

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

FINAL

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 Mount Vernon Downtown Historic District

other names/site number 129-439-36000

2. Location

street & number Roughly bounded by the Ohio River, 6th and Walnut Streets and College Avenue N/A ☐ not for publication

city or town Mount Vernon N/A ☐ vicinity

state Indiana code IN county Posey code 129 zip code 47620

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 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:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

- ☐ 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:)

Mount Vernon Downtown Historic District
Name of Property

Posey IN
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- ☒ private
☒ public-local
☐ public-State
☐ public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- ☐ building
☒ district
☐ site
☐ structure
☐ object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
39	18	buildings
2	0	sites
1	0	structures
2	0	objects
44	18	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

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

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed
in the National Register**

1

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT: City Hall

GOVERNMENT: Fire Station

GOVERNMENT: Courthouse

COMMERCE/TRADE: Business

EDUCATION: Library

LANDSCAPE: Park

COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Store

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT: City Hall

GOVERNMENT: Fire Station

GOVERNMENT: Courthouse

COMMERCE/TRADE: Business

GOVERNMENT: Government Office

LANDSCAPE: Park

COMMERCE/TRADE: Specialty Store

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

MID-19th c.:

LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

LATE VICTORIAN: Queen Anne

LATE VICTORIAN: Romanesque

19th & 20th c. REVIVALS: Classical Revival

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation

BRICK

walls

BRICK

STONE: Limestone

roof

STONE: Slate

other

METAL: cast iron

ASPHALT

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.)

- ☒ **A** Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- ☐ **B** Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- ☒ **C** 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.
- ☐ **D** 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:

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

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

c.1850-1953

Significant Dates

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Behrick, F. & Sons

Harris & Shopbell

Werking, C.E. & Son

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:

Posey County Historical Society

Mount Vernon Downtown Historic District
Name of Property

Posey IN
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 21.1 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 16 421120 4198630
Zone Easting Northing

3 16 421540 4198090
Zone Easting Northing

2 16 421340 4198690
Zone Easting Northing

4 16 421000 4198010
Zone Easting Northing

☐ 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 Chris Babcock, Wanda Griess, Stacey Moye, and Paul Diebold
organization _____ date 01-02-2002
street & number 233 Main St. telephone 812/ 838-3830
city or town Mount Vernon state IN zip code 47620

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 Various
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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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Section number 7 Page 1 *Mount Vernon Downtown Historic District, Posey Co., IN*

Section 7 – Description

Mount Vernon was platted in 1819 by the Mount Vernon Company. No special provision was made for a courthouse square, since that designation did not come until 1825. Mount Vernon's site, tucked over a great bend in the Ohio River, gave it transportation advantages over centrally-placed Springfield, the previous seat. The sense of a formal courthouse square came with the construction of the current courthouse in 1876. However, because commerce pre-existed the courthouse, Main and College Streets developed in linear strips of storefronts. Walnut Street, "backing up" to the courthouse, remained residential in character as it does today, leaving the courthouse surrounded on only three sides by commerce. Even though most of the buildings in the district are from Mount Vernon's railroad era, their orientation, extending in strips to the river, belies the significance of river trade to the town's early history.

Most the buildings in the district are two stories in height, with flat or shed roofs. Most are brick with stone detailing. Some intact cast iron storefront elements remain in place, but most shop fronts were updated through the years. Floods in 1913 and 1937 have no doubt contributed to the need to improve lower sections of buildings. While commerce dominates in use, the district includes a significant collection of historic governmental buildings, including a former library, City Hall, the Posey County Courthouse, a former civic auditorium and a small city park with bandstand. The district once was home to a number of private civic groups such as fraternal lodges and benevolent societies.

The district's period of significance runs from the earliest known building (c.1850) to the fifty year mark, 1953.

The Posey County Courthouse was previously listed in the National Register of Historic Places, along with its memorial on the courthouse lawn (1 contributing building, 1 contributing object). They are not included in the resource count. The resource count includes 39 contributing buildings (bandstand counted as a building); 2 contributing sites (Sherburne Park site and McFadin Cemetery site); 1 contributing structure (iron fence around McFadin site); 2 contributing objects (the flood monument-obelisk and the memorial at the McFadin site); and 18 non-contributing buildings. Non-contributing buildings generally fall into two categories: those built (or likely built) in historic times but too altered (225 N. Main, photo 23) or, those built clearly after the period of significance. The construction of 402 N. Main by a local bank resulted in the tragic loss of fine historic building in the 1990s, for example. Also, 125 W. Water was constructed in the 1980s following demolition of two 19th century buildings.

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McFadin Cemetery (Photos 1&2)

The cemetery is commemorated at this riverfront location by a brick and stone monument surrounded by a cast iron fence. The fence surrounds the square shaped plot with the diagonally set monument facing toward Sherburne Park. In 1934, the first Posey County Historical Society placed a marker at the site of McFadin's store and dwelling. The plaque reads "In memory of the pioneer families who settled McFadin's Bluff." The iron fence was donated by Billy Krug, the son of former Mayor George Krug.

Sherburne Park 1937 Flood Monument (Photo 3)

This concrete marker, in the form of a truncated obelisk, marks the location of the high point of the waters in the flood of 1937. The worst recorded floods recorded locally occurred in 1937 when the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers flooded millions of acres of land. The river crested at Mount Vernon at 59.25 feet on February 2.

Sherburne Park (Photos 4&5)

The bandstand at Sherburne Park, in the Arts and Crafts style, is constructed of a reddish-brown brick base with four corner piers and a flared hipped roof above. The roof is clad with clay roofing tile. The bandstand is detailed with exposed rafters, the supporting beams atop the brick piers "overlap" with exposed carved beam tails at each corner face. Also, the piers have a corbel to support diagonal wood braces.

The bandstand is located at the center of the Park, between Main Street and College Avenue, and creates a focal point as well as an observation spot for views of the river. The site is located on the slope between Water Street and the Ohio River, and the structure is therefore a one story open pavilion at the Water Street elevation and an open pavilion atop a raised basement at the elevation facing the river.

The park is a memorial to a young boy, Sherburne Cronbach, who once upon a time loved to watch the traffic of the river boats, listen to their steam whistles, and dreamed of becoming part of the exciting life of this growing river town. Sherburne Cronbach was born in 1886. He was the first and only child of Jacob and Nellie (Blunt) Cronbach. He was named after his grandfather, Dr. Marcus Sherburne Cronbach, a prominent physician in Mount Vernon. In 1903 he died of typhoid fever.

