

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		district
		site
		structure
		object
1	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Commerce/Trade: Office Building
- Recreation/Culture: Theater
-
-
-
-
-

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Commerce/Trade: Office Building
-
-
-
-
-
-

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

-
-
-
-
-

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation: Poured Concrete
- walls: Limestone
- Brick
- roof: Single-Ply Membrane
- other: Glass
- Steel

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

Built in 1924, the Montgomery Building is a ten-story, nine-bay-wide Chicago skeletal frame construction skyscraper located at 187 North Church Street, in the heart of downtown Spartanburg, South Carolina. The building was designed by Lockwood Greene & Company, an architectural and engineering firm from Boston, Massachusetts, that played a key role in the early development of the textile industry in Spartanburg.

Narrative Description

The Church Street façade [west elevation] of the Montgomery Building is ten stories high and nine bays wide with a full basement level. The façade is limestone faced and features Italian Renaissance Revival detailing. The third and tenth floors have triple-window bays with decorative bas-relief Renaissance Revival pilasters between the window bays. Above the bays on these levels is a band of decorative bas-relief molding with a half-medallion design. These bands of molding are separated between each of the nine sets of window bays on the third and tenth levels by a bas-relief square panel. The fourth through ninth floors have only coupled window bays. Main entrances are located at the second and eighth bays of the main level and feature a slightly arched, decorated surrounds, inset entries. Both of these bays feature a high level of decoration continuing through all ten floors. On the second level, the main entrances are flanked by Renaissance Revival capitals, and though the flanking walls beneath these capitals does not project, the wall area is suggestive of classical pilasters. A row of six decorative medallions is between the first and second levels at each entrance. Each entrance is deeply inset and features above the double-leaf doorways a paneled and crested tablet with "Montgomery Building" upon it. Each portal's ceiling is coffered with a large central panel containing a decorative medallion. On the fourth level, a decorative bas-relief featuring an urn filled with fruit is located on each side of the main entrances. Between the ninth and tenth levels are decorative buttress caps on either side of the second and eighth bays. The windows between these buttresses are decorated with metalwork on the tops of the windows. On the parapet above the tenth floor is a crest featuring the letter "M" in the center of the second and eighth bays. The parapet above the other bays of the building features a row of three bas-relief square panels alternating between two different designs.

The north elevation consists of two elements, the two-story theater on the left end of the building and the three bays wide office tower on the right. The central bay of the office tower is a wide Chicago bay on the fourth through ninth floors. The office tower features much of the same Renaissance Revival detailing as the west elevation, including the decorative pilasters between the window bays of the third and tenth levels, the buttress caps between the ninth and tenth levels and the half-medallion molding and bas-relief panels above the window bays of the third level.

The parapet features a set of two bas-relief square panels above the first and third bays and a rectangular decorative bas-relief above the wide central bay. On either side of the central bay on the fourth level is the same bas-relief urn found on the fourth level of the west elevation. In 1984, a metal fire escape was added to the north elevation.

The east elevation consists of two elements, the theater on the first and second floors and the office tower on the third through tenth floors. This elevation is sixteen bays wide. Each end of this façade

has a limestone return. The main façade is painted brick. In the early 1970s, a glass canopy was added to the east elevation at the center door, along with a corridor through the theater to the center lobby area of the building.

The south elevation is a mirror of the north, the only exception being that it has seven bays on the first and second floors. The third through the ninth floors are three bays wide with a wide Chicago bay in the center. The two-story theater is located on the right side of the building with the office tower to the left. The south elevation features the same Renaissance Revival detailing as the north elevation, including the bas-relief pilasters on the third and tenth levels, the buttress caps between the ninth and tenth levels and the bas-relief patterning on the parapet.

The rear area of the first two floors of the building houses a theater that has much of the original detailing still intact. The front area of these floors contains storefronts on the first floor and offices on the second level. The remaining levels of the building house offices with a central, double-loaded corridor and restrooms located on each level. There is a central elevator and stairway that both lead to the main lobby of the building.

