

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Union City Historic District
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number Main St., High St., South St., and Third Avenue not for publication
city, town Union City vicinity
state Pennsylvania code PA county Erie code 049 zip code 16438

3. Classification

Ownership of Property	Category of Property	Number of Resources within Property	
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	Contributing	Noncontributing
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public-local	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<u>96</u>	<u>33</u> buildings
<input type="checkbox"/> public-State	<input type="checkbox"/> site	<u>1</u>	<u> </u> sites
<input type="checkbox"/> public-Federal	<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<u> </u>	<u> </u> structures
	<input type="checkbox"/> object	<u>97</u>	<u>33</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A
Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Dr. Brent D. Glass Brent D. Glass 1-31-90
Signature of certifying official Date

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
- determined not eligible for the National Register.
- removed from the National Register.
- other. (explain:)

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/specialty store
 DOMESTIC/single dwelling
 PROCESSING/manufacturing facility

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/specialty store
 DOMESTIC/single dwelling
 DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling
 PROCESSING/manufacturing facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Late Victorian
 Colonial Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone
 walls Brick
 Weatherboard
 roof Asphalt
 other Asphalt
 Synthetics

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Union City Historic District is an area of mixed buildings - commercial, industrial, and residential - primarily erected between 1865 and 1925. The district contains a wide sampling of late 19th century eclectic and early 20th century revival styles, in a variety of materials of which brick and frame are the most common. The district runs along the principal thoroughfare, Main Street, where the commercial buildings are clustered, and extends to the west to include a residential neighborhood of single family dwellings anchored by High Street, Third Avenue, and South Street. The over-all integrity of the residential portion of the district is good, while that of the commercial section has suffered to some extent through the loss of earlier 19th century buildings and their replacement by non-descript mid-twentieth century structures.

The Union City Historical District includes 128 buildings. Of these seventeen were erected between 1865 and 1879; fifty-eight between 1880 and 1892; forty-one between 1893 and 1925; and twelve since 1925.

The district is bounded on the east by Main Street. Commercial buildings on its east side tend to be concentrated north of the bridge which spans the south branch of French Creek. In the far northeast corner of the district are the office and plant of the Union City Chair Company. To the south of the bridge the east side of Main Street is a mixture of business blocks, institutional buildings such as city hall, former high school, public library, and pentecostal church; as well as three residences. Commercial buildings on the west side of Main Street are found throughout its entire length. There are two open spaces - a landscaped area surrounding the public library and a municipal parking lot along the creek just south of the High Street bridge.

Of the 28 contributing commercial buildings, the majority are 2-3 stories in height, of brick construction, and feature the two-part commercial block configuration so common on small town main streets during the mid to late 19th century. The two-part commercial block was an outgrowth of the shop-house building of an earlier period, and displays a distinct division between the single-story lower zone which was used for public space, and the upper zone which was devoted to more private functions. Generally speaking the facades of the examples along Union City's Main Street are treated in a very simple manner. Little or no applied ornamentation is present. However there are instances such as the 1888

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Hansen Building at 11 South Main, the 1890 Clement Lodge Building at 19 North Main, and the 1884 Borough Building at 13 South Main, where Victorian influences are present. The Hansen Building (now occupied by the Union City Historical Museum) has an elaborate wood cornice supported by large brackets; the Clement Lodge Building has an impressive corbelled brick cornice with the inscription "Clement"; and the third story of the Borough Building features a corbelled arcade of small rounded attic windows. A stone marquee at the cornice reads "City Building 1884."

In other cases such as the 1889 I.O.O.F. Building at 23 North Main with its scalloped cornice of stamped metal with parapet above, and the ca. 1880 building at 39 North Main with its dentiled cornice at the roof line, window eyebrows in decorative stone, and dentiled stringcourse between the first and second stories Victorian influences are even more exotic.

There are two buildings associated with Union City's industrial history which border on the commercial area of the district. These are the offices and main plant of the Union City Chair Company at 18 Market Street. The 1907 office building's entryway is arched with a keystone. The deep-set frieze bears the inscription "The Union City Chair Co." The 1911 plant building which is also constructed of brick, has multiple bays on both front and side containing windows which are double-hung, six-over-six.

The single contributing structure in the historic district is the Main Street Bridge, constructed by the Groton Bridge Co. in 1896. It is of Pratt truss design, and has a span eighty feet long.

There are sixteen non-contributing commercial buildings. Most of these are on the west side of Main Street and have construction dates that fall outside the period of significance for the district. There is one major intrusion which is the fiberglass panel clad "1960" Pennbank building at 24-28 North Main.

The residential portion of the district which lies to the west of the creek, has 68 contributing buildings. Sixty-three of these are 2-2½ story frame buildings, the others of similar size are: two brick, one stucco, and two combined stone and frame.

