

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

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

For HCRS use only  
received  
date entered

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

**1. Name**

historic WEST PARK PLACE

and/or common

**2. Location**

street & number Bounded by N. Park Row, Peach, Fifth & State St. not for publication

city, town Erie \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district 24

state Pennsylvania code 42 county Erie code 049

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name Multiple

street & number

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Erie County Courthouse

street & number West Sixth Street

city, town Erie \_\_\_\_\_ state Pennsylvania

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Pennsylvania Inventory  
of Historic Places

has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 3-24-80  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission

city, town Harrisburg \_\_\_\_\_ state Pennsylvania

# 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" 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**

West Park Place is a typical mid-19th century business complex constructed between 1857 and 1865. In size and design its buildings reflect the general prosperity and growth that Erie experienced as the city moved from the status of lake port to manufacturing center. During the early decades of the century Erie's commercial district gradually shifted from the bayfront to the periphery of the central park. In 1860 a total of 16 brick business stands were under construction in that general vicinity. The scale of these new buildings, and particularly those bordering the park to the north, gave a sense of substance and permanence to Erie's booming economy.

All of the original 13 main buildings that were erected along North Park Row, and along State and Peach Streets as far as Fifth, remain with one exception. That exception is the Park Opera House which was demolished in 1939, and whose site is now occupied by the Bus Depot. An 1868 photograph of North Park Row reveals a solid line of imposing brick edifices which together with the amenities of canopies, hitching posts, street lanterns, and iron sidewalk railings; conveys a scene of elegance and taste. The use of brick in the construction of commercial buildings served a practical as well as an aesthetic purpose - to avoid the fires which constantly consumed many of Erie's older wooden business structures.

The buildings which were erected in the commercial district were generally three stories above grade with full basements. They typically consisted of the following divisions: basements and first floor - shops and services; second floor - offices; and third floor - entertainment center. West Park Place provided two such entertainment centers - Farrar Hall and later the Park Opera House on North Park Row, and the Independent Order of Odd Fellows Hall on State Street. In some cases upper floors were utilized as living quarters by shopkeepers.

Generally the architectural style of West Park Place can be classified as Commercial Italianate. It is a reflection of the fact that John Hill designed a majority of the buildings. Hill had just finished remodeling his residence on West Sixth Street in the Italian Villa mode. (National Register - December, 1979) Hill's talents had been employed in the design and construction of Erie's new Court House and Gaol a few years earlier. Testimonials to the regard in which Hill's architectural skills were held frequently appear in newspaper accounts of the day. On February 3, 1859, The Erie Gazette stated, "The new room of Carter and Brother in the brick block on the north side of the Diamond promises to eclipse any of the kind west of New York. Under the direction of John Hill whose judgement and taste in such matters are proverbial, it has been finished in truly elegant style, and supplied with the conveniences for a first rate Drug and Chemical establishment . . . "

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

WEST PARK PLACE, Erie County

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 2

The facade treatment which Hill applied to his buildings reveals a high degree of architectural sophistication. Of particular note are the cornice and window areas. Cornices incorporate wide eaves supported by large and often paired brackets. They are further embellished by dentils and decorative frieze panels. Windows are arched with masonry eyebrow heads, and sills. Masonry pilasters and spandrels divide the facades into a mix of single, double, and triple window bays. The overall effect is one of pronounced moldings and details.

Two buildings which Hill did not design command special attention. One is the Purcell Hardware Store. It was designed and built by Samuel Lytle in a somewhat more classical tradition. When completed in 1859, The Erie Gazette claimed that there was "nothing comparable to it in architectural finish or convenient arrangement". The slurry of cast stone applied to the facade inspired the name "Marble Front" by which it was known for many years. The storefront remains basically unaltered to this day. The other building - the Bus Depot, while not a part of the original business complex, is the best example of Art Moderne architecture in the city.