From the front of the building, there is an entry leading to an arcade on the second bay from each end of the building. These are connected with a cross corridor. The entry on the St. John Street end of the building goes all the way through the building and exits at the rear. The walls of these arcades are made of a buff color marble, some with grey panels on them and about a fourteen inch green marble base. Storefronts with large windows a door and transoms are located along the arcades as well. Remnants of bronze colored column capitals are visible along these arcades, as are the slightly arched and paneled ceilings.

The theater is accessed from the arcade on the St. John Street end of the building. The two-story lobby area includes an original wrought iron railing on the second floor. The ceiling of the main seating area of the theater is slightly arched and features an ornate metal grille in the center of the space. There is a balcony that has some of the original stained glass lights still hanging underneath. The proscenium arch still shows the 1924 color scheme on the rope and panel detailing all around the arch. The ceiling nearest the proscenium arch is slightly arched and features a large field of panels or coffers. Decorative pilasters with Composite order capitals, plaster panels and other decorative motifs are still visible and present within the theater space.

The building's historic windows were replaced in the 1970s, and several cosmetic changes were made to the arcade and other public spaces, including the historic theater space. A rehabilitation of the building, with the federal investment tax credits in view, is planned by the current owner/developer.

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Period of Significance (justification)

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Architecture
- Commerce
- Entertainment/Recreation

Period of Significance

1924-1958

Significant Dates

1924

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Lockwood, Greene, & Company

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria)

The Montgomery Building, located at 187 North Church Street, in the center of downtown Spartanburg, South Carolina, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the Areas of Significance for Commerce and Entertainment/Recreation for its association with the commercial and entertainment history of Spartanburg from 1924 to 1958, including its association with the development of the post-1920s textile industry and with the Montgomery family, textile leaders in the South for more than 150 years. It is also eligible for listing under Criterion C in the Area of Significance for Architecture as an excellent example of a Chicago skeletal frame construction skyscraper with a highly developed limestone facing, including more than 22,900 square feet of limestone-faced area on its western elevation.

Narrative Statement of Significance (provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance)

Commerce

The high rise or elevator building started in Spartanburg in the early twentieth century. The majority of these buildings were hotels, a direct result of increased rail traffic due to the expansion of the textile industry in the upstate of South Carolina. In 1908, the Gresham Hotel (later the Morgan Hotel), a seven story wood frame building with exterior load bearing walls located near the Union Depot on Magnolia Street was built. In 1916, the seven-story Cleveland Hotel was built on Morgan Square, followed by six-story Franklin Hotel in 1920. There was a lack of office space in Spartanburg, and so in 1913, the Chapman Building was constructed in the Chicago Style of Architecture. It was eight stories and was designed by Julius F. Harder of New York City, architect for the Palmetto Building in Columbia, South Carolina [1912-1913].¹

In the early 1920s, modern office building space was still scarce in Spartanburg and the town was experiencing a new growth era. A group of local men decided to organize a company to build and operate a modern ten-story office building. It was to be of fireproof construction and house a movie theater and stores on the ground floor with offices above. Because descendants of Captain John Montgomery, the founder of Spartan Mills, took a leading part in the project, the building was called the Montgomery Building.² The property on North Church Street where the Montgomery Building stands today was originally the site of the Captain John H. Montgomery House, located at North Church and Elm Streets. Captain Montgomery's three sons, Victor M. Montgomery, Walter S. Montgomery and Ben W. Montgomery, received the property from the estate of their father upon his death, and in May of 1924, the Montgomery brothers transferred the property's title to Montgomery Building, Inc.³

Other well-known tenants flocked to the Montgomery Building. Many were textile companies—a testament to the Montgomery family's influence in the field. Pacolet Manufacturing Company, Royal Manufacturing Company, the South Carolina Cotton Manufacturers Association, Arcadia Mills, Carolina Cotton Company, Inman Mills, American Spinning Company, Florence Mills and Deering

¹ *Manufacturer's Record*, 13 February 1913, p. 69.

² Samuel B. Lincoln, *Lockwood Greene: The History of an Engineering Business, 1832-1958* (Brattleboro, Vt.: The Stephen Greene Press, 1960), pp. 482-484.