Jacob and Manuel Cronbach, the boy's father and uncle, owned and operated a popular drug store in downtown Mount Vernon. Jacob Cronbach became a wealthy man. He took an interest in public affairs and served as city councilman and member of the school board. He was an active member of the Ansche Israel congregation. Mr. Cronbach was instrumental in soliciting the aid of Mr. Carnegie in building and equipping the Alexandrian Library. Mr. And Mrs.

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Cronbach's lasting contribution came in 1912 when they deposited \$1,500.00 with the People's Bank to be used in the building and equipping of a park on Mount Vernon's riverfront.

Ed Stallman superintended the construction. Sherburne Park was dedicated on May 28, 1913. Concrete walks; well-lit lampposts and a shelter house equipped with restrooms completed the new park. The final amount came to \$2,882.40. Although Mr. and Mrs. Cronbach moved to Santa Monica, California, shortly after the dedication, their contributions over the years helped to install new swings, merry-go-rounds and other equipment. Mr. and Mrs. Cronbach were philanthropists, giving large monetary contributions to Oakland City College and liberal donations to the local Baptist Church. Jacob died in 1926 and Nellie died in 1939. Both were buried beside their son Sherburne in Bellefontaine Cemetery.

109 West Water Street - The Eagles #1717 (Photo 6)

The two story Eagles' Lodge faces the Ohio River and Sherburne Park. It is two stories high, with a parapeted roof, and walls constructed of a dark brick with limestone and wood trim. A one-story, hip roofed porch carried on five heavy square wood columns faces the river. The second floor of the front elevation originally consisted of four equal windows (the window location at right has been filled with brick). The front and one bay of side windows are framed with soldier brick work and stone springer and keystone blocks. Window sash at the front elevation are not original. A simple cornice is located at the top of the front elevation, wrapping around to one bay on the flanks. The side and rear are utilitarian, lacking ornamentation.

The lodge was founded in December 1907 by a Mount Vernon resident, John W. Krug, with 70 charter members. In 1993 there were 462 members and 150 in the auxiliary. The first home was just east of the current building. A contract was awarded for the present building in June 1917.

118 Main Street - The Armory (Mt. Vernon Parks & Recreation) (Photo 7)

The symmetrical two story brick and limestone utilitarian structure is composed of red brick and limestone. It is composed of 5 equal horizontal bays divided by stone-capped buttress strips. A round arched central entrance is surrounded by a rectangular frame of limestone quoins. A single window is located at the center of each bay at each floor. Windows are steel sash.

The Armory is one of several public buildings in the district. The Battery "E" 139th Field Artillery of the Indiana National Guard, was organized by Capt. Philip E. Rowe, First Lieut. Ira V. Rochrock and Second Lieut. Gilbert F. Behrick, during the early part of June, 1922. It occupied the Joest building on the corner of Third and Main Streets for sometime before moving into the Tente building on West Second street. After considerable time the Hagemann property on lower Main Street was selected as an ideal location. Mr. Phil Hagemann agreed to build the Armory, and after it was built, it was leased to the state of Indiana.

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The Armory was dedicated in 1927. It was equipped with a wood playing floor where basketball and other sports could be played. As the state did not equip the Armories, it was up to Battery "E" to do it through their own efforts. The drill floor was converted to a skating rink type floor around 1970 and the building is now being used as a teenage center.

512 Main Street - Norvell Funeral Home (Schneider Funeral Home) (Photo 14)

The Short Funeral Home was erected in 1925. It was the first Posey County mortuary to use motorized funeral and ambulance equipment. It had a Hammond organ, family rooms and air conditioning. Mr. and Mrs. Paul Short, both graduates of the Indiana College of Mortuary Science, founded the business in Mount Vernon in 1910. Mr. Short was a son of John L. Short, a veteran Owensville, Indiana funeral director, and a brother of Roy D. Short, a Mt. Carmel, Illinois mortician.

In about 1970, the Short family home and the funeral parlor were joined and given a Neo-colonial façade. Because of the recent nature of the remodeling, the building does not contribute to the district.

520 Main Street – The Alexandrian Library (City Hall Annex) (Photos 15,17,18)

Originally constructed as the Mt. Vernon Alexandrian Free Public Library, this structure was built as one of the Carnegie libraries built in the early part of the twentieth century across the United States. This symmetrical, neo-Classical building is composed of a Palladian scheme, with a tripartite arrangement consisting of a central block and portico flanked by a slightly recessed subordinate wing to each side. The *piano nobile*, or main floor, is situated above a raised basement. Materials at the front elevation are a buff-colored brick with accents of Indiana limestone. Red brick and Indiana limestone are used at the side and rear facades.

The central block dominates the composition, given greater prominence by the portico, its increased height over the flanking wings and rusticated corners that accentuate the setback of the flanking wings. The central portico is reached by a grand flight of steps from street level. Four Ionic columns support the denticulate entablature and pediment with raking cornice above. The single central door is surrounded by a limestone enframingent with modillions at the cornice. An attic level window is located directly above. The portico extends from the entrance block, which has channeled rusticated walls at the outside corners.

Each of the flanking wings is composed of one set of paired windows at the basement and *piano nobile*. Windows are typically one over one double-hung. Transoms of a Roman classical design are located above the *piano nobile* windows. A brick and limestone pilaster corresponding to the height of the window separates the windows at the *piano nobile*; a monumental brick and limestone pilaster corresponding to the height of the *piano nobile* is located at each corner of the façade. The denticulated entablature is identical to that of the central pavilion, but set at a lower level. The side of the gabled roof is visible above.

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The original exterior dome has been removed. Its location on axis behind the pediment alluded to other neo-Classical and Classical structures, from Thomas Jefferson's domed Library at the University of Virginia, to Palladio's Villa Rotunda at Vicenza, which was itself based on a reinterpretation of elements used in the Roman Pantheon.

The first library in Mount Vernon was a gift of Mrs. Matilda Alexander, was located on the second floor, rear room, of the present fire and police building. The library was the result of an organization of the Alexandrian Literary Society, which took place at the home of Mrs. Alexander on October 11, 1892.

The library in the old city building was located directly above the fire department quarters and at that time horses were used to take the apparatus to fires. Many times youngsters would be visiting the library when an alarm was sounded, and then they would rush to the north windows to watch the horses as they left the fire house in their run to answer the alarm.

From the start the one room library was a success and a demand for a better one was inaugurated by a number of citizens, who solicited Andrew Carnegie for funds for the erection of a library building. A committee was appointed for this purpose, and included Jacob Cronbach, Prof. Edwin S. Monroe and Prof. E. G. Bauman.