West Park Place is Erie's sole remaining concentrated Victorian business district. Looking down at its buildings from above, one is immediately impressed by their massive proportions in relation to the surrounding area. Yet, while there is a considerable degree of uniformity in appearance, each building is identifiably separate.

# 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 checked="" 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

Builder/Architect

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

West Park Place bounded by historic Perry Square to the south, and by two leading thoroughfares - Peach Street on the west and State Street on the east, was the heart of Erie's business district during a good part of the latter half of the 19th century.

This complex of commercial and professional buildings came into existence during the late 1850's and early 1860's following a major fire in the winter of 1857 which destroyed all the wooden structures extending from the corner of Fifth and State Streets to the middle of North Park Row. In rapid succession substantial 3 story brick buildings were erected in their space, and by 1865 all vacant space along North Park Row and Peach and State Streets had been filled.

The development of West Park Place was part of a general building boom which took place in the vicinity of Central Park at that time. Erie had been incorporated as a city in 1851 with a population of 6,000. Within a decade its size would almost double. New status and growth combined to create a dramatic need for additional commercial facilities. In this sense the fire of 1857 was fortuitous since it cleared prime land of undesirable rickety structures and permitted the extension of the city's expanding commercial activity to that area. Although many building owners and tenants had suffered severe losses in the fire, there was little reluctance to start over on a grander scale.

The men who engaged in the revitalization of West Park Place were already successful entrepreneurs, and there is evidence that they worked closely together to insure that their investment would produce a complex that was not only profitable but aesthetically pleasing. Among the leading developers was William Rindernecht, a wholesale grocer, who replaced the building he had lost in the fire, at the corner of Fifth and State. At the opposite corner on the park, Isaac Rosenzweig, also a fire victim, erected a fine structure part of which he used for his dry goods business. A series of private banking firms had previously occupied the site which the result that this new facility was called the Exchange Building. Its principal tenant for many, many years was the Marine National Bank. Thomas Austin had been burned out of his jewelry shop on State Street, and he now proceeded in partnership with John Moore, a retired sailor turned businessman, to put up the Paragon Building on North Park Row. However Moore's major contribution to West Park Place was undoubtedly the handsome building he later erected on State Street which was called the "Marble Front".

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

WEST PARK PLACE, Erie County

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 2

Other builders of West Park Place were Newell J. Clark who established a boot and shoe business at the corner of Peach and North Park Row, Benjamin Grant whose law offices adjoined Clark, and A. H. Gray and F. F. Farrar who together with William Caughey and John Clemens erected a large commercial building as a joint venture. Farrar served as mayor in 1865, while Clemens would later be president of Erie Malleable Iron Works, one of the city's important industries. Nathaniel Murphy moved his tinning shop on the other side of State Street to a building which he had constructed with bricks from the old 1824 Court House. Next door an up-and-coming doctor John Garter established his apothecary. In time the Carter name would attract national acclaim with its "Little Liver Pills".

Erie beat a path to the shops and stores in West Park Place to buy clothes, groceries, hardware, imported foodstuffs, silverware, paintings, books, real estate, insurance; and to seek the services of lawyers (the 1879 City Directory listed 15 attorneys on North Park Row), doctors, engineers, and dentists. People went there to bank, to buy tickets on the Erie and Pittsburgh Railroad, and possible to school at Erie Commercial College. But above all they went to be entertained.

In 1860 Gray and Farrar had finished off the upper floor of their building as a small theater. It was called Farrar Hall and could seat 1500 people. Many of the theater notables of the period appeared there, including Lauara Keene, Ristori, Edwin Forrest, and Mrs. Scott Siddons. Farrar Hall was closed for extensive renovations in 1872 and when reopened the following year as the Park Opera House, was touted as the largest theater between New York and Chicago. The new facility was designed by New York architect Thomas Jackson somewhat along the plan of Booth's Theater in that city. It hosted attractions that were impressive in their number, in their diversity, and in their evident stylishness. During the 1888-89 season the Park advertised upwards of 100 dramatic and quasi-dramatic offerings. Scattered throughout this legitimate fare were wrestling matches, a wild west show, minstrels, magicians, and vaudeville artists. While it was claimed that every precaution had been taken to guard against fire, the park Opera House did burn twice.