³ Deed of Sale from Victor M. Montgomery, W. S. Montgomery and Ben W. Montgomery to Montgomery Building, Inc., 23 May 1924, Spartanburg County, South Carolina, Deed Book 7-A, 86. Register of Mesne Conveyance, Spartanburg County Courthouse, Spartanburg, S.C.

Milliken Mills were ala tenants in the building at various times during its history. There were also many other cotton brokers and factories who had offices in the Montgomery Building.

The city's reception of the proposed building was positive. In the first week of October 1923, an article ran in *The Spartanburg Herald* stating that \$325,000 in building stock had been raised. But mounting costs in the building's completion required more investment from the city's residents. Anyone could purchase stock—in fact during a finance committee meeting it was said, "If those who have money had subscribed as liberally as those with small means the entire fund necessary to erect the building would in hand." The residents of Spartanburg apparently felt very strongly about this modern "skyscraper." By October 28, 1923, a large scale ad ran on the front page of *The Spartanburg Herald* with the Montgomery Building placed front and center. It was the pièce de résistance of the newly developed North Church Street commercial corridor; this area was touted as a "popular trading center of a rapidly growing city" and that shoppers could count on the managers of stores in this area to be "aggressive and progressive."

The Montgomery Building continued to be a popular business address until the 1980s. As the textile industry continued to flounder, those offices were closed and tenants began vacating the building. Businesses began building their own buildings or renting spaces in stand alone buildings. During the 1990s and into the new millennium, tenants continued to vacant the Montgomery Building. WSPA housed some its offices and a satellite broadcasting studio in the building into the early 2000s. When the building went into foreclosure in 2007, the remaining tenants vacated. The offices and theater are still vacant today, but the current owners have plans to redevelop the space. In fact, in a downtown master plan commissioned by the City of Spartanburg in 2008, the building was cited "as a historic landmark critical to the fabric of downtown." The Montgomery Building is one of the few surviving, and much loved relics from Spartanburg's new age of business and commerce.

Entertainment

Not only did the Montgomery Building house business offices, but also a theatre/auditorium space, and a radio station. When plans for construction of the building were announced local newspapers had an eight column, page-one headline "Ten Story Skyscraper Will Cost Over Million Dollars." (a secondary headline noted the death of President Warren G. Harding). The article states that "the auditorium feature of the structure will probably prove one of the most interesting and popular things to citizens of Spartanburg.....Spartanburg has no auditorium or legitimate theater for several years and it has been felt that this was one of the city's greatest needs."⁴

The history of theaters in Spartanburg is long and varied. This history began with the building of an opera house in the 1880s. This seven hundred seat venue brought a range of musical acts, comedy tours, and acting troupes to Spartanburg, and often the theatre would sell out of seats.⁵

But by the turn of the century, other theatres were opening their doors to Spartanburg in order to take advantage of touring Vaudeville acts that were all the rage throughout the country. The Harris Theatre stood across the street from the future location of the Montgomery Building. Built in 1907, it was one of the upstate's finest and most advanced theatres. It also boasted the largest stage in the south. It

⁴ Vernon Foster with Walter S. Montgomery, Sr., *Spartanburg: Facts, Reminiscences, Folklore*. (Spartanburg: The Reprint Company, 1998), p. 412.

⁵ Marion Peter Holt, *Magical Places: The Story of Spartanburg's Theatres and Their Entertainments, 1900-1950* (Spartanburg: Hub City Writers Project, 2004), p. 15.

remained the showplace of Spartanburg until 1920, wherein it was condemned and the interior razed. The building was shored up and used as retail for decades until half of the building was demolished to accommodate a drive-thru bank. The Grand (1910) was also a major player in the vaudeville stage business before converting to movie house in 1915.⁶

Traditional theatres were not the only form of entertainment springing up in Spartanburg. With the advent of moving pictures, nickelodeons were being built in rapid succession. Some of the more popular ones were The Magic (1905) and The Fairyland (1905), The Electric (1908), and The Lyric (1909). As movie technology progressed and began more popular, many of these small theatres were abandoned for more modern movie houses. The Lester (or later The Strand) was the dream house of Lawrence Lester, Jr. Built in 1913, it was the premier movie house in Spartanburg for many years. Lester had been the first to bring electric pictures to Spartanburg and was constantly selling off his old theatres to create new spaces. Even though Lester sold the building in 1915, the theatre continued operating for another 33 years.⁷

