

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY
RECEIVED JUL 28 1980
DATE ENTERED SEP 22 1980

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC

The Robert Smith Mortuary

AND/OR COMMON

The Greek-Shears Mortuary

LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

118-120 Walnut Street

__NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CITY, TOWN

Evansville

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

Eighth

__ VICINITY OF

STATE

Indiana

CODE

18

COUNTY

Vanderburgh

CODE

163

CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY

OWNERSHIP

STATUS

PRESENT USE

__DISTRICT

__PUBLIC

OCCUPIED

__AGRICULTURE

__MUSEUM

BUILDING(S)

PRIVATE

__UNOCCUPIED

__COMMERCIAL

__PARK

__STRUCTURE

__BOTH

__WORK IN PROGRESS

__EDUCATIONAL

PRIVATE RESIDENCE

__SITE

PUBLIC ACQUISITION

ACCESSIBLE

__ENTERTAINMENT

__RELIGIOUS

__OBJECT

__IN PROCESS

__YES: RESTRICTED

__GOVERNMENT

__SCIENTIFIC

__BEING CONSIDERED

__YES: UNRESTRICTED

__INDUSTRIAL

__TRANSPORTATION

NO

__MILITARY

__OTHER:

OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME

Lester E. And Harriet Watson

STREET & NUMBER

120 Walnut Street

CITY, TOWN

Evansville

__ VICINITY OF

STATE

Indiana

LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Vanderburgh County's Recorder's Office

STREET & NUMBER

City-County Administration Building

CITY, TOWN

Evansville

STATE

Indiana

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE

Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory

DATE

1978

FEDERAL __STATE __COUNTY __LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Indiana Department of Natural Resources

CITY, TOWN

Indianapolis

STATE

Indiana

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The former Greek-Shears Mortuary is located at 118-120 Walnut Street in the block between Southeast First and Second Streets. Adjacent to the Riverside Historic District (National Register, 1978), the Greek-Shears structure is also situated just two blocks southeast of Evansville's central business district.

The two-building complex was designed in the Spanish Colonial Revival tradition popular from about 1915 to 1945. A two-and-one-half story brick house, erected approximately forty years prior to the construction of the mortuary, stands on the alleyside of the lot. A steeply-pitched red tile gabled roof, the length of which faces the street, surmounts the plain projecting eaves. The body of the house was laid in common bond red brick, later painted yellow to match the yellow brick facade of the new mortuary building. Arched radiating voussoirs adorn the segmented, relieving-arched window-heads on the alleyside, while the plain sills on the facade are limestone. The windows, double-hung sashes with 1/1 lights, are slightly recessed; one window on the lower elevation has been considerably lengthened, probably an alteration made in recent years. The house's Italianate facade was remodelled to convey the Spanish Colonial motif when the newer structure was completed. The entire two-and-one-half-story complex is decorated with light buff brick and a limestone trim which encircles the base of the edifice and caps the flat-roofed gallery attached to the house.

The new addition has a clearly-defined rectangular plan and is ten bays in length. An arcaded wall treatment is the most outstanding feature on the facade of the overall complex. A row of bricks surrounds the windows which are further defined by a large keystone on the window-head and one smaller one on either side of the window. The tympanum is filled in with red tile blocks, and a stone cartouche accents each tympanum. Windows sills are limestone, and the slightly-recessed paired lights, separated by a thin pilaster strip, are multi-paned. Stone flower boxes supported by a triple volute underscore many of the windows as well as the arched openings on the gallery.

The impressive portal to the former mortuary is also surrounded by the same brick trim and keystone features of the arcaded windows. A red brick esplanade encircles the front of the building. Both entranceways on the facade enhance the delicate beauty of Spanish Colonial Revival architecture with their multi-paned glass doors; the door at the main entrance to the old mortuary is double-leafed, with glass side panels flanking either side of the flat-headed door. Multi-paned transom panels above the door appear to formerly have been glass panes that were later covered with yellow paint, and colorful tiles brighten the walls and floor of the entranceway. At the far right end of the complex is a large, impressive arched garage entrance with a Spanish-style wrought iron gate and red brick interior. Like the house, the mortuary

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW				
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER	
<input type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)	
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION			

SPECIFIC DATES 1930

BUILDER/ARCHITECT Fritz Anderson

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

The Greek-Shears Mortuary is one of Evansville's oldest continuing mortuaries. Established in 1864, the business has undergone a series of name-changes, as well as changes of locations. Today the successive firm remains one of the most prominent in Evansville.

The mortuary was originally named after its founder, Robert Smith, who along with his brother Fred, opened the business after serving in the Civil War. In 1930, the Robert Smith Mortuary moved to their sixth location when the new edifice at 120 Walnut Street, adjacent to the Riverside Historic District (National Register, 1978), was completed. The new custom-built mortuary adjoined a two-story house at 118 Walnut Street that was erected in about 1890. The house was remodelled to match the new mortuary.