After several unsuccessful efforts to interest Mr. Carnegie in the proposal, he finally decided to donate \$12,500 for the building and an additional \$1,400 for equipment.

The site selected for the building was just south of the old city building. It was completed during the summer of 1905. Mrs. Alexander presented the city with 1,200 volumes for use in the new institution and it inherited properties of about \$10,000 at her death.

Harris and Shopbell of Evansville were the architects. When the new Library was built, across Main Street, in 1886, the Carnegie structure became an annex to the old City Hall and the city offices moved there.

526 Main Street - City Hall, Police and Fire Departments (Photos 16,17,18)

The City Hall is a two story red brick structure with Indiana limestone trim atop a partially raised basement. The hipped roof at the top of the building is broken by cross gables accenting the center of the narrower façade facing Main Street, and above the fire truck entrance door at the 6th Street entrance.

The Main Street façade is composed of essentially an asymmetrical design, with a central bay of paired windows flanked by a single window bay to either side. First and second floor windows throughout are segmental arches with a central limestone keystone. The facades of the building are given relief by two-story high recessed panels with

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corbeled brickwork. A limestone water table marks the transition of the basement to the first floor. Windows to either side are framed vertically within the described panels. Windows are tall double hung units, some four-over-four, some two-over-two. A one-story gabled entrance porch to the right of the elevation is reached by a flight of steps. The porch entrance is defined by a multi-coursed round arch with stone keystone.

The 6th Street elevation is asymmetrical but contains symmetrical compositions within its elements. The projecting left wing, accented by a gable above, is set apart from the remainder of the building by the two-story base of the removed bell tower. A third floor bell tower was originally constructed above the area of the second floor loggia. The bell it housed is now located within the open wooden structure at ground level. Recessed brick wall panels with corbel work articulate the flanks of the building.

The Romanesque Revival style building was built in 1893. It cost \$7,295.00. F. Behrick and Sons was the contractor. The north front room is the only portion of the interior that remains the same as when the building was first used. What is now the dormitory for the firemen were once the stalls for horses. The kitchen for the firemen occupies a small portion of the new addition on the east, erected to house needed new equipment for the Fire Department. For a few years after erection the city treasurer's office was located in that section now used as a police headquarters. When the two rooms were used for the clerk and treasurer's offices, both had long counters on which were attached high screens with a small opening on the bottom through which business was transacted.

The location of the first city hall is not known, as the early records have been lost.

In the early years of the Fire department the only means of notifying officers not at the city hall was for the driver of the fire department horse-drawn apparatus to turn on a small light over the intersection of Second and Main Streets and Fourth and Main Streets. The officer would then have to find a telephone downtown and call City Hall to find out what the call was about.

As the police department was operated with only a few men during the turn of the century, so it was with the fire department, which at that time had only one unit drawn by horses. Only the driver was stationed at the fire station; other members of the department received all alarms over the telephone.

Feed for the horses were kept in a two-story building located in the rear of the recent addition to the fire station. The building also contained the city scales, where persons who wanted official weights would come to have their horse-drawn vehicles weighed. The driver for the fire department also served as weigh master and charged a small fee for this service, which was turned over to the city.

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201 Main The Fogas Building (Gary Fox) (Photos 19,44)

This three story, flat roofed commercial building is constructed of a three bay cast iron storefront with a central entrance at the ground floor and two horizontal window bays at the second and third floors. A bracketed cornice sets the base apart from the second floor. Second floor windows are six over six double-hung with limestone lintels. The third floor windows have been removed. A denticulated brick cornice accentuates the top of the building. The south side of the building faces W. 2nd St. and has equally spaced bays of six-over-six windows and a side entrance in the fourth bay. A similar but separate building extends the rest of the half block to the west, with several individual storefronts.

The first known owner was Joseph G. Gardiner in 1880. He sold the building to William M. McArthur. Then, the drugstore carried such items as drugs, chemicals, oils, paints, glass, medicines, varnishes and putty.

In 1894, William H. Fogas purchased the store and did much remodeling. He operated the Fogas Drug Store until his death in 1929. His daughter, Alice, operated the store until 1943, when she sold to Ted Wheaton and J. H. Thornton. Mr. Wheaton bought out his partner in 1948 and operated the drugstore until 1966. Alan M. Curtis purchased it and operated the business as the Mount Vernon Pharmacy until 1988. At that time it was believed by many in Posey County to be the oldest business in the county to be operating at the same location.

207 Main Street - The Stinson Brothers (The Mini Mall) (Photos 8,19, 21)

The building is a monumental three story six bay commercial structure. The ground floor has been modified. The second and third floors are constructed of red brick and Indiana limestone.

The windows of the second and third floors are separated by an arcade carried on giant order pilasters. Ornamental limestone Composite Order capitals mark the end and center pilasters; a less ornamented capital is located above the intermediate pilasters. Second floor windows are rectangular one over one double-hung units; third floor windows are semi-circular arched one over one double-hung. The massive, multi-coursed arches are linked.

Limestone enriches the tops of the third floor arches as well as the circular surrounds and projecting piers at the attic story. "Stinson Bros." is written in raised letters in the central limestone plaque at the attic level. The parapet above this central section is set at a greater height than the adjacent parapets.

This Romanesque Revival building was erected in 1890. It was three floors high with handsome staircases leading to each floor. The rounded rail banisters were supported with heavy ball topped newel posts.

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The Stinson Brothers retail empire was founded by 4 brothers, Charles, Robert V., Rufus and William Edward Stinson, natives of Marion, Ky. At one time the family owned 11 stores in Southern Illinois and Indiana.

The family sold the business to the Atkins Brothers and Cannon, operators of department stores in Missouri and Southern Indiana in 1956. In 1970 Otis Allyn purchased the building and converted the first floor into 11 suites for small businesses.

209/211/213 Main (Shops beside Mini Mall) (Photos 8,19,20,21)

This three story commercial building appears to date from about 1870, and is divided into three storefronts. The ground floor storefronts have all been modified, however, traces of the cast iron architectural storefront-pilasters, decorated I-beams-remain in place. The upper two stories, of painted brick, consist of three bays of two over two double-hung windows at each floor per storefront. Each window has flat hooded entablature style lintel. The unique triple gabled roofline gives this building its distinctive character. A bracketed projecting entablature lines the gable marking each of the storefronts; brackets are quadrupled to mark each storefront.

In 1899, 209 was owned by M. Harlem Heirs, 211 was owned by Parke and Owen and 213 was owned by George Henrick.

