

RESULTS OF LISTING IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES

Eligibility for Federal tax provision: If a property is listed in the National Register, certain Federal tax provisions may apply. The Tax Reform Act of 1986 revises the historic preservation tax incentives authorized by Congress in the Tax Reform Act of 1976, the Revenue Act of 1978, the Tax Treatment Extension of 1980, the Economic Recovery Tax Act of 1981, and Tax Reform Act of 1984, and as of January 1, 1987, provides for a 20 percent investment tax credit with a full adjustment to basis for rehabilitating historic commercial, industrial, and rental residential buildings. The former 15 percent and 20 percent Investment Tax Credits (ITCs) for rehabilitations of older commercial buildings are combined into a single 10 percent ITC for commercial or industrial buildings built before 1936. The Tax Treatment Extension Act of 1980 provides Federal tax deductions for charitable contributions for conservation purposes of partial interests in historically important land areas or structures. Whether these provisions are advantageous to a property owner is dependent upon the particular circumstances of the property and the owner. Because tax aspects outlined above are complex, individuals should consult legal counsel or the appropriate local Internal Revenue Service office for assistance in determining the tax consequences of the above provisions. For further information on certification requirements, please refer to 36 CFR 67.

Consideration in planning for Federal, federally licensed, and federally assisted project: Section 106 of the National Preservation Act of 1966 requires that Federal agencies allow for the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to have an opportunity to comment on all projects affecting historic properties listed in the National Register. For further information, please refer to 36 CFR 800.

Consideration in issuing a surface coal mining permit: In accordance with the Surface Coal Mining and Control Act of 1977, there must be consideration of historic values in the decision to issue a surface coal mining permit where coal is located. For further information, please refer to 30 CFR 700 et seq.

Qualification for Federal grants for historic preservation when funds are available: Presently, funding is unavailable.

Please note that listing in the National Register does not mean that limitations will be placed on the properties by the Federal government. Public visitation rights are not required of owners. The Federal government will not attach restrictive covenants to the properties or seek to acquire them.

RIGHTS OF OWNERS TO COMMENT AND/OR TO OBJECT TO LISTING IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

Owners of private properties nominated to the National Register have an opportunity to concur with or object to listing in accord with the National Historic Preservation Act and 36 CFR 60. Any owner or partial owner of private property who chooses to object to listing may submit to the State Historic Preservation Officer a notarized statement certifying that the party is the sole or partial owner of the private property and objects to the listing. Each owner or partial owner of private property has one vote regardless of the portion of the property that the party owns. If a majority of private property owners object, a property will not be listed. However, the State Historic Preservation Officer shall submit the nomination to the Keeper of the National Register of Historic Places for a determination of eligibility of the property for listing in the National Register. If the property is then determined eligible for listing, although not formally listed, Federal agencies will be required to allow for the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation to have an opportunity to comment before the agency may fund, license, or assist a project which will affect the property. If you choose to object to the listing of your property, the notarized objection must be submitted to Brent D. Glass, State Historic Preservation Officer, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, P. O. Box 1026, Pennsylvania, 17108-1026, by March 10, 1992.

If you wish to comment on the nomination of the property to the National Register, please send your comments to the State Historic Preservation Office before the Pennsylvania Historic Preservation Board considers this nomination on March 10, 1992. A copy of the nomination and information on the National Register and the Federal tax provisions are available from the above address upon request.

National Register of Historic Places
Towanda Historic District

The Towanda Historic District contains the commercial and primary residential neighborhoods of Towanda, which is the County seat of Bradford County. The town was the most important commercial center in the County throughout the 19th Century, and contains the longtime homes of nationally significant political figures David Wilmot and Ulysses Mercur. Towanda's collection of buildings represents the broadest selection of building types and styles within the county: the earliest date from the second decade of the 19th Century, and the resources run through the era of the Great Depression. Towanda's architecture reflects the town's status as a center of government and manufacturing.

