

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

For NPS use only  
received NOV 21 1985  
date entered DEC 19 1985

**1. Name**

historic Gonnerman, William, House

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number 521 West 2nd Street N/A not for publication

city, town Mt. Vernon N/A vicinity of

state Indiana code 018 county Posey code 129

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
	<u>N/A</u>	<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Apartment

**4. Owner of Property**

name Keaco, a partnership

street & number 803 Hulman Building

city, town Evansville N/A vicinity of state Indiana 47708

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Posey County Recorder's Office

street & number Court House

city, town Mt. Vernon state Indiana 47620

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Indiana Historic Sites and Structures Inventory has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1984  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Indiana Department of Natural Resources

city, town Indianapolis state Indiana

## 7. Description

### Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

### Check one

unaltered  
 altered

### Check one

original site  
 moved      date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Gonnerman House faces south onto West Second Street, and is just three blocks from the Ohio River and about five blocks from commercial downtown. The lot measures 70' x 140' and is bordered on the east and north by alleyways and on the south by Second Street. The neighborhood is residential, although within two blocks of a large flour mill.

The massive, two-story frame house was constructed in the Free Classic style, with a classical porch and porte-cochere dominating the exterior. The walls are finished with clapboard and cornerboards, and are painted white. The structure is irregular in plan and asymmetrical in composition. The house was constructed between 1887 and 1895; the east porte-cochere was added in the 1920's, and the sun porch wing on the west side was added in the 1930's. The porch and the original house have brick foundations, and the west addition has a concrete block foundation. The foundation of the porch has several rectangular vent openings.

The first level of the original house's main facade has, at its western end, a bay window with three large, one-over-one, double-hung windows. A tall, narrow window opening is to the right (east) of the bay window. To the right of this is a partial wall with a recessed entrance and with two narrow window openings on the eastern end of the facade. The windows and entrance are trimmed with plain moulding.

The one story porch wraps around the main facade and east elevation, and is attached to the porte-cochere. Eighteen fluted columns with floriated capitals and a plain entablature adorn the porte-cochere and porch. The columns are white, and the bases are painted black. The outer corners of the porch and porte-cochere contain groupings of three columns, with the remainder of the columns being spaced across the porch. Between the columns on the porch is a low balustrade with the balusters painted white and the handrail painted black.

The porch is entered from a central stair, which contains six steps and a central pipe handrail. The brick foundation of the porch was continued to flank each side of the stairs, supporting two columns on either side. Another stair with three steps leads from the porte-cochere to the porch. There are broken-bed pediments over the main entrance and at the end of the porte-cochere, and the roof is trimmed with a plain boxed cornice.

The second story windows of the main portion of the house contain one-over-one, double-hung sash with plain trim. The attic story of the south and east elevations contains fanlights, also with plain trim.

The 1930's sun porch wing contains six bays on the first level. An entrance is near the eastern end of the wing, being flanked by one window to the east and four windows to the west. The windows are closely spaced, and each contains two panes separated by a muntin. Above each window opening and door is a transom window. The windows have a continuous sill and plain moulding. The second level contains two windows which are like those on the first level and which are closely spaced and centered.

The roof is hipped and gabled, and retains its original shingles and tile ridge. There is one triangular dormer with a round-arched opening on the main facade. The gable end of the main facade contains a decorative vergeboard, and the roof has a sloped soffit. There are two tall, rectangular-shaped interior chimneys.

The interior retains some of its distinguishing decorative features. The downstairs interior flooring is hardwood, comprised of oak parquet with walnut edge stripes in the living and dining rooms, and alternating maple and walnut planks in the bedroom. Five hand-painted,

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Continuation sheet William Gonnerman House

Item number 7

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marbleized fireplaces are located throughout the house, many with decorative art work on the side and cross panels. Three original chandeliers hang in the downstairs living area.

A carriage house is located along the east alleyway, and a brick smokehouse is directly behind the house in the back yard. The house was converted to an apartment dwelling in 1950. The entrance hallway was changed to permit private access to the upstairs apartment. There are three apartments in the main house and two in the carriage house.

## 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 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800–1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900–	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

**Specific dates** Between 1887 & 1895    **Builder/Architect** Unknown

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Gonnerman House derives its significance from being the home of industrialist William Gonnerman, who greatly contributed to the industrial advancement of Mt. Vernon. Mr. Gonnerman was also a political figure, serving on the city council and in the State Senate.

The house was constructed sometime between 1887 and 1895. William Gonnerman purchased the property and house from Anna F. Hayes in April, 1895, for \$3,000, and lived there approximately 55 years, until his death in 1949.

William Gonnerman was born in Solz, Germany, where he received his early education and learned the machinist trade under his brother-in-law. At age 17 he decided to avail himself of broader opportunities offered in the United States, and emigrated in 1873. He came to Evansville on borrowed money and secured employment in a foundry, where he became foreman in 1878 and remained in that capacity until 1884. In that year he joined with John Keck to institute his first independent business. The firm of Keck-Gonnerman & Co. engaged in the manufacture of steam powered threshing machines, saw mill machinery, separators, and mining machinery. The modest enterprise grew to become the largest industry in Mt. Vernon and the most important industrial plant in Posey County. It employed over 200 people, distributed its products throughout the United States and Canada, and had branch outlets in St. Louis and Sikeston, Missouri. Mr. Gonnerman was vice president in charge of manufacturing and sales.

Mr. Gonnerman also was president of the Industrial Brick Company in Mt. Vernon, which employed 25 people. He co-founded and served as vice president of the People's Bank and Trust Company of Mt. Vernon. After serving ten years on the City Council, he ran for and was elected to the State Senate in 1904, receiving a majority of 198 votes as a Republican in a district having a normal Democratic majority of 600.

The Keck-Gonnerman plant is no longer standing. The estate, which included three houses, an office building, and the plant, was auctioned off in the early 1950's. Not only were there no male heirs to carry on the business, but the invention of combines and hybrid grains rendered the threshing machine and separator obsolete. Reportedly, Mr. Gonnerman warned the Board of Directors shortly before he retired that combines would replace threshers, but the Board did not act on his warning. Subsequent attempts to develop a market in Cuba for threshing rice and to modify the machine to carry seismographic equipment into the muskeg of Canada failed, due to inadequate financing.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Forthoffer, Margaret. Personal account, granddaughter.  
Leffel, John C. History of Posey County, 1913.

## 10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property Less than one acre

Quadrangle name Mt. Vernon

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

### UTM References

A 

1	6	4	2	0	8	5	0	4	1	9	8	1	0	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H 

Zone		Easting				Northing								

### Verbal boundary description and justification

Lot 24, William Welborn's Enlargement

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Stephen B. Chess, with Ronald Greenfield

organization N/A

date April 23, 1985

street & number 603 Hulman Building

telephone 812/425-2207

city or town Evansville

state Indiana 47708

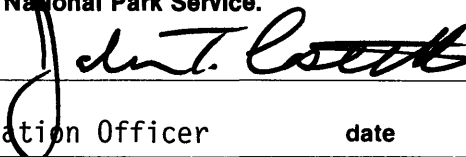
## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

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



title Indiana State Historic Preservation Officer

date 11-7-85

### For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

Entered in the  
National Register

date

12-19-85

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration