

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

FEB 28 1989

National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form

NATIONAL
REGISTER

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Bernardin-Johnson House
other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 17 Johnson Place N/A not for publication
city, town Evansville N/A vicinity
state Indiana code IN county Vanderburgh code 163 zip code 47714

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
		Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> structures
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u>0</u>	<u>0</u> objects
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, 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. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official [Signature] Date 2-15-89
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.

Signature of commenting or other official _____ Date _____
State or Federal agency and bureau _____

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register. Patrick Andrus 6/27/89
 See continuation sheet.

determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register.

removed from the National Register.

other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)
 DOMESTIC: single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)
 DOMESTIC: single dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
 (enter categories from instructions)

Georgian Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation BRICK

walls BRICK

STONE: limestone

roof STONE: slate

other STONE: limestone

WOOD

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

Completed in 1917, the Bernardin-Johnson House is a well-managed interpretation of the Georgian Revival style executed in brick. The house was built in the then rural eastern environs of the city for Miss Emma Bernardin on land partitioned off in December 1916, after the death of her father earlier in the year, from the family's twenty-five acre Lincoln Avenue estate. Miss Bernardin's property was a long (nearly one-quarter mile in length) and narrow (approximately 330 feet in width) tract comprising ten acres. The new home, like that of the family, located a short distance to the east, was sited on the crest of a low-lying ridge which ran through the front part of the estate in an east-west direction. The commanding position of Miss Bernardin's residence, overlooking Lincoln Avenue, and its handsome architecture likely made it a landmark for travelers upon this historic artery linking Evansville with Newburgh. Although its earlier prominence has been decreased by the abundance of now mature pine and deciduous trees that dot and border the deep front lawn and by the transformation after 1956 of twenty-three acres of the original estate into the exclusive Johnson Place residential enclave, Miss Bernardin's former country residence is still capable of momentarily catching the eye of the observant passerby.

Plans for the Bernardin-Johnson House were devised by the Clifford Shopbell architectural firm. Construction of the eight room, two-and-a-half story, Georgian style residence was accomplished in August 1917. The plan comprised a generally rectangular main massing block, extended at the rear by a gabled projection, and flanked on the west by a two-story wing and on the south by a one-story, flat roofed sun room. Exterior walls, surmounted by slate covered gable roofs, were faced with a dark red, striated Rugby brick, probably manufactured locally by the Standard Brick Company which had begun commercial production of this type of brick in 1915.

The front elevation is the focus of the design and features Georgian five-bay symmetry enhanced with Adam style detailing. The entrance is an elegant composition. It features a pedimented classical portico, supported by fluted Ionic columns based upon a limestone platform, and a four part doorway unit composed of a paneled door bordered by delicately designed sidelights and surmounted by an equally refined fanlight.

See continuation sheet

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

HEALTH/MEDICINE
COMMERCE
ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1917-1934

Significant Dates

1917
1923

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Johnson, Edward Mead, Sr.

Architect/Builder

Thole, Edward Joseph

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Bernardin-Johnson House is both historically and architecturally significant to Evansville's development. The residence is especially important for its association with Mead Johnson. Johnson, who had separated from his brother's firm of Johnson & Johnson in the 1890's, brought the company to Evansville in 1915. The Mead Johnson business became a nationally recognized nutritional and pharmaceutical concern during the 1920s and 30s. Mr. Johnson also left his mark in Evansville in the area of commercial development and as a spirited civic figure. Architecturally, the 1917 residence is one of the city's important early twentieth century statements. The design, which features refined Adamesque detail, came out of the locally prominent office of Clifford Shopbell and Company, and is attributed to Edward Thole, one of Evansville's eminent architects.

The Bernardin-Johnson House derives its name from the original owner, Miss Emma Bernardin, and significantly, from the next owner Edward Mead Johnson, Sr.

The occupancy of the house by Miss Bernardin was short term. In about 1919, she left Evansville for an indefinite stay in Colorado. Four years later, she sold the Lincoln Avenue property to E. Mead Johnson, Sr., for \$60,000 and in 1924 erected another residence a block east on Lincoln Avenue. Johnson's tenure in the house was a somewhat longer one, terminated only by his death in 1934. His widow continued to make it her primary home until her death in 1943. The following year, ownership passed to E. Mead's son, Lambert D. Johnson, who, with his wife Evelyn Igleheart Johnson, moved into the house in about 1949 from their palatial Tudor Revival residence (razed 1954) built in 1928 on the adjoining site of the old Bernardin home. After Lambert Johnson's death in 1955 and the creation of the Johnson Place subdivision, Mrs. Johnson built a home on land in the southeast corner of the subdivision and the 1917 house was taken over for a short time by one of her daughters.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

LOCAL ATLASES, BIOGRAPHIES, HISTORIES, etc.

