United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Montgomery Ward Store
and/or common Old Montgomery Ward Building

2. Location

street & number 517-19 Main Street Walkway
not for publication
city, town Evansville vicinity of congressional district
state Indiana code 18 county Vanderburgh code 163

3. Classification

Category district building(s) X building(s) ownership public private both Status occupied unoccupied work in progress
Public Acquisition Accessible yes restricted yes unrestricted no

4. Owner of Property

name Gary Gerling
street & number 651 Walnut Street
city, town Evansville vicinity of state Indiana

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Vanderburgh County Recorder
street & number 651 Walnut Street
city, town Evansville state Indiana

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Indiana Historic Sites and Structures
has this property been determined eligible? yes X no
Inventory
date June 1981
depository for survey records Division of Historic Preservation and Archeology

FHR-S-900
7. Description

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Condition</th>
<th>Check one</th>
<th>Check one</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>excellent</td>
<td>deteriorated</td>
<td>unaltered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>good</td>
<td>unexposed</td>
<td>altered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>fair</td>
<td>ruins</td>
<td>original site</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The building occupies a site in the center of the city's retail/commercial core. Main Street was once lined with structures like this former retail store. Brick-constructed with structural steel in floors and ceilings, the Old Montgomery Ward Building stands three stories in height. Its Georgian Revival facade contains the only significant architectural features to be found. Above a recently altered (about 1975) ground floor is a two-story elevation executed in common bond brick. Three vertically organized bays punctuate the facade, carrying two sets of double hung multi-paned windows, one per floor. The bays are framed by short balustrades at the bottoms and molded cornices at the tops. Alternating corner quoins constructed of brick frame either side of the facade. String courses and a stone coping divide the elevation horizontally. The bottoms of the window ensembles rest on a beltcourse of soldier course brick. The outer dimensions of the building are roughly the same as those of an earlier building on this site which was remodeled by the Ward chain to make way for their store in 1933. The party walls on either side of the elevation are completely devoid of decoration, as is the rear elevation. The interior, clear-span space consists of a basement, first floor, mezzanine, and second and third floors. Variously remodeled while still a retail concern, the interior was furthermore utterly gutted in about 1975 by local entrepreneurs in preparation for development as offices. All that remains of any significance is a stair and rail leading to the basement and to the mezzanine. The lack of integrity can also be said for the ground floor on the facade. The original storefront was typically plate glass with steel frame and was remodeled repeatedly during the course of the building's retail history. The present ground floor treatment was largely performed as a temporary measure by a previous owner.
8. Significance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Period</th>
<th>Areas of Significance—Check and justify below</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>prehistoric</td>
<td>archeology-prehistoric</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1400-1499</td>
<td>archeology-historic</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1500-1599</td>
<td>agriculture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1600-1699</td>
<td>architecture</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1700-1799</td>
<td>art</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>1800-1899</td>
<td>commerce</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>X 1900-</td>
<td>communications</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>X</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Specific dates 1933

Builder Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The significance of the Old Montgomery Ward Building rests upon its association with an important national corporation and its reflection of an important passage in the social history of the country. The 1933 construction of the building in Evansville as part of the Ward retail system followed a pattern of retail shopping and consumerism which had its genesis in the large Eastern department stores of the late-19th century. The preeminent Midwestern/rural catalogue shopping phenomenon had begun its gradual erosion in 1925 with the establishment of Sears-Roebuck's first retail-only store (in Evansville, the McCurdy-Sears Building, National Register, 1979). The Ward Building in Evansville reflected the Chicago company's regard for the growth of city-based markets in the early 20th century and its program of cementing its retail shopping thrust (begun falteringingly in Plymouth, Indiana, in about 1928). Ward's approach to marketing also illuminated the pattern of democratization which had occurred over the quarter century of department store shopping preceding the Evansville Ward building, whereby products and advertising were aimed at a broad range of economy-minded buyers instead of just the well-to-do. The design of the Evansville building was based on a prototype prepared by the company in the early part of 1933. Variations were seen at one time throughout the region.
9. Major Bibliographical References
Evansville City Directories.
Latham, Frank B. 1872-1972, A Century of Serving Consumers: The Story of

10. Geographical Data
Acreage of nominated property: less than one
Quadrangle name: Evansville South
UMT References

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Zone</th>
<th>Easting</th>
<th>Northing</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>1 6 4</td>
<td>5 2 1 0 0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>4 2 0 1 5 0 0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Zone Easting Northing

Verbal boundary description and justification

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>state</th>
<th>code</th>
<th>county</th>
<th>code</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. Form Prepared By
name/title: Douglas L. Stern, City Historic Preservation Officer
organization: Department of Metropolitan Development
date: August 1981
street & number: 216 Washington Ave.
telephone: 812/426-5487
city or town: Evansville
state: Indiana

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

- national
- state
- local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title: date

For HCRS use only
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Keeper of the National Register: date

Attest: date

Chief of Registration: date
Old Montgomery Ward Building
517-19 Main Street
Evansville, Indiana

National Register of Historic Places
16/452100/4201500
STATE OF INDIANA
DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES
INDIANA HISTORIC SITES AND STRUCTURES INVENTORY

Additional Architectural Information

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>A. NAME</th>
<th>Old Montgomery Ward Building</th>
<th>C. NUMBER</th>
<th>82-196-0020</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>B. ADDRESS</td>
<td>517 Main Street</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>D. UTM References</td>
<td>1.6</td>
<td>4.5,0</td>
<td>0.0,0</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

E. This property has been given preliminary approval by the Interior Department and the SHPO as a certified historic structure. A National Register nomination form was filed with the SHPO 15 September 1981.

It was not unusual for national corporations to use stock plans for their buildings when Montgomery Ward came to downtown Evansville in 1933. The firm extensively remodeled another building on this site, and distinct similarities can be noted between the Evansville store and stores throughout the Midwest.

F. INFORMATION SOURCES City Directories; Montgomery Ward Corporate History.

G. PREPARED BY Douglas L. Stern

H. DATE 29 January 1982
**A. HISTORIC NAME**
Old Montgomery Ward Building

**B. COUNTY**
Vanderburgh

**C. NUMBER**
02-1916-0020

**D. ADDRESS**
517-19 Main Street

**E. TWP/CITY**
Pigeon/Evansville

**F. QUAD NAME**
Evansville South

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>RATING</th>
<th>Outstanding ☒</th>
<th>Significant/Notable ☐</th>
<th>Contributing/Reference ☐</th>
<th>Non-Contributing ☐</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**STATE OF INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**

**INDIANA HISTORIC SITES AND STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

**REVISED 1961**

**MOUNT CONTACT PRINTS HERE**

1. **COMMON NAME**
Gerling Law Offices

2. **OWNERSHIP**
Public ☒ Private ☐

3. **VISIBLE**
Yes ☒ No ☐

4. **PROPERTY'S MAILING ADDRESS**
Gary Gerling
651 Walnut Street
Evansville, Indiana 47708

5. **LOCATION NOTES**
Main Street Walway midway between Fifth and Sixth on the SE side.

20-34-0 less than one acre

6. **USE**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>PRESENT</th>
<th>PAST</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Residence</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Govt./Pol.</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Commerce</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Industrial</td>
<td>☢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Agriculture</td>
<td>☢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Transportation</td>
<td>☢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Organization</td>
<td>☢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>☢</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**office under construction**

6a. **SURVEYS**
SR ☒ NR ☒ NHL ☒ HABS ☒ HAER ☒

7. **ENDANGERED**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Past</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Vacant</td>
<td>☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Neglected</td>
<td>☢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Encroachment</td>
<td>☢</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other</td>
<td>☢</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

8. **CATEGORY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Local Legal Protections</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Historic District ☒</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Landmark ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Structure ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Site ☐</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Other ☐</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

9a. **LOCAL LEGAL PROTECTIONS**

**MUSEUM**

**Multiple Resource**

9b. **CONSTRUCTION HISTORICAL INDEX**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>10. CONDITION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☒ Excellent</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Good</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Fair</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Deteriorated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Ruins</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11. **BUILDING INTEGRITY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Present</th>
<th>Past</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐ Unaltered</td>
<td>☒ Altered</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>☐ Moved</td>
<td>☐ Date</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

11a. **Specify Alterations**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Removals</th>
<th>Structural</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>☐</td>
<td>☒ Front</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Additions</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

12. **DATE**
1933

13. **STYLE**
Georgian Revival

14. **ARCHITECT/BUILDER**
Montgomery Ward Corp.

15. **DESCRIPTION**
see below

16. **OUTBUILDINGS**
none

17. **SITE PLAN**

18. **ENVIRONMENT**
urban, built-up
The Old Montgomery Ward Building, a brick-constructed building standing three stories in height with structural steel in its floors and ceilings, occupies a site in the center of Evansville's retail/commercial core. Evansville's Main, Street was once lined with structures similar to this former retail store. Its Georgian Revival facade has been retained through the years and contains the significant architectural feature to be found in the exterior. The original store front was typically plate glass with steel frame and has been remodeled repeatedly during the course of the building's retail history. The present ground-floor treatment was installed in 1975 by the then owner and is of contemporary design which is compatible with the scale, design, materials, color and texture of this building. Above the ground floor is a two-story elevation executed in common bond brick. Three vertically organized bays punctuate the facade, carrying two sets of double hung multi-paned windows, one per floor. The bays are framed by short balustrades at the bottoms and molded cornices at the tops. Alternating corner quoins constructed of brick frame either side of the facade. String courses and a stone coping divide the elevation horizontally. The bottoms of the window ensembles rest on a beltcourse of soldier course brick. The outer dimensions of the building are approximately the same as those of an earlier building on the same site which was remodeled by the Ward chain to make room for their store in 1933. The party walls on either side of the elevation are completely devoid of decoration, as is the rear elevation. The interior clear-span space consists of a basement, first floor, mezzanine, and second and third floors. Interior renovations were performed from time to time to suit the needs of the then occupant. The only remaining original interior architectural feature is the metal rail and stair on the first, mezzanine and second floor levels.

19: see Additional Information Form

20. INFORMATION SOURCES

Evansville City Directories; Evansville Journal (19 March 1909 and 15 March 1914); Latham, Frank B., The Story of Montgomery Ward, Chicago, 1972; Brant & Fuller, History of Vanderburgh County, 1889.

21. SURVEYOR

Douglas L. Stern

22. DATE

ammended 19 August 1982
Property: Montgomery Ward Building  
State, County: IN, Vanderburgh

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

Substantive Review: ✔ sample request appeal NR decision

Reviewer's comments: The significance as stated in 8.5 and on inventory form is not sufficient for individual listing. Only one of 2 Depression-era department buildings in Evansville does not qualify building unless its role at that time assumed importance for community as large. Nor does representation of a stock design of Montgomery Ward store indicate architectural importance (continued)

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

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

7. Description

- summary paragraph  
- completeness  
- clarity  
- alterations/integrity  
- dates  
- boundary selection

Please clarify date of current appearance (1933 or 35?) Please date and describe changes to store front and interior
8. Significance

Please discuss the importance and contributions of the Mont. Ward Dept. Store to Evansville in the 1930s. Does its establishment in Evansville reflect the city's importance in the development of Evansville's Commercial development or role as a major center of commerce? How does this store, store, role, and its architectural style, period and appearance relate to that of others locally (please assess this building for the value found in this building) of similar period?

If building is re-submitted before 50 years of age in its current importance must be included.

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

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's signature

13. Other

Maps, Photographs, Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to T. Maloney

Signed, Date Phone: 202 272-3504

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet.
the significance such a type has not been established in nomination or is not generally understood. Questionable is the date of the remodelling, assuming it is 1933, we need the documentation to demonstrate exceptional importance. The importance of the presence of a Montgomery Ward Dept. store in Evansville needs substantiation to support historic significance.

---

#8 form. What are its distinctive features? Please discuss the importance of its design as a reflection of 20th-century Classicism. In commercial architecture, or as a prototype associated with the widespread benching of large retailing establishments? Please relate the importance of freight pattern of development to Evansville's development of 1930s and show how the presence of this stone type was local and reflects an erect or type having local importance for that context.

Note: Upon further evaluation of buildings encompassing buildings 51, 52, 53, 93, 94, 95, 96, 97, 98, 99, 100, 101, this building may be found to be an integral part of a district.
The significance of the Old Montgomery Ward Building rests upon its association with an important national corporation and its reflection of an important passage in the social history of the country and of Evansville. The 1933 construction of the building in Evansville as part of the Ward retail system followed a pattern of retail shopping and consumerism which had its genesis in the large Eastern department stores of the late 19th century. The preeminent Midwestern/rural catalogue shopping phenomenon had begun its gradual erosion in 1925 with the establishment of Sears-Roebuck's first retail-only store (in Evansville, the McCurdy-Sears Building, National Register, 1979). The Ward Building in Evansville reflected the Chicago company's regard for the growth of city-based markets in the early 20th century and its program of cementing its retail shopping thrust (begun falteringingly in Plymouth, Indiana, in about 1928). Ward's approach to marketing also illuminated the pattern of democratization which had occurred over the quarter century of department store shopping preceding the Evansville Ward Building, whereby products and advertising were aimed at a broad range of economy-minded buyers instead of just the well-to-do.

The construction of the Ward store in Evansville represented a new chapter in the city's commercial experience. In the 19th century consumer goods were largely obtained by city dwellers on a personal, direct basis. Neighborhood stores flourished, and downtown establishments catered to specialized clientele. This was the era of predominantly smaller, locally-owned and managed stores which dealt in a limited line of goods for a single class of customers which were either well-to-do or less well-to-do, never both at once. Many local merchants even resided on their stores' premises.

The 20th century marked a change which the Evansville Montgomery Ward store illustrated. Though there had been a few large general department stores in Evansville (for example, the William Hughes Store—#12—established in 1854 and responsible for the construction of a large store block in 1911), these were still locally based. Chain stores appeared to enter the picture in about 1912 with the arrival of Woolworth's (see #15), the first time that nationally-based enterprises made a bid for the local retail market. The balance tipped further away from the local merchants in 1925 with the establishment of the world's first (continued on separate sheet)
ADDITIONAL ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION, continued:

Sears-Roebuck noncatalogue store (see #32), followed soon after by the less daring Ward chain in 1933. Ironically, the Ward corporation selected an early 20th century department store which had been locally owned and operated for their remodeled Georgian Revival storefront.

Ward's development of a prototype storefront design in 1933 also underscored the transition from local to regional and even national perspective. Not many other institutions had the opportunity to behave as national architectural producers during the 19th or early 20th centuries. To an extent, larger railroad concerns unified the designs of stations and other railway buildings, not so much perhaps for purposes of identity, but rather because the larger companies employed staff architects and engineers who tended to stick with proven answers to similar programs. The Federal Government—in the form of the Supervising Architect of the Treasury Department—certainly exercised more centralized control over the design and construction of public architecture than any other institution which comes to mind. The years during which Mills, Young, and Rogers occupied the office was a period in which the nation's building program was widely criticized for being too standardized. Nevertheless, when it came to commerce and the retail market, there was not any precedent for what the Montgomery Ward Corporation embarked upon when the Board of Directors accepted a prototype "architectural treatment for a new storefront of original design" as part of its first approach to the noncatalogue, city-based market. The identification of the Ward store under a single, unified architectural rubric reflected the company's regard for high building standards. After all, not all Midwestern communities had architects on hand to design stores according to Ward's needs. Furthermore, as Midwesterners became more mobile and the region became more urban in the early 20th century, Ward could be assured of ready identification of their stores by anyone new to a community. Ward was acutely mindful of the public's distrust of anything suggesting the slightest inconsistencies. Every effort was made—in advertising, the display of goods, or the architecture of the store—to reassure the skeptical consumer who was not familiar with national chains that he was getting exactly the same high quality that he had come to know and expect from Ward's long history of catalogue sales. Ward was a slave of standardization; they would no sooner conduct retail business in differently appearing stores as they would attempt to issue different catalogues in the same year for their mail-order business. It may also be concluded that Ward, in choosing the Georgian Revival for the prototype seen in Evansville, was aligning itself with the conservative traditionalism of its rural/small town markets instead of, for instance, an Art Deco modernism more readily associated with big city ways.

The integrity of the Evansville Ward store is based upon its retention of key architectural features which relate strongly to the elements of the context of significance: 1) The property remains in the same location as where the described events and phenomena occurred during the period of the building's establishment and use as a Ward store; 2) the Georgian Revival features of the 1933 prototype design remain absolutely intact and unchanged, while the interior and ground floor elevation—never particularly significant or noteworthy within the meaning of the building's design—have been altered, albeit not incongruously; 3) the property is still within a retail and commercial environment set in the center of the Evansville community; 4) the composition, arrangement, and pattern of the
ADDITIONAL ARCHITECTURAL INFORMATION, continued:

building's storefront materials have not been altered except for the ground floor; 5) the workmanship of the storefront as expressed in the skillful brickwork and other masonry or in the woodcarving evident on the facade is still intact; 6) the building clearly evokes strong association within the local community through its appearance; and 7) the property is unquestionably the locus for the events outlined within the context of significance.

The total acreage of the site is .32 acres.
**STATE OF INDIANA**
**DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES**
**INDIANA HISTORIC SITES AND STRUCTURES INVENTORY**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>FIELD</th>
<th>INFORMATION</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. HISTORIC NAME</td>
<td>Montgomery Ward Bldg.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. OWNERSHIP:</td>
<td>Public X Private</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. LOCATION NOTES</td>
<td>20-44 2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. USE</td>
<td>Present X Past O</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. CATEGORY</td>
<td>Commercial X Industrial</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. ACCESSIBLE</td>
<td>Yes/Restricted X Yes/Unrestricted</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13. STYLE</td>
<td>Federal X Greek Revival X Gothic Revival X Italianate X Romanesque Revival</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15. ALTERATIONS</td>
<td>UNALTERED X NO</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>16. SITE INTEGRITY</td>
<td>X ORIGINAL SITE</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>18. IN ESTABLISHED HISTORIC DISTRICT</td>
<td>Yes</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>20. INFORMATION SOURCES</td>
<td>Township A. National |</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>21. PREPARED BY</td>
<td>L. Hammel X 22. DATE</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

**REMARKS:**
Remodeled by Montgomery Ward about 1934-5. Presently (9/81) undergoing renovation and remodeling for conversion to offices.
Montgomery Ward Bldg. (Downtown Evansville MRA)

Montgomery, Vanderburgh

Working No. 5-20, 82-1006
Fed. Reg. Date: 2/1/83
Date Due: 10/2/82
Action: RETURN
Federal Agency: ______________

Substantive Review:  sample ___ request ___ appeal ___ NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Nomination materials attempt to make the case for eligibility as a good example of Ward's standardized facade design and for its importance as one of the major department stores in Evansville which changed the commercial marketing base from small, cheap to larger, more standardized chain stores.

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

1. Name
The case would have been much better made for eligibility if the specific impact of the building on the community was discussed. The less the building's significance lies in its historical impact on the community (along with Sears) as a major chain department store.

2. Location

3. Classification

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

7. Description

Condition
_ excellent ___ deteriorated
_ good ___ ruined
_ fair ___ unexposed

Check one
_ unaltered ___ moved
_ altered ___ date

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

X summary paragraph
_ completeness
X clarity
_ alterations/integrity  OK
_ dates
_ boundary selection
8. Significance

Period
Specific dates
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
UMT 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

13. Other

- Maps
- Photographs
- Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to

Signed

Date

Phone: 202 272-3504

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

#98 view south of
515-17 Main Street
Old Montgomery Ward Building
517-19 Main Street
Evansville, Indiana

D Stern, DMD July 1981
#2 view looking N of rear and side elevations
Old Montgomery Ward Building
517-19 Main Street
Evansville, Indiana
D Stern, DMD August 1981

#3 view of 1st floor interior; looking NW
#4 view of 1st floor and mezzanine
Please refer to the map in the Multiple Property Cover Sheet for this property

Multiple Property Cover Sheet Reference Number: 64000186
September 8, 1981

Dear Mr. Stern:

At your request I have reviewed your proposed nomination that my property at 517-519 Main Street Walkway, Evansville, Indiana, being the old Montgomery Ward Building, be listed in the National Register of Historic Places. Please be advised that I heartily endorse and support such nomination and assure you that if the same is approved, we will commence the necessary steps to restore and preserve this historic structure.

