

A. HISTORIC NAME Wittmer Building B. COUNTY Vanderburgh C. NUMBER 82-196-00013
 D. ADDRESS 609 Main Street E. TWP/CITY Pigeon F. QUAD NAME Evansville-South
 RATING Outstanding Significant/Notable Contributing/Reference Non-Contributing UTM REFERENCES 18 4 5 0 0 5 0 4 2 0 2 7 5 0

STATE OF INDIANA DEPARTMENT OF NATURAL RESOURCES INDIANA HISTORIC SITES AND STRUCTURES INVENTORY REVISED 1981

MOUNT CONTACT PRINTS HERE

1. COMMON NAME Gemcraft
 2. OWNERSHIP Public Private
 3. VISIBLE Yes No
 4. PROPERTY'S MAILING ADDRESS
609 Main Street
Evansville, Indiana 47708
 5. LOCATION NOTES
SE side of Main between 6th and 7th
18 3/4' x 142.5' sub of lot 2, Eastern
Enlargement block 37 northeast of and
adjoining lot 1 of said EE block (SHEET 1)

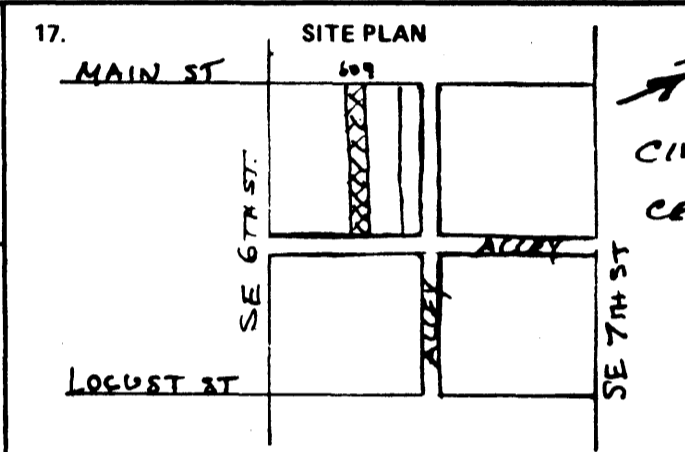
6. USE	PRESENT	PAST	PRESENT	PAST	7. ENDANGERED	8. CATEGORY	9a. LOCAL LEGAL PROTECTIONS
Residence	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Military	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> District	<input type="checkbox"/> Historic District
Govt./Pol.	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> Landmark
Commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	Scientific	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Structure	<input type="checkbox"/> Deed Restriction
Industrial	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Religious	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Site	<input type="checkbox"/> Other
Agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Park	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/> Object	
Transportation	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Museum	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Organization	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>	Educational	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		
Other	<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		<input type="checkbox"/>	<input type="checkbox"/>		

9b. SURVEYS
 SR NR NHL HABS HAER

10. CONDITION
 Excellent
 Good
 Fair
 Deteriorated
 Ruins

11. BUILDING INTEGRITY
 Unaltered
 Altered
 Moved
 Date _____

11a. Specify Alterations
 Removals _____
 Structural _____
 Replacements ground floor modernized
 Additions _____



12. DATE 1892 13. STYLE Victorian Commercial 14. ARCHITECT/BUILDER NOT KNOWN
 15. DESCRIPTION SEE BELOW
 Inscriptions none Facade Material metal
 16. OUTBUILDINGS none

19. AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE: Specify the significance for each area checked

<input type="checkbox"/> Aboriginal	<input type="checkbox"/> Number 609 Main is a long, narrow (18.5 foot frontage), 2 1/2-story high	ATTACH NEGATIVE ENVELOPE HERE
<input type="checkbox"/> Arts	commercial brick building. A modern display window crosses the ground	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Architecture	floor elevation, and on the interior the party wall has been removed to	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Commerce	make one large storeroom with the 1st floor of the building to the south	
<input type="checkbox"/> Communications	(607). The galvanized and cast-iron treatment of the upper stories of 609 remains intact.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Community Planning	The arcaded plan comprises 4 bays (now shuttered) separated by slender cast iron columns.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Education	Cast-iron pilasters and cornice and decorative panels of galvanized iron further enhance	
<input type="checkbox"/> Environs/Neighborhoods	the architectural program. The changes to the ground floor probably occurred in the 1950's	
<input type="checkbox"/> Exploration/Settlement	or 1960's. The site's approximate acreage is .06 acre.	
<input type="checkbox"/> Humanities		
<input type="checkbox"/> Indian		
<input type="checkbox"/> Landscape Architecture		
<input type="checkbox"/> Military		
<input type="checkbox"/> Politics/Government		
<input type="checkbox"/> Religion		
<input type="checkbox"/> Science/Technology		
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Social/Ethnicity		
<input type="checkbox"/> Transportation		
<input type="checkbox"/> Vernacular/Construction		
<input type="checkbox"/> Other		

19: See Additional Architectural Information form.

20. INFORMATION SOURCES City Directories; Building Permit Record; Deed Records; Mortgage records; Courier, 13 June 1900.

21. SURVEYOR Douglas L Stern 22. DATE 07 December 1982 (amended)

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

Additional Architectural Information

A. NAME Wittmer Building **C. NUMBER** 82-196-00013

B. ADDRESS 609 Main Street

D. UTM References 1,6 4,5,0,0,5,0 4,2,0,2,7,5,0

E. The arrival of Fred J. Wittmer to Evansville in the mid-1860's was typical of the first wave of German immigration which began with Germany's unrest of the 1840's and continued through America's immediate post-Civil War period. Wittmer first settled in Mount Vernon, Indiana, a river town southwest of Evansville near the confluence of the Ohio and Wabash Rivers. Mount Vernon, as well as most other 19th century river cities, attracted German immigrants through a nearly continuous program of publications and boosterism. Free-thinking Germans fleeing the unpleasantness of mid-century Germany were much sought after by expansion-minded cities for their industriousness.

Wittmer fit the profile characteristic of the first-wave Germans. He was a skilled artisan (boot and shoe making), Lutheran, and entrepreneurial. Wittmer and his cohort of mid-century immigrants tended to become small businessmen, at least, or captains of local industries. The later major wave of German immigration tended to be characterized in Evansville by blue-collar, laboring class Catholics.

Wittmer's ethnic enterprise found expression immediately. At the age of 20, Wittmer established himself as a shoemaker. Just five years later, in 1873, Wittmer and a partner (Philipp Wittmer; relation unknown) purchased the property at 609 Main Street. Wittmer operated out of the former saloon building as a manufacturing shoemaker until about 1884, when he branched out into retail sales. This evolution from manufacturing to retailing was evidence of the increasing stratification of the local commercial scene at the end of the 19th century. By 1892, the year that Wittmer took out a building permit (and mortgage with the Central Trust and Savings Bank), he was well on his way to becoming one of the city's most fashionable shoe retailers ("dealer in ladies and gents boots and shoes"). Wittmer continued to operate out of his newly renovated quarters (he and his family of five lived upstairs) until his death at the age of 52 in 1900.

The building which Wittmer renovated in 1892--and which is so well preserved today--is a rare remaining example of Downtown Evansville's metal-front commercial architecture. The city had several foundries producing architectural metal work as early as mid-century. One of the greatest local names associated with architectural metalwork was the George L. Mesker Company, a manufacturer and distributor whose galvanized store fronts found their way throughout North America in the late-19th and early-20th centuries. Regrettably, the Wittmer storefront (along with the front at 325-27 Southeast Eighth Street, #59, 82-196-0296) is a rare extant example of this Evansville phenomenon--most others, particularly on the riverfront, were demolished for surface parking or urban renewal projects.

G. PREPARED BY Douglas L Stern

H. DATE 07 December 1982(Amended)