227/231 Main Street – Zimmerman Shoe Shop/Rothrock Pharmacy (Movie Zone and Home Zone) (Photos 21,23)

A two story, seven bay commercial structure with attic above. The ground floor storefronts have been modified, however, the south bays retain Luxfer-style transom glass. The second and attic stories are cast iron.

The two structures appear to have been built as one design. The central bay of the second and third floors is accented by its projection, also, it is narrower. Fluted pilasters are set at the corners of the building. Engaged colonettes separate the windows of the second floor. A bracketed cornice forms the base of the attic story. Large, square windows divided by fluted pilasters mark the attic, capped by a shallow cornice. The multiple paned windows were installed in recent years.

In 1899, 227 was owned by Justin and Burton Wolf. #231 was built about 1880 by Charles F. Leonard. Dawson's Drug Store was opened about 1921 and was sold to Ira and Russell Rothrock in 1926. Shortly afterwards Russell moved to Evansville where he operated a drug store. Ira continued the store in Mount Vernon until he sold to Lloyd Culley. Rothrock had a 100 proof straight bourbon whiskey bottled especially named "Old Posey". Labels used on the bottles contained a picture of the Posey County Courthouse. Lloyd Culley purchased the building in 1961. At that time the interior of the building was completely renovated, the four walls being the only part left of the original structure. One of the main attractions at that time

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was the soda fountain. This was a glimpse of the past from early drug store days and was a unique service Culley offered. The still Rothrock had used for bottling whiskey was still in the building and the Culleys used it for bottling distilled water.

Wayne Culley sold the building to Linda Moll in 1999.

233 Main The Leonard Building (M. Christine Babcock C.P.A.) (Photos 21,22,23)

This corner building is a two story commercial structure of brick and limestone with an attic story above. Windows are typically one over one double-hung at the second floor.

The Main Street elevation is a symmetrical three bay composition. A pedimented entrance door is located at the center of the ground floor. Prismatic glass fills the storefront transom windows. The second floor is composed of a paired window with a segmental arch above at the center of the building and a single window to either side. A single window is located above each of the flanking windows at the attic level. The masonry of the central section of the attic level projects slightly. The parapet is topped with terra cotta copings. The building may have originally been crowned with a cornice.

The Main Street elevation wraps the building at the first bay of the side elevation. The remainder of the side elevation at the first floor is composed of one over one double-hung windows alternating with circular windows. The fenestration of the second and attic stories is typically located above the first floor circular windows.

Charles Frederick Leonard, a prosperous merchant built this building in 1881 after a fire in 1880 burned down the entire block of frame buildings located on Main Street. One brick building survived. The frame buildings were rebuilt with brick. The building has housed a millinery shop, a bank, two grocery stores, a men's clothing store, two real estate offices, a doctor's office, a lawyer's office, and a newspaper, and was at one time a meeting place for a fraternal organization. The current limestone storefront was added by First National Bank in the early 1900's.

301 Main Street – Palace Soda Shop (Radio Shack) (Photos 21,22,24)

It is a two story three bay commercial building. The ground floor has been modified with brick piers, and metal framed windows and doors. An asphalt shingled pent roof with cross gable masks the former transom area. The second floor is constructed of red brick with limestone trim. Pedimented lintels are set above the one-over-one double hung windows. The pediments are ornamented with scrolls meeting in the center, under a small anthemion ornament. The parapet lacks ornamentation.

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The lack of ornamentation at the parapet but uniformity of the remainder of the architectural vocabulary with the adjacent structure raises questions as to whether there has been a modification to the top of the building.

The Walter family was the first proprietors of candy and soda in the building. From around 1915 until the late 1930s, George Hilakos, a native of Lagada, Greece, owned and operated the "Palace of Sweets" located at the north-west corner of Third and Main Streets. The store featured homemade candies. It also had a soda fountain and a nickelodeon player piano, loaded with popular songs of the era. The young school crowd used the "Palace of Sweets" as a social gathering spot when they wanted to meet their friends and beaus, for cokes and player piano music. Small round tables and matching chairs with wire legs and backs were in the rear portion at the "Palace" as well as near the piano. The front of the store had long glass-covered cases filled with homemade candies that provided appetizing aromas. One of the young people who was a frequent visitor at the "Palace" was Ann Hovey who became a "Wampus Baby" movie starlet of 1929. Ann's great-grandfather Alvin Hovey was the governor of Indiana from 1889 to 1891.

Sometime before 1940 Nick Andrikos became proprietor of the shop. In the early fifties, he sold the shop to Alfred G. White who operated it as Whitey's Restaurant. The restaurant did not do well and went bankrupt. In the mid-fifties Norman Blackburn and his parents purchased the stock and equipment. They leased the building from Mrs. Charlotte Carr and Mrs. Mose Bohn, the owners. In 1956 the business was sold to Charles Bauer. In 1999 David Ziegler opened a men's clothing shop.

In 1907 when the Eagles Lodge was organized in Mount Vernon, the lodge meetings were held on the second floor of the building.

303 Main Rosenbaum's Jewelry (Photos 21,22,24)

A three story, two bay commercial building. The ground floor has been modified. The second and third floors are constructed of red brick with limestone trim. Pedimented lintels are set above the one-over-one double hung windows. A cornice of ornamental brickwork caps the building. As indicated in the discussion of 301 Main, this building appears to have part of 301 at one point, however, 303 maintained its third story and corbel work cornice.

The building was owned by Rosenbaum Bros. In 1899. Isaac Rosenbaum had his jewelry store there until his death and then his daughter Mrs. Charlot Carr had the business.

305/307 Main (BC's Bar & Grill / William W. Gooden Attorney) (Photos 22,24,25)

This three story six bay commercial building is composed of two separate portions of equal width. The upper two stories are constructed of brick and stone. Narrow two story brick pilasters separate the six bays. All window openings are semi-circular arched; second floor

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windows are larger in scale than those at the third floor and have hood molds. The attic windows have simple round arches but the sills are supported by two corbels.

The left storefront retains its original ground floor cast iron storefront, with the central entrance recessed slightly behind the plane of the façade. The windows at the second and third floors of the left building have been replaced with a multi-paned window configuration. A central door at the second floor leads to a balcony with an ornamental cast iron railing. An ornamental bracketed cornice is located at the top of the building.

The right storefront has been modified. Windows at the second floor are one over one double-hung. The third floor windows are shuttered. An ornamental brick cornice lines the top of the building, its lower courses continuing the full length of the structure.

