

FINAL

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name I & M Electric Co. Building, Transformer House and Garage  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_ 141-597-36316-36318

2. Location

street & number 401 E. Colfax and 312 E. La Salle Streets N/A  not for publication  
city or town South Bend N/A  vicinity  
state Indiana code IN county St. Joseph code 141 zip code 46617  
46617

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature] 10/20/98  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
Indiana Department of Natural Resources  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. (  See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register
- removed from the National Register
- other, (explain:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Name of Property

County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

- building
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
3	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
3	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

East Bank Multiple Property Listing

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

INDUST/PROC/EXTR: Energy Facility

TRANSPORTATION: Parking Garage

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE: Organizational

COMMERCE/TRADE: Business

TRANSPORTATION: Parking Garage

INDUST/PROC/EXTR: Energy Facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

19th & 20th c. REVIVALS: Neo-Classical Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls BRICK

Stone

roof ASPHALT

other STONE

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria (Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations (Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
removed from its original location.
a birthplace or grave.
a cemetery.
a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
a commemorative property.
less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

INDUSTRY

Period of Significance

1911-1947

Significant Dates

1911

1929

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Christman, H. G., Builder

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographic References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record #

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Approx. 4.5 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	16 Zone	562840 Easting	4614180 Northing	3			
2				4			

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Camille B. Fife, President

organization The Westerly Group, Inc. date 06/30/97

street & number 556 W. 1175 N. Rd. telephone (812) 696-2415

city or town Farmersburg state IN zip code 47850

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of SHPO or FPO.)

name The Commerce Center / Sherry Stickler

street & number 401 E. Colfax / 312 E. LaSalle telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town South Bend state IN zip code 46545

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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# National Register of Historic Places

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**I&M Electric Co. Buildings**  
**St. Joseph County, Indiana**

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### 7. Description

The I & M Electric Company buildings are a complex of three main buildings in a site which is bound by E. Colfax Avenue on the south, by the east race on the east, LaSalle Street on the north and the eastern property lines of the properties located on Sycamore Street to the west. There are three buildings on the site, a garage, a transformer house and a main building.

The I & M Electric Company Garage, which faces E. LaSalle Street, is a rectangular brick building, three stories tall, with a granite block foundation and support system. The building, constructed in 1929 was built by H.G. Christman. It features a dark red-brown facing brick on the main facade, with decorative coping and belt courses in light stone. The ground floor openings have remained, although the original windows and doors have been removed. There are corner pavilions which rise above the second and third stories of the building. Demarking the first and second floor is a projecting cornice, above which is a nine-bay facade, with wings containing two windows at each end. Above another, decorated belt course at the second floor roof line, the parapet contains a flat coping and, on the LaSalle Street facade, two previously mentioned pavilions with gabled parapets and a central round medallion in each. There is a belt course at the third floor window head line which is interrupted by the windows whose sills are of stone.

The eastern facade is similarly treated, except that the original window openings are oversize. All of the glazing has been removed from the windows on both facades, however, some frames remain. The interior of the building is devoted to parking spaces, with concrete floors, and supports.

The I & M Electric Company Transformer House is a small, one and a half story brick building which is joined to the south or rear side of the garage by a modern brick addition. The foundation is of concrete and the building was constructed at the same time as the main building in 1929. The building has corbelled brick detailing at the corners, just below the flat parapet which has a terra cotta coping. A notable feature of the building are the window and door openings which are semicircular, with corbelled brickwork at the head and springing line, forming a surround, with slightly projecting pilasters, in brick. The glazing features steel sash with an awning vent and a semi-circular fan light. Double leaf, glazed metal doors within the same surround are present on the south facade. This building is still actively used by the utility company. Within the large interior room are extensive switching apparatus, with a

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small space for a guard and other limited personnel. The equipment is automatic.