When the Montgomery Building was constructed, it brought yet another venue to Spartanburg. Called The Montgomery originally, the auditorium was the first live show space to grace Spartanburg since the closing of The Harris in 1920. The elaborate theatre opened with little fanfare but featured an interior box office, thirty-six foot wide proscenium, chandeliers, and a large balcony. What kept this theatre open so long was the management's ability to adapt to changing times. When motion pictures were introduced in 1927, The Montgomery became Spartanburg's prime destination for first-run motion pictures. When the theater changed hands in 1932, it became known as The Carolina. A brand new marquee with flashing light bulbs was installed, and remained for decades afterwards. A weeklong engagement of *Gone With the Wind* played at The Carolina following the Atlanta premiere by only six weeks. Moviegoers lined up across the theater lobby and up the N. Church Street sidewalk in front of the Montgomery Building and Central Methodist Church for each performance. Due to the theater's versatility, live performances were still hosted in the auditorium. Elvis Presley stopped in the city in February 1956 to play the six-hundred seat theatre.⁸

While The Carolina would remain open until the 1970s, an ill advised refurbishment removed its iconic marquee and many of its classic Art Deco fixtures and decorations. The theater is shuttered to the public now, but is the only historic movie theater remaining in Spartanburg.⁹

The Montgomery Building also housed Spartanburg's first commercial radio station. WSPA was launched in 1930 on the AM dial and is the longest running in the state. The station broadcasted from studios on the top floor of the building.¹⁰ Radio broadcasts were an extremely important in that the area surrounding Spartanburg was largely rural. For the first time, people were able to hear news and live broadcasts of events. WSPA continued to grow with the times, advancing as each new technology was introduced. In 1946, WSPA-FM signed on. In 1956, WSPA launched a television station and began broadcasting from downtown Spartanburg. Then in 1961, WSPA-FM was the first radio station in the southeast to broadcast in stereo. WSPA is still in existence today, although it has been divided up and sold to different corporations. WSPA-TV is still broadcasting from its original

⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 90.

⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 88-93.

⁸ Lynne Shackelford, "Downtown Landmark Could See Renewal." *Spartanburg Herald-Journal* (Spartanburg, S.C.), September 8, 2008. Accessed April 8, 2011.

⁹ Holt, p. 101.

¹⁰ Foster, p. 412.

home on Channel 7 and is owned by the Media General Corporation. WSPA-FM is now known today as Magic 98.9, and WSPA-AM is under the call letters WORD.¹¹

Architecture

Lockwood Greene & Company, an architecture and engineering firm from Boston, Massachusetts, designed the Montgomery Building in 1923. They used the Chicago skeletal frame method of construction. This method was developed after the Great Fire of Chicago, which occurred on October 8, 1871. The leading inventors and designers to begin this method were Henry Bessemer, William LeBaron Jenney, George A. Fuller, Daniel Hudson Burnham, and John Wellborn Root.

Lockwood Greene & Company played a key role in the development of the early Spartanburg County cotton mill industry. Between 1873 and 1911 the firm engineered and built over fifty cotton processing mills in the state.¹² Lockwood Greene's connection to Spartanburg began in 1882 when Captain John Montgomery hired the firm to design a mill in Pacolet for Spartan Mills. After designing this first mill, the firm designed several Spartan Mills operations, as well as mills in Clifton and Whitney. By 1923, the firm was designing so many projects in Spartanburg and the surrounding area that it decided to move its southern headquarters from Atlanta to Spartanburg. The firm opened its office temporarily in the Andrews Law Building until construction on the Montgomery Building was complete. Lockwood Greene owned one seventh of the total shares in the building and was a tenant from 1924 until 1966.¹³

In addition to the many mills Lockwood Greene designed before moving their headquarters to Spartanburg, there were many other significant projects commissioned while Lockwood Greene operated from the Montgomery Building. Some of these were First Presbyterian Church (1923-24), Mary Black Clinic (1923-24), Aug. W. Smith Co. Department Store (1925), two new Schools (1928 & 1938), Spartanburg Memorial Auditorium (1947), Additions to the Spartanburg County Courthouse (1929), Clubhouse at Spartanburg Country Club (1930) and various residences in Converse Heights (1924).