Founded by William Means, who settled on the site around 1786, Towanda was located on the wagon road which ran north to Tioga (later Athens) and on the North Branch of the Susquehanna River, which provided access to markets both downstream and upstream. Means himself was a boatman by trade; he soon added a distillery, tavern and ferry to his little empire. When Bradford County was organized in 1812, Means was influential in locating the county seat in Meansville, as the town was then known; court was held in his tavern until the courthouse was finished in 1816. By that year, five taverns were licensed in the village, several merchants were trading there, a tannery had been built, and a number of grist mills and sawmills were operating in the vicinity. By 1825, the population was 225, and in 1828, the Borough of Towanda was incorporated.

In 1832, Towanda possessed 63 houses and more than 30 tradesmen. Two doctors and seven lawyers served the needs of the town, which had become the primary market and service center for the surrounding farms. A bridge across the river was completed that year, and the Towanda Academy at [314 State Street](#) was founded in 1835. Among its teachers were Henry Hoyt, late Pennsylvania Governor, and O. H. Platt, who was elected to the U.S. Senate from Connecticut. Stephen Foster, the beloved songwriter, studied at the Academy in the winter and spring terms of 1840.

The extension of the North Branch of the Pennsylvania Canal to the New York line was begun in 1836. Lack of funds caused suspension of work in the mid-1840's but the channel was finally completed in 1854, connecting Towanda with the New York State canal system and improving access to markets for Towanda goods. Commercial and industrial growth mushroomed; from a population of approximately 300 in 1830, the town had grown to 912 in 1840, and increased slightly to 1,175 in 1850. In 1847, a disastrous fire consumed the Courthouse and two business blocks, but the lost buildings were quickly replaced. The construction of the 17 mile Barclay Railroad in 1854 supplied the town with unlimited coal, and the pace of industrial development quickened. In 1858, local interest purchased the canal from the state and began work on the Pennsylvania and New York Railroad. Population had increased by about a third in 1860, reaching 1,622.

The Pennsylvania and New York track reached Waverly, New York, in November 1867, and completed the connection with Wilkes-Barre in September 1869. Manufacturing operations were expanded or founded to utilize this easy access to distant markets. By 1870, population increased by half to 2,696. The Sullivan and Erie Railroad which served the Sullivan County coal fields, was partially opened in 1871, and heavy manufacturing and ironworking operations added to the town's industrial strength. Population leapt again to 3,814 in 1880. Coal gave way to lumbering in the vicinity, but new factories were still springing up, increasing population to 4,169 in 1890. In 1900, Towanda's population peaked at 4,663; by 1910 it had fallen to 4,281, then held steady through the onset of the Great Depression. Manufacturing was in a gradual decline as well. Elmira and Binghamton to the north, with better east-west transportation links, became the economic magnets within the region. Sayre, with its railroad shops, had some 600 more inhabitants than Towanda by 1900, and by 1920 almost doubled Towanda's population. By 1920, Athens had also surpassed it.

National Register of Historic Places
Towanda Historic District

Founder William Means was responsible for settling his village off on a commercial course. Means had connections with Wilkes-Barre merchants from his boating enterprises, particularly with Matthias Hollenback. The fine Federal house at [110 Bridge Street](#) which was built in 1816 by Peter Egner of Northumberland (builder of the first courthouse) is representative of Means' days; Spalding operated a store and tavern in the building still standing at 1 York Avenue, which was built in 1812. Joseph Montanye, who became the dean of Towanda merchants, was in business on his own by 1826. His general merchandise store building still standing at 317 Main was one of the first brick buildings in Towanda, replacing a structure burned in the 1847 fire. Montanye's house stands at 20 Main Street. C.S. Russell, was in business by 1826, selling hardware, and was later a partner in the large Coddling and Russell firm. Russell's house stands at 512 Third Street.

The Borough's first bank was established in 1834, located at 209-211 Main Street. Joseph Kingsbury, bookseller, was established in 1837; his house is at 24 Main Street. Colonel John Means, grandson of the founder, lived in the Means' house and was the "Jacob Astor" of Towanda, having inherited much of the land in the downtown. He was also contractor for the North Branch Canal and later the Williamsport and Elmira Railroad. Means was a partner in the Means Rockwell & Co. Foundry, director of Eureka Mower, and manager and president of the Towanda Iron nailworks. He also was a builder/developer of downtown property; in 1885, he moved the Means' house to its present location at 100 Bridge Street. Another notable commercial figure of the 1840's was Eleazar Fox, grandson of Rudolph Fox, Bradford County's first settler. Fox formed a partnership first with Joseph Montanye, then with Mahlon Mercur; by 1876, he was president of the Citizens National Bank. Fox's house is at 15 York Avenue.

Mahlon Mercur was a key figure in Towanda's commercial development. Born in the town, he attended the Academy and built the first planning mill. Mercur masterminded the Pennsylvania and New York Railroad, which laid its track on the towpath of the canal. The railroad was responsible for the continued commercial growth of the town, succeeding the canal in connecting Towanda with national markets. Mercur was also a developer of downtown real estate and ran his own bank. Mahlon Mercur built one of the significant houses in the district at 217 Chestnut around 1857. Later, Mercur was president of the Sullivan and Erie Railroad.

Lawyer Edward Overton, who founded the Barclay Railroad and owned the coal deposits which the railroad exploited, was another key figure in commercial growth. His house is at 19 Main Street; the house next door, which was built around 1858 for son-in-law James Macfarlane [21 Main St.](#), is one of the district's notable houses. Macfarlane was a lawyer who was also trained as an engineer. He managed the Barclay mines and wrote a book [Coal Fields of America](#), published in 1873, that was a standard text on the subject; Macfarlane was also a coal mining consultant who worked throughout the east. Attorney David Cash was also involved in the Barclay coal lands; his mansion at [302 Third St.](#) 1845, is one of the district's architectural jewels.

J.O. Frost at 10 N. Main St. started his furniture store in 1865; by 1870 it had grown into a furniture factory which soon became one of the town's biggest employers. Humphrey Bros. and Tracy, shoe and boot manufacturers, began operations in 1871. James Humphrey's house is at 302 Second St., Charles Tracy's at [101 York Avenue](#). The business district boasted a number of hotels. Only the American at 1 Bridge St. (c.1865), currently an apartment house, is extant. Prominent merchants connected to surviving buildings included R.M. Welles, dealer in agricultural implements (house, 227 Poplar) druggist H.C. Porter (house 361 York Avenue, store 323 Main) and butcher George Neal (house 105 York Ave.) Elijah Parsons (house [22 William St.](#)) and his son E. Ashmun house [304 York Ave.](#), owned and edited the

Bradford Argus newspaper, while O. D. Goodenough (house 1 Mix St) edited the Towanda Business Item.

The major new industry begun in the 1880's was the James H. Hawes toy factory, located just north of the district in a neighborhood called Toytown. The Hawes firm became one of the country's largest; William Hawes, James' son and successor, lived in the house at [363 York Ave](#). A new bank, the Citizens National (founded 1876) built a new building at [428 Main Street](#) in 1886 designed by architects Pierce and Dockstader of Elmira. The Hale Opera House of 1886 ([601 Main St.](#)) the Episcopal Church at [1 Main Street](#) (c.1889) and the charming town library of 1897 ([104 Main St.](#)) expressed the civic pride of the town, which reached its peak population in 1900.

Carl V.S. Patterson, who invented the fluorescent X-ray screen, provided a late burst of industrial development with his Patterson Screen Co. Patterson lived in the house at 9 Huston St., and his partner Frederic Reuter lived at 309 York Ave. Patterson Screen was the forerunner of the large DuPont and GTE factories, which account for much of the town's current employment.

A large number of significant political figures are associated with the Towanda District. John LaPorte, son of an Azilum Frenchman, was elected to the U.S. Congress in 1833, and was also a substantial business figure (LaPorte and Mason Bank, 209-11 Main St). David Wilmot, Senator and Congressman, moved to Towanda in 1834 and lived there until his death in 1868. Serving in the House from 1845-1851, he was the author of the Wilmot Proviso, which was intended to limit the expansion of slavery. A foe of James Buchanan and a famous orator, Wilmot was a founder of the Republican Party in Pennsylvania and a major figure in its national councils. He was Judge of the 18th District and was defeated by William Packer in a bid for governor in 1857. Elected to the Senate in 1861, he resigned in 1863 due to ill health; Wilmot served as Judge of the U.S. Court of Claims until his death. He lived at [227 Poplar](#) from 1850 until 1867, when he moved to 207 York Avenue.

Ulysses Mercur, David Wilmot's law partner and brother of Mahlon Mercur, was Towanda's other nationally significant political figure. Born in Towanda in 1818, he read law with Edward Overton. Where Wilmot was known for his native oratorical skill and expansive personality, Mercur was noted for his diligent study of technical matters within the law and a rigidly conservative personality. Like Wilmot, he was a founding Republican; elected to the U.S. House in 1864, he served three terms. His primary contribution in Washington was sponsorship of the tariff law exempting coffee and tea, making both more affordable for the working class. Mercur joined the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in 1872 and became its Chief Justice in 1883. As a justice, he was considered rigid and old fashioned, unwilling to alter the precepts which he learned in his youth. Ulysses Mercur lived at 203 Third St. from 1851 until his death in 1887.

Other significant politicians include William Elwell, who arrived in 1833, was a State Representative in 1841-42 and lived at 106 River St., from 1854 to 1863. He became President Judge of the Columbia District in 1863 and moved then to Bloomsburg. Paul Dudley Morrow, whose house is at 512 Third St., was a Judge in the Court of Claims and in 1874 President Judge of the Bradford District. Edward Overton Jr. was elected to Congress in 1877; his house is at [305 York Ave](#). Joseph Powell was elected to the Congress in 1874, and lived at 215 York Ave. William T. Davies was first a State Senator, then Pennsylvania Lieutenant Governor from 1887-91; his house is at 201 Second St. James Coddington (house at 213 Pine St.) was elected to Congress in 1897. Finally, George Kipp ([302 Third St.](#)) was elected to the House of Representatives in 1907 and in 1911, dying in office during his second term.

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The collection of architecture in the Towanda District is by far the largest and most varied in Bradford County. In the area of Greek Revival, it is rivaled only by Athens in quality, although Athens has many fewer examples. The Gothic Revival buildings constitute one of the best collections in north-central Pennsylvania. In the styles of the Victorian era, Troy and, to a lesser extent, Canton have examples of similar quality, but fall short in quantity. The Towanda business district contains an unparalleled collection of post Civil War buildings in the County. Again, Canton and Troy possess valuable small collections of such buildings; such large examples as the [Hale Opera House](#) and the [Courthouse](#) are without peer in the County.

A number of builders and architects are associated with buildings located in the district. Peter Egner built the first courthouse and the still extant Means house in 1816. James K. Vaughn was the architect of [304 York Avenue](#), and James Fausey built [308 York Avenue](#), both in the late 1860's. The architectural firm of Fleming & Hollon moved their office from Philadelphia to Towanda at about that time. They designed a school and a bank in Towanda, both since razed and a mansion for H.E. Packer at Jim Thorpe. J.E. Fleming lived at 516 Second Street. H.L. Lamoreaux designed the house at 201 Second Street in the 1870's; while S.W. Little built [311 York](#) and William Kingsley built 305 Second during that decade. The architects Pierce and Dockstader of Elmira designed the [Citizens National Bank](#) in 1888 and a number of houses on York Avenue; Contractor J.H. Webb was associated with the Pierce building projects in the 1890's. The local builders Codding and Hale erected the [Hale Opera House](#), (c 1886.) George Decker built his own house at [118 York](#) (c 1897,) and others, while both Tomas Bradley and N. W. King built several extent houses in the north end of the district in the 1890's. Well-known Cleveland, Ohio, architects Israel Lehman and Theodore Schmitt designed the [County Courthouse](#) (National Register, 1986 in 1896, while W.B. Camp designed several extant houses in the 1890's. The firm of Darmonds, Ashmead and Bickley designed the Patterson House in 1918, and Patrick Frawley and a Mr. Vargeson were builders of the early twentieth century whose houses are extant.

