This striking industrial building was erected by the Pearl firm in 1912. The cost of the structure—completed according to the designs of local architect James L. Wills—was $25,000. Wills is also known for the design of the Register-eligible Skora Building (see State Form 82-196-0185). The building still houses the laundry and is remarkably little changed.
Property: Pearl Steam Laundry
State, County: IN, Vanderburgh

Federal Agency:

- resubmission
- nomination by person or local government
- owner objection
- appeal

Substantive Review:

- sample
- request
- appeal
- NR decision

Reviewer's comments: No statement of significance for role as laundry or for architectural merit.

Recom./Criteria: Return
Reviewer: J. McFadden
Discipline: Arch. Hist.
Date: 9/1/82

Nomination returned for:

- technical corrections cited below
- substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category Ownership Status Present Use
Public Acquisition Accessible

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? yes no

7. Description

Condition: excellent deteriorated unaltered
- good
- bad unexposed altered
- fair

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- alterations/integrity
- dates
- boundary selection
6. Significance

Please assess the significance of this building architecturally or historically for use as laundry. Please provide context for appropriate area of significance.

8. Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

- Summary paragraph
- Completeness
- Clarity
- Applicable criteria
- Justification of areas checked
- Relating significance to the resource
- Context
- Relationship of integrity to significance
- NA Justification of exception

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property: [Please provide amount]

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is

- [ ] national
- [x] state
- [ ] local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Site: [ ]
Date: [ ]

13. Other

- [ ] Maps
- [ ] Photographs
- [ ] Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to [ ]

Signed: [ ]
Date: 7/6/82
Phone: 202 272-3504

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet
Additional Architectural Information

A. NAME Pearl Steam Laundry

B. ADDRESS 428 Market Street Evansville, IN

D. UTM References 19: SIGNIFICANCE

The Pearl Steam Laundry building occupies a unique place in the cultural history of Evansville. As a work of architecture, this unspoiled industrial building reflects concern for various modern issues—technology, labor saving, worker's welfare, future planning, and the like—as no other local building does. The business operation represented by the building—under continuous family ownership and management since its founding in 1896—also furnishes a vivid image of the complex nature of commerce at the turn of the century, the city's hard-nosed yet innovative business character, the effect of religious belief on secular affairs, and the imprint of ethnicity.

The Pearl laundry building was erected in 1912 by Jacob Rust and Daniel Korb, partners in a domestic laundry business. Since its founding in 1896, the business had already outgrown three previous facilities. In the design of their new Market Street plant, Korb and Rust sought to produce a modern and functional operation which would not only improve their means for handling their present volume but would be adequate for an "ever increasing business." (Their plan was perhaps more viable than they realized, for the building is still in use today for its intended purpose and, even with increased business through the years, it has remained relatively unaltered.)

Daniel Korb (1865-1948) spent his early years on the family's large farm in the southeast corner of Scott Township, about eight miles northeast of Evansville. His introduction to city life was in 1877 when, at age 11, he moved to the city with his recently widowed mother and his sister. At 18, he entered the work world where he spent the next decade as a bookkeeper for various local concerns. In a 1921 newspaper article on "Self-Made Men of Evansville," he characterized this period of his life as one of "'cramming' in business principles and practices." Korb's partner, Jacob Rust (1868-?), was brought up on his parent's truck farm just beyond the city's eastern limits. Part of a large family, he sought employment in the city, when he came of age as a (wagon) driver, contributing his wages to his parent's support. When Rust and Korb actually linked up is not known, but in 1889 they both had (continued)

F. INFORMATION SOURCES COURIER, 11 July 1911, 28 August, 6 October, and 15 October 1912 JOURNAL, 25 August, 6 October 1912; 14 February 1914; PRESS, 15 October 1912. COURIFR, 18 September 1921.

G. PREPARED BY Joan Marchard & Douglas L Stern H. DATE 14 February 1983 (amended)
Pearl Steam Laundry  
82-196-00207  
Evansville IN  
19: Significance (continued)  
Page 2

Jobs with the Evansville Ice & Cold Storage Company. In 1894, their association was  
formed by Korb's marriage to Rust's sister Margaret. Two years later, they made the  
shift from wage earners to proprietors by investing savings of $550 in a small, debt-  
plagued laundry on the city's west side. (They had shortly before turned down the  
purchase of a larger, $3,800 laundry operation because "that was far more capital then  
we possessed," and neither believed in mortgaging unnecessarily.) The early years  
spent in establishing their business were ones of "hard grinding work and deprivation,"  
a period for which the two men were clearly qualified by a common working-class back-  
ground and culture. In spite of the meager beginnings, the conscientiousness and in-  
dustriousness typical of their German ethnic spirit, garnered them an increasing portion  
of the domestic laundry trade. Their growing enterprise forced Rust and Korb to seek  
larger, leasedquarters in 1897 and then again in 1902. In 1911, after fifteen years  
in business, Rust and Korb were laying plans for their own permanent facility, one of  
the region's most modern laundry facilities. This $25,000, mortgage-free investment  
was realized a year later in the completion of the Pearl Steam Laundry plant, stable  
and office complex on Market Street. When Rust retired in 1928, and Korb bought his  
half-interest, the tangible worth of the business was placed at $150,000. The Pearl  
firm managed to stay buoyant despite changes in the laundry industry, and today it has  
the corner on the local domestic laundry business and, uniquely, still provides home  
pick-up and delivery service.

