



**PENNSYLVANIA INDUSTRIAL RESOURCE SURVEY FORM — DATA SHEET 89 BIN**  
 Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Bureau for Historic Preservation

**IDENTIFICATION AND LOCATION**

Survey Code: GAI # 4 Tax Parcel/Other No.: \_\_\_\_\_  
 County: 1. Erie 0 4 9 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Municipality: 1. Erie 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Address: East Avenue, East 12th Street, and Wayne Street  
 Historic Name: East 12th Street Industrial Historic District  
 Other Name: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Owner Name/Address: Multiple  
 Owner Category:  Private  Public-Local  Public-state  Public-federal  
 Resource Category:  Building  District  Site  Structure  Object  
 Number/Approximate Number of Resources Covered by This Form: 19  
 USGS Quad: 1. Erie North 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
 UTM A. 17-57750-466420 C. 17-57850-466420  
 References: B. 17-57840-466500 D. 17-57810-466400

**HISTORIC AND CURRENT FUNCTIONS**

Historic Function Category: \_\_\_\_\_ Subcategory: \_\_\_\_\_ Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
 A. Industry Manufacturing facility 1 0 A  
 B. \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_  
 C. \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

Particular Type: A. factory-machinery and equipment manufacture  
 B. \_\_\_\_\_  
 C. \_\_\_\_\_

Associated Process/Activity: A. Iron and steel industry Code: I - B B  
 B. Engines and turbines manufacture Code: I - D B  
 C. \_\_\_\_\_ Code: \_\_\_\_\_

Current Function Category: \_\_\_\_\_ Subcategory: \_\_\_\_\_ Code: \_\_\_\_\_  
 A. Industry Manufacturing facility I 0 A  
 B. \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_  
 C. \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION**

Architectural Classification: A. \_\_\_\_\_ Other 8 0  
 B. \_\_\_\_\_ Other: \_\_\_\_\_

Exterior Materials: Foundation Stone 4 1 Roof: metal 5 0  
 Walls Brick 3 0 Walls \_\_\_\_\_  
 Other \_\_\_\_\_ Other \_\_\_\_\_

Structural System: 1. Steel 4 0 2. \_\_\_\_\_  
 Roof System: Material Steel 4 System: Truss 3  
 Width: 5-6 F Depth: 10-11 C Stories/Height: 2- 2 1/2 C  
 Power System: \_\_\_\_\_  
 Machinery: \_\_\_\_\_

See individual survey forms for resources within the district.

Archaeological Remains: \_\_\_\_\_

### HISTORICAL INFORMATION

Year Built:    C. 1880 to    C. 1915  
Additions/Alterations Dates:    C. 1930s    C. present  
Basis for Dating: xx Documentary    Physical

Explain: Documentary sources include published sources, atlases and maps.

Cultural/Ethnic Affiliation:	1. <u>          N/A          </u>	2. <u>                          </u>
Associated Individuals:	1. <u>          N/A          </u>	2. <u>                          </u>
Associated Events:	1. <u>          N/A          </u>	2. <u>                          </u>
Architects/Engineers:	1. <u>          Unknown          </u>	2. <u>                          </u>
Builders:	1. <u>          N/A          </u>	2. <u>                          </u>

### MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

See continuation Sheets

Archival Collections: Description

Erie County Historical Society Archives  
Erie County Historical Society  
Contact Person:  
Don Mueller, Director

Location:

### PREVIOUS SURVEY, DETERMINATIONS

1993-- Erie Industrial Resources Survey--Foundries and Machine Shops (Greenhorne & O'Mara)

### EVALUATION (Survey Director/Consultants Only)

Individual NR Potential:    <sup>X</sup> Yes    No Context(s)    Industry, Architecture  
Contributes to Potential District:    <sup>X</sup> Yes    No District Name/Status:                             
Explain:

See continuation sheet

### THREATS

Threats:    1.None 2.Public Development 3.Private Development 4.Neglect 5.Other  
Explain:

District adjoins a construction alternative for the proposed East Side Access Highway project.