An Illustrated Plat Book of Vanderburgh and Warrick Counties, Indiana.

Evansville: Tillman & Fuller Publishing Co., 1889; reprint ed.,
Evansville: Unigraphic, Inc., and Friends of Willard Library, 1975.

Biographical Cyclopedia of Vanderburgh County, Indiana. Evansville:
The Keller Printing and Publishing Co., 1897.

"E. Mead Johnson's Mission Feeding Babies." Medical Times, November 1958.

See continuation sheet

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

Specify repository: _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of property 1.5 acres

UTM References

A

1	6
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4	5	4	0	4	0
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4	2	0	2	2	9	0
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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

Lots 17, 19 and 21, Johnson Place subdivision, Evansville, Indiana.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

This is the largest remaining portion of the original estate. The house and its current lots were divided permanently from its surroundings by a 1955 replatting.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Joan C. Marchand, Hist. Preservation Officer, Hist. Preservation
organization City of Evansville, Indiana date July 29, 1988 Services
street & number 216 Washington Avenue telephone 812/428-0737
city or town Evansville state Indiana zip code 47713

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Windows of the house are generally of the double-hung sash type containing six-over-six lights and underscored by a limestone sill. Those of the facade have traditional keystone lintels. All double-hung windows have operable shutters, paneled ones for the first story and louvered ones for the second story.

The perimeter of the main roof is treated in Adam fashion, complete with a cornice, modillions and dentil moulding, and in keeping with old time practice, the construction date--in this case, "1916"-- appears in raised numerals on the leader boxes of the front copper downspout system. The gable ends have a matching raking cornice with returns.

A slate covered, side-facing gable roof crowns this stately house. Spaced along the front roof slope are three gabled dormers with round arched windows and slate covered walls.

To the west of the main block of the house stands a lower, two-bay wing. On the south elevation, it has a secondary entrance which may have been added and windows without stone lintels. The wing has a plain cornice.

The rear (north) elevation has an "L" shaped plan formed by an off-center gabled projection. Window treatment is similar to the west wing. The notable exception is a large, round arched window above the rear entry which lights a stair landing on the interior.

While the basic plan remains preserved, several changes resulting from the 1960s rehabilitation project bear mentioning. The original, brick sun room was replaced by a frame, hipped-roofed addition that extended the area of the living room; a series of floor-to-ceiling, multi-light windows were installed at the rear of the house, affording more illumination for the dining room; a flat roofed portico was added to shelter the rear entry; lastly, a two-bay, weatherboarded garage was added to the west side of the wing. The architectural character of the house remains undisturbed, however, and exemplifies the design talents for which the Shopbell firm was noted.

The architectural finishes of the interior of the house further the Georgian spirit of the exterior. As reflected by the front

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entrance, the floor plan features a 'formula' central through-hall graced at its rear by a two-flight, open-well stairway. There is a lavish display of ornamental woodwork, including ceiling cornices, Adam-type round-topped archways with keystone, eared door and window enframements, dining room wall paneling and wainscoting, which is present throughout the other primary spaces of the first floor and continues up the stairway to the upper hall. The house has five fireplaces. Four have mantelpieces executed in wood and are in keeping with the colonial motif. One mantelpiece, located in a bedroom, is of marble. Very ornately carved, it may have been imported from Europe by Mrs. Charlotte Johnson. Woodwork is painted throughout except for the stairway railing which is stained.

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(It might be noted that the subdivision was planned by Ralph N. Melin & Associates of Chicago and developed by Fred C. Cook & Son, a local construction company.) A vice president of Mead Johnson & Company was the next owner from 1959 to 1963. In the latter year, the house and the one-and-a-half acre site (since 1955) was purchased by Mrs. Charlotte Fuehring Johnson, the widow of E. Mead Johnson, Jr. (1888-1930). She rehabilitated the house after buying it, but continued to live in her old family home in the Bayard Park district while her acquisition stood vacant for twenty-two years. On the settlement of her estate in 1985, the Johnson house and grounds were bought by the present residents, the Alan Johnsons, who are not related to the E. Mead Johnson family.