I and my associates view with pride the opportunity of placing our law offices in this structure. If we may assist you in the securing of approval of this certification, please advise.

Sincerely yours,

[Signature]

Mr. Douglas L. Stern  
Historic Preservation Officer  
City of Evansville  
Department of Metropolitan Development  
327 Civic Center Complex  
Evansville, IN.  47708
11 September 1981

Mr James M. Ridenour
Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer
608 State Office Building
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Dear Mr Ridenour:

I write to urge your approval of the application of Mr Gary Gerling for Tax Act certification of his building and planned rehabilitation.

As the attached documentation indicates, the applicant's Old Montgomery Ward Building clearly meets the criteria for declaration as a "certified historic structure." As for the proposed adaptive reuse of Mr Gerling's building as law offices, I am certain that you will agree that it conforms to the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

The City of Evansville is excited about the potential for this project as a part of our Downtown revitalization. I would hope that you and your staff assist Evansville by performing a speedy review and approval of this application.

Thank you very much for your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Michael D. Vandeveer
Mayor

cc: Douglas L. Stern
15 September 1981

Mr James M. Ridenour  
Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer  
608 State Office Building  
Indianapolis, Indiana  46204

Dear Mr Ridenour:

I write to transmit a National Register nomination form for the Old Montgomery Ward Building in Evansville, Vanderburgh County. The preparation of this form and nomination material has been performed by this office in conformance with the grant agreement with the Division of Historic Preservation and Archeology.

The nomination request is being made concurrent with a certification application for the new Tax Act benefits. Your office will receive the application material under separate cover in the next few days.

Allow me to repeat my appreciation for your attention to Evansville's preservation needs. The Old Montgomery Ward project and others like it are important to the city's revitalization and depend upon the support of your office.

Sincerely,

Douglas L. Stern  
Historic Preservation Officer

DLS:p

cc: Gary Gerling

enclosures
29 September 1981

Mr James M. Ridenour
Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer
608 State Office Building
Indianapolis, Indiana 46204

Dear Mr Ridenour:

I write to transmit a Tax Act Certification Application for a property in Vanderburgh County known as the Old Montgomery Ward Building. The certification material has been prepared by this office in compliance with the grant agreement with the Division of Historic Preservation and Archeology.

As you know, this property is the subject of a National Register nomination under consideration by the State Review Board. We hope that the concurrent review of the nomination and application for certification can be completed in time for an early construction date on or near the first of 1982.

The letter of endorsement from Mayor Vandeveer accurately expresses the City's interest in seeing a speedy review and approval of this important revitalization project. You can be sure that the number of applications for certification or listing is in direct ratio to the amount of red tape which entrepreneurs feel they can endure. Your cooperation is appreciated.

Sincerely,

Douglas L. Stern
City Historic Preservation Officer

DLS:p

enclosures
IN REPLY REFER TO:

December 10, 1981

1602-02
0071-82-IN-82-0063
Old Montgomery Ward Building
517-519 Main Street Walkway
Evansville, Indiana

Mr. Gary Gerling
651 Walnut Street
Evansville, Indiana 47708

Dear Mr. Gerling:

We have made a preliminary determination that the property listed above will probably be certified and listed in the National Register of Historic Places.

If the property is listed in the National Register and if it is subject to depreciation under section 167 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954, this property will qualify as a "certified historic structure." "Certified historic structure" status is the first step in qualifying for tax deductions under section 2124 of the Tax Reform Act, as extended, and the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981. Certification of the rehabilitation is the second step. These incentives apply only to structures which undergo rehabilitation which can be certified in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

This preliminary determination is made pursuant to your request in Part 1 of the Historic Preservation Certification Application. Part 2 of the application is undergoing separate review by this office. You will be notified of that determination in a separate letter. Specific questions concerning Part 2 of the application to certify rehabilitation work should be addressed to your State Historic Preservation Officer or to this office at (313) 668-2058.

Sincerely,

Harry G. Scheele
Harry G. Scheele, Acting Chief
Division of Cultural Programs
19 August 1982

Mr. James M. Ridenour
Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer
608 State Office Building
Indianapolis, IN. 46204

Dear Mr. Ridenour:

I submit for your review and action a response to the National Register regarding the listing of a property nominated as a part of the Evansville Downtown Multiple Resources Area. The resource in question is known commonly as 517-19 Main Street, the Old Montgomery Ward Building.

Enclosed are several items which together form our response to the questions and issues raised by the National Register review transmitted to you on 26 July and received here on 7 August. Please find:

* An amended State Historic Sites and Structures Inventory Form
* An amended Additional Information Form
* A Part 1 Certification Application, dated 8 September 1981
* A National Register Nomination Form, dated August 1981

I ask your indulgence on one matter raised by the reviewer concerning the building's age and a statement of exceptional significance. The building is presently approximately three months short of reaching fifty years of age. If the National Register and your office are convinced that Criteria Considerations regarding the fifty-year cutoff apply to this property, then we will rephrase our statement of significance in such a way to explain exceptional significance. Allow me to quote, however, the 1 June 1982 How To Apply The National Register Criteria for Evaluation (Draft), page 62: "Fifty years is a general estimate (my underlining) of the period of time necessary for the development of the historical perspective necessary to evaluate significance."