### SURVEYOR INFORMATION

Surveyor Name/Title:           Geoffrey Henry           Date:    1-19-95  
Project Name:           Erie East Side Access Highway            
Organization:           GAI, Inc.           Telephone:    412-856-9220  
Street and No.:           570 Beatty Road            
City, State:           Monroeville, Penna.           Zip Code:    15146  
Additional Survey Documentation:                             
Associated Survey Codes:

Survey Code: GAI #4 Tax Parcel/Other No.: \_\_\_\_\_  
County: Erie 049 Municipality: Erie  
Address: East Avenue, East 12th Street and Wayne Street  
Historic/Other Name: East 12th Street Industrial Historic District

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:**

GENERAL DESCRIPTION

The East 12th Street Industrial Historic District in Erie is bounded by East 12 Street on the north, the east side of Wayne Street on the west, the tracks of the Conrail and Norfolk/Southern railroads on the south, southeast, and southwest, and Pennsylvania Avenue on the east. The district contains approximately 19 resources consisting of six historic foundry and machine shop complexes. The district is bisected by East Avenue, which crosses in a north-south direction by bridge over the Conrail tracks. The two railroad lines meet and cross at a point in the western part of the district. There are a number of rail spurs and branches that serve the many buildings and factories in the district.

The buildings and factory complexes date from the 1880s to the 1930s and mostly large three and four-story brick buildings. They range between poor to good in condition. The buildings and the district as a whole retain a good level of architectural integrity.

INDIVIDUAL BUILDING DESCRIPTIONS

The east side of the district along 12th Street is dominated by the giant plant of the former **Pennsylvania Boiler Works** (now Kaiser Aluminum). This complex of three 2 1/2-story, gable-roofed brick buildings extends two city blocks in length. The buildings date from the 1880s and have corbelled brick cornices, segmental-arched windows, and brick pilasters marking each bay. Many of the windows and doors have been boarded up, but otherwise the buildings retain a high level of architectural integrity.

Along the west side of 12th Street is the equally impressive factory of the former **Nagle Corliss Company** (now owned by Zurn Industries). The complex consists of the machine shop building facing East Avenue, a tall 3 1/2-story, 3 by 16-bay brick building on a granite foundation. The office and pattern storage building faces 12th Street and is 13 bays long. The foundry building is to the south and is a tall gable-roofed brick building with a prominent monitor roof.

To the south of the Nagle-Corliss complex is the former **Erie City Iron Works** complex (now also owned by Zurn Industries), dating from the 1880s. The former machine shop building has been sided with metal, save for the nearly all-glass east gable end. The building

**PENNSYLVANIA HISTORICAL RESOURCE SURVEY FORM — NARRATIVE SHEET**  
Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Bureau for Historic Preservation

89C

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is 18 bays long, 3 1/2 stories high with a tall monitor roof. There are two foundry buildings located on either side of the machine shop and a 2-story office to the south.

Across East Avenue is the **Nagle Engine & Boiler Company (049-EIS-036)** building (owned by Zurn Industries), a single 2 1/2-story, multi-bay, gable-roofed brick building with its gable end facing the street.

To the west of the Erie City Iron Works complex is the former factory building of the **Stearns Manufacturing Company (049-EIS-43)**, a 2 1/2-story, gable-roofed brick building of uncertain date (although possibly from the early 1900s) almost entirely covered with metal siding.

South of the Conrail tracks on the east side of East Avenue are the partially demolished buildings of the **Weil-McLain Company (049-EIS-48)**. Dating from the 1920s, the complex consists of a brick office building and part of the old machine shop. The 1-story brick office is notable for its slightly Moorish styling and decorative brickwork.

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**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:**

**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

The East 12th Street Industrial Historic District is potentially significant under Criterion A in the area of industry/manufacturing. The district contains a significant concentration of resources associated with Erie's nationally prominent foundry/machine shop industry. representing companies which date from the 1840s and resources dating from the 1880s, the district relates to the full spectrum of Erie's industrial history and illustrates the dominance and industrial might of the machine shop and foundry industry in the city's economic history.

The district is also potentially significant under Criterion C for containing a significant number of well-preserved industrial buildings from a number of different periods.

**HISTORY**

Since the 1840s the metal founding and machine shop industry has been among the most important components of Erie's industrial economy. Aided by an efficient transportation system that reached full maturity after the Civil War, Eries foundries and machine shops became known nationwide for the volume and the diversity of their products (G&O: 1993: 3).

