman & Schaaf development, the district demonstrates key principles promoted by the City Beautiful Movement for creating an “ideal” place to live away from the dirt, noise, and frenzy of the downtown streets. For these reasons the Foster Park Neighborhood Historic District was listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The National Register is the nation’s official list of properties considered worthy of preservation. Listing on the National Register gives a degree of protection from any potentially adverse effects of state and federally funded projects, and may also provide financial incentives for appropriate rehabilitation.

For more information about Historic Districts please call the Division of Community Development at (260) 427-1127 or visit [www.cityoffortwayne.org/preservation](http://www.cityoffortwayne.org/preservation).

## History

The early decades of the twentieth century were a time of great change in Fort Wayne. As part of an urban design philosophy called the “City Beautiful Movement,” cities like Fort Wayne sought ways to improve themselves by better utilizing the benefits, natural and man-made, of their environment. In 1909, the Civic Improvement Association hired urban planner Charles Mulford Robinson to evaluate Fort Wayne and produce a beautification plan that would enhance the positive aspects of the city and its environs. Three years later, noted landscape architect George Kessler designed “The Park and Boulevard System of Fort Wayne” that incorporated existing and proposed parks into a collection of green spaces connected by a system of boulevards and parkways. More than just a plan to provide citizens with easy access to parks through a more efficient and attractive transportation system, it was a critical part of a much larger goal aimed at guiding growth and development of the city in an orderly manner. To fulfill the plans for making Fort Wayne an ideal place to live, developers and city officials joined together to create harmonious designs in their respective projects and produce healthier environments for city residents.

Among the many developers in Fort Wayne was the firm of Hilgeman & Schaaf, whose staff and partners combined their talents in design, development, and conservation of landscape resources to the best advantage of their clients. Many of Robinson’s design imperatives can be seen in the firm’s subdivision planning. Common to all of their developments was the use of restrictions – monetary, physical, and visual – to promise an environment in keeping with the City Beautiful concept, while at the same time creating an air of exclusivity that guaranteed new owners a sense of “making the right choice.” Monetary restrictions dealt with minimum costs of the residences facing a particular street. Physical and visual design aspects reflecting these planning principles included: deep and consistent set back of homes; fenceless front lawns resulting in open, uncluttered views; placement of utilities along rear lot lines; plantings and small masses of trees to provide variety; a strip of lawn planted with shade trees between the sidewalk and the street; and terracing or the use of natural elevation changes to create variety in the landscape.

Embracing the city planning movement, developers changed from only selling empty lots to also providing new home construction options. Hilgeman and Schaaf offered lot owners a number of alternatives for building their homes. The firm employed its own architect, Simpson Parkinson, to design homes. Parkinson and his family lived at 1250 Sheridan Court for a number of years. The firm’s building department, under the direction of Leonard C. Smith, supervised the construction of the house and guaranteed that the final product would meet all “101 Points of Excellence” (a sales slogan in a local newspaper). Actually, Hilgeman & Schaaf proved to be a “one-stop shopping” operation as they also offered to “build a home for you” with “no cash required” in the process. One requirement for this good deal was prior ownership of a lot. But even if the lot wasn’t fully paid for, the advertisement encouraged those interested to come in anyway and “talk it [a new home] over.” Other contractors built some of the homes in the district, under the auspices of the firms C. F. Bruns, George Bennett, H.L. Burt, and R. O. Hines.

Lots in the Foster Park Neighborhood Historic District were put up for sale in July of 1924. Ads in the local newspaper noted that the location, “in the most desirable section of Fort Wayne” that “many people have been waiting for,” offered home sites attractive to “hundreds of people.” The sale would not start until July 19, 1924 but prospective buyers “could enter the property now” and

secure “a tag” which, along with a deposit, was to be turned into Hilgeman & Schaaf’s office to reserve the lot. The firm promised a surprise to the buyer by way of the “reasonable” prices on these home sites.

The proximity to Foster Park served as an inducement to prospective buyers. Having the large green space available to use for recreational activities seven days a week and literally at one’s doorstep offered unlimited opportunity to citizens of all ages. In addition, with no through street except Lexington Avenue, the streets in the district, felt like a series of quiet cul-de-sacs. Adding to this sense of a rural setting, the Wiebke farmstead to the east remained undeveloped for many decades and therefore the district actually had green space on its east and west boundaries.