309 Main (Bamberger, Foreman Oswald & Hahn Attorneys) (Photos 22,25)

This three story building is composed of three equal bays, the center bay accented by the increased parapet height. An owner altered the storefront in about 1975 with the ribbed metal material. The second and third floors are faced with buff-colored brick and Indiana limestone. The second floor consists of 3 equal bays of one-over-one windows, with paired windows located at the third floor directly above. The windows are organized vertically by three recessed panels marked by corbel work at the top and bottom. The recessed panels create four pilaster strips which rise to the parapet. The owner in 1899 was C. R. Steffan.

311 Main - The Rosenbaum Brothers (Rosenbaum Antique Mall) (Photos 22,25)

The Rosenbaum & Brothers Building is the most monumental structure of this block on Main Street facing the Courthouse Square. The three story, Romanesque Revival commercial building of red brick and Indiana limestone is composed of a tripartite design. The ground floor, with its asphalt-clad pent roof and aluminum-and-glass doors, was modified in the 1960's or 70's. Above this, however, survives a fine façade. Four giant order pilasters at the second and third floors mark the corners of the building and separate the central section from the two flanking sections.

The central section of the façade is composed of three window bays set within a monumental, multiple coursed semi-circular arch at the third floor. The third floor openings are actually composed of third floor and attic fenestration at this central section. The height of the parapet above is significantly raised above the parapet to either side. The bay to each side of this central section is composed of one set of paired windows with limestone lintels at the second floor and massive semi-circular brick arches at the third.

Window configuration is predominantly one-over-one double-hung but varies. Limestone ornamental stonework accents the building at locations including the pilaster bases and

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Composite Order capitals, the third floor arches and the entablature. "Rosenbaum & Bro." is inscribed in a central limestone plaque at the base of the central parapet.

Henry Weiss, of Evansville, built the Romanesque Revival building at a cost of \$25,000.00 in 1893. Foshee and Hosea, of Mount Vernon, did the brick work. The main room is 50x110 feet; the second and third stories are 50x100 feet. The cable cash carrier, run by water motor, made the circuit of the entire room within twelve seconds. A hydraulic elevator for passenger service was in the south side of the main floor.

Mose and Daniel Rosembaum established Rosembaum and Brothers in 1851. In 1889 Jacob and Lee, sons of Mose and Julius and Mike, sons of Daniel were made members of the firm. After a fire in 1893 the present building was erected. The grand opening of the store in April 1894, with Kling's Orchestra and the world-renowned Pythian Band furnishing the music for the citizens of Mount Vernon and the hundreds of strangers thronging the handsome building. It was declared one of the finest stores in the state. An elegant souvenir was given each visitor, and the store was beautifully decorated for the occasion.

403/409/411Main (Mt. Vernon License Branch, Vacant Building , Gould Professional Computing Services) (Photos 27,28)

It is a three story commercial structure with a cast iron storefront at ground level and red brick and limestone trim at the upper floors. The cast iron pilasters and lintels remain intact, but the glazing and other portions of the storefronts have been replaced. The northernmost front is the most intact.

The building is divided into four equal sections, probably originally corresponding to separate storefronts. Each section is divided from the next by a slightly projecting pier.

Each section consists of three equally spaced windows. All windows are double hung, and vary between one over one and two over two. Second floor lintels are limestone with a cornice or drip mold at the top; they are continuous for each triple window group. Brick mullions with stone caps and bases divide the triple windows. On the third floor, windows are arched in brick, with flat extrados and segmental intrados are located above third floor windows. The attic story is typically broken by three equally spaced grilles, although a large segmental arch and curvilinear pediment accent the second storefront from the left. A raised circle bears raised letters in the decorative pediment, reading, "1888." A uniform ornamental cornice lines the top of the building, broken only by each of the slightly projecting piers.

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413 Main Street – Gronemeier Hardware (Bud's Hardware Store) (Photos 27,28)

This building has a three story cast iron façade, but the ground and second floors have been obscured. An awning roof hides the original second floor window pattern, which consists of arches similar to those of the third floor.

The original configuration of the second and third floors remains visible at the third floor. It is divided into two equal sections of four equally spaced window bays each. Windows are one over one double-hung with semi-circular arches. A projecting cornice with ornamental modillions and brackets accents the top of the building. The date "1884" is in the pediment embellishment above the right four window bays. The exposed third story, and the exposed north wall give this building enough integrity to contribute to the district.

This Italianate was built in 1884. In 1874 an Industrious young man founded his own business at 106 Main Street in manufacturing tin ware and sheet metal ware. Simon H. Gronemeier learned his trade under one of the best firms in business at that time, John H. Barter & Co. His son, Alfred S., entered the firm in 1901 and moved the business to 307 Main Street. In 1906 the business moved to the Boberg Building at 413 Main Street. In 1914 a 35-foot addition was made to the building and in 1918 another 30-foot addition was made. When the Old First National Bank was liquidated in 1935 the business bought the north half of 415 Main Street. In 1938, a complete remodeling was carried out. Including a modern new front, new partitions, new heating system and adding 2000 square feet of floor space. In 1945 the firm again expanded, purchasing the Spencer property across the alley on the north side. Larry Stinson purchased in 1967 Gronemeier Hardware Company. In 1972 Stinson's was sold to Bud Funkhouser.

131 East Fourth Street – Alvin P. Hovey Home (The Elks Lodge #277) (Photos 32,33)

The two story red brick and limestone house is now used as the Elks' Lodge. The front façade is composed of three equal horizontal bays. A gable with a fanlight window at the roof level is located at the center of the composition. The entrance is reached by a central door accessed by a one-story gabled porch. The corners of the building are marked by brick quoins. The one story side wing is a modification. Ornamental brackets below the projecting roof have been covered with aluminum siding.

The house was built by Alvin P. Hovey, in the mid-1800's (c.1850). It was one of the finest local dwellings of its day. Hovey was a military and political figure who was to serve as a general in the Civil War, U. S. Minister to Peru, congressman and finally, governor of Indiana. It was here his children was born and his first wife, Mary James, died. His military career reached its zenith, while the general was a resident in his home, which became the center of political and military activities of that time.

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After the death of 3 of his 5 children and that of his wife who died in 1863, he sold the property and all the furnishings to Matthew Thompson who subsequently sold the property to Daniel Rosenbaum. Different members of the Rosenbaum family owned and occupied the house for many years – first, Dan, then Moses and later Moses' son Lee. After Lee and Elka Rosenbaum had build a new house they sold the Hovey House to the Elks Lodge #277.

At one time, the Hovey home had a large latticed porch on the northwest side, squaring out the back section. In 1949 the Elks Lodge removed the porch and added a large lounge on that side.