Among the earliest iron foundries in the city was known as the "New Furnace" established in 1840 at State and 11th Streets by W. H. Johnson. One of the offshoots of this company was the Erie City Iron Company which produced the first steam engine in Erie in 1844, as well as the drilling rig used in sinking the first oil well in the U.S., in Titusville, Pennsylvania in 1859 (G&O: 1993: 10). Unlike other foundries in Erie, Erie City Iron works moved away from the production of stoves or railroad cars into more specialized product lines such as engines, boilers, and small machinery. By 1879 the company had outgrown its location near the city center and had built a new complex on East Avenue. The company built engine shops, boiler shops, a foundry and pattern buildings.

Nearby was the factory of the Stearns Manufacturing Company, whose roots elsewhere in Erie can be traced back to 1855 (G&O: 1993: 42). The company specialized in the production of sawmill machinery and eventually became one of the largest integrated foundry and machine shop companies in Erie. In 1880 the company ranked second in employment of machinery builders in Erie ("Stearns Mfg. Co.")

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vertical file, ECHS). In 1888 the company moved from the center city location to the east side of Wayne Street. By 1905 however, the company had split into several components and the plant in East Erie was acquired by the Erie City Iron Company.

Two other vitally important companies in late 19th century Erie were the Nagle Engine Company and the Pennsylvania Boiler Company. The Nagle Company (including the Nagle Corliss Company) were run by the Nagle family in the late 19th century and were known for their slide valve engines that were sold nationwide ("Nagle Engine Co.", vertical files, ECHS). The Pennsylvania Boiler Company was one of the largest producers of boilers in Erie. In the early 20th century the production of boilers was among Erie's most important industries and in 1913 the city was proclaimed the "Engine and Boiler Capital of the World".

The majority of buildings in the district are now owned by Zurn Industries which took over the operation of Erie City Iron Works in 1965. Although machine and machine parts continue to be manufactured at this location, foundry operations are no longer carried out at this plant.

**REFERENCES**

Miller, John A. 20th Century History of Erie Co. Pennsylvania (Chicago: Line Printing Co.), 1909.

Mueller, A. H. Atlas of the City of Erie (1917)

"Drake's Well had a Zurn Connection", Erie Story (December, 1985), page 26.

Moore, Edward C. Erie City Iron Works 1840-1934 (Erie City Historical Society Archives)

Sanborn Maps of Erie (1888-1952)

"Stearns Manufacturing Company", vertical files, Erie County Historical Society, Erie, Penna.

"Nagle Engine Company" vertical files, Erie County Historical Society, Erie, Penna.

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**NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARIES**

The East 12th Street Industrial Historic District is bounded on the north by East 12th Street, a continuation of Pennsylvania Avenue on the east (paper street as revealed on tax map), the tracks of the Conrail and Norfolk Southern railroads on the southeast, south, and southwest, and the east side of Wayne Street on the west.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATIONS**

The boundaries of the East 12th Street Industrial Historic District include the resources historically associated with foundry and machine shop manufacturing operations at this location since the 1880s to the present. A clear delineation of the boundary is provided by residential areas to the north and west of the district, a parking lot to the east, and the railroad tracks to the south.