As conservative as they may have been in running their business, Rust and Korb  
were receptive to innovation. The Market Street plant easily absorbed and adapted to  
a changing industry and increased volume. (This is in contrast to the equally old  
White Swan Laundry—survey #00182—which still operates out of a two-story facility  
marked by a succession of additions.) When Rust and Korb decided to build their own  
plant after years of leasing, they visited laundries in different cities for ideas in  
plant design and new methods in handling the operation. With certain features in  
mind, they commissioned local architect James L. Wills to prepare the plans.

The result was a one-story building comprising about 18,000 square feet of floor  
space. As one journalist remarked about the Pearl's design, "It seems rather odd to  
built a one story building of this magnitude, but it has been found that a laundry  
can be more conveniently arranged on one floor than on several." The lay-out com-  
prised a one-floor-line plan whereby laundry progressed systematically through the  
various departments (such as sorting, marking, weighing, washing, drying, pressing,  
bundling, and routing) before being deposited into waiting wagons stationed in the  
stable at the south end of the building. (While the equipment has been periodically  
updated, the general processing format remains essentially the same.

The design of the facility incorporated other modern elements promoting not only  
efficiency, but also the health and comfort of the employees. Equipment was steam  
powered (up until 1954), and electric lighting was used throughout. Ventilation was  
provided by roof monitors and expansive sashes with operable windows. "Sanitary  
drinking fountains" were placed conveniently throughout the plant for the employee's  
refreshment and safety, and the proprietors emphasized the provision of modern, com-  
modious restrooms and dressing rooms. Rust put his attitude succinctly: "Take care  
of plant and horses. But human element worthy more attention."

(continued)
By the late 19th century, an urbanized Evansville was rapidly acquiring a rising demand for consumer services. When Rust and Korb entered the laundry business in 1896, their competition numbered a dozen. The operations typically were small, housed generally on the ground floor of buildings not any different in form or appearance than any other commercial building. In some cases, the business was run out of a home. The repeated need for increased space by the Pearl between 1896 and 1911 indicated an increasing demand for this type of service. However, although some of the companies, including the Pearl, advanced into commercial-scale operations based upon improved cleaning technologies, many operators couldn't make the shift and ceased to exist. By the time Korb and Rust completed their new plant in 1912, the field of competition had narrowed to six competitors. Pearl's high volume/low cost capability, abetted by modern steam-powered machinery, offered even the early 1900's budget-minded housewife freedom from the laborious and time-consuming task of doing the weekly family wash.

In short, the Pearl Steam Laundry was modern: a modern building erected in a modern architectural expression; a company doing business on a larger, modern scale; employer's concerned for the efficiency of employees' efforts; and a combination of enlightened labor practices and worker safety. Pearl Laundry was a distinct departure in every sense from 19th century ways. Its physical presence and its stable management/ownership also provide unusual documentation for studying not only the growth and development of a local concern in its temporal context but helps to interpret the evolution of Evansville's economic life.
PEARL STEAM LAUNDRY

FOR GOOD SERVICE
TELEPHONE 622
Pearl Steam Laundry
114 - 128 SECOND AVENUE
## Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory

### A. Historic Name
Pearl Steam Laundry

### B. County
Vanderburgh

### C. Number
82-196-00207

### D. Address
428 Market Street

### E. Twp/City
Pigeon

### F. Quad Name
Evansville South

#### RATING
- Outstanding
- Significant/Notable
- Contributing/Reference
- Non-Contributing

#### UTM REFERENCES
- Zone: 16
- UTM: 459500
- Zone: 1203020

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### 1. COMMON NAME
Pearl Laundry

### 2. OWNERSHIP
Public

### 3. VISIBLE
Yes

### 4. PROPERTY'S MAILING ADDRESS
Pearl Laundry
428 Market Street
Evansville, IN 47708

### 5. LOCATION NOTES
Stockwells Enlargement Block 2.
Lots 1-10; Tax Code: 29-25-1

### 6. USE PRESENT PAST
- Residence
- Govt./Pol.
- Commercial
- Industrial
- Agricultural
- Transportation
- Organization
- Other

- Military
- Entertainment
- Scientific
- Religious
- Park
- Museum
- Educational
- Other

