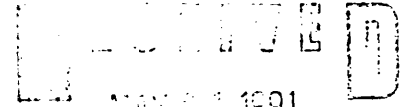


United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



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 Burlington Montgomery Ward Building
other names/site number Capitol Stationers

2. Location

street & number 52-54 Church Street N/A not for publication
city, town Burlington N/A vicinity
state Vermont code VT county Chittenden code 007 zip code 05401

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input type="checkbox"/> district	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u> </u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> objects
			<u> </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] 5/1/91 April 22, 1991
Signature of certifying official Date
Vermont
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. Entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet. [Signature] 5/30/91
 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)

COMMERCE/department store

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/department store

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Commercial Style

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls brick

concrete

roof asphalt

other terra cotta

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

See continuation sheet for description.

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Burlington Montgomery Ward Building

7. Description

Located at 52-54 Church Street near the center of Burlington, Vermont's main downtown commercial district, the Burlington Montgomery Ward Building is an early 20th century, two-story commercial style building with vernacular neo-classical details. The west-facing, 3-bay wide, front facade is sheathed with grey cast concrete "imitation granite." The upper story features three Chicago style windows. Each of these windows have a large fixed sash flanked by narrower double-hung sash. The stiles of the center sash extend above to frame a narrow horizontal fixed sash flanked by quarter-round corner sash. Separating the bays are cast concrete pilasters, graced with stylized neo-classical swags near their tops. The pilasters are capped by concrete knobs cast in the shape of urns filled with foliage. The three sections of the front facade which rise between the pilasters form a low front parapet with protruding cast-concrete capstones. Each section of the parapet is stepped to a centered semicircle. The center section is decorated by a tall, green, terra cotta panel, cast with the Montgomery Ward Company's "Spirit of Progress" torch-bearing figure in bas-relief, while both side bays of the parapet feature red terra cotta paterae centered below the semicircle and green reticulated terra cotta panels below. Small square paterae in red terra cotta flank the large green panels on each bay. Below the Chicago style windows is a full-length signboard over a line of eleven double-hung, leaded, prism-glass windows. Although the upper windows were masked by louvered shutters and plywood during the 1970's, they have recently been unveiled and restored.

The display windows and doorways were removed during the 1970's when a brick-faced storefront with three large display windows and two

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Burlington Montgomery Ward Building

doorways were installed. This street level storefront was replaced with the current 3-bay design in 1989. Each bay is divided into thirds with wooden double doors opening in the center bay and a similar single door in the northern bay. The northern door leads to a lobby for an automatic banking machine, while the center doors lead to a small lobby. The wood-framed display windows have large, fixed, tempered, insulating glass panes with smaller fixed panes above. The upper panes have etched lines parallel to the edges. A canvas awning supported by a steel frame extends along the length of the front just below the signboard.

The side walls of the building are brick with no windows. On the south, the side wall extends a story above the adjacent one-story store while on the north, the adjacent three story building rises several feet higher toward the front, but drops to only one story toward the rear.

The rear (east) elevation, visible from an alley which extends south from Cherry Street, is also constructed of common brick. Fenestration is irregularly spaced, with 1-over-1 windows marking the first, mezzanine, and second stories. The northeast corner extends a story higher to enclose the machinery for a freight elevator. This penthouse is lit by a 9-pane, fixed sash on the east side. On the first story of the elevator shaft, a large overhead door opens at a raised loading dock. A pair of modern aluminum and glass passage doors are located at ground level, south of the loading dock. An integral brick furnace chimney rises from the southeast corner. Just below the rear parapet, two, small, louvered vents ventilate the attic. The flat roof is covered with built-up roofing and pea-stone ballast.

The interior of the store has been partitioned into two major spaces on the first floor. A new center entry vestibule leads to a branch bank on the forward north side of the first floor, while a stationery store currently occupies

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Burlington Montgomery Ward Building

the rest of the building. Although little of the original appearance of the interior, with its plastered interior walls and ceilings, is visible behind the suspended ceilings, carpeting, store displays, and merchandise, the original open stairway with wooden balusters and handrails is located near the rear of the building. Flights lead up to the mezzanine and second story, and down to the basement level.

The basement has several rooms at the rear (east) for the furnace and small rooms at the front, southwest corner for utilities and a toilet. Access doors to the freight elevator enclosed in the northeast corner is provided at every level. The rear mezzanine has been partitioned to form two offices. The front mezzanine is hidden by a suspended ceiling above the first floor and is accessible only from a wooden stairway leading down from the second floor. Three rooms used as offices and a lunchroom extend along the rear of the second floor.