Designed by local architect Fritz Anderson, who practiced in Evansville from approximately 1915 to 1942, and constructed by the Scarborough Corporation, the mortuary complex received attention for the beauty of its classic design--an uncommon design in Evansville which seems to have been influenced by the Spanish Colonial Revival architectural mode. The new mortuary was described as a "commanding structure" and as "a distinct asset to the city from both the standpoint of architecture and service." Indeed, the yellow brick paired against the roof's deep red tile conveys a colorful, if not impressive, appearance. The arcaded wall treatment vastly enhances the wall design; of particular note are the windows which are accented by stone cartouches and red tile blocks forming the tympanum of the arched, multi-paned casement windows. Colorful tile, probably imported, can also be found on the walls and floor of the entranceway. As far as can be determined, the former mortuary is in pristine condition.

For forty-four years, the Robert Smith Mortuary, which was later renamed the Greek-Shears Mortuary, remained on Walnut Street. After 1974, the house once again became a single-family residence, and the old mortuary was converted into apartments by its present owner; throughout the years, however, virtually no alterations have been made to the building's exterior.

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

(See continuation sheet).

UTM NOT VERIFIED

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY less than one acre

QUADRANGLE NAME Evansville South, Indiana

QUADRANGLE SCALE 1:24,000

UTM REFERENCES

A 16 449740 4202300

B
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

E

F

G

H

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:

(See continuation sheet).

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Patricia K. Sides, Historic Preservation Specialist

ORGANIZATION

Department of Metropolitan Development

DATE

December 14, 1979

STREET & NUMBER

Room 301, Old Courthouse Center

TELEPHONE

812-426-5487

CITY OR TOWN

Evansville

STATE

Indiana

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL

STATE

LOCAL X

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER SIGNATURE

Joseph D. Cloud

TITLE State Historic Preservation Officer

DATE 7-11-80

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

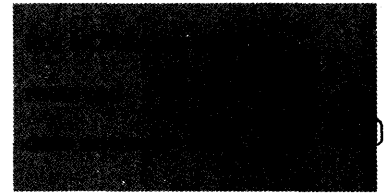
W. Ray Price
 W. Ray Price
 ATTENDANT

DATE 9/27/80

DATE 9/17/80

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Continuation sheet

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structure has a steeply-pitched red tile roof with shed dormers and slanting, parapet gables; each end also has a small attic window, one of which is vented.

The rear of the complex features a garage seven bays in length which once housed the mortuary's hearses.

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LOCAL HISTORIES, ATLASES, AND REFERENCES

An Illustrated Plat Book of Vanderburgh and Warrick Counties, Indiana.
Evansville: Tillman & Fuller Publishing Co., 1899; reprint ed.,
Evansville: Unigraphic, Inc., and Friends of Willard Library, 1975.

Griffing's Atlas of Vanderburgh County, Indiana. Philadelphia: D. J.
Lake & Co., 1880; reprint ed., Evansville: Unigraphic, Inc. and
Friends of Willard Library, 1975.

History of Greek-Shears Mortuary. Official history distributed by the
Greek-Shears Mortuary, 1972.

History of Vanderburgh County, Indiana.... Brant & Fuller, 1889.

Robert, Charles, E. Evansville: Her Commerce and Manufactures.
Evansville: Courier Co., 1874.

Whiffen, Marcus, American Architecture Since 1780: A Guide to the
Styles. Cambridge, MA: The MIT Press, 1969.

PERIODICALS

"4 Employees Become Associates of Local Mortuary Owner." Evansville
Press, 21 February 1951.

"Church Moving Into Old Mortuary." Evansville Press, 16 July 1975.

(Ellis C. Shears obituary.) Evansville Courier, 28 June 1971.

"Ex-Mortuary Property Sold." Evansville Press, ca. 23 October 1974.

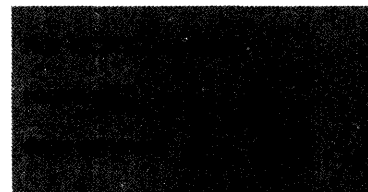
"Robert Greek Youngest Man Ever to be Knights Templar Commander."
Evansville Press, 23 February 1930.

"Robert L. Greek, Sportsman, Mortician, Dies at 67." Evansville
Courier, 16 June 1969

"Robert Smith Mortuary Opens New Home!" Evansville Press, 7 July 1930.

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Continuation sheet

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PHOTOGRAPHIC SOURCES

Central Library Newspaper Clipping File.

Evansville, Indiana, 1812-1962. (No publisher, 1962.)

Photo albums/archival records of the mortuary's history maintained
by Robert I. Shears, present owner of the Greek-Shears Mortuary.

PRIMARY SOURCES

Evansville City Directories, 1858+.

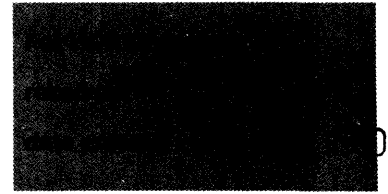
Interview with Robert I. Shears, October 16, 1979.

Vanderburgh County Deed Indexes and Records.

Vanderburgh County Tax Assessment Books, 1891 and 1901.