Fifteen of the houses in the district exhibit mid-nineteenth century architectural influences, primarily Greek Revival and Italianate. The best examples of Greek Revival style are the house at 28 First Avenue, the ca. 1865 Shaffer House at 22 First Avenue, and the former Church Farm homestead at 20 West High Street. The use of Italianate design is evident in the house at 4 South Street, and the ca. 1875 William Boarts residence at 27-29 First Avenue.

The dominant styles in the district are those associated with the late Victorian and early 20th century periods. Among the more popular are Queen Anne which is exemplified in the house at 21 South Street with its standing

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metal seam roof, stylized shingles in the gable ends, decorative window surrounds, and varied clapboard siding. Another Queen Anne building but also exhibiting certain Stick Style elements in its gable ends is located at 20 South Street.

The Shingle Style Mulkie House, ca. 1905, stands at the corner of First Avenue and South Street. It features hipped dormers, and French style shingle roof. The porch columns and foundation are constructed of stone. Next door is a residence of the same age, with Tudor detailing and a hipped roof with dormers in the Tudor Revival Style.

Among the numerous period houses in the district is the ca. 1910 Colonial Revival residence at 27 Third Avenue. It features a large front porch, elaborate pediment-shape dormers, prominent cornice with dentils and brackets, and pilasters supporting the front dormer.

The Westcott House at 27 West High Street, ca. 1900, is also of Colonial Revival design whose large two-story portico incorporates a pediment and entablature of elaborate decoration.

Built at the same time as the more imposing residences in the district are a number of smaller houses which can be classified as "bungalows." Examples of this type are the ca. 1902 Fuller House at 28 Second Avenue, and the ca. 1910 Stroth House at 41 West High Street.

The only institutional building is the brick Neo-Classical First Baptist Church erected in 1923. It has a colossal portico in the Ionic Order with a large parapet and unadorned roof line above.

The residential section of the district contains thirteen non-contributing buildings. Most of these do not qualify by virtue of substantial changes to their materials, primarily the application of aluminum and asphalt siding.

Overall, the non-contributing buildings do not detract greatly from the integrity of the area. They comprise less than one fifth of the total buildings and are widely dispersed. Most of them are well maintained or are in the process of repair. In scale they fit in with the contributing buildings.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Industry
Architecture

Period of Significance

1865 - 1925

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

N/A

Architect/Builder

Various

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Union City Historic District is significant in the areas of industry and architecture for its association with the wood products economy which has sustained the community since 1865. During the latter half of the nineteenth century Union City became a furniture manufacturing center of national reputation. During this century while furniture making still continues to be an important industry, this tradition is being carried on for the most part by new companies which are located outside the historic area of the town. The one exception is the Union City Chair Company which still continues to operate at its original 1882 site. However, further evidence of that earlier "Mill and Mansion age" is reflected in the many frame houses of the district, themselves products of a thriving local industry.

The settlement of what was known as Miles Mills was established in 1800. William Miles had fought in the American Revolution and had been captured by the Iroquois and imprisoned at Quebec. He built a dam on the south branch of French Creek and erected a gristmill and sawmill. Until 1855, Miles Mills remained nothing more than a thin strand of small mills along this waterway. That year in anticipation of the coming of the railroad, town lots were plotted north and east of the creek. The Philadelphia and Erie Railroad entered the town in 1858 shortly before Edwin L. Drake successfully drilled for oil in Titusville. The impact on the young town serving as a rail head for oil was dramatic. In 1860 it had 283 inhabitants and total real property valued at \$98,217. In 1862, the same year that a second rail line, the Atlantic and Great Western, was built through Miles Mills, the town boasted three refineries and a barrel-making industry in addition to its saw and planing mills. Caught up in a booming oil economy, the exuberant citizens of Miles Mills incorporated themselves as the Borough of Union Mills in 1865. The diversion of the oil freight business to Corry after 1862 gradually extinguished the oil refinery business. What remained proved important for the town's future. Over time, barrel-making for oil bequeathed a wood products industry that has marked the town's economy to the present day.

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By 1870, the town's population had risen to 1,500, and the sawmills which had been shut down as part of the scramble for oil riches, were back in business. Six saw mills and planing mills including those of Clark, and Hunter and Wade, appear in the 1870 census. Barrels continued to be a major wood product and their importance increased in 1870 with the founding of Wood and Johnson's factory. It employed 70 workers and produced an annual inventory valued at \$165,000. The company advertised itself as the largest manufacturer of oil barrels in the country. Sensing a new start the town changed its name to Union City in 1871.

The next decade revealed only modest changes in the town's socio-economic profile. Part of the slowdown was no doubt due to a disastrous fire which consumed most of the business establishments along both sides of Main Street south of the creek in 1879. But in the course of a few years what had been destroyed was replaced, and the new buildings were mostly of brick and in nearly every instance a great improvement over what had been there before. Typical was the town hall erected in 1884, a handsome brick building with accommodations for the town clerk and other officers, as well as council meetings and public gatherings. Co-incident with all this activity was the transfer of the Union City Chair Co. from Jamestown, N.Y. in 1882. It signaled the beginning of Union City as an important center for furniture making in Pennsylvania.