The growing availability of personal family transportation is shown by the fact that over ninety percent of the homes in the district have a garage. With the new boulevard system and available public transportation on Broadway, residents could live in a clean and healthy environment while maintaining easy access to the workday world. Demographically, the first residents of the district were solidly middle to upper-middle-class in their economic and educational background. Residents included company presidents, department supervisors, salesmen, bricklayers, and machinists. It appears that those folks who bought early tended to stay in the neighborhood, as many of the first owners lived in their homes for over twenty years.

Ranging from Craftsman Bungalow and two-story Colonial Revival examples to Tudor Cottage and sleek post-WWII Contemporary homes the architecture has experienced little alteration. The overall effect of a walk through the district transports the traveler back to the building-boom days of the 1920s, the post-World War II time of returning veterans, and on to the relatively carefree days of the 1950s.







# Foster Park Neighborhood Historic District

Please respect the occupants' privacy by viewing all listed homes from the street.

**Edward & Geneva Kruse House**  
4001 Old Mill Road  
Modern c.1950

The Modern style was a favorite of architect designed houses of the 1950s, 60s, and 70s. These homes generally have wide overhangs, an emphasis on geometric shapes and angles, and large expanses of glass. Contrasting wall materials and textures are also typical. The home of physician Edward Kruse features a tall center section with a steep shed roof flanked by lower, flat-roofed sections. Board-and-batten siding covers the walls and a series of large picture windows maximizes the view toward Foster Park.



**Oscar & Edith Weitzman House**  
1311 West Foster Parkway  
Tudor Revival c.1940

Tudor houses usually have steeply-pitched side gable roofs with at least one prominent front gable and large, decorative chimneys. Their most characteristic feature is the use of decorative half-timbering with stucco or brick infill. Brick, stucco, and stone wall surfaces are common, and windows are typically casements of wood or metal, in groups, with multiple panes of glass. This cottage-like house also has an unusual large bay at the west end. Mr. Weitzman was a superintendent at General Electric.



**Louis & Eugenia Gollmer House**  
1302 West Foster Parkway  
Colonial Revival c.1932

The side-gabled roof and symmetrical façade are classic Colonial Revival features. This home also features an entry portico with paired columns and windows with multi-pane upper sash and functional shutters. The brick arches with the basket-weave infill over the first floor windows are an uncommon feature. Louis Gollmer was the superintendent at Schwegman-Witte Co., plumbing & steam heating.



**Jesse & Grace Meyer House**  
1255 West Foster Parkway  
Tudor Revival c.1940

This frame example of the Tudor Revival style features the steep gables characteristic of the style as well as half-timbered decoration around the front entry. While the exterior walls are covered with wood clapboard, the boards are finished with a wavy edge above the door and are a bit wider in the peak of the front gable. Mr. Meyer managed the Empire Life & Accident Insurance Co.



**Jay & Minnie Boeshore House**  
1228 West Foster Parkway  
Dutch Colonial Revival c.1932

Dutch Colonial Revival style homes are easily identified by their gambrel, or barn-like, roof. This symmetrical home also features windows arranged in pairs and triple sets, an arched door, and a gabled entry porch with stout classical columns. Original owner Jay Boeshore was the secretary-treasurer of Rea Magnet Wire.



**Ida Erickson House**  
1225 West Foster Parkway  
Garrison Colonial, c.1940

Garrison Colonials are built with the second story extended slightly outward to overhang the wall below. Stylized, side-gabled examples of the style were very popular from the 1930's through the 1950's. Detailing is similar to the main Colonial Revival. This brick home features board and batten siding on the second floor, and a shallow box window on the first floor. Ida Erickson was the secretary-treasurer of Fries Tool and Machine Works.



**Gertrude Steinbauer House**  
1138 West Foster Parkway  
Contemporary c.1950

The flat roof, deep overhang, lack of decorative detailing, and solid walls contrasting with large bands of windows are features that identify the Contemporary style of this home. Sometimes referred to as American International, the flat-roofed form is derived from the earlier International style which emphasized minimalism and function. As assistant secretary for Wermuth, Inc, general contractors, Gertrude Stenbauer would have been familiar with the latest architectural trends.



**Minnie Sheets House**  
1227 Sheridan Court  
Contemporary c.1950

Minnie Sheets was the Vice President of W.A. Sheets & Sons, general contractors. After she was widowed she built this streamlined, modern home with a simple, one-story plan. The low-pitched roof with wide overhangs and broad, front-facing gable is characteristic of the style. Contrasting wall materials and textures, such as the brick side walls and vertical wood siding seen here, and unusual window shapes and placements are also typical.