The I & M Electric Company main building was constructed in 1911, according to local information, around the old plant which had existed on the site. The building is constructed in an irregular plan, with four and/or five stories. The front wing of the building, facing Colfax Street, contains an ornate facade of brick and stone. The first floor contains regularly spaced windows above a concrete and stone water table. The sills of the windows are stone. A central recessed entry provides access to the structure. Above this a wide, decorative belt course with a projecting cornice forms the base for stone and brick pilasters separating the windows on the second and third floors. These are overtopped by round arched transoms which spring from a capital at the upper window line. Surmounting this register of thirteen windows is a wide, projecting stone course encompassing a cornice, with brackets and dentils below. The upper story of the building is plain brick with square windows set in brick corbelled panels and surmounted by a double plain frieze and flat roof parapet. The lower floors of the rear portion of the building are similar, except that the round arch windows have rows of radiating voussoirs at their heads. Above this is a row of double, round arched windows with similar brick heads, and a deeply corbelled brick frieze, with round arch motifs. Surmounting this is a projecting cornice and flat roof. Beyond, the roof has been gabled to improve drainage.

The interior of the building has been adaptively used as offices for the South Bend Chamber of Commerce, as well as other businesses and professional endeavors. A complete interior renovation was undertaken. No large generating equipment is visible in this building. What remains from the era when the electric company generated power here, is the structural fabric of the building, especially visible in a multi-story atrium in the east central part of the building, which can be reached either through a central hall, or from the outside, via a sidewalk leading from the parking area at the rear.

The essentially rectangular plan of the building faces on Colfax Street, with the long sides parallel to the East Race, adjacent to the building on the east side. One enters the building from a central doorway on Colfax Street, and walks up a short stair to a small elevator hall, with access, to the right to a long hall that bisects the building. To the left of the elevator are a series of office suites. Utilize the windows on the front and west sides of the building. To the right, off the hall, are additional

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suites. All of the office suites have modern walls and floors and interior furnishings. There are three large suites down the hall, the last of these is adjacent to the atrium and has windows opening on this space. The atrium contains a large elevator, to access offices which are located in the interconnected rear part of the building, a three story block to the north. The floor plans of the second and third floors are similar to that of the first, except that instead of the front lobby area, one exits from the elevator into a small space, with several of the front windows visible from the interior, or an office has been built to accommodate this space. The rear of the building does not rise beyond the third floor, so office space on the fourth floor is confined to the front part of the building, where an extension accommodates this extra floor. The elevator rises to all floors. The basement is dedicated to maintenance and building services.

The trusses which are visible in the atrium, include simple framing trusses, lattice work steel and various I-beams. The central elevator is connected to the second and third floor offices via a walkway extending from the west side of the elevator, the east side faces the open area and is of glass. Window openings in the brick facade which forms the south wall of the atrium. The building was constructed in phases, with additions after 1911. The front, or south part of the building was originally constructed to house switchboards and company offices; the area presently occupied by the atrium and the wing beyond contained the equipment, according to a survey completed in the late 1970s. As previously mentioned, all of the equipment has been removed, and interior renovations completed in the wing, with the atrium remaining to demonstrate the structural interest of the building. Within the latter, is a gracious sitting area, with landscaping and a bubbling fountain. It is used by employees of the building's tenants.

Adjacent to the building on the west side is a parking lot, enclosed and protected by a brick fence with square, stone topped columns and terra cotta coping. Also within this enclosure is a contemporary transformer installation. This facility is presently in use by the utility company and is protected by a large chain link fence.

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### 8. Statement of Significance

The I & M Electric Company is significant under Criterion A for its association with the rapid industrial and other development of the East Bank area, and South Bend, at the turn-of-the century. (See Section E., E. Bank Multiple Property Listing.) With the access of water power ready at hand, electric power became an important part of the early development of the area. Soon, more efficient coal fired, steam-operated generators increased the capabilities of the plant.

The first electric plant to be located at this site was the South Bend Electric Company which appeared sometime between 1891 and 1893 according to Sanborn Maps. This plant had six dynamos and probably generated electricity from coal, although it was located adjacent to the East Race, where water for the boilers was drawn as well as from artesian wells. The new building was constructed at the site, under the auspices of the Indiana and Michigan Electric Company, who were the owners by 1911. According to local sources, the new building was built around the old one, and the latter was dismantled from within, following construction. This unusual method was designed to maintain continuous service to the company's clients -- a distinct advantage when demand was great.

The new plant was larger than the old and allowed for 6 huge Wicks boilers which used 200 tons of slack coal daily. The fuel was fed by mechanical stokers built by the Murphy Iron Works of Detroit. Tertiary or exhausted steam from the turbines was piped into several major downtown buildings. The southern wing of the building, on Colfax Street, housed switchboards and the company offices.

