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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

AUG 23 1993

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National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL REGISTER

NATIONAL REGISTER

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 Masonic Temple/Watts, Ritter Wholesale Drygoods Company Building

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 1100-1108 East Third Avenue not for publication

city or town Huntington vicinity

state West Virginia code WV county Cabell code 011 zip code 25701

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 36 CFR 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.)

William G. Laman
Signature of certifying official/Title

5/26/93
Date

State of 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

~~Entered in the~~
National Register

Date of Action

Helene Byer

8/26/93

Masonic Temple/ Watts, Ritter Co. Bldg.

Cabell, Co., W. Virginia

Name of Property

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(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	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

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/warehouse

SOCIAL/meeting hall

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/office building

SOCIAL/meeting hall

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

EARLY 20TH CENTURY/ commercial style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete

walls brick

roof other

other terra cotta

Narrative Description

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

Masonic Temple/Watts, Ritter Co. Bldg.
Name of Property

Cabell Co., West Virginia
County and State

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.)

9. Major Bibliographical 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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE
SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1914-1930

Significant Dates

1914, 1922, 1926

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Wilbur T. Mills, architect
Moore Construction Co., builder

Primary location of additional data:

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

Name of repository:

6/7/93

Masonic Temple/Watts, Ritter Co. Bldg.
Name of Property

Cabell Co., West Virginia
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	1 7	3 7 4 2 1 0	4 2 5 3 5 1 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
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 Nancy Recchie/ Historic Preservation Consultant

organization Benjamin D. Rickey & Co. date 3/93

street & number 391 Library Park South telephone (614) 221-0358

city or town Columbus state Ohio zip code 43215

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 Ferguson Land Co.

street & number 1108 Third Ave. telephone 304-522-0150

city or town Huntington, state W.V. zip code 25701

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 Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 7 Page 1

**Masonic Temple/Watts, Ritter Wholesale Dry Goods Co.
Cabell County, West Virginia**

Description

The Masonic Temple/Watts-Ritter Wholesale Dry Goods Company Building is a large early twentieth century seven-story commercial building located on the northeast corner of Third Avenue and Eleventh Street in downtown Huntington, West Virginia. The building was constructed to house a large wholesale business and Huntington Lodge #53 of the Masons.

The building, which was built in three sections, is constructed of steel-reinforced concrete with yellow and orange brick facing and white terra cotta trim. The first section of the building, the western portion, was completed in early 1914. It measures five by 10 bays and is constructed in a tri-partite design consisting of a base, shaft, and terminating cornice that is typical of multi-story commercial buildings of the period. The base, or first floor, consists of storefronts and a heavily decorated main entrance on the Third Avenue elevation, and a row of high windows with brickwork laid in a horizontal design along the Eleventh Street elevation. The main entrance consists of a double-width entry with a segmental-arched stained glass transom. The entire entrance is framed in a glazed terra cotta surround consisting of semi-engaged columns, topped with banded spheres; an enlarged keystone and an oval stained glass window depicting the Masonic emblem; and a wide terra cotta frame. A terra cotta intermediate cornice, with a diamond-patterned design on the frieze, separates the first floor from the plainer four-story shaft of the building. Those upper floors have both paired and single double-hung one-over-one windows. The wall surface is visually varied at the corners through the use of a lighter-colored brick, laid in a design that accentuates the horizontal lines forming the quoins. A simple terra cotta beltcourse separates this section of the building from the top two floors. These floors, which were designed for and are still occupied by the Masonic Lodge, feature paired Ionic columns separating bays containing two levels of decorative windows located within a recess. The lower level windows have elaborate terra cotta window surrounds and entablatures, while the upper level windows are taller with fixed transoms and indicate the location of the dining room. Plainer versions of these taller windows are used on all of the seventh floor. A restrained terra cotta cornice completes the design of the original building. The rear elevation features simple double-hung windows, a few large industrial-type windows on the first floor, and an unadorned brick wall surface.

