

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**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

The Robert Smith Mortuary

AND/OR COMMON

The Greek-Shears Mortuary

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

118-120 Walnut Street

CITY, TOWN

Evansville

__ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Eighth

STATE

Indiana

__ VICINITY OF

CODE

18

COUNTY

Vanderburgh

CODE

163

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDEN
		<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Lester E. And Harriet Watson

STREET & NUMBER

120 Walnut Street

CITY, TOWN

Evansville

__ VICINITY OF

STATE
Indiana

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,

REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Vanderburgh County's Recorder's Office

STREET & NUMBER

City-County Administration Building

CITY, TOWN

Evansville

STATE
Indiana

47708

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory

DATE

1978

FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Indiana Department of Natural Resources

CITY, TOWN

Indianapolis

STATE
Indiana

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The former Greek-Shears Mortuary is located at 118-120 Walnut Street in the block between Southeast First and Second Streets. Adjacent to the Riverside Historic District (National Register, 1978), the Greek-Shears structure is also situated just two blocks southeast of Evansville's central business district.

The two-building complex was designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival tradition popular from about 1915 to 1945. A two-and-one-half story brick house, erected approximately forty years prior to the construction of the mortuary, stands on the alleyside of the lot. A steeply-pitched red tile gabled roof, the length of which faces the street, surmounts the plain projecting eaves. The body of the house was laid in common bond red brick, later painted yellow to match the yellow brick facade of the new mortuary building. Arched radiating voussoirs adorn the segmented, relieving-arched window-heads on the alleyside, while the plain sills on the facade are limestone. The windows, double-hung sashes with 1/1 lights, are slightly recessed; one window on the lower elevation has been considerably lengthened, probably an alteration made in recent years. The house's Italianate facade was remodelled to convey the Spanish Colonial motif when the newer structure was completed. The entire two-and-one-half-story complex is decorated with light buff brick and a limestone trim which encircles the base of the edifice and caps the flat-roofed gallery attached to the house.

The new addition has a clearly-defined rectangular plan and is ten bays in length. An arcaded wall treatment is the most outstanding feature on the facade of the overall complex. A row of bricks surrounds the windows which are further defined by a large keystone on the window-head and one smaller one on either side of the window. The tympanum is filled in with red tile blocks, and a stone cartouche accents each tympanum. Windows sills are limestone, and the slightly-recessed paired lights, separated by a thin pilaster strip, are multi-paned. Stone flower boxes supported by a triple volute underscore many of the windows as well as the arched openings on the gallery.

The impressive portal to the former mortuary is also surrounded by the same brick trim and keystone features of the arcaded windows. A red brick esplanade encircles the front of the building. Both entranceways on the facade enhance the delicate beauty of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture with their multi-paned glass doors; the door at the main entrance to the old mortuary is double-leafed, with glass side panels flanking either side of the flat-headed door. Multi-paned transom panels above the door appear to formerly have been glass panes that were later covered with yellow paint, and colorful tiles brighten the walls and floor of the entranceway. At the far right end of the complex is a large, impressive arched garage entrance with a Spanish-style wrought iron gate and red brick interior. Like the house, the mortuary

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES 1930

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Fritz Anderson

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Greek-Shears Mortuary is one of Evansville's oldest continuing mortuaries. Established in 1864, the business has undergone a series of name-changes, as well as changes of locations. Today the successive firm remains one of the most prominent in Evansville.

The mortuary was originally named after its founder, Robert Smith, who along with his brother Fred, opened the business after serving in the Civil War. In 1930, the Robert Smith Mortuary moved to their sixth location when the new edifice at 120 Walnut Street, adjacent to the Riverside Historic District (National Register, 1978), was completed. The new custom-built mortuary adjoined a two-story house at 118 Walnut Street that was erected in about 1890. The house was remodelled to match the new mortuary.

Designed by local architect Fritz Anderson, who practiced in Evansville from approximately 1915 to 1942, and constructed by the Scarborough Corporation, the mortuary complex received attention for the beauty of its classic design--an uncommon design in Evansville which seems to have been influenced by the Spanish Colonial Revival architectural mode. The new mortuary was described as a "commanding structure" and as "a distinct asset to the city from both the standpoint of architecture and service." Indeed, the yellow brick paired against the roof's deep red tile conveys a colorful, if not impressive, appearance. The arcaded wall treatment vastly enhances the wall design; of particular note are the windows which are accented by stone cartouches and red tile blocks forming the tympanum of the arched, multi-paned casement windows. Colorful tile, probably imported, can also be found on the walls and floor of the entranceway. As far as can be determined, the former mortuary is in pristine condition.

For forty-four years, the Robert Smith Mortuary, which was later renamed the Greek-Shears Mortuary, remained on Walnut Street. After 1974, the house once again became a single-family residence, and the old mortuary was converted into apartments by its present owner; throughout the years, however, virtually no alterations have been made to the building's exterior.

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Continuation sheet

Item number 7

Page 2

structure has a steeply-pitched red tile roof with shed dormers and slanting, parapet gables; each end also has a small attic window, one of which is vented.

The rear of the complex features a garage seven bays in length which once housed the mortuary's hearses.

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**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

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received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 9

Page 2

LOCAL HISTORIES, ATLASES, AND REFERENCES

- An Illustrated Plat Book of Vanderburgh and Warrick Counties, Indiana.
Evansville: Tillman & Fuller Publishing Co., 1899; reprint ed.,
Evansville: Unigraphic, Inc., and Friends of Willard Library, 1975.
- Griffing's Atlas of Vanderburgh County, Indiana. Philadelphia: D. J.
Lake & Co., 1880; reprint ed., Evansville: Unigraphic, Inc. and
Friends of Willard Library, 1975.
- History of Greek-Shears Mortuary. Official history distributed by the
Greek-Shears Mortuary, 1972.
- History of Vanderburgh County, Indiana.... Brant & Fuller, 1889.
- Robert, Charles, E. Evansville: Her Commerce and Manufactures.
Evansville: Courier Co., 1874.
- Whiffen, Marcus, American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the
Styles. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1969.

PERIODICALS

- "4 Employees Become Associates of Local Mortuary Owner." Evansville
Press, 21 February 1951.
- "Church Moving Into Old Mortuary." Evansville Press, 16 July 1975.
- (Ellis C. Shears obituary.) Evansville Courier, 28 June 1971.
- "Ex-Mortuary Property Sold." Evansville Press, ca. 23 October 1974.
- "Robert Greek Youngest Man Ever to be Knights Templar Commander."
Evansville Press, 23 February 1930.
- "Robert L. Greek, Sportsman, Mortician, Dies at 67." Evansville
Courier, 16 June 1969
- "Robert Smith Mortuary Opens New Home!" Evansville Press, 7 July 1930.

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**National Register of Historic Places
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received

date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 9

Page 3

PHOTOGRAPHIC SOURCES

Central Library Newspaper Clipping File.

Evansville, Indiana, 1812-1962. (No publisher, 1962.)

Photo albums/archival records of the mortuary's history maintained
by Robert I. Shears, present owner of the Greek-Shears Mortuary.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Evansville City Directories, 1858+.

Interview with Robert I. Shears, October 16, 1979.

Vanderburgh County Deed Indexes and Records.

Vanderburgh County Tax Assessment Books, 1891 and 1901.

**United States Department of the Interior
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service
National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

For HCRS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 10

Page 2

Commencing on Walnut Street 47 feet from Second Street and running thence along Walnut Street toward First Street 103 feet, thence at right angles along the alley toward Locust Street 100 feet, thence at right angles toward Second Street 103 feet and thence to the place of beginning.