126 East Third Street – The Memorial Coliseum (Photos 36,37)

The Coliseum, facing the Courthouse Square, is constructed in a symmetrical, Neo-classical design with a two story central pavilion flanked by one-story wings, all atop a raised basement that is visible only from the sides and rear of the building. Materials are buff-colored brick and Indiana limestone. The flat roofs are not visible from street level.

Four Roman Doric columns in antis mark the recessed portico, reached by a frontal flight of steps from street level. A classical metal light fixture with globe shade stands atop each flanking wall beside the steps. Recessed behind the colonnade, three architrave-framed doorways lead inside, above these are three triple window groups with projecting, corbel-supported stone sills.

One bay each flanks the recessed colonnade. On the first level is a window recessed into a shallow panel, with keystone. A triple window group is above this opening, similar to those under the colonnade. A simple full entablature crowns the two story portion, with triglyphs and a modillion-lined cornice. The metope spaces are blank. The parapet above steps up slightly above the portico. The parapet supports a single sculpture of an eagle at the center of the building.

The one story flanking wings consist of a single limestone memorial at the base of the building, with a tripartite window at the entablature frieze. The entablature at the wings is a simplified version of the one at the center pavilion, lacking modillions.

This was among the earliest monuments to W.W. I veterans in the state. The original petition for the coliseum was filed in 1920. This petition to honor veterans of all wars contained the names of 1800 taxpayers and was secured by the American Legion posts of Posey County. In March 1920 the county commissioners named as members of the coliseum board of trustees were Jacob M. Harlem, Louis W. Raben, William E. Holton, Lowell Stallins and L. J. Demberger. In June the trustees selected the southwest corner of Third and Walnut Streets. After some litigation between opposing groups, the contract for construction of the building was awarded on plans of the architectural firm of C. E. Werking & Son of Richmond, Indiana. Other contractors were J. A. Behrick and Sons of Mount Vernon, Gottman and Weber of Evansville, Lynn M.

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Strack of Mount Vernon and Oscar D. Keck of Mount Vernon. Supervising engineer was Alvin E. Gempler.

In 1925 the County Commissioners authorized a bond sale of \$2195,000 to pay for the construction of the building. The Old First National Bank of this city was the successful bidder for these bonds, paying a premium of \$10,787 on the total issue. Bonds were in \$1,000 denomination and were to mature in 20 years. This premium went to the coliseum board of trustees and with other funds the board had an amount of approximately \$30,000 that was used to decorate, furnish and beautify the building.

The building is designed to be as fire proof as much as possible and is constructed of gray brick, Indiana limestone, steel and concrete. Overall dimensions are 130 x 142 feet.

Originally the large entrance lobby on the first floor had 3 doors opening into the auditorium, the doors signifying the 3 branches of service at that time – Army, Navy and Marines. The auditorium had a seating capacity of 1,100. At the south end of the auditorium was a standard stage, which had a fly gallery, wash rooms, dressing rooms and a stairway leading to the second floor. This stage, in the past, had been used for a number of purposes, including minstrel shows by local talent, variety shows by the Carr Bros., stage shows and religious meetings.

The second floor of the coliseum had an assembly hall, with 2 ante rooms, and a large balcony with a motion picture booth on the north end.

A gymnasium, swimming pool, with balcony for spectators, lockers and kitchen was located in the basement. A memorial plaque listing the names of Posey County W.W.I veterans hangs in the lobby. A second plaque, honoring those who died in W.W.II, Korea, and Vietnam, was dedicated in 1990 and hangs in the southeast corner of the lobby.

When floodwaters ravaged Posey County in 1937, the Coliseum was converted into a hospital and dormitory for refugees forced from their homes.

In 1995 the building was remodeled due to moving part of the county offices from the County Courthouse. The ground floor where the pool and gymnasium had been was filled in and the Probation, Surveyor, Health Department, Veterans and Ag. Offices were moved from the courthouse and restrooms were added.

On the main floor a second floor was added to the auditorium space and a new courtroom, with holding spaces, judge's offices, Clerk's office, Black Twp. Assessor office and restrooms.

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The second floor was remodeled into space for the Recorder, Treasurer, Auditor and restrooms. An elevator runs to all 3 floors.

131 West Second Street – The Opera House (Alles Brothers Furniture Co) (Photos 41,42)

This three story building, originally the opera house, is composed of twelve equally spaced bays at the front elevation. It is constructed primarily of red brick and Indiana limestone. The top of the building is covered with a double pitched hip roof clad with slate.

A cast iron storefront is located at the ground floor of the front elevation. Large plate glass windows and sets of doors are set below a transom window zone.

The second floor windows are monumental in height, nine-paned triple hung windows. Third floor windows are six over six double-hung. All windows at the second and third floor primary street elevation are rectangular with blind arches above. Arches are of brick with a limestone keystone. A bracketed cornice is located at the top of the structure.

This building was built by the Masons in 1879. M. Harlem purchased the building in 1880 for \$5,260. He remodeled it into a proper theater. He added a gallery, new seats, and extended the platform stage by 6 feet. The name was changed to "The Mount Vernon Opera House " and became a building of social activity. Vaudeville, dances, boxing matches were all held on the second floor. The Mount Vernon High School played its first basketball game on the second floor. The Masons had their meetings on the 3rd floor.

In the spring of 1914, the activities discontinued and much of the theater fixtures were dismantled, leaving the balcony and ticket booth still intact. Alles Brothers Furniture Store is the present owner of the building and they use the second floor for storage.

132 East Second Street (Gundi's Restaurant) (Photos 39,40)

132 E. Second is a two story brick commercial structure with attic story. The building is constructed primarily of red brick with limestone trim.

The front elevation storefront has a pent roof and metal framed doors and windows, all from the 1960s or 70s. A corbel table marks the base of the second story. The second and attic stories above are composed of three equal bays. Segmental arched second floor openings have been modified; shortened to accommodate smaller windows. Attic floor openings have been filled with brick. An ornamental brick cornice lines the top of the building, complete with a solid brick parapet decorated with recessed lozenges.

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The fenestration pattern of the side elevation is set by the six equally spaced windows of the second floor. First floor circular windows and third floor attic window openings have been altered by masonry fill, for smaller sash. The parapet is stepped to follow the slope of the roof.

The building was owned in 1899 by Henry Brinkman and was the site of William Frier, Jr. 's cigar factory. At one time Frier had over 30 workmen and had sales totaling over one million cigars annually.

Later what is now the dining room on the right side was the site of "The Western Star" newspaper. John C. Leffel was the owner and editor of the paper.