The plant was operated at this site until the late 1970s, when new technology and changes in demand for power caused the company to relocate the plant, although a substation was retained. The building has been adaptively rehabilitated, by the City of South Bend as a "Commerce Center" with offices and other facilities. The former garage at the north end of the property was also rehabilitated, (see description) and serves as a garage for the complex and other East Bank entities.

As an important part of the infrastructure of the developing industrial/residential area of the East Bank, the I & M Electric Company plant serves as a reminder of the industrial era and its methods of power generation.



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### 9. Bibliography

(See E. Bank Multiple Property Listing.)

#### Other Sources

Sanborn Insurance Maps for the City of South Bend: On microfilm in the collection of the South Bend Public Library, Library clipping files.

Survey Form, South Bend Historic Sites and Structures Survey, 1977/1979; 1988.

### 10. Verbal Boundary Description

The property consists of Lots 19-24, and 13 of the Original Plat of the Town of Lowell, as well as Lots 5-9 of Macy's Subdivision of the same, all now incorporated into South Bend.

### Boundary Justification

The boundary of the property encompasses the property historically associated with the I & M Electric Company at this site and with its ancillary facilities.

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### **Contemporary and historic photographs:**

The following information is the same for all photographs, unless otherwise noted.

1. I & M Electric Company Buildings  
401 E. Colfax/312 E. LaSalle Streets
2. St. Joseph County, Indiana
3. Camille Fife, The Westerly Group, Inc.
4. May-June, 1997
5. 556 W. 1175 N. Rd., Farmersburg, IN 47850
  
6. View looking south/southeast from the north side of E. LaSalle Street toward the north and west facades of the I & M Electric Co. Garage.
7. Photo No. 11
  
6. View looking east toward the west elevation of the transformer building, showing the round arch windows and its relationship to the garage (to the left) and the main building (at rear.)
7. Photo No. 12
  
6. View looking east from the north sidewalk of E. Colfax Street, along the brick wall just west of the I & M Electric Co. Building. The present transformer equipment is visible.
7. Photo No. 13
  
6. View looking north/northeast toward the south and west facades of the main I & M Electric Co. Building. Taken from the south side of E. LaSalle Street.
7. Photo No. 14
  
4. April-May, 1998
6. Photograph looking west from parking area on the east side of the East Race toward the east facade of the I&M Electric Company Building. The protruding, two-story tower in the center is the entrance to the atrium.
7. Photo No. 14a
  
4. April-May, 1998
6. Photograph looking southwest from near the East Race toward the east facade of the building, showing the front section, with the East Race

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in the middle ground. Today, this facility has been reworked to provide a challenging course for kayakers, a few of whom are seen in the foreground.

7. Photo No. 14b

4. April-May, 1998

6. An image looking due west from a slight rise on the east side of the East Race, toward the east facade of the I&M Garage.

7. Photo No. 14c

4. April-May, 1998

6. This photograph shows the east facade of the Transformer House; looking west from the parking lot immediately west of the main building.

7. Photo No. 14d

4. April-May, 1998

6. This image was taken from the property immediately to the west of the I&M complex, looking north through the modern transformer yard toward the south facade of the old Transformer House, with the garage and La Salle Street beyond.

7. Photo No. 14e

4. April-May, 1998

6. A Photograph of the modern transformer yard, taken from the parking lot immediately west of the main building, looking southwest toward Colfax Avenue.

7. Photo No. 14f

4. April-May, 1998

6. An interior photograph taken in the atrium, looking southwest toward the modern elevator, and the office suites in the southern part of the building. The intricate truss and steel system is visible. Behind the elevator, one can see a part of the walkways leading to offices on the west and north sides of the complex.

7. Photo No. 14g

4. April-May, 1998

6. An interior close-up image, looking straight up toward the lattice beam on the ceiling and showing details of its construction. The brick wall on the south side of the atrium is at bottom and the black object in the upper right is part of the elevator housing.

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7. Photo No. 14h
4. April-May, 1998
6. An interior image, taken on the second floor, front, looking south toward the front windows, from within the small elevator hall. Access to offices in this area is to the left and right. The curved arched windows provide light in the hall and adjacent offices.
7. Photo no. 14i