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Section number 7 Page 2

Masonic Temple/Watts, Ritter Wholesale Dry Goods Co.
Cabell County, West Virginia

Description (continued)

An annex, consisting of five stories, was constructed on the east side of the original building in 1922. It was built of reinforced concrete with the same color of brick facing as the original building. The storefronts were located on the first floor, separated from the upper stories by a simple terra cotta cornice matching that on the original building. The paired window rhythm of the original building was duplicated, as was a simplified version of the brick quoins in a contrasting color. Four years after construction of the addition, in 1926, two more stories were added to the building. These, too, echo but do not duplicate exactly the design of the original building. A terra cotta beltcourse separates the top two floors from the shaft of the building. Simple paired pilasters separate the bays of the upper stories. The rear and east elevations consisted originally of the exposed concrete structure and brick infill panels. These were modified recently to accommodate new window openings.

The only other exterior alterations have been to the storefront openings along Third Avenue. The original storefronts had prism glass transoms and large storefront windows. These were changed to a more contemporary look in the 1960s, including blank upper and lower panels that created a narrow band of windows across the entire first floor. These in turn were later changed to aluminum-and-glass full-height display windows. These later windows remain in place in the western portion of the building; wooden storefronts were recently reintroduced as part of the rehabilitation project in the eastern half of the building.

The interior of the building, with the exception of the Masonic lodge rooms on the top two floors of the original building, consisted of large open spaces with concrete structural columns, typical of space used as a warehouse by a wholesale firm. The main entrance, in the south elevation of the western half of the building, leads into a very small elevator lobby and staircase serving the lodge; doors to the left and right of the lobby door serve the first floor and were the primary access to the warehouse firm and its offices. The elevator and stairs open only onto the sixth and seventh floors; the second through fifth floors are served by a different set of stairs and elevators, near the rear of the building, that do not extend to the top two floors, thus completely separating the building's original two occupants. At various locations on the first through the fifth floors, the masonry wall between the two halves of the

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**Masonic Temple/Watts, Ritter Wholesale Dry Goods Co.
Cabell County, West Virginia**

Description (continued)

building has been opened into large doorways to permit easy access on all floors to all of the warehouse space.

The Masonic lodge rooms are little altered from their original design. Two small and one large meeting room retain their original height, decorative plaster, stained glass, light fixtures, and much of the original furniture. The Main Meeting Room features the original stage, flyspace, and painted fabric backdrops used for various ceremonies. A decorative plaster proscenium surrounds the stage opening. The wall surfaces are plain plaster with a restrained plaster cornice surrounding the room. A balcony with wood panels and a brass railing surrounds the room on three sides. The original balcony furniture survives, consisting of connected rows of folding seats with wire hatracks under them. The carved wooden chairs, podium, light fixtures and other furniture used in the ceremonies is also original. Several smaller rooms and offices are also located on this floor (the sixth floor). The top floor of the building houses the dining room and kitchen. The dining room has been modified through the addition of restroom partitions but otherwise is a large open room with a polished wood floor and its original ceiling height.

The building stands at the edge of the downtown, surrounded either by parking lots or new low-rise construction except for the former Baltimore & Ohio Railroad Station and Freight House located immediately to the north behind the Masonic Temple/Watts-Ritter Building. The railroad buildings have been preserved as a historical park and commercial area.

The eastern portion of the building, the part built by Watts-Ritter between 1922 and 1926, has been completely rehabilitated for office use. All seven floors have been redone with a core consisting of elevator, corridors and restrooms; and the various floors infilled with office partitioning. The concrete columns remain exposed throughout the building as evidence of its structural system and earlier warehouse appearance.