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)

ARCHITECTURE
COMMERCE

Period of Significance

1929

Significant Dates

1929

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Montgomery Ward Company

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

See continuation sheet for statement of significance.

See continuation sheet

9. Major Bibliographical References

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:

University of Vermont

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 0.14 acres

UTM References

A

1	8	6	4	2	1	4	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---	---

4	9	2	6	4	0	0
---	---	---	---	---	---	---

Zone Easting Northing

B

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

Zone Easting Northing

C

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

D

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

--	--	--	--	--	--	--

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

This is a nearly rectangular lot of land that begins at a point in the east line of Church Street a distance of 107.6 feet south from the intersection of the south line of Cherry Street and said east line of Church Street; thence running easterly a distance of 130 feet to a marked corner; thence southerly a distance of 47 feet parallel to the east line of Church Street; and thence westerly 130 feet to a point on the east line of Church Street, and thence northerly 47 feet along Church Street to the place of beginning.

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes the entire lot that has been historically occupied by 52-54 Church Street.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Thomas Visser, Coordinator
 organization Architectural Conservation & Education Service date April 16, 1990
 street & number History Dept., University of Vermont telephone (802) 656-3180
 city or town Burlington state Vermont zip code 05405

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Burlington Montgomery Ward Building

8. Statement of Significance

The Burlington Montgomery Ward Building is significant under National Register criterion A as an important representative example of the historical trend recognized in the "Commercial Development in Urban Areas" historic context included in the Vermont Historic Preservation Plan. This chain store building is a Vermont example of a nationwide historical trend in commercial development, constructed as major merchandising companies swiftly altered their marketing strategies from mail-order to retail sales as consumers shopping habits changed with the advent of affordable automobile transportation. The Burlington Montgomery Ward Building is also significant under criterion C for its architectural design. With its front facade clad in cast concrete decorated with neo-classical motifs, it is one of few such buildings constructed with this material in Vermont. The same design was used on several other Montgomery Ward stores in Vermont cities, however this is the best surviving example. The building is also a significant Vermont example of an early 20th century corporate- designed chain store architecture.

To assess the significance of this building in light of the "Commercial Development in Urban Areas" historic context included in the Vermont Historic Preservation Plan, the first area to examine is how and why one of the nation's largest retail chains chose to establish this store when it did in Burlington, Vermont.

When the Montgomery Ward Company opened its 515th retail store in downtown Burlington on December 28, 1929,¹ its bold plan launched less than two years earlier to construct hundreds of retail stores in small cities across the nation was nearly complete. Countering a move by arch-rival Sears Roebuck Company, which was opening a chain of large retail stores on

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Burlington Montgomery Ward Building

the outskirts of major cities, Montgomery Ward also sought to supplement their mail order business with retail sales.² Responding to a drop in mail order sales as more customers began to drive to cities to do their shopping, these new retail chain stores were the product of a major historical transition. Americans were shifting their economic and social focus from the farm to the city with the help of the new-found mobility provided by the automobile.³ Indeed by 1930, two out of every three Vermont farms had automobiles, while ten years earlier the ratio was only one in four.⁴

From only 36 stores at the end of 1927, within two years Montgomery Ward had well over 500 retail stores nationwide -- 200 more than Sears. But the October 1929 New York Stock Market crash and a slowing economy soon brought Ward's expansion plans to a halt as the company's most urgent concern became its financial survival.⁵

Montgomery Ward's Burlington store, the fourth to open in Vermont,⁶ and one of the last constructed during this period of corporate expansion, was probably designed by the company's architectural and engineering staff at their headquarters in Chicago. While no record of these plans has been uncovered at the corporate headquarters, it is likely that the stores were built from standardized plans. The "spirit of progress" company symbol, cast in terra cotta, was prominently installed in the front parapet.

The 3-bay wide vernacular commercial style street facade was nearly identical to several other Montgomery Ward stores constructed at the time in Vermont. The Brattleboro Montgomery Ward store, also finished in 1929, appears to have its front facade constructed from nearly the same design with the same type of materials. It is included in the Brattleboro Downtown Historic District, entered on the National Register of Historic Places on February 17, 1983.⁷ The Rutland store, built in 1928, also shares a similar design. This

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Burlington Montgomery Ward Building

building, located at 26-30 Merchants Row, is listed on the National Register of Historic Places in the Rutland Downtown Historic District.⁸ The Burlington store is the best surviving example in the state.

Although the street level store front was altered in the 1960's, most of the distinctive architectural features remain, including the cast-concrete front facade, the upper "Chicago style" windows and the prism-glass windows which lit the mezzanine.