The reviewer also raises the possibility of a district embracing the Ward Building and other properties on Main and NW Sixth Streets. Based upon a reinspection and re-evaluation of the buildings mentioned
by the reviewer and upon discussions with Nancy Long, architectural historian with your office, we have concluded that there is not a district which meets National Register criteria. The reviewer had the benefit of seeing neither the extent and type of noncontributing buildings within the so-called potential district nor the unclear delineation of the "district" from contiguous portions of the Multiple Resources Area. It would be our wish, therefore, to proceed on an individual basis regarding the eligibility of the Ward Building and others nearby which were noted by the reviewer for reconsideration.

Your speedy action would be greatly appreciated. The owner of the property and the City are both more than willing to meet with you or your staff or provide any other information as you see fit. We are very anxious to resolve this matter and appreciate your cooperation.

Sincerely,

Michael D. Vandeveer
Mayor
September 8, 1982

Carol D. Shull
Acting Chief of Registration
D O I
W 434
Washington, D.C. 20243

Dear Ms. Shull:

Enclosed is a National Register nomination for the former Montgomery Ward Building in Evansville, Indiana. This nomination was initially submitted as part of the nomination for the Downtown Evansville Multiple Resource Area, and was returned to us for more information. Additional materials have been provided, which hopefully address your concerns.

Please note that the Montgomery Ward Building received a preliminary determination of eligibility from the National Park Service last December, in connection with a certified rehabilitation project. Also please note that the building will be 50 years old in a mere four months.

Very truly yours,

James M. Ridenour
State Historic Preservation Officer

Enclosure
HISTORIC PRESERVATION CERTIFICATION
APPLICATION — PART 1
(Pursuant to the Tax Reform Act of 1976)

PART 1 EVALUATION OF SIGNIFICANCE

1. NAME OF PROPERTY: Old Montgomery Ward Building
   Address of property: Street 517-19 Main Street Walkway
   Evansville Vanderburgh Indiana 47708
   City County State Zip Code
   Name of historic district in which property is located: not applicable

2. DESCRIPTION OF PHYSICAL APPEARANCE:
   (see instructions for map and photograph requirements—use reverse side if necessary)
   The building occupies a site in the center of the city's retail/commercial core.
   Main Street was once lined with structures like this former retail store. Brick-
   constructed with structural steel in floors and ceilings, the Old Montgomery Ward
   Building stands three stories in height. Its Georgian Revival facade contains the

3. STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:
   (use reverse side if necessary)
   The significance of the Old Montgomery Ward Building rests upon its association with
   an important national corporation and its reflection of an important passage in the
   social history of the country. The 1933 construction of the building in Evansville
   as part of the Ward retail system followed a pattern of retail shopping and consumerism
   Date of construction (if known): 1933
   Original site □ Moved Date of alterations (if known): ca 1975

4. NAME AND MAILING ADDRESS OF OWNER:
   Name Gary Gerling
   Street 651 Walnut Street
   City Evansville Indiana 47708
   State Zip Code
   Telephone Number (during day): Area Code 812/423-5251

I hereby attest that the information I have provided is, to the best of my knowledge, correct, and that I am owner of the property described above.

Signature Date Sept 8, 1976

For office use only
The structure described above is included within the boundaries of the National Register historic district and □ contributes □ does not contribute to the character of the district.

The structure □ appears □ does not appear to meet National Register Criteria for Evaluation (36 CFR 60.6) and □ will likely □ will not be nominated to the National Register in accord with the Department of the Interior procedures (36 CFR 60).

The structure is located in a district which □ appears □ does not appear to meet National Register Criteria for Evaluation (36 CFR 60.6), □ will likely □ will not be nominated to the National Register in accord with Department of the Interior procedures (36 CFR 60), and □ appears □ does not appear to contribute to the character of said district.

Signature Date
State Historic Preservation Officer

This property has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Department of the Interior (36 CFR 67) and, if subject to depreciation under section 187 of the Internal Revenue Code of 1954.

□ is hereby certified a historic structure.
□ does not contribute to the character of the historic district and does not merit certification as a historic structure. Reasons given on the attached sheet.
only significant architectural features to be found. Above a recently altered (about 1975) ground floor is a two-story elevation executed in common bond brick. Three vertically organized bays punctuate the facade, carrying two sets of double hung multi-paneled windows, one per floor. The bays are framed by short balustrades at the bottoms and molded cornices at the tops. Alternating corner quoins constructed of brick frame either side of the facade. String courses and a stone coping divide the elevation horizontally. The bottoms of the window ensembles rest on a beltcourse of soldier course brick. The outer dimensions of the building are roughly the same as those of an earlier building on this site which was remodeled by the Ward chain to make way for their store in 1933. The party walls on either side of the elevation are completely devoid of decoration, as is the rear elevation. The interior, clear-span space consists of a basement, first floor, mezzanine, and second and third floors. Variously remodeled while still a retail concern, the interior was furthermore utterly gutted in about 1975 by local entrepreneurs in preparation for development as offices. All that remains of any significance is a stair and rail leading to the basement and to the mezzanine. The lack of integrity can also be said for the ground floor on the facade. The original storefront was typically plate glass with steel frame and was remodeled repeatedly during the course of the building's retail history. The present ground floor treatment was largely performed as a temporary measure by a previous owner. The proposed ground floor alteration will not produce a lasting effect on any significant original building fabric and will furthermore be in harmony with the scale and detail of the building's 1933 style of design.