Section 8 - Statement of Significance

The district meets Criteria A and C. Downtown Mount Vernon was and is the center of commerce and government for this Ohio River county seat community, and the district includes a fine architectural collection illustrating the development of these themes over the past 150 years. Since 1805, when the McFadin brothers settled on the site and built a storehouse, commerce has been ongoing in Mount Vernon. The commissioners moved the county seat here in 1825, first of many significant governmental roles filled by the buildings of downtown Mount Vernon. Architecturally, the district is the most impressive civic display in Posey County. Several buildings even rival their counterparts in nearby Evansville (Vanderburgh County) in detail and scale.

Sometime in 1790 brothers William and Andrew McFadin took a hunting trip and in crossing the Ohio River, reached a high bluff on the north side. In 1805 the two brothers and their families returned to the bluff and built two log cabins near the foot of what is now College Avenue. William Henry Harrison, governor of the Indiana Territory and resident of Vincennes, had ownership of the land. The McFadins eventually bought a portion of the land from Harrison. By 1812, a wharf was in place near the site, flatboat skippers were landing here, and a small woodlot was in business. Milling added to the importance of the area, with the McFadins constructing a horse-drawn mill by 1819. Later Andrew was buried on his land just north of where his warehouse stood on the high bluff. It was the closest area not hindered by swamp land to the confluence of two major trade routes, the Wabash and Ohio Rivers.

In 1819, a band of entrepreneurs including Jesse Welborn and others formed the Mount Vernon Company, bought the land extending away from the river, and platted the town.

River trade was a key part of Mount Vernon's success. Flatboats and later, steamboats, found Mount Vernon an ideal place to trade. However, initially, tiny New Harmony held many trade advantages over Mount Vernon. Founded in 1814 by a band of German protestants called the Rappites, New Harmony prospered for a decade, with home industries, abundant agricultural

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produce, and a surplus of goods to trade. The tidy village of German half-timbered homes and brick public buildings was the leading trade center of the county. But in 1824, the Rappites sold their holdings and returned to Pennsylvania. Robert Owen purchased the town and tried to establish an ideal community. Though Owen lured many renowned educators and intellectuals to New Harmony, he ultimately never completely succeeded in creating his dream. New Harmony retained its intellectual bent but its economy settled into the role of small market town. Banking and milling kept New Harmony viable through the first decades of the 20th century.

Bouyed by the award of county seat status in 1825, Mount Vernon would take more of a leading role. By the 1830s, pioneers had already established several groceries, general stores, and the McFadins had a steam powered mill. As early as 1820, three different "firms" were sending flatboats brimming with milled corn and processed pork down river to Louisiana, Mississippi, and Tennessee. Beginning in the 1830s, a cooperage provided the containers; all made from locally harvested hardwoods. Grain mills, such as the Fuhrer-Ford Milling Company, and pork packing plants were filling the waterfront prior to the Civil War. By some accounts, the town was processing and shipping the equivalent of 600 hogs per year in the decades after the Civil War. Mount Vernon and several of its residents were earning a fortune off of the agricultural trade. Packets arrived on the riverfront at least once a week carrying both passengers and freight.

In 1850, 1,120 persons lived in Mount Vernon. There were five dry goods and general merchants, including Rosenbaum's, a blacksmith, James & Muggs flour mill, and Sarver's saw mill, in addition to the pork plants. George Booker and A.S. Curtis started the first bank in town in the 1850s, and a plank road connected Mount Vernon and New Harmony in 1851. The Civil War years saw the addition of a buggy factory, grain mills, and a wharf-boat shipwright. The population reached 2,880 by 1870. Among the new arrivals were foreign-born Germans, who founded an Aid Society in 1857 and a German language newspaper – one of several active papers in town at the time – by 1875. They quickly found a place in the local economy.

Railroads augmented the sometimes uncertain river trade with the arrival of the Louisville and Nashville in 1869-70. Railroads had reached neighboring Evansville in the 1850s, just years after the Wabash and Erie Canal reached the town. The resulting economic boom made Evansville the dominant river town on the west half of Indiana leg of the Ohio. Too late for Mount Vernon to challenge Evansville, yet, rail access gave Mount Vernon's industries and businesses better opportunities than New Harmony, which had no rail access until 1880. In 1881, however, the Evansville and Terre Haute line reached Mount Vernon, increasing its advantage yet again.

Streets in 1870 were still unpaved and drained by side ditches. Main Street was one of the few rock and cobblestone streets in the city. Crosswalks at intersections were of large slab stones. There were few sidewalks and these were of wood or stone. With the use of horses and mules for transportation, there were hitching racks in front of business houses and scattered about

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town were watering troughs, blacksmith shops and livery stables. Business houses had awnings of wood, metal or canvas to block out the sun.

Mount Vernon's businesses were fueled by the surplus farm economy. Reports show the wealth of the surplus: in 1875, Posey County farmers turned out 1,231,490 bushels of corn, 724,530 bushels of wheat, and 660,982 pounds of bacon (Hovey, as quoted from State Auditor's report of 1875). Certainly at least half of this was finding its way to Mount Vernon for processing, trade, and distribution, with Evansville being the other likely destination. The population increased each decade of the 19th century, 3,730 in 1880, 4,705 in 1890, finally reaching a long time high of 5,563 in 1910. At least one firm began shipping locally mined coal in the 1880s.

Farming remained the lynchpin of business in Posey County, well into present times. On the eve of World War I, historian John Leffel stated "...thousands of barrels of hominy and flour leave this place annually..." (Leffel, p. 96), along with "many tons" of hay and corn. But farm-related industry was a major employer. In 1913, the biggest firm in town was the Keck-Gonnerman Company. The Woody family began the plant as a foundry in 1873. By 1913, the plant covered 10 acres, employed 200, and made steam engines, threshers, portable saw mills and even coal mining equipment. The 'teens and 'twenties industries included the Mount Vernon Straw Board Company, makers of shipping cases, with eighty workers; American Hominy Company and three other mills; Whitmore Handle Company, a cooperage, brickyard, tile plant, and a few other concerns. The solid underpinning of industry and agriculture created the economic means for the merchants, banks, and secret societies housed in the district to exist and prosper.

The population remained close to the 5,000 mark throughout the hard times (for farms) of the 'twenties, 'thirties, and 'forties. Keck-Gonnerman remained an active industry through this period, failing only in the 1950s. Grain milling and distribution continued its importance through the war years as well. Only after the Second World War, and on into present, did Mount Vernon reach a steady climb to just under 8,000 persons.

Architecturally, the district's governmental buildings trace the history of Mount Vernon. The town tried several attempts at incorporation in the 1830s and mid-1840s. The first city election was held in 1865. The county commissioners created the oldest governmental building in the district, when they hired architects Vrydagh and Clarke of Terre Haute to design the 1876 courthouse. This monumental French Second Empire style building still serves the public today, and remains an impressive statement. A county jail and sheriff's house by the same architects no longer stands.