With matching facades, windows and ornamentation of cast concrete and terra cotta, these matching Montgomery Ward chain stores are also important Vermont examples of standardized American corporate architectural design constructed in the early 20th century. By sharing a similar appearance, these chain stores established a visual identity for the company which extended from city to city. Along with grocery stores, drug stores, and five & ten cent stores, the corporate architectural design of the front facades of chain stores became part of the marketing strategy to distinguish these outlets from independent businesses, a trend which continues to this day.⁹

The prime Burlington location at 52-54 Church Street (the main retailing street in Vermont's largest city) had been made available by a fire which destroyed the Bundy-Barrows block in the spring of 1929. Rather than constructing a traditional "Main Street" type of three or four story building, the Montgomery Ward Company chose to infill the site with a two-story commercial style design similar to those being built in new commercial blocks along shopping strips nationwide.¹⁰ Construction of the building was announced in the Burlington Free Press in August 1929, with Victor A. Bergeron identified as the contractor.¹¹ By early October most of the steel frame was erected and a lease agreement between the Montgomery Ward Company and Barrows Real Estate Corporation had been settled.¹² One of

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Burlington Montgomery Ward Building

very few buildings constructed with ornate cast-concrete facades in Vermont, the facade pieces were probably imported from an out-of-state supplier. This "front of cast granite... of an unusual design" was finished by mid-November, according to accounts in the local newspaper, but hopes to open the store before Christmas faded as the contractor moved to quicken the pace with 24 hour shifts with plastering, carpentry and painting work still remaining.¹³ The store was ready for its grand opening on Saturday, December 28th, announced by a double-paged advertisement in the Burlington Free Press featuring such items as an electric washing machine, vacuum cleaner, men's suits, ladies' dresses, automobile tires, radio, and a "smart three-piece living room suite covered with peach mohair."¹⁴

The Montgomery Ward Company continued to operate the retail store at 52-54 Church Street with few changes to the building for 32 years, closing in December 1961.¹⁵

Since then, the building has continued to serve as a retail store. Directories indicate that between 1963 and 1966 the building was occupied by Uncle Phil's Bargain Store. From 1967 to 1972, it housed the Smith Furniture Company. The G. B. Rood Co. then used the building to sell office supplies. In 1975, the north front half of the main floor was partitioned off for a branch of the Howard Bank (followed by a Burlington Savings Bank Branch, now the Bank of Vermont).¹⁶ Along with the interior partitions for the bank, the front was altered with a new recessed street-level storefront with large plate glass windows, imitation brick and a sign board masking the leaded glass windows at the mezzanine level.¹⁷ The three "Chicago style" windows on the upper story were also covered by wooden shutters.

Capitol Stationers, current owners of the building, have retailed office products from the first floor since 1979. The second floor and basement are

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used for offices and storage. The Bank of Vermont also operates a branch bank through a separate entrance on the main floor.

In the fall and winter of 1989 - 90, renovations were made following a design by Northern Architects of Burlington, Vermont, repairing the front facade, uncovering the "Chicago style" upper windows, restoring the leaded glass mezzanine windows and replacing the 1970's recessed storefront with a new 3-bay design. Unfortunately insufficient photographic evidence of the original storefront design could be uncovered, so new display windows and entrance were designed to be compatible, yet distinguishable from the historic features. Although the front street-level display windows and doorways are new, the front facade has retained most of its key architectural features and the historic character and integrity of the building has clearly survived. The distinctive cast-concrete street facade, with its neo-classical parapet crowned by cast-concrete urns atop the four decorated pilasters, distinguishes the building while adding to the historic character of the streetscape.

Notes

1. "Montgomery Ward Co. Opens Store Tomorrow," Burlington Free Press, 27 Dec. 1929: 1.
2. Frank B. Latham, The Story of Montgomery Ward (Chicago: Montgomery Ward & Co., 1972) 72-74.
3. William J. Baxter, Chain Store Distribution and Management (New York: Harper, 1928) 156-7, 285-7.
4. Howard S. Russell, A Long Deep Furrow (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 1982) 313.
5. Cecil C. Hoge, The First Hundred Years Are the Toughest (Berkeley: Ten Speed Press, 1988) 103-105.
6. "Montgomery Ward Co. Expects to Stimulate All City's Business," Burlington Free Press, 28 Dec. 1929: 8.
7. Hugh Henry, "Brattleboro Downtown Historic District," National Register of Historic Places, Washington, 1983.