However, in the end it was not flame but the demise of the grand road company productions which put an end to the Park Opera House. It survived as a seedy burlesque theater until 1939.

In a way the decline of the Park Opera House is paralleled in the blight which afflicts West Park Place as a whole. Although the Park Opera House is no more, West Park Place continues to exist albeit with many of its buildings empty and in poor condition. In passing West Park Place by, the 20th century has allowed it to retain many of the qualities of downtown 19th-century Erie.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 2.3

Quadrangle name Erie North, Pa.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

### UMT References

A 

17	575430	4664370
Zone	Easting	Northing

B 

17	575530	4664420
Zone	Easting	Northing

C 

17	575560	4664360
Zone	Easting	Northing

D 

17	575460	4664320
Zone	Easting	Northing

E 

Zone	Easting	Northing

F 

Zone	Easting	Northing

G 

Zone	Easting	Northing

H 

Zone	Easting	Northing

**Verbal boundary description and justification** Starting at a point on the NW corner of State St. and N. Park Row, then SW along northside of N. Park Row to corner with Peach St., then NW along eastside of Peach St. to SE corner with Fifth St. then NE along Southside of Fifth St. to SW corner with State St.; then SE along westside of State St. to starting point.

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

state code county code point.

state code county code

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title John R. Claridge / Heidi Brinig

organization Erie Co. Historical Society

date February 1980

street & number 417 State Street

telephone 814-454-1813

city or town Erie

state Pennsylvania 16501

# 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 Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Ed. Weintraub, Director

title Office of Historic Preservation

date 6/24/80

For HCRS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY - NOMINATION FORM

WEST PARK PLACE, Erie County

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

9

PAGE 1

Miller, John. A Twentieth Century History of Erie County, Pa.  
Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Company, 1909. 2 vols.

Biographical Dictionary and Historical Reference Book of Erie County, Pa.  
Erie: S. B. Nelson, Publisher. 1896.

The Erie Gazette. Various issues, 1857-65.

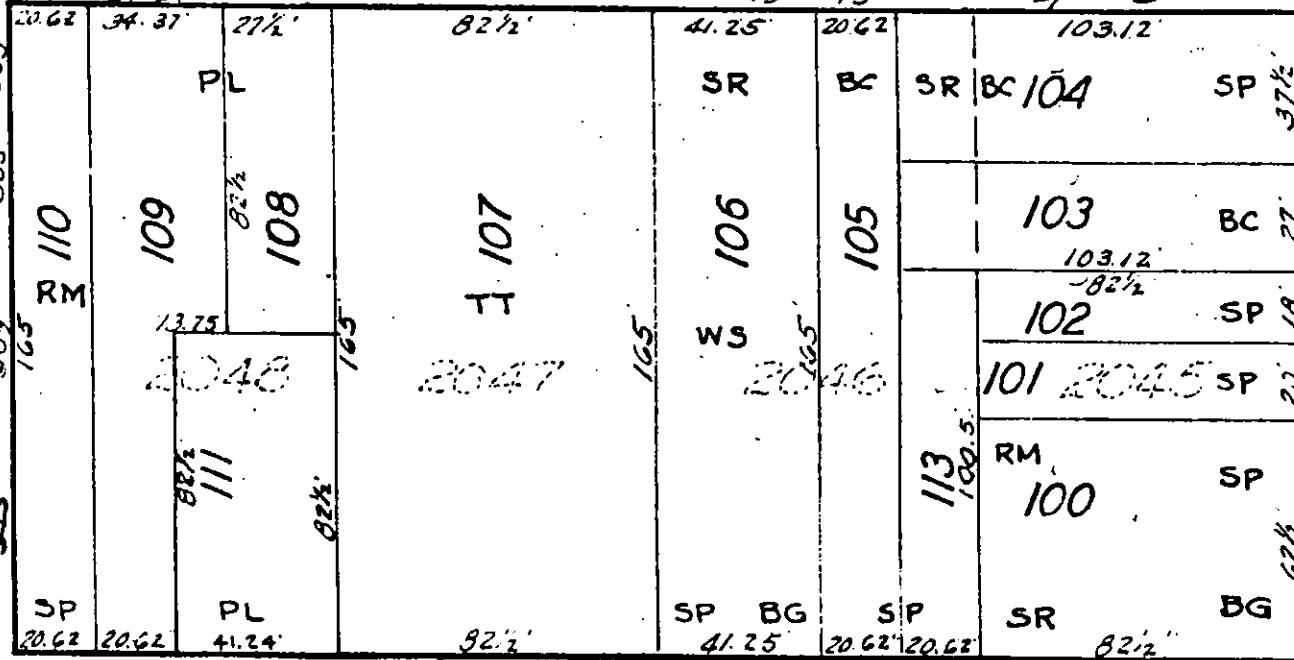
The Erie Observer. Various issues, 1873.