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Commencing on Walnut Street 47 feet from Second Street and running thence along Walnut Street toward First Street 103 feet, thence at right angles along the alley toward Locust Street 100 feet, thence at right angles toward Second Street 103 feet and thence to the place of beginning.

124/16

C. NUMBER 82-196-0002

B. COUNTY VANDERBURGH

A. NAME OLD GREEK-SHEARS MORTUARY

F. QUAD SHEET Evansville_South

E. TOWN/CITY Evansville

D. ADDRESS 118-120 Walnut

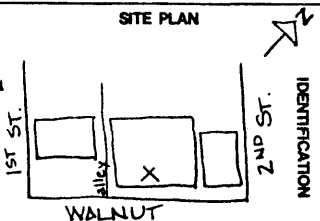
G. SITE X STRUCTURE

H. NHIL X NR

I. UTM Reference 16 449710 4202290

STATE OF INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES INDIANA HISTORIC SITES AND STRUCTURES INVENTORY

1. HISTORIC NAME ROBERT SMITH MORTUARY
2. OWNERSHIP: PUBLIC X PRIVATE
NAME LESTER E. (JR.) WATSON + HARRIET WATSON
ADDRESS N. PRESIDENT OF RED SPOT PAINTS
3. LOCATION NOTES ORIGINAL PLAN PART OF LOTS 91 & 92
4. VISIBLE FROM PUBLIC RIGHT OF WAY: X YES NO



5. USE PRESENT PAST
Residential (sing.) []
Residential (mult.) [X]
Commerce []
Industrial []
Agriculture []
Transportation []
Organization []
Military []
Political []
Unknown []
Vacant []
Other MORTUARY []

6. CATEGORY DISTRICT []
BUILDING(S) [X]
STRUCTURE []
SITE []
OBJECT []
7. ACCESSIBLE YES/RESTRICTED []
YES/UNRESTRICTED []
NO [X]
8. ENDANGERED X NO
YES/BY WHAT []
9. DATE 1930
10. ARCHITECT/BUILDER []

11. PERIODS: PREHISTORIC [] 17TH/18TH CEN. [] 1800-1860 [] 1861-1869 [] 1900-PRESENT [X]

12. AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE
Archeology-Prehistoric [] Conservation [] Law [] Sculpture []
Archeology-Historic [] Economics [] Literature [] Social/Humanitarian []
Agriculture [] Education [] Military [] Theater []
[X] Architecture [] Engineering [] Music [] Transportation []
Art [] Exploration/Settlement [] Philosophy [] Other (Specify) []
Commerce [] Industry [] Politics/Government []
Communications [] Invention [] Religion []
Community Planning [] Landscape Architecture [] Science []

13. STYLE
Federal []
Greek Revival []
Gothic Revival []
Italianate []
Second Empire []
Stick Style/Eastlake []
Queen Anne []
Romanesque Revival []
Colonial Revival []
Neo-Classical []
Bungalow []
Vernacular []
Other (Specify) Spanish Colonial [X]
UNALTERED []
MINOR [X]
MAJOR []

14. CONDITION
EXCELLENT []
GOOD [X]
FAIR []
DETERIORATED []
RUINS []
UNEXPOSED []
16. SITE INTEGRITY
ORIGINAL SITE [X]
MOVED DATE []
17. OUTBUILDINGS/SECONDARY STRUCTURES
NO [X]
YES []
18. IN ESTABLISHED HISTORIC DISTRICT
NO [X]
YES/NAME []

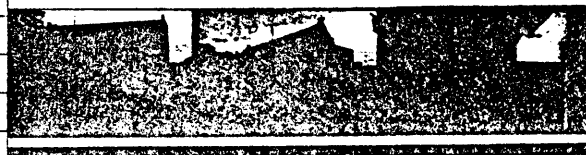
19. DESCRIPTION OF ENVIRONMENT (NATURAL AND MAN-MADE) DOWNTOWN ADJACENT TO RIVERSIDE HISTORIC DISTRICT. PLANS ARE TO CONVERT TO APARTMENTS.

20. INFORMATION SOURCES CITY DIRECTORIES, TOWNSHIP ASSESSOR

21. PREPARED BY W.A. GUMBERTS, N.J. LONG 22. DATE 10/11/77

- 1.
2.
3.
4. GABLED, RED TILE ROOF. LONG SIDE FACES STREET.
5. YELLOW BRICK FACADE LAID IN STRETCHER BOND. BODY IS RED
6. BRICK, LAID IN COMMON BOND. TWO AND A HALF STORIES. (ARCADE WALL TREATMENT) (TYRANUM)
7. WINDOW OPENINGS ARE TWO-STORY ARCHES; HEADS FILLED IN
8. WITH RED TILES, STONE CARTOUCHE ONE-STORY ARCADE PORCH
9. AT LEFT ARCHED GARAGE ENTRANCE HAS IRON GATE. DECORATED GARAGE CEILING.

Architectural Information



- 23. SEPT. 1980 - NAT'L REG LISTING
24. NOMINATION PREPARED BY PAT SIDES