which had its genesis in the large Eastern department stores of the late-19th century. The preeminent Midwestern/rural catalogue shopping phenomenon had begun its gradual erosion in 1925 with the establishment of Sears-Roebuck's first retail-only store (in Evansville, the McCurdy-Sears Building, National Register, 1979). The Ward Building in Evansville reflected the Chicago company's regard for the growth of city-based markets in the early 20th century and its program of cementing its retail shopping thrust (begun faltering in Plymouth, Indiana, in about 1928). Ward's approach to marketing also illuminated the pattern of democratization which had occurred over the quarter century of department store shopping preceeding the Evansville Ward building, whereby products and advertising were aimed at a broad range of economy-minded buyers instead of just the well-to-do. The design of the Evansville Building was based on a prototype prepared by the company in the early part of 1933. Variations were seen at one time throughout the region.
HISTORIC PRESERVATION CERTIFICATION
APPLICATION — PART 2
(Pursuant to the Tax Reform Act of 1976)

United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
Office of Archeology and Historic Preservation
Washington, D.C. 20243

Instructions: Applicant should read the instructions carefully before completing application. No Certification may be made unless a completed application form has been received (P.L. 94-455). Use typewriter or print clearly in dark ink to complete the application form. If additional space is needed to complete Part 2, attach additional blank sheets. Part 2 of this application may be completed and sent to the appropriate State Historic Preservation Officer at any time during the year and may be sent separately or with Part 1.

Part 2 DESCRIPTION OF REHABILITATION

1. NAME OF PROPERTY: Old Montgomery Ward Building

Address of property: Street 517-19 Main Street
City Evansville State Indiana Zip Code 47708

If located in National Register historic district, local or State designated district, specify: not applicable

2. DATA ON EXISTING STRUCTURE:

Date of construction: 1933 Existing floor area: 31,000 sq. ft.

Original use: retail department store Type of construction: brick bearing with structural steel in concrete floors and ceilings

3. DATA ON REHABILITATION PROJECT:

Project starting date (est.) Jan 1982 Project completion date (est.) May 1982

Estimated cost of rehabilitation: $500,000 Proposed use: offices

Number of housing units to be created (if applicable): 0

Has the property received Federal or State financial assistance? □ yes □ no

If yes, specify source:

Are architectural plans and specifications available for review? □ yes □ no

Architect’s or developer’s name and address: Gary Gerling

651 Walnut Street Evansville, Indiana 47708

Telephone Number: 812/423-5251

4. DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF REHABILITATION/PRESERVATION WORK — Includes site work, new construction, alterations, etc. Complete blocks below.

**NUMBER 1**

Architectural feature: facade

Approximate date of feature: 1933

Describe existing feature: Brick bearing with 3 major sets of upper story windows, multi-paned. Ground floor altered recently by previous owner out of keeping with original style or design. Facade previously white-painted, now almost completely weathered. Ornamental clock in roofline. Windows are double-hung, multi-paned sash. Corner quoins frame facade above the ground floor level 3 stories in height.

Photo no: 1-2 Drawing no: 5

Describe work and impact on existing features: Owner intends to restore upper stories and to replace ground floor entry and windows. Brick to receive maintenance repointing with compatible mortar. Ground floor to be redesigned to feature motifs in harmony with original Georgian Revival style of the building. Central entrance surmounted by pedimented canopy and flanked by 2 sets of multi-paned windows similar in scale and detail to those above. New brick on ground floor to match original. Trim painted off-white. Inconspicuous storm windows to be added.
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>Architectural feature</th>
<th>Approximate date of feature</th>
<th>Describe work and impact on existing features:</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>2</td>
<td>windows</td>
<td>1933 +</td>
<td>The only proposed action is to restore and repaint using colors similar to original.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3</td>
<td>exterior walls</td>
<td>1933 or earlier</td>
<td>The exterior walls will not be substantially changed. On the southwestern wall one fixed pane, single light window will be added to light the proposed interior atrium. A pair of smaller, similarly detailed windows are planned for the rear elevation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4</td>
<td>roof</td>
<td>1933 +</td>
<td>The existing roof will be repaired in kind.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5</td>
<td>site</td>
<td>1933 or earlier</td>
<td>No planned changes are proposed.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Describe existing feature:
Aside from the aforementioned facade windows, the only other fenestration is on the building's rear elevation. These are plain awning windows, metal sash.

Describe existing feature:
The brick exterior walls were constructed originally in the early 20th century as party walls for adjoining buildings. As such, they have no windows or significant decorative features. The southwestern wall is stucco-covered.

Describe existing feature:
The building has a flat concrete roof behind a parapet and covered with a standard BUR.

Describe existing feature:
There is no open space or landscaping.

Name and mailing address of owner:
Gary Gerling
651 Walnut Street
Evansville, Indiana 47708
812/423-5251

I hereby apply for certification of rehabilitation work described above for purposes of Section 2124 of the Tax Reform Act of 1976. I hereby attest that the information I have provided is, to the best of my knowledge, correct, and that I am owner of the property described above.