PEACH

60'

513 509 507 503

60'



32

31

29-30

25-28

23-24

22

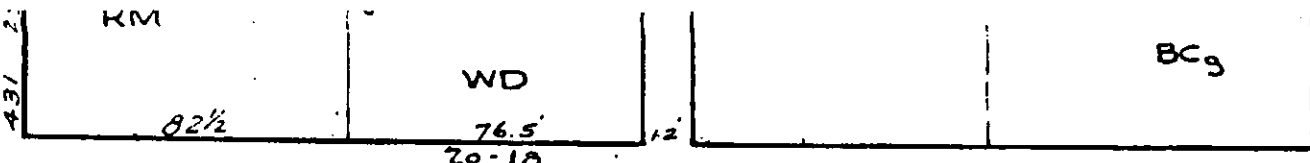
21

18-20

72

NORTH PARK ROW

72



W. FIFTH STREET

60'

60'

62-22

34.37

27 1/2

82 1/2

41.25

20.62

103.12

PL

SR

BC

SR

BC 104

SP

109

108

107

106

105

103

BC

2048

2047

2046

101 2045

111

113

113

RM

100

SP

SP

20.62

PL

41.24

82 1/2

SP

BG

41.25

SP

20.62

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SR

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72

NORTH PARK ROW

72

WEST PARK PLACE  
BRID, PA.

THIS KEYED TO BUILDING  
INVENTORY AND PHOTOS

ST

STATE

100'



WEST PARK PLACE building inventory contd.

<u>Location</u>	<u>Photographs</u>	<u>Common/Historical Name</u>
23-24 North Park Row	# 6	<del>Reston Building</del> Three story combination apt., restaurant, store building. Brick with perma-stone facade Portions date from early 1840s. Windows replaced and interior remodeled to provide 3rd floor of apts. No cornice Owned by Paul Steinbrink, 17 W. Fifth St.
22 North Park Row	# 8, 10	<del>Murphy Building</del> Three story brick building with restaurant on street level. Moulded cornice with heavy brackets. Built 1857 architect John Hill. 2nd & 3rd stories vacant. Owned by Frank J. Merva, 3635 Zuck Rd.
21 North Park Row	# 8, 11, 14	<del>Curtis Building</del> Four story brick building with restaurant on street level. Large eaves, moulded cornice with heavy brackets. Built 1859 architect John Hill. 2nd, 3rd, 4th stories vacant. Owned by Frank J. Merva, 3635 Zuck Rd.
18-19-20 North Park Row # 7, 17 & 512-14-16 State St.		<del>Exchange Building</del> Three story brick building with street level vacant. Cornice removed. Built 1857 architect John Hill. Owned by Warren Bentz, 404 Marine Bank Bldg.