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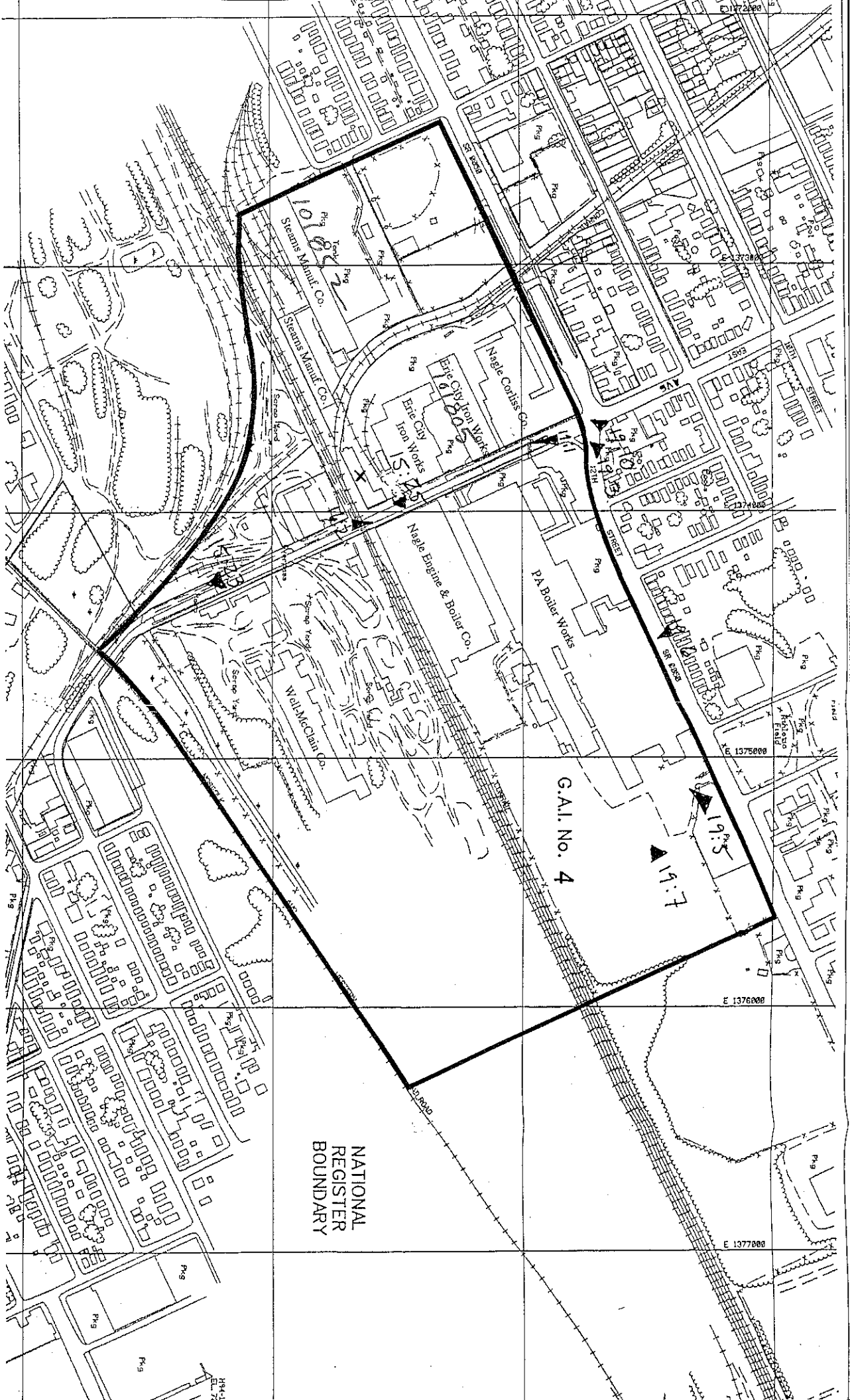
Historic/Other Name: East 12th Street Industrial Historic District

**PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION:**

**PHOTOGRAPHS**

**#      SUBJECT AND CAMERA POSITIONS**

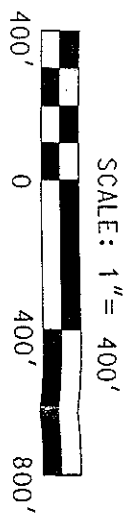
- 19:5 Pennsylvania Boiler Works, East 12th Street, east
- 19:6 Pennsylvania Boiler Works, East 12th Street, south
- 19:7 Pennsylvania Boiler works, East 12th Street southeast
- 19:10 Nagle-Corliss Company, East Avenue and East 12th Street, east-south-east
- 19:1 Nagle Corliss Company, East 12th Street and East Avenue, southeast
- 19:3 East Avenue south of East 12th Street, southeast
- 16:2 Weil-McLain Co., office, east
- 15:23 Weil-McLain Co., northeast
- 15:25 Nagle Engine Company, east



X = post-1945 structure

NATIONAL REGISTER BOUNDARY

G.A.I. No. 4



FIGURE

Erie East Side Acc  
 Erie City,  
 Erie County,  
 GAI #4