Owner's Signature: [Signature]
Date: Sept. 5, 1981
CONTINUATION SHEET
Historic Preservation Certification
Application — Part 2

Name of Property: Old Montgomery Ward Building
Address of Property: 517-19 Main Street
Name of Owner: Gary Gerling

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>NUMBER</th>
<th>Architectural feature</th>
<th>Approximate date of feature</th>
<th>Describe work and impact on existing features</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>6</td>
<td>interior walls</td>
<td>before and after 1933</td>
<td>The deteriorated plaster will be demolished and the wall surfaces will be dry-walled. Interior finishes will include wood and brick trim.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7</td>
<td>floors</td>
<td>1933</td>
<td>Floors will be carpeted except in public areas and in kitchens and restrooms. Brick pavers will be employed in public areas, and the kitchens and restrooms will be tiled.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8</td>
<td>ceilings</td>
<td>1933 +</td>
<td>The existing plaster will be demolished. A new ceiling system of acoustical tiles will be installed at the existing ceiling level.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9</td>
<td>interior plan</td>
<td>1933 +</td>
<td>Various office spaces will be constructed in conformance with the attached schematic plans. The mezzanine will be expanded by the addition of a mezzanine across the front portion of the building and bridges linking the two sections. The unfinished basement may be used for parking. The upper floors will remain unimproved for future possible expansion.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Describe existing feature
The brick party walls are basically sound, though waste pipes and electrical conduit have been variously routed through them. Major portions of the plaster covering have been removed, and what remains is in a deteriorated state. Existing fire stairs Photo no 4-10 Drawing no 1-4 are clay tile.

Describe existing feature
Original coverings have long since vanished. What remains today is a rough and sometimes deteriorated subflooring over a poured concrete base.

Describe existing feature
The original plaster ceilings have been partially demolished or are in an advanced state of deterioration. Metal lath was hung from iron ceiling beams and then plaster-covered.

Describe existing feature
Clear span with row of center posts. No partitions of any sort except for a recently constructed temporary vestibule. Basement, first floor, mezzanine, and two upper stories. Mezzanine extends across the rear of the building. A freight elevation is the back of the building along with a set of fire stairs.
Describe existing feature

The building is completely without mechanical service or distribution of any kind.

Photo no 4-9 Drawing no 1-4

Describe work and impact on existing features

A modern HVAC, plumbing, and electrical system will be retrofitted. Not any significant interior spaces or features will be affected.

Fixtures

Describe existing feature

All lighting fixtures were removed in the 1975 gutting of the interior. It is doubtful that these were original to the building. An original staircase, concrete with iron rail and balusters, remains.

Photo no _____ Drawing no _____

Describe work and impact on existing features

New light fixtures will consist of standard lay-in panels within the new ceiling tiles. The staircase will be restored and incorporated into the expanded mezzanine.

Photo no _____ Drawing no _____

longer used to sock it to the reader. Over the years, this uncluttered format was further refined and today the Ward catalog is highly rated by students of graphic arts.

At Wards, Avery pushed a reorganization plan to avoid conflicts between mail order and retail operations by bringing them under centralized control. In 1931 and 1932 the company lost a total of more than $14 million and 62 stores were closed.

Ward's sales moved up in mid-1933 and a profit of over $2 million was made. Plans for retail expansion were again dusted off and the board of directors was shown an "architectural treatment for a new storefront of original design." The Georgian-style architecture was adopted for the new stores. A total of $3 million was authorized for land purchase and construction.

Consumers were most cost-conscious during the Depression and Wards met this challenge. Merchandise was classified into such categories as Supreme Quality and Standard Quality. Repackaged products bore the "MW" monogram in place of the brand name of manufacturers. A catalog store was opened in Saranac Lake, New York, for display only, as in Merseles day. (The original stores had been closed in 1931 because of scant profits.) The Saranac Lake store took orders for home delivery from Albany. Five other catalog stores opened that year. A phone order service was set up to induce city people to use the catalog and place orders by phoning the catalog house. This time, Sears followed Ward's lead.

Vice President Hoving then came up with several promotional schemes to boost mail order sales. He had learned that the toy buyer kept a file of children's birthdays and sent them greeting cards. Hoving took off from there and inserted a notice in the catalog, offering children "a nice little present" for filling out a coupon with papa's name and address. Some three million coupons were returned, which proved an embarrassment since a specific gift had never been selected. Even that many penny balloons would run into big money with handling and mailing. This innocent idea finally cost $280,000—an expensive way to add names to the catalog mailing list.

But out of this blooper grew the idea to use the mailing list in a contest for young people eager to attend the Century of Progress Exposition in 1933. (Interestingly enough, Chicago made a success of two expositions at a time when the nation was battling a severe depression: the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893 and the Century of Progress, which celebrated Chicago's 100 years of amazing growth from a struggling frontier town to a world leader in commerce and industry). Under the Hoving plan, 200 winners were given an all-expense-paid, six-day sightseeing trip to Chicago with a parent. They won the

The St. Joseph, Missouri, store built in 1934 in the Georgian style of architecture.