In 1893, the city council built a new City Hall and firehouse at 526 Main. This largely intact building has served the citizens of Mount Vernon for 110 years; certainly it is one of the oldest

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city halls in continuous use in the state. Its architecture is Romanesque Revival with Queen Anne influences.

Other public buildings came as Mount Vernon was reaching unforeseen economic heights. Two in particular show interest in the City Beautiful / Neo classical movement that so marked civic endeavors of the early 20th century: Mount Vernon would not be "left behind" Indiana's other growing towns. The Alexandrian Free Library, completed 1905, and the Memorial Coliseum, 1925, are the two. The Alexandrian was a Carnegie-funded library. Harris and Shopbell of Evansville were the architects. In the first decade of the 1900s, the pair designed Carnegie-funded libraries in towns across Indiana, including Greensburg, Martinsville, and Shelbyville. All three are markedly similar to the Jeffersonian-Palladian-Pantheon scheme expounded so well at Mount Vernon. Clifford Shopbell, on his own, continued receiving Carnegie related jobs. He ultimately became the second most prolific designer of Carnegie libraries in Indiana with a total of eighteen commissions.

The Memorial Coliseum was designed by C.E. Werking & Son, a Richmond, Indiana firm. Charles Werking and his Paul maintained a modest practice in Richmond, designing homes and small schools in the early 1900s. The Memorial Coliseum job was somewhat far afield for the two and was one of largest commissions the firm had at the time (background on firm from Seager). Its form is similar to that of the Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library (1913-16, Paul Phillip Cret, architect) and that of the Memorial Coliseum in Evansville (1916-17, Shopbell & Co., architects). Original drawings for the project survive in the archives of Ball State University, Muncie, Indiana.

New city services and improvements came with the more visible construction projects. By 1913, Mount Vernon had a city water plant, electric service, ninety-five blocks of macadamized streets, thirty-three blocks of asphalt-paved streets, and a riverfront public park with bandstand (Sherburne Park, in the district). The 1927 armory was the final government-sponsored building in the district.

Architectural historians have often noted the role of the federal government in the City Beautiful movement, especially regarding post office and federal courthouse design. The 1931, Neo classical, stone-faced U.S. Post Office, 308 Walnut, is located adjacent to the Mount Vernon Downtown Historic District, within the boundaries of the NR-listed Welborn Historic District. With five major structures, downtown Mount Vernon has the best collection of historic public architecture in the county.

Unfortunately, city improvements couldn't always stave off disaster. When two fires, in 1880 and 1895, destroyed most of the frame commercial buildings along the Main Street, between Second and Fourth Streets, merchants rebuilt with brick. Extensive use of cast iron from the Mesker Ironworks in Evansville was made, both in single columns and in entire building fronts.

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The individual efforts of merchants, and the importation of cast iron architectural elements from Evansville, created a distinctive collection of commercial buildings in the district that spans decades of time. The Opera House at 131-133 W. 2nd, is one of several fine examples of a cast iron front. 227-231 Main displays a full cast iron front. Further embellishments of pressed metal or cast iron seen in the district are usually on Italianate style buildings: sheet metal bracket work, cast iron window hoods, or window pediments.

As owners rebuilt their stores, they chose the popular styles of the period. Two of the best examples of Romanesque Revival in the county were the result of merchant pride and prosperity in Mount Vernon: Rosenbaum's at 311 N. Main (1893), and Stinson's at 207 N. Main (1890).

New Harmony and Poseyville also have railroad-era 19th century downtowns. While New Harmony's is remarkably intact because most buildings are owned by Historic New Harmony, it cannot match Mount Vernon's downtown in scale and diversity of style and materials. Nor can Poseyville's, though several individual buildings stand out.

Ongoing, viable commerce has sometimes led to the loss of historic buildings in the district. Most notably, a local bank demolished the finely crafted 1898 I.O.O.F. Hall in the 1990s, located on the north side of the square. The presence of the bank does continue a tradition of banking in the district. Hopefully, this nomination will help encourage the healthy trend of reinvestment beginning to take hold in downtown Mount Vernon.

Section 9 - Bibliography

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

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Verbal Boundary Description

Note: for ease of reference, directions are given as though College, Main, and Walnut run a true north-south direction.

Beginning at the southeast corner of Main and E. 6th St., proceed east along the south curb of 6th to the first alley east of Main. Turn south down the west edge of the alley and follow across 5th to south edge of the alley parallel to and between 5th and 4th Streets. Turn east down said alley edge and go to the west curb of Walnut Street. Turn south down the west edge of Walnut, follow past 4th, 3rd, and 2nd Streets to the alley parallel to and between 2nd and Water Streets. Turn west down the north edge of said alley. Follow to the west curb of Main Street. Follow a line described by the west curb of Main, across Water Street, to the banks of the Ohio River. Follow the banks of the Ohio west to a line described by the east curb of College Avenue. Follow this line and the east curb of College north to the south curb of 3rd Street. Go east to a point in line with the east edge of the alley between and parallel to College and Main. Follow north along said alley edge to the south edge of the alley between and parallel to 4th and 5th Streets. Turn east along this alley edge and follow to the east curb of Main. Return to point of origin along the east curb of Main.

Boundary Justification

The district includes the commercial and civic heart of Mount Vernon. The district always developed in linear strips extending away from the riverfront on parallel streets; this accounts for its elongated form, and placement of resources. The east boundary is largely dictated by the pre-existing Welborn Historic District (NR, 1992). The Welborn neighborhood is almost entirely residential in nature, though, it does include the 1931 U.S. Post Office. The boundary extends north to include a significant cluster of civic structures, all intrinsically related to a theme defended in the statement of significance, government and architecture in Mount Vernon. Including only a portion of Mount Vernon's civic resources in the district would leave a significant part of the community's story out of the picture. To the west of the district, surface lots and non-contributing buildings divide the district from other potentially contributing buildings.

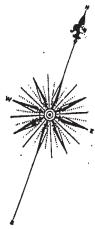


MOUNT VERNON DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT

- A 16 421120 4198631
- B 16 421340 419869
- C 16 421540 4198090
- D 16 421000 41980

(CABORN)
3459 IV NE
HOWELL 15 MI
EVANSVILLE 19 MI.

MOUNT VERNON DOWNTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT POSEY COUNTY, INDIANA



KEY

- C Contributing
- NC Non-Contributing
- ➔ Photo Number & Location
- - - Boundary