### 7. ENDANGERED
- Vacant
- Neglected
- Encroachment
- Other

### 8. CATEGORY
- District
- Historic District
- Building(s)
- Structure
- Site
- Other

### 9a. LOCAL LEGAL PROTECTIONS
- Historic District
- Landmark
- Deed Restriction
- Other

### 9b. SURVEYS
- SR
- NR
- NHL
- HABS
- HAER

### 10. CONDITION
- Excellent
- Good
- Fair
- Deteriorated
- Ruins

### 11. BUILDING INTEGRITY
- Unaltered
- Altered
- Moved
- Date: ca. 1923

### 11a. Specify Alterations
- Removals
- Structural
- Replacement
- Additions

### 12. DATE
1912

### 13. STYLE
Industrial

### 14. ARCHITECT/BUILDER
J. J. Hoffman, Const.

### 15. DESCRIPTION
See below.

### 16. OUTBUILDINGS
NONE

### 17. SITE PLAN

![Site Plan Diagram]

### 18. ENVIRONMENT
Light industrial service

### Inscriptions
- STABLE
- PEARL STEAM LAUNDRY
- OFFICE

### Facade Material
- Brick

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*Note: The site plan includes a map of the property with a diagram of the building's layout and a small sketch of the facade. The plan is labeled with key points such as Market St. and Bond St.*
19. AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Specify the significance for each area checked:

- Aboriginal
- Arts
- Architecture
- Commerce
- Communications
- Community Planning
- Education
- Engineering
- Environ/Neighborhoods
- Exploration/Settlement
- Humanities
- Indian
- Landscape Architecture
- Military
- Politics/Government
- Religion
- Science/Technology
- Social/Ethnicity
- Transportation
- Vernacular/Construction
- Other

15: Facing east onto Market Street, the Pearl Steam Laundry building has a frontage of about 200 feet and a depth at its widest point, the south end, of about 122 feet. The depth gradually narrows down to about 47 feet at the north end in conformance with the irregular shape of the platted block on which the structure is situated. Walls, rising two stories in height, are of common red brick and are pierced at close, regular intervals by two banks of large, multi-pane, steel sash windows. A stone course separates the two levels of windows. The original plan of the Market Street elevation was principally one of symmetry and featured a six-bay-wide central section surmounted by a one-step high parapet bearing the name "PEARL STEAM LAUNDRY" executed in large block letters formed with stone. Flanking this main part on the south and north, respectively, were the stable and the office with their intended use denoted in block letters above the second story windows. In 1923, the building was extended on the north by the erection of a two-story, three-bay-wide addition. In materials and general plan it was a sympathetic expansion. Other features of the 1912 construction still present include the brick smokestack which towers above the building at the rear and, also visible from the rear, the saw-tooth and flat-decked roof monitors. Except for the 1923 addition and the more recent bricking in of the stable windows, the exterior plan of the building remains unchanged since its completion seventy-one years ago. The utilitarian arrangement of the interior--the stable, the two-story high open spaces of the plant, and the office--likewise remain virtually unaltered. The site comprises approximately five-tenths (.5) acre.

19: See Additional Architectural Information form.

20. INFORMATION SOURCES

Public records: deeds, leases, mortgages, census, birth, death, marriage, township and recorded plats; City Directories; Interview: Daniel Korb (III); 1880 Atlas of Vanderburgh County; 1899 Plat Book of Vanderburgh and Warrick Counties; 1912 City Directory (depicting the four Pearl Laundry locations); (continued)

21. SURVEYOR  Joan C. Marchand & Douglas L Stern

22. DATE  14 February 1983 (Amended)
WASO Form - 177
("R" June 1984)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Pearl Steam Laundry (Downtown Evansville MRA)
Vanderburgh County
INDIANA

Working No. 5/06/82 - 1226
Fed. Reg. Date: 2/5/85
Date Due: 6/17/84
Action: ACCEPT 6-84
RETURN
REJECT

Federal Agency: ______________________________

Reviewer’s comments: ____________________________

NR decision

Nomination returned for: technical corrections cited below
substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category Ownership Public Acquisition Status Accessible Present Use

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Has this property been determined eligible? yes no

7. Description

Condition

Check one

excellent

ruins

deteriorated

unaltered

fair

unexposed

altered

Check one

original site

moved
date

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

□ summary paragraph
□ completeness
□ clarity
□ alterations/integrity
□ dates
□ boundary selection
8. Significance

Period Areas of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates Builder/Architect
Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

☐ summary paragraph
☐ completeness
☐ clarity
☐ applicable criteria
☐ justification of areas checked
☐ relating significance to the resource
☐ context
☐ relationship of integrity to significance
☐ justification of exception
☐ other

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property _______________
Quadrangle name _______________
UTM References

Verbal boundary description and justification

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification
The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☐ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature
title date

13. Other

☐ Maps
☐ Photographs
☐ Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to ______________________________

Signed _______________________________ Date _______________________________ Phone: _______________________________

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet
DOWNTOWN EVANSVILLE RESOURCES
Vanderburgh County, Indiana
N. Long, DMD 1977

#115 view southwest of
428 Market Street

#108 Pearl Steam Laundry
Please refer to the map in the Multiple Property Cover Sheet for this property

Multiple Property Cover Sheet Reference Number: 64000186