The 1880's marked a decade of considerable residential construction. Whereas the owners of the town's many sawmills had tended to build their residences nearby, the constant threat of fire convinced the managers of the new furniture plants to erect their homes in the developing neighborhoods further removed. Among those who chose to build fine homes on higher ground west of the creek were John D. Wescott at 27 West High Street, Louis P. Hansen at 4 South Street, and Marvin Cooper at 30 Second Avenue.

Other prominent citizens who moved into this part of town during the same years were: merchant W.F. Conway at 27 Second Avenue, merchant James Smiley at 48 West High Street, banker R. Fuller at 28 Second Avenue, and physician E.B. Smith at 32 First Avenue. By 1900 a good percentage of the lots along West High Street and South Street and the avenues that connected them were filled.

Despite two crises, one local and one national, Union City managed to grow and prosper during the 1890's.

In 1892 following two torrential rainstorms the south branch of French Creek overflowed its banks and flooded the center of the town. Several businesses along Main Street were destroyed, leading the Union City Times to declare the disaster "a serious blow to our thriving town" The flood provoked a complete reassessment of the use of the creek for waterpower, and at the same time sparked interest in public improvements in general. While the Main Street Bridge survived the flood, it was severely weakened, and a contra

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for its replacement was awarded in 1896. A campaign to pave Main Street was launched the following year and this was accomplished in 1899. In the meantime sewers had been laid along both Main and Crooked Streets.

Union City's inelastic wood products economy helped the town to weather the crippling depression of 1892. Local firms successfully bucked the financial tide. Blanchard and Hansen, a firm which combined casket making with furniture production, added a third floor to its Main Street plant. Increased orders at Novelty Wood Works required that company to put on a night shift. In 1897 the Union City Times reported that the real estate market had revived and that builders were advertising lots and moderately priced Queen Anne residential designs in large new subdivisions. Substantial homes began to go up again in the established neighborhoods as well, among them Dr. A.G. Sherwood's Colonial Revival residence at 25 West High Street, and Assemblyman John Mulkie's handsome Shingle Style mansion at First Avenue and South Street.

By the early 20th century Union City's "Mill and Mansion" era had pretty well ended. While eight houses would still be built in the West High Street/South Street district, they would be of a smaller scale and far less ornate than what was already there. This is also true of those homes erected beyond Third Avenue. While the area still remained essentially a neighborhood of single family dwellings, it could no longer claim to be the town's "A No. 1 place-to-live."

Among the places of employment, things had changed too. The wood products industry with several new firms was still very important, but with the exception of the Union City Chair Co. it was no longer centered on Main Street and the creek. That company is the only one in existence that can trace its lineage directly to the 19th century and the "Mill and Mansion" period.

The Union City Historic District is architecturally significant as a locally outstanding concentration of commercial and residential architecture. The commercial buildings in the historic district represent the evolution of commercial architecture in Union City from 1865 to 1925, especially since there are few commercial buildings found elsewhere in the municipality. The residential buildings in the historic district form the largest and most intact concentration of high style domestic architecture constructed during the later nineteenth to early twentieth centuries in Union City. Most other residential buildings erected between 1865 and 1925 in Union City were plain, vernacular buildings. A relatively small number of houses influenced by high styles were scattered among these vernacular residences. Thus there is no other large grouping of high style homes from this period in Union City. Also, those homes outside the historic district that show late nineteenth and early twentieth century high style influences generally have poorer integrity than those residences located inside the district.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Erie County Directory 1911, (Erie: Atkinson Erie Directory Co.), 566-585.

Atlas of Erie County, Pennsylvania (New York: Beers, Ellis & Soule, 1865), 8.

Gazetteer and Business Directory for Erie County, Pennsylvania for 1873-74 (Syracuse: Hamilton Child), 106-108, 219-229, 297-334.

New Historical Atlas of Erie County, Pennsylvania (Philadelphia: Everts, Ensign & Everts, 1876), 114-115, 126.

John Miller, A Twentieth Century History of Erie County, Pennsylvania (Chicago: The Lewis Publishing Co., 1909), Vol. I, 531-540.