The entire Masonic Temple/Watts-Ritter Building retains a high degree of integrity of design, materials, location and association. The exterior wall surfaces, wooden double-hung windows,

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Cabell County, West Virginia****Description (continued)**

main entrance, decorative terra cotta, and storefront openings remain intact, giving the building integrity of design and materials. The building is located on its original site and continues to dominate the corner where it is located. The building also maintains integrity of association, as the Masonic Lodge has continuously occupied this building since its completion in 1914 and plans to remain here after rehabilitation of the rest of the building is completed.

Although the building was constructed over a period of nearly 15 years, it is architecturally cohesive -- its three separate components were skilfully blended into a single composition -- and retains an important visual presence in this area of downtown Huntington.

Statement of Significance

The Masonic Temple/Watts, Ritter Wholesale Drygoods Company Building is eligible for the National Register under criterion A for its long association with one of the largest and most successful wholesale enterprises in Huntington's history and for its long association with the Masonic lodge and the social and cultural life of the community. The building was constructed in 1914 to house the Watts, Ritter Wholesale Drygoods Company on the lower five floors and the Masonic Lodge on the upper two floors. The rapidly growing wholesale business necessitated the need for expansion, and in 1922 a five-story annex was built to the east on adjacent land. Four years later, in 1926, two additional stories were added completing the seven-story block. The Watts, Ritter Company occupied the building until the firm's closing in 1959. The Masonic Temple has been in constant use since its construction and remains an active and heavily used social and cultural facility today.

Historical Background and Significance

Although the history of Huntington, West Virginia predates the late 19th century, the city as we know it today developed largely as a result of several concurrent events in the late 19th century -- the development of an excellent transportation system; the selection of Huntington as the location of the important locomotive and car shops for the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway; and the development of the timber, coal and gas fields in the surrounding tri-state area.

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2**Masonic Temple/Watts, Ritter Wholesale Dry Goods Co.
Cabell County, West Virginia****Statement of Significance (continued)**

The development of an excellent transportation network was critical to the success and development of communities during the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Huntington, West Virginia was fortunate to be able to take advantage of Ohio River transportation, but it was the rapid development of a complex network of railroads that made the city a thriving manufacturing and jobbing center. Construction of the main lines of the Chesapeake and Ohio Railway through Huntington in the 1870s and of the Norfolk and Western Railway a few miles to the west in the 1880s created the trunk lines connecting the industrial midwest and its raw materials with east coast manufacturers and shipping ports. In the middle sat Huntington, at the north end of West Virginia's huge coalfields. With the trunk lines in place, branches into the mountainous coal regions could be built, unlocking the interior's mineral wealth. Soon coal was flowing in endless streams to both east and west, and the state's interior grew rapidly in population. All these people had to be clothed and fed, and Huntington was in the perfect position to meet that need.

The growth of Huntington was explosive during the period from 1890 to 1930. The population was only 10,000 in 1890 (Wheeling, by comparison, had over 34,000 at the time) but grew to 31,161 by 1910. By 1920 the population was over 50,000 (nearly the same size as Wheeling). By 1930, Huntington had become the largest city in the state with 75,572 people (over 14,000 more than Wheeling had during the same census). This growth in population reflected growth in local industry and commerce, particularly the immense trading area of the coalfields and other areas of extractive industry. A 1912 publication by the Huntington Chamber of Commerce boasted a large number of factories producing freight cars, glassware, tools, furniture, china, shoes, bricks, clay materials, beer, tipples and boats, boxes, windows and doors, shirts and overalls, ice cream and dairy products, and stoves, among other products.

This same publication noted that Huntington was also a major jobbing center. In 1902 there were eight jobbing houses, but by 1912 there were over 40. This was attributed to Huntington's "splendid railroad and river service. . .granting a location better than any other point to ship to West Virginia, Southern Ohio and Eastern Kentucky and. . .to the phenomenal industrial development in coal, timber, oil and gas that put so many jobbers in the field in

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Cabell County, West Virginia

Statement of Significance (continued)

recent years. . . ." The same publication noted that the thousands of men in the fields served by the railroads were served by the wholesale houses of the city. "Hundreds of thousands have been spent in oil and gas development within a few miles of us in a half dozen counties. This has been the store house for these sections. . . . The development of the treasure houses in the mountains south of us has hardly begun. . . ."

A few years later, in 1921, another Chamber of Commerce publication aggressively promoted the city as the ideal place to locate furniture and woodworking industries, glass plants, steel mills, iron furnaces, and brick and tile plants. It also noted, "It is estimated that more than a million persons were clothed and fed thru Huntington in 1920, and our jobbing houses during that year sold more than \$50,000,000 worth of goods, a large part of this business being from the rich coalfields that surround the city. . . ."

It was during this period that the Watts-Ritter Wholesale Drygoods Company was founded and thrived. The predecessor company, The Barlow-Henderson Company, which was one of the first jobbing houses in the city, was founded in 1892. B.F. Barlow served as president and manager, and Charles W. Watts as secretary and treasurer. By 1895 they had built a seven-story block and had representatives covering areas in four states. In 1898, G.N. Biggs became involved in the business and the name was changed to Biggs-Watts & Company. A 1902 issue of the *Huntington Herald* stated, "Huntington enjoys the distinction of being the best and largest jobbing center on the Ohio River between Cincinnati and Wheeling. . . . Of the numerous larger houses here, that of Biggs, Watts & Co. is among the foremost. . . ." It further stated that the firm owned and operated a factory which produced overalls, work shirts and pants under the "Peerless" brand. When Mr. Biggs retired in 1906, C. Lloyd Ritter entered the business and the name was changed to Watts, Ritter & Company with Watts as president. It moved again in 1914 to occupy approximately 67,000 rented square feet in the just-completed Masonic Temple building at Third and Eleventh. The company purchased adjacent land for expansion and constructed the 42,000-square-foot addition (owned by Watts-Ritter) in 1922 and another 14,000 square feet (the top two floors) in 1926, bringing the total square footage to over 123,000 square feet. The company passed from local ownership in 1930 when it was sold to Ely & Walker of St. Lewis (although it retained the Watts, Ritter

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Cabell County, West Virginia****Statement of Significance (continued)**

& Co. name). The business occupied this space until it 1959 when it was consolidated with operations in other cities. By the time it closed, Watts, Ritter & Co.'s parent company had become a wholly owned subsidiary of Burlington Industries Inc. of Greensboro, N.C.

The Huntington Lodge No. 53 of the Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons was founded in 1872 and occupied a number of locations before deciding to build its own building in 1912. During this 40-year period, there were a number of committees charged with the responsibility of finding quarters for lodge activities. The Masons occupied at least six different locations before The Masonic Temple Association was authorized to purchase a lot on the northeast corner of Eleventh Street and Third Avenue, 80 x 140 feet, for \$15,000 on April 8, 1909.

Wilbur T. Mills, of Columbus, Ohio was selected as the architect of the building. Mills served as supervising architect of the Carnegie Library in Columbus and had also worked as supervising architect of other public buildings such as Oxley Hall at The Ohio State University. According to a local historian for the Masonic Lodge, the Masons advertised for bids from architects and selected Mills from a number of interested firms. Mills worked with an associate architect from Huntington, Mr. C.O. Gilbert. The cornerstone of the building was laid in a ceremony on October 2, 1912. Preceding the ceremony was a grand parade downtown. The original contractor for the project, the Iback Construction Co., was dismissed nearly one year after beginning work on the project over a dispute regarding the type of steel being used. Notes from the period indicate the dispute was over "round steel" versus the "Kahn system of reinforcement steel." The Moore Construction Company, of Parkersburg, West Virginia, completed the project. The total cost of the building was \$200,000, making it one of the biggest buildings constructed in Huntington during the early 'Teens. The dedication of the building took place during three days of activities in November, 1914. Included were a public open house, banquet, speakers, and dedication ceremony. According to the local newspaper, "the Temple rooms here are said to be the most beautiful in the state," and over 100 out-of-town visitors of the order participated in the dedication ceremony.