WEST PARK PLACE  
Building Inventory

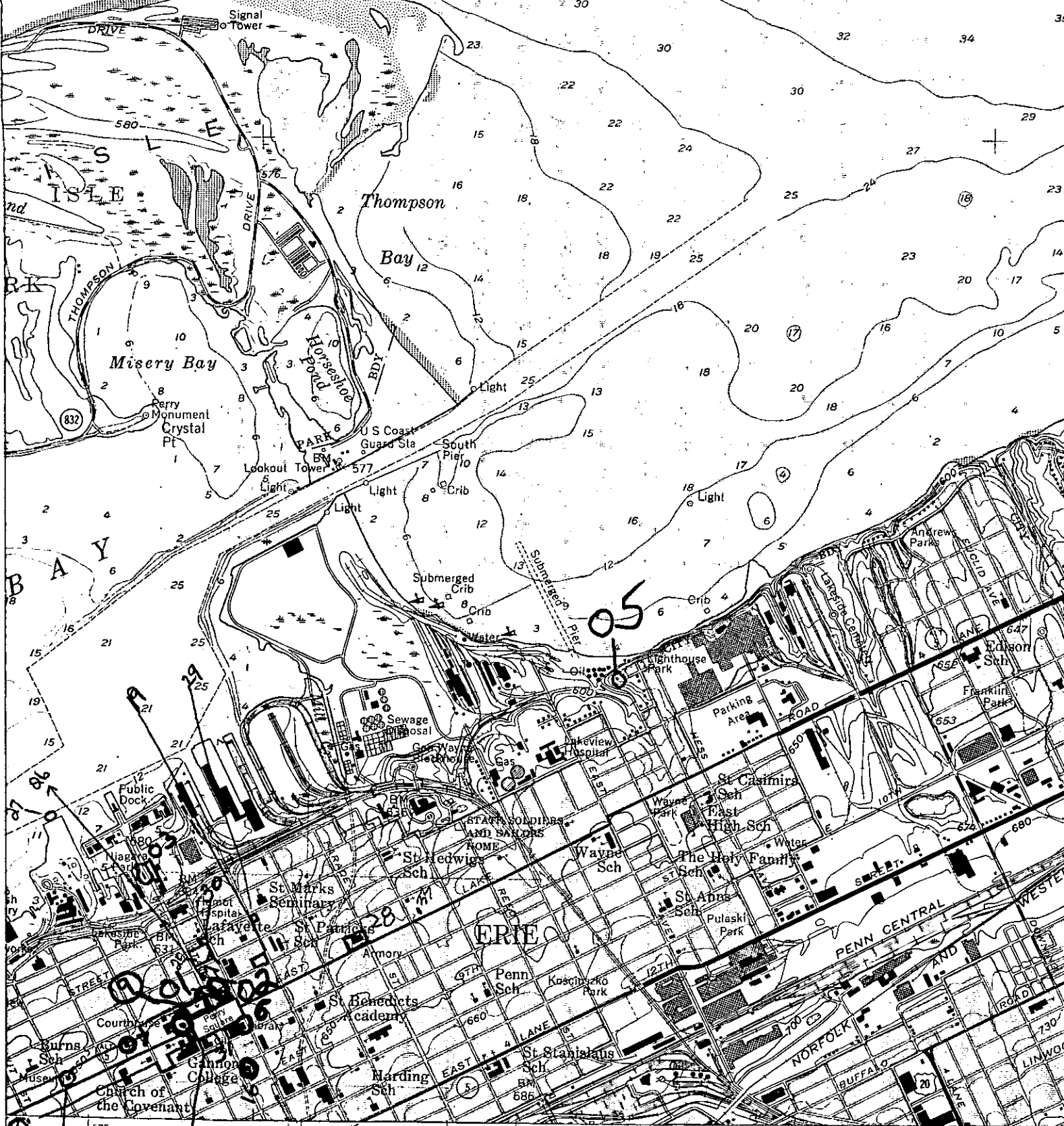
<u>Location</u>	<u>Photographs</u>	<u>Common/Historical Name</u>
32 North Park Row & 513 Peach St.	# 1, 30	<del>Mission Block</del>  Three story brick building with law office on street level. Built in 1860, architect unknown. Windows at 2nd and 3rd stories replaced after 1910. Owned by Steve DiRaimo, 450 E. 6th St., and Joseph P. Flamio, 434 E. 10th St.
31 North Park Row	# 1	<del>Cornell Building</del>  Three story brick building with smooth-faced coursed ashlar finish. Molded cornice with heavy brackets. Built in 1862, architect unknown. Owned by Superior Realty, 5 W. 10th St.
29-30 North Park Row	# 1, 2	<del>Paragon Building</del>  Three story brick building, now vacant. Molded cornice with heavy brackets. Built 1857, architect John Hill. Owned by Superior Realty, 5 W. 10th St.
25-28 North Park Row	# 3, 4	<del>Bus Depot</del>  Two story cement block building with rounded corners, flat roof, and smooth wall finish. Built 1939 on site of Park Opera House, architects Wischmeyer, Arrasmith, & Elswich, Louisville, Ky. Owned by H.H. Clemens, c/o First Nat. Bank of Pa., 940 Park Avenue, Meadville, Pa.