**Rudolph & Caroline Raffel House**  
1243 Sheridan Court  
Tudor Revival Cottage c.1930

The original owner of this visually intriguing house worked as a brick mason. His skills are evident in the unusual exterior walls of his Tudor Revival cottage which combine bricks of different sizes with pieces of stone. The roof, which has a rolled edge and irregular surface to imitate a thatch roof, and the little eyebrow dormer window add to the storybook character of the house.



**Walter Geller House**  
1306 Sheridan Court  
Colonial Revival c.1932

While the symmetry, roof form, and classical portico of the Colonial Revival style are present in this house, the tall, narrow proportions are unusual. The height is emphasized by the steep front gable. There is beautiful and complex detailing in the entry portico. Also note that the shape of the arched transom over the door is repeated in the gable window. Mr. Geller served as the treasurer for Main Auto Supply Sales Corporation.



**Robert & Irene Moellering House**  
1320 Branning Avenue  
Colonial Revival c.1940

With the random window placement, off-center entry, and lower side wing, this home is an excellent example of the asymmetrical Colonial Revival designs that became popular in the 1930's and 1940's. The detailing on these later designs is also simplified and the entry of this home has a streamlined, Art Deco feel with the smooth, stylized moldings. Mr. Moellering was the vice-president of Moellering Construction Co.



**Martin & Adeline Baade House**  
1252 Branning Avenue  
Craftsman Bungalow c.1927

This bungalow demonstrates many of the bells and whistles of the style. The side-gabled roof sweeps down over the porch and includes triangular knee braces and exposed rafters under the wide eaves. The battered porch supports are unusually wide yet narrow. Windows have vertical muntins in the upper sash. Exterior walls flare at the base and are covered in clapboard siding without corner boards.



**William & Dorothea Thomas House**  
1144 Branning Avenue  
Tudor Revival c.1950

The stone cladding surrounding the entry contrasts with the smooth, buff brick walls on this late example of the Tudor style. Typical of the time period, detailing has been streamlined. However, the numerous pointed gables, stone tabs over the front windows, and the large chimney add to the distinctive character. Mr. Thomas ran the W.J. Thomas Insurance Agency.



**Joseph Miles House**  
1143 Branning Avenue  
American Foursquare c.1927

The two-story box-like shape, hipped roof with central dormer, and full-width porch are hallmarks of the American Foursquare style. The character of this house relies on its strong, clean lines. Decorative details are limited to a band of basket-weave brickwork on the porch and vertical muntins in selected windows. Mr. Miles was employed as a die maker at General Electric Company.



**Wayne & Mary Sheets House**  
(Louis O. Reich, architect)  
4123 Old Mill Road  
Ranch 1945

This unique L-shape home has a low hipped roof of standing-seam copper with deep eaves, and a broad chimney dominating the north side. A massive stone planter extends along the north side of the house and wraps around the front to the entry where it intersects with the walls of the stairs that descend to the driveway. An angled, multi-paned window overlooks the park. Sheets was president of W.A. Sheets & Sons contractors. His mother resided at 1227 Sheridan Court.



**Henry & Lillian Eckrich House**  
4131 Old Mill Road  
Ranch c.1950

Originating in California in the mid-1930s, the low, sprawling form of the Ranch house became the dominant style of residential architecture in the '50s and '60s. These one-story homes have low-pitched roofs and long facades with an attached garage. Hipped roofs with moderate to wide eaves are most common. Built by the president of Peter Eckrich & Sons Inc., this limestone clad home has large, multi-pane windows and a distinctive green tile roof.



**Robert & Marcella Maxwell House**  
1230 Lexington Avenue  
Massed Ranch c.1950

The massed ranch was developed for narrower lots and typically has a low, hipped roof with multiple planes, wide eaves, and a deeper plan rather than the linear plan of the traditional ranch. The roof, eaves, wide clapboard siding, and even the cut of the limestone accenting the entry show the horizontal emphasis of this home design.



**Earle & Pearl Reeves House**  
1132 Lexington Avenue  
Contemporary c.1950

Mr. Reeves was the Vice President-Treasurer of the Fort Wayne Drug Company. The clean contemporary lines of this house are emphasized by the angle of the shed roof with its deep flat eaves and broad edge. The rectangular chimney, large panes of glass, and use of both vertical and horizontal siding, reinforce the use of simple geometry to give the home a sculptural quality.