The Montgomery Building was the tallest building in Spartanburg until the 1950s. At that time, the Schuyler Building and the Archibald Rutledge Building were constructed in the dressed down aesthetic of the Modernist movement. They were constructed as apartments then and continue to serve that function today. In the 1980s, the eighteen story BB&T Building was constructed. Still known today by that name, the building was only inhabited by the bank for a few short years before becoming the corporate headquarters for the Denny's food chain. Nevertheless, the Montgomery Building remains an iconic part of the Spartanburg skyline, a lone testament to the city's early age of tall building construction.

¹¹ "SCBA at 60," South Carolina Broadcasters Association, accessed April 8, 2011, <http://www.scba.net/documents/HistorySectionforWebsite.pdf>.

¹² John E. Wells and Robert E. Dalton, *The South Carolina Architects, 1885-1935: A Biographical Dictionary*. (Richmond: New South Architectural Press, 1992), p. 107.

¹³ Betsy Wakefield Teter, ed., *Textile Town: Spartanburg County, South Carolina*. (Spartanburg: Hub City Writers Project, 2002), pp. 72-73.

Select Bibliography

Unpublished Sources

Spartanburg County Deeds, Register of Mesne Conveyance, Spartanburg County Courthouse, Spartanburg, S.C.

Published Sources

Manufacturer's Record, 13 February 1913.

Edgar, Walter B., ed. *The South Carolina Encyclopedia*. Columbia: University of South Carolina Press, 2006.

Foster, Vernon, ed., with Walter S. Montgomery, Sr. *Spartanburg: Facts, Reminiscences, Folklore*. Compiled Spartanburg: The Reprint Company, 1998.

Holt, Marion Peter. *Magical Places: The Story of Spartanburg's Theatres and Their Entertainments, 1900-1950*. Spartanburg: Hub City Writers Project, 2004.

Lincoln, Samuel B. *Lockwood Greene: The History of an Engineering Business, 1932-1958*. Brattleboro, Vt.: The Stephen Greene Press, 1960.

Shackleford, Lynne. "Downtown Landmark Could See Renewal." *Spartanburg Herald-Journal* (Spartanburg, S.C.), 8 September 2008.

Teter, Betsy Wakefield, ed. *Textile Town: Spartanburg County, South Carolina*. Spartanburg: Hub City Writers Project, 2002.

Wells, John E., and Robert E. Dalton. *The South Carolina Architects, 1885-1935: A Biographical Dictionary*. Richmond: New South Architectural Press, 1992.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets)

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

Name of repository: **Spartanburg County Public Library, Spartanburg, S.C.**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive black and white photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Montgomery Building
187 North Church Street

City or Vicinity: Spartanburg

County: Spartanburg County State: South Carolina

Photographer: Martin E. Meek

Date Photographed: September 2009

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1. Church Street Elevation
2. North Elevation
3. Church Street Elevation, Entrance Detail
4. St. John Street Elevation
5. St. John Street Elevation and Rear Elevation
6. Church Street Elevation, Bay Window Configuration
7. Church Street Elevation, Bay Window Configuration
8. Detail of Bas Relief Ornaments
9. Church Street Entrance Detail
10. Church Street Elevation, Capital Detail
11. Arcade, Interior View
12. Arcade, Interior View
13. Arcade, Detail of Pegasus Capital
14. Arcade, Interior View
15. Arcade, Interior View
16. Theater Lobby, First Floor
17. Theater Lobby, Balcony Level
18. Theater Lobby, Second Floor Ceiling Trim
19. Theater, Ventilator Grill Detail
20. Theater, Ventilator Grill Detail
21. Theater Lobby, Stained Glass Light Fixture Under First Floor Balcony
22. Theater Interior
23. Theater, Proscenium Arch and Polychrome Decorated Panels
24. Theater, Proscenium Arch and Polychrome Decorated Panels

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.