Although it has been many years since E. Mead Johnson has been a part of the Evansville scene, this old Lincoln Avenue residence that he lived in from 1923 until his death in 1934 is still strongly identified with him, particularly by the older generation. E(dward) Mead Johnson, Sr., (1852-1934) grew up on a farm outside of Carbondale, Pennsylvania, in a family that contained eleven children. His ambition to succeed in the world was demonstrated at a relatively young age when he financed his way through the University of Michigan Law School with wages earned by school teaching and performing engineering work for a Carbondale coal company. He graduated in about 1876 with a law degree, but opted instead for a career in the world of commerce. He began work in the employ of a brother who was a principal in the Seabury & Johnson medical supply business. Another one of Mead's brothers followed his footsteps. In 1893, the trio left the company and established their own medical supply firm, Johnson & Johnson. Several years later, E. Mead parted amicably from his brothers after selling back his financial interest and in 1900, he incorporated the American Ferment Company, a maker of digestants marketed exclusively through physicians for ethical reasons. In 1905, adding a new line, pharmaceuticals, the name of the firm was changed to Mead Johnson & Company. (In 1986, as a subsidiary of Bristol-Myers, the name was changed to the generic U. S. Pharmaceutical and Nutritional Group, although for most Evansville people, the name will continue to be Mead Johnson & Company.) The company was a pioneer in infants nutritional materials and the major product development break-through, which set them on the

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course to be a leader in this field, was their product Dextrin-Maltose. As the name implies, it is a combination of dextrin and maltose carbohydrates and, together, was a far superior digestant additive to cow's milk than the cane sugar that was in general use. Expensive to produce, it was not available to all people. In 1911, the company evolved a method of extracting the starch sugar from the German potato and was able to go into commercial production and make it available at reasonable cost. From this effort, the company became renown as a developer of scientific infant nutritional formulas.

It was by chance Mead Johnson & his company relocated in Evansville. In 1915, the war in Europe forced him to turn to other alternatives than the German potato, and grain and corn presented the best solutions for obtaining the dextrin and maltose. On a scouting trip in the Midwest grain belt for the location of a plant closer to the source of the materials, Johnson was between trains in Evansville. A member of the local business association invited him to tour the old vacant cotton mill with the thought that it might satisfy Johnson's plant requirements.

The old mill did just that. Johnson bought the plant on St. Joseph Avenue near the Ohio River and by the following spring, 1916, the plant was in operation. The economic value alone of having Mead Johnson & Company located in Evansville is incalculable. During the years under Johnson's guidance it was continually expanding plant-wise and product-wise. In 1967, when sold to Bristol-Myers, Mead Johnson & Company was one of the three largest industries operating in the city. It is a status that it retains today.

Mead Johnson's business reputation was equalled by his concerns for the welfare of the city. A student of waterways, and the possibilities they presented when connected with other forms of transportation for the efficient shipment of goods, determined that Evansville needed a modern river terminal. While the city's historic development had been linked to the river, it had no up-to-date port facility for public use. He provided \$500,000 from his own pocket for the design and construction of such a facility. In February 1931, the Mead Johnson River-Rail-Truck Terminal was dedicated with city fanfare. (National Register, 1984.) It did

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spur commerce and was one of the reasons that Chrysler in 1935 located a Plymouth assembly plant in Evansville. Another of Johnson's civic expressions was the donation of the Public Health Nursing Association building (Busse House and Office, National Register, 1982) and most of its furnishings. He augmented this benefaction by supplying the association with packets of his infant formulas for free dispersal through their clinic. There was one string attached to this philanthropic package: that during his lifetime the arrangement not be made public. In 1927, E. Mead Johnson, Sr., had the distinction of being the recipient of the first Evansville Rotary Civic Award for distinguished community service ever presented.

This 1917 house is also architecturally significant. The basic format of the old Bernardin-Johnson residence is a realistic rendering of the Georgian idiom. Although lacking the patina of age, if placed in an Eastern seaboard context amidst historic prototypes, it would blend in comfortably. As it is, Thole's twentieth-century interpretation is one of the few authentic local examples of this revival style and compares favorably with the historically faithful design of the William Miller house produced in 1923 in the Bayard Park district (National Register, 1985) by Anderson & Veatch. A member of the Shopbell firm since 1912, Edward Joseph Thole (1890-1956) by 1916-1917, when the Bernardin house was conceived, was just beginning to make his mark as a competent designer. However, because of attribution policies of architectural firms then, as well as now, Thole's early record with the Shopbell firm is nearly a blank one. Besides the Bernardin house, he is credited with the design of the Neo-Classical portico which monumentalizes the Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Coliseum (National Register, 1979). From these two examples only, it can be seen that Thole, even in his early years, possessed architectural talent and skill. In the 1920s, while still with the Shopbell firm, Thole began to stand out as an architect in his own right. The Boseman-Waters Bank of 1923, (National Register, 1987) and the Collegiate Gothic Reitz Memorial Catholic High School (1924) were two of his large commissions. He also designed another residence for Miss Bernardin, an English Tudor style house constructed in 1924 a block east of her first home.