The Masonic Temple has occupied the building since its completion. The meeting and dining facilities have been in active use for over 75 years. During this period it has been the scene of

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Masonic Temple/Watts, Ritter Wholesale Dry Goods Co.
Cabell County, West Virginia

Statement of Significance (continued)

many social and cultural events for the hundreds of members of the Huntington Lodge, as well as for outside organizations.

The Masonic Temple/Watts, Ritter Building is representative of the period of greatest growth and expansion in Huntington's history. Its restrained yet beautifully detailed design reflects its use as both a functional business house and as a ceremonial lodge hall for an important local organization. This building has retained its integrity of design, location, setting and association and it continues to occupy an important location visually in downtown Huntington.

Bibliography

Casto, James. Huntington, an Illustrated History. Northridge, Ca.: Windsor Publications, Inc., 1985.

History of Huntington Lodge No. 53. Ancient, Free and Accepted Masons, 1954.

Huntington City Directories.

Huntington Advertiser, November 3, 1914 and November 5, 1914.

Huntington Herald, special issues, 1895 and 1902.

Huntington. Huntington Chamber of Commerce, 1912.

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Huntington, West Virginia, The Progressive City. no publisher or date given.

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Masonic Temple/Watts, Ritter Wholesale Dry Goods Co.
Cabell County, West Virginia

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Miller, Doris C. Centennial History of Huntington, W. Va., 1871-1971. Huntington: Franklin Printing Co., 1971.

U.S. Census records.

Wallace, George Selden. Huntington Through Seventy-Five Years. Huntington: 1947.

Wallace, George Selden. Cabell County Annals & Families. Richmond, Va.: Garrett & Massie, Publishers, 1935.

Miscellaneous primary documents courtesy of Huntington Lodge #53.

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Continuation Sheet**

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**Masonic Temple/Watts, Ritter Wholesale Dry Goods Co.
Cabell County, West Virginia**

Photographs

Masonic Temple/Watts, Ritter Wholesale Dry Goods Co.
1100-1108 East Third Avenue
Huntington, W. Virginia (Cabell County)
Jeffrey Darbee
3/93

Photo Views

1. West Third Avenue (south) elevation
2. Eleventh Street (west) elevation
3. East elevation
4. Historic photograph of the building as it appeared when completed in 1914
5. Cornerstone
6. Interior of main meeting hall in Masonic Temple showing original stage, backdrops, furniture etc..
7. Interior of main meeting hall of Masonic Temple; opposite stage
8. Interior of one of the smaller meeting rooms in the Masonic Temple
9. " " " " "
10. Interior of lounge in Masonic Temple showing woodwork
11. " " "
12. Interior of dining hall in Masonic Temple
13. Typical interior showing structural framing system visible on lower floors
14. " " " "

Verbal Boundary Description

Masonic Temple is located on Block 144, Lots 21 and 22, Third Ave. in the City of Huntington. Watts, Ritter Wholesale Drygoods Co. is located on Block 144, part of lots 19 and 20 Third Ave., in the City of Huntington

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Section number 10 Page 2

Masonic Temple/Watts, Ritter Wholesale Dry Goods Co.
Cabell County, WV

Verbal Boundary Description

The Masonic Temple is located on Block 144, Lots 21 and 22, Third Ave., City of Huntington. The measurement of this parcel is 80' along Third Ave. and 140 ft. along the side. Contiguous with the east wall of the Masonic Temple Building the boundary of the nominated property extends 50' along Third Ave. and thence northward along the east wall of the Watts Building 140'. The nominated resource at the corner of 11th and Third Ave. thus forms a rectangle measuring 130' along Third Ave. by 140' along 11th St.

The nominated property constitutes the entire lot arrangement historically associated with the Masonic Temple/Watts, Ritter Wholesale Dry Goods Co.