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Burlington Montgomery Ward Building

8. Curtis Johnson and Elsa Gilbertson, ed., The Historic Architecture of Rutland County (Montpelier, Vt.: Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, 1988) 307, 373.
9. Baxter, 12, plate facing 106, 150, 160.
10. Chester Liebs, Main Street to Miracle Mile, (New York: New York Graphic Society, 1985) 3-37.
11. "August To See Much Construction Work", Burlington Free Press, 3 Aug. 1929: 16 and "One Contractor Has 115 Men Engaged in Construction Work In Burlington", Burlington Free Press, 17 Aug. 1929: 14.
12. "Montgomery Ward Building To Be Ready For Use December 15," Burlington Free Press, 5 Oct. 1929: 8; and "Barrows Real Estate Corp. to Montgomery Ward & Co, Inc.," City of Burlington Deeds, 91: 521.
13. "Work On Montgomery-Ward Building To Be Rushed Day and Night," Burlington Free Press, 16 Nov. 1929: 14.
14. "Montgomery Wards New Retail Store Opens Saturday!" Burlington Free Press, 27 Dec. 1929: 11.
15. "Ward's Store To Close Dec. 30," Burlington Free Press, 14 Nov. 1961:9.
16. Manning's Burlington Directory, H. A. Manning, Co., Greenfield, Mass., 1961-1984.
17. "52-54 Church", Historic Sites & Structures Survey, Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, Montpelier, Vt., 14 June 1977.

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- "52-54 Church Street, Burlington, Vermont." "Historic Sites & Structures Survey." Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, Montpelier, Vt., 14 June 1977.
- "August to See Much Construction Work." Burlington Free Press 3 Aug. 1929: 16.
- "Barrows Real Estate Corp. to Montgomery Ward & Co, Inc." City of Burlington Deeds. 91: 521.
- Baxter, William J. Chain Store Distribution and Management. New York: Harper, 1928.
- Henry, Hugh. "Brattleboro Downtown Historic District." National Register of Historic Places, Washington, D. C., 1983.
- Hoge, Cecil C. The First Hundred Years Are the Toughest. Berkely: Ten Speed Press, 1988.
- Johnson, Curtis and Elsa Gilbertson, eds. The Historic Architecture of Rutland County. Montpelier, Vt.: Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, 1988.
- Latham, Frank B. The Story of Montgomery Ward. Chicago: Montgomery Ward & Co., 1972.
- Liebs, Chester. Main Street to Miracle Mile. New York: New York Graphic Society, 1985.
- Manning's Burlington Directory. Greenfield, Mass.: H. A. Manning, Co., 1961-1984.

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Burlington Montgomery Ward Building

"Montgomery Ward Building To Be Ready For Use December 15." Burlington Free Press 5 Oct. 1929: 8.

"Montgomery Ward Co. Expects to Stimulate All City's Business." Burlington Free Press 28 Dec. 1929: 8.

"Montgomery Ward Co. Opens Store Tomorrow." Burlington Free Press 27 Dec. 1929: 1.

"Montgomery Wards New Retail Store Opens Saturday!" Burlington Free Press 27 Dec. 1929: 11.

"One Contractor Has 115 Men Engaged in Construction Work in Burlington." Burlington Free Press 17 Aug. 1929: 14.

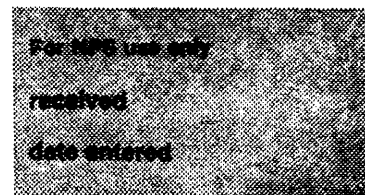
Russell, Howard S. A Long Deep Furrow. Hanover, N. H.: University Press of New England, 1982.

"Ward's Store To Close Dec. 30." Burlington Free Press 14 Nov. 1961: 9.

Work On Montgomery-Ward Building To Be Rushed Day and Night." Burlington Free Press 16 Nov. 1929: 14.

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Inventory—Nomination Form**



Continuation sheet

Item number

Page

This information is the same for photographs 1 through 5:

Burlington Montgomery Ward Building
52 - 54 Church Street
Burlington, Vermont
Credit: Thomas Visser
Negative filed at Vermont Division for Historic Preservation

Photograph 1. Streetscape along Church Street, looking northeast.
Date: February 1990

Photograph 2. Streetscape along Church Street, looking southeast.
Date: February 1990

Photograph 3. Front facade, looking east.
Date: February 1990

Photograph 4. Rear facade, looking west.
Date: January 1990

Photograph 5. Interior, first floor, looking west.
Date: September 1989

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Burlington Montgomery Ward Building
Burlington, Vermont

OWNER:

Donald Bigglestone
President
Capital Stationers, Inc.
52 Church Street
Burlington, Vermont 05401