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LOCAL ATLASES, BIOGRAPHIES, HISTORIES, etc. (continued)

"Fact Sheet on the Johnson Family." Evansville: Mead Johnson & Company, circa 1963.

Griffing's Atlas of Vanderburgh County, Indiana. Philadelphia: D. J. Lake & Co., 1880.

History of Vanderburgh County, Indiana. Madison, Wisconsin: Brant & Fuller, 1889.

Reece, Clyde L. Who's Who--In Evansville. Evansville: The author, 1932.

Roll, Charles. Indiana: One Hundred and Fifty Years of American Development. 5 vols. Chicago and New York: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1931.

NEWSPAPERS

Biographical:

"Mrs. Bernardin Claimed By Death." Evansville Journal-News, 07 July 1910.

"New Industrial Life For The Old Cotton Mill." Evansville Courier, 27 June 1915.

"Death Claims A. L. Bernardin." Evansville Courier, 31 January 1916.

"A. L. Bernardin Is Called By Death." Evansville Journal-News, 31 January 1916.

"Alfred Bernardin's Funeral." Evansville Press, 31 January 1916.

"Manufacturer A Good Friend Of Health Center." (Central Library biographical file. No newspaper cited.)

"Sudden Heart Attack Is Fatal To E. Mead Johnson." Evansville Press, 21 March 1934.

"Mead Johnson's Widow, 70, Dies At Home Here." Evansville Courier, 14 December 1943.

"Funeral Set Friday For Miss Bernardin." Evansville Courier, 21 April 1950.

"L. D. Johnson Dies Aboard Fishing Boat." Evansville Courier, 30 July 1955.

"L. D. Johnson Estate Set At \$7.5 Million." Evansville Courier, 14 June 1956.

Klingler, Ed. "Pabulum Made An Industry Grow." Evansville Press, 03 December 1962.

Building News:

"Residence Of A. L. Bernardin on Newburgh Road." Evansville Journal-News, 21 June 1908.

"Notes From The Office of Clifford Shopbell & Co." Evansville Courier, 06 January 1914.

(Continuation sheet)

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NEWSPAPERS (continued)

Building News: (continued)

- "Building Permits." Evansville Journal, 13 December 1916.
- "Bernardin Suburban Home To Be Remodeled." Evansville Courier, 17 June 1917.
- "Bernardin Country Residence Nearly Done." Evansville Courier, 05 August 1917.
- "Clifford Shopbell & Co., Architects." Evansville Courier, 06 January 1918.
- "Shopbell & Co. Review The Year." Evansville Courier, 06 January 1918.
- "Bids Monday For Bernardin Home." Evansville Courier and Journal, 15 July 1923.
- "Suburban Homes of Evansvillians." Evansville Courier and Journal, 27 April 1930.
- "New 33-Unit Subdivision Announced." Evansville Courier, 12 May 1956.
- "Plan Swank Subdivision." Evansville Press, 12 May 1956.

OTHER PRIMARY SOURCE MATERIALS

- Evansville City Directories.
- Knight Township Assessor's Plat Records.
- Vanderburgh County, Indiana, Birth Index.
- Vanderburgh County, Indiana, Death Index.
- Vanderburgh County, Indiana, Death Records.
- Vanderburgh County, Indiana, Deed Grantee/Grantor Index.
- Vanderburgh County, Indiana, Deed Records.
- Vanderburgh County, Indiana, Miscellaneous Records.
- Vanderburgh County, Indiana, Plat Records.
- Vanderburgh County, Indiana, Probate Records.
- United States Census, Vanderburgh County, Indiana.
- "Wesley Architectural Index of the Clifford Shopbell & Company Office."
Evansville: Jack Wesley, ed. Plan #557, "Residence for Miss Emma
Bernardin." Edward J. Thole, Associate, 21 June 1923.

(Continuation sheet)

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INTERVIEWS (Interviewer: Joan C. Marchand)

Bernardin, Alfred L. Evansville: 09 September 1980 and 07 June 1988.

Cook, Fred, developer. Evansville: 23 June 1988.

Igleheart, Mrs. James B. Evansville: 10 June 1988.

Johnson, Mrs. Alan H., owner. Evansville: 24 June 1988.

Sparrenberger, Charles H., attorney. Evansville: 07 June 1988.