See continuation sheet

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
- Specify repository:
Union City Historical Museum

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 33.8

UTM References

A 17 | 595960 | 4638875
 Zone Easting Northing

C 17 | 595265 | 4638840

B 17 | 595675 | 4638690
 Zone Easting Northing

D 17 | 595340 | 4639025

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Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at the southwest corner of the intersection of West High Street and North Main Street, then proceeding south seventy feet along North Main Street; then proceeding east crossing North Main Street and continuing along the north edge of the lot at 41 North Main Street; then

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries enclose properties contributing to the historical and architectural significance of the Union City Historic District. At the northeast corner is the office and main plant building of the Union City Chair Company, which constitutes the industrial significance of the district. The rear property lines of

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title John R. Claridge / William Sisson
 organization Erie County Historical Society / PHNC
 street & number 417 State Street / Box 1026
 city or town Erie / Harrisburg

date August 11, 1989
 telephone (814) 454-1813 / (717) 755-1111
 state PA zip code 16501

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Nelson's Biographical Dictionary and Historical Reference Book of Erie County, Pennsylvania (Erie: S.B. Nelson, 1896, rpt. 1988), Vol. I, 355-358.

Union City. Map. Morrisville, Pa.: Fowler, James & Moyer, 1895.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. Tenth Census of the United States. Washington, D.C., 1880.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. Census of Manufacturers, Products of Industry. Washington, D.C., 1870.

U.S. Bureau of the Census. Census of Manufacturers, Products of Industry. Washington, D.C., 1880.

Union City Borough. Minutes of Borough Council. June 30, July 5, September 1, 1892, February 28, 1896.

Union City Times, various issues, 1892-1897.

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Boundary Description (continued)

proceeding south along the rear edges of lots at 27-37 North Main Street and crossing Market Street to the south edge of Market Street; then proceeding southeast 520 feet along Market Street; then proceeding southwest fifty-five feet; then proceeding 500 feet northwest, then sixty-five feet southeast, then ten feet northwest to the east corner of the lot at 5-9 North Main Street; then proceeding southwest along the rear edge of the lot at 5-9 North Main Street, then proceeding northwest along the southwest edge of the lot at 5-9 North Main Street to the southeast edge of Main Street; then proceeding southwest along Main Street to the north corner of the lot at 11 South Main Street, then southeast along the northeast edge of the lot at 11 South Main Street; then southwest along the rear edge of the lot at 11 South Main Street; then proceeding southeast, southwest and northwest along the rear end of the lot at 13 South Main Street; then proceeding southwest along the rear edges of the lots at 17-23 South Main Street and crossing Bank Street to the southeast edge of Bank Street; then proceeding southeast along Bank Street to the rear edge of the lot at 29 South Main Street; then proceeding south along said edge to the northwest side of Stranahan Street; then northwest along Stranahan Street to a point opposite the northwest edge of Miles Street; then southwest crossing Stranahan Street and proceeding along the northwest edge of Miles Street to the south corner of the lot at 8 Miles Street; then northwest along the southwest edge of the lot at 8 Miles Street; then southwest and northwest along the southeast and southwest edges of the lot at 55 South Main Street; then crossing South Main Street and proceeding along the southwest edge of the lot immediately southwest of 58 South Main Street; then proceeding northeast along the rear edges of the lots from the lot due southwest of 58 South Main Street to the lot at 54 South Main Street; then proceeding west along the rear property lines of the lots at 10-18 South Street; then proceeding north along the east side of Second Avenue to a point opposite the rear edge of the lot at 20 South Street; then proceeding west again crossing Second Avenue and moving along the rear edges of the lots at 20-36 South Street; then proceeding north along the west edge of the lot at 36 South Street and crossing South Street to its north edge; then proceeding west along South Street to the southwest corner of the lot at 45 South Street; then proceeding north and east along the west and north edges of the lot at 45 South Street; then north and east along the west and north edges of the lot at 30 Third Avenue crossing Third Avenue to the east edge of Third Avenue; then proceeding north along Third Avenue to the northwest corner of the lot at 51 West High Street; then proceeding along the rear edges of the lots at 51-25 West High Street; then south along the eastern edge of 25 West High Street crossing West High Street to the southwest corner of West High Street and First Avenue; then east crossing First Avenue and proceeding east along the southern edge of West High Street to the point of beginning.

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Boundary Justification (continued)

commercial properties on the east side of Main Street form the main eastern boundary of the district. Boundaries for the residential portion of the district run along the rear property lines on the north side of West High Street, on the west side of Third Avenue, and the south side of South Street.

The boundaries exclude resources that do not contribute to the district's historical and architectural significance. At the north, the Penn Central Railroad tracks, which extend indefinitely beyond the district to the east, are excluded. Poorly maintained and smaller houses behind Main Street's commercial properties on the east, are outside the district. Just beyond the district on the south is a large collection of 20th century industrial buildings. Residential buildings to the west of Third Avenue and north of West High Street, are for the most part of 20th century origin, and can be classified as middle class vernacular houses.

UNION CITY
 HISTORIC DISTRICT
 FAIR HAVEN
 ZONE 17
 A 595 960 4638875
 B 595 675 4638690
 C 595 265 4638840
 D 595 340 4639025