WEST PARK PLACE building inventory contd.

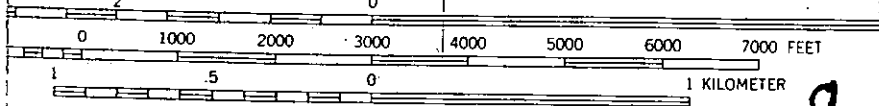
<u>Location</u>	<u>Photographs</u>	<u>Common/ Historical Name</u>
510 State St. & 513 Beach St.	# 20, 30	<del>Shellock's Restaurant</del>  Three story brick building with 2nd and 3rd story vacant. Moulded cornice with heavy brackets. Pilasters extend out from the facade in two steps. Built 1857 architect John Hill. Owned by Thomas A. Dworzanski, 914 E. 27th St.
508 State St.	# 20, 21	<del>Shellock's Restaurant</del>  Three story brick building with 2nd and 3rd stories vacant. Molded cornice with heavy brackets. Pilasters extend out from facade in two steps. Built 1857 architect John Hill. Owned by Thomas A. Dworzanski, 914 E. 27th St.
506 State St.	# 22	<del>Marble Front</del>  Three story brick building with stucco application to resemble marble. Curved pediment roof. Molded cornice with brackets. No eyebrow window heads. Built 1859 architect Samuel Lytle. Owned by Ruth I. Purcell, 314 Craig St.
502-04 State St. & 5 West 5th St.	# 20, 26	<del>Binders Block</del>  Three story brick building with bar on street level at 502 State St. 2nd and 3rd stories vacant. Molded cornice with heavy brackets. Projecting 2nd story bay window. Built 1857 architect John Hill. Owned by Ruth I. Purcell, 314 Craig St.

WEST PARK PLACE building inventory contd.

<u>Location</u>	<u>Photographs</u>	<u>Common/Historical Name</u>
27-29 West 5th St.	# 28	<del>Dispatch Printing &amp; Engneering Co.</del> Warehouse and loading dock, now vacant. Built ca. 1908, architect unknown.
503-07-09 Peach St.	# 29	<del>Mission Block</del> Three story brick apartment building. Plain brick cornice. Windows replaced after 1910. Built 1865, architect unknown. Owned by Steve DiRaimo, 450 E. 6th St., and Joseph P. Flamio, 434 E. 10th St.



SCALE 1:24 000



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET  
NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929  
DEPTH CURVES AND SOUNDINGS IN FEET—DATUM IS LOW WATER 570.5 FEET

9 West Park Plate