In the area of Politics/Government, Towanda produced a large group of significant men which many small cities couldn't match. Senator and Congressman David Wilmot is a figure of national importance as is Ulysses Mercur as Pennsylvania Supreme Court Chief Justice and Congressman. Figures of state significance are James H. Codding, John LaPorte, Edward Overton, Jr., Joseph Powell and George Kipp, all members of Congress, and William T. Davies, Lieutenant Governor of Pennsylvania. More subtly, some of these men figured in the foundation of the national and state Republican Party, which dominated state and national politics for fifty years after the Civil War.

Towanda was the commercial hub of Bradford County for most of the 19th century, dominating the manufacturing realms and organizing the railroads which connected Bradford County with the outside world. Athens, though older than Towanda, took a peripheral economic role until the last years of the century. Its large cast-iron bridgeworks and smaller furniture factory provided most of its jobs. Athens' first bank wasn't organized until 1865, and its economic growth was dependent on the Pennsylvania and New York Railroad. Sayre was laid out in 1871, at the junction of the Pennsylvania and New York, the southern Central Railroad and the Geneva and Sayre Railroad. It was a pure railroad town, named after Robert Sayre, the railroad's president. A roundhouse (1873) and large railroad repair shop (1880) put the town on the map. It was incorporated in 1891, and was the largest town in the County by 1900. It rapidly eclipsed Towanda in economic growth although the courthouse and the established manufacturing sector kept Towanda thriving through the onset of the depression.

National Register of Historic Places
Towanda Historic District

Bradford County Historical Society, The Settler, Volume 13 Number 3, 1975; Volume 22 Number 2, 1984; Volume 26 Number 1, 1988; Volume 26 Number 2, 1988, Towanda PA.

Bradford County Historical Museum, clipping files

Craft, History of Bradford County PA, Philadelphia 1878, L.H. Everts and Co.

Geiger, J.V. Reminiscences of Towanda Borough; An Imaginary Walk Through Town As It appeared 60-65 Years Ago (c.1838); Unpublished Manuscript, 1903, Bradford County Historical Museum.

Haines, E.B. Historical Sketch of Towanda and Business Review, Williamsport, PA, 1873, Gazette and Bullet Printing House.

Heverly, C.F., History of the Towandas, Towanda, PA 1886, Reporter Journal Printing Co.

Malone, Dumas, editor, Dictionary of American Biography, Volume 12, New York 1933, Charles Scribners Sons, p.549 (Ulysses Mercur).

Malone, Dumas, editor, Dictionary of American Biography, Volume 20, New York 1933, Charles Scribners Sons, p.317 (David Wilmot)

MAPS

Nuna, Philip and McCarthy, D., Map of the Borough of Towanda, Bradford County, PA, 1854, Published by Philip Noonan

Lake, Ames and Davidson, Atlas of Bradford County, 1858, Place of publication and publisher unknown.

Beers, F. W., Sandford, George P. and others, Atlas of Bradford County PA, New York 1869, Published by Beers, Ellis and Soule.

BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Begin at a point on the curb at the south west corner of 601 Main Street; proceed approximately 250 feet east to a point on the western curb of River Street; proceed north approximately 1150 feet to the south curb of Park Street; proceed west approximately 25 feet to a point opposite the east line of Borough Building; proceed approximately 120 feet north to north line of Borough Building; proceed approximately 37 feet west to west line of Borough Building; proceed approximately 120 feet south to south curb of Park Street; proceed west approximately 250 feet to west curb of Main Street; proceed north approximately 180 feet to a point opposite the south line of 213 Main Street; proceed east approximately 200 feet to curb of unnamed alley; proceed north approximately 200 feet to north curb of State Street; proceed east north east approximately 220 feet to west curb of River Street; proceed north approximately 1480 feet to south curb of Chestnut Street; proceed west approximately 280 feet to west curb of William Street; proceed north approximately 450 feet to a point opposite the south line of Riverside Cemetery; proceed east approximately 300 feet to the east line of Riverside Cemetery; proceed north approximately 1400 feet to south curb of Locust Avenue; proceed west south west approximately 260 feet to west curb of William Street; proceed north north west approximately 340 feet to north line of 307 William Street; proceed west south west approximately 88 feet to the west line of 307 William Street; proceed south south east approximately 40 feet to north line of 15 Locust Street; proceed west south west approximately 100 feet to west line of 15 Locust Street; proceed south south east approximately 290 feet to south curb of Locust Avenue; proceed west south west approximately 220 feet to point opposite east line of 25 Locust Avenue ; proceed north north west approximately 250 feet to north line of 25 Locust Avenue; proceed west south west approximately 80 feet to east curb of Cherry Street; proceed south south east approximately 240 feet to south curb of Locust Avenue; proceed west south west approximately 440 feet to west curb of York Avenue; proceed north north west approximately 160 feet to point opposite south line of 312 York Avenue; proceed east north east approximately 220 feet to east line of 312 York Avenue; proceed north north west approximately 470 feet to south curb of unnamed alley; proceed west south west approximately 210 feet to west curb of York Avenue; proceed north north west approximately 1160 feet to north line of 375 York Avenue; proceed west south west approximately 210 feet to west line of 375 York Avenue; proceed south south east approximately 530 feet to north curb of Oak Street; proceed east north east approximately 60 feet to point opposite rear line of 361 York Avenue; proceed south south east approximately 980 feet to south curb of Ann Street; proceed west south west approximately 100 feet to the west line of 311 York Avenue; proceed south south east approximately 1020 feet to north line of 207 York Avenue; proceed west south west approximately 390 feet to east curb of Watt Street; proceed south south east approximately 280 feet to south curb of Huston Street; proceed west south west approximately 150 feet to east line of 22 Huston Street; proceed north north west approximately 190 feet to north line of 22 Huston Street; proceed west south west approximately 70 feet to east line of 24 Huston Street; proceed west north west approximately 100 feet to north line of 24 Huston Street; proceed west south west approximately 120 feet to east curb of Fourth Street; proceed south south east approximately 900 feet to south line of 217 Chestnut Street; proceed east north east approximately 260 feet to east line of 209 Chestnut Street; proceed east approximately 380 feet to east line of 13 North Third Street; proceed south approximately 20 feet; to the south line of 107 Chestnut Street; proceed east approximately 75 feet to the east line of 107 Chestnut Street; proceed south east approximately 25 feet to the south line of 105 Chestnut Street; proceed east approximately 200 feet to the west line of 7 York Avenue; proceed south south east approximately 137 feet to the north curb of Plank Road; proceed east south east approximately 262 feet to the east curb of Main Street; proceed south approximately 220 feet to point opposite south curb of Lombard Street; proceed west approximately 7800 feet to east curb of Third Street; proceed south approximately 150 feet to south line of Catholic Church; proceed east approximately 160 feet to east line of unnamed alley; proceed south approximately 360 feet to

south curb of Maple Street; proceed east approximately 70 feet to west line of 102 Second Street; proceed south approximately 160 feet to south line of 104 Second Street; proceed east approximately 60 feet to west line of 108 Second Street; proceed south approximately 260 feet to south curb of State Street; proceed west south west approximately 200 feet to west curb of Third Street; proceed north approximately 390 feet to north line of 106 Third Street; proceed west approximately 370 feet to west curb of Fourth Street; proceed north approximately 20 feet to north line of 110 Fourth Street; proceed west south west approximately 220 feet to west line of 110 Fourth Street; proceed south south east approximately 160 feet to north line of 326 State Street; proceed west south west approximately 160 feet to east curb of Henry Street; proceed south approximately 190 feet to south curb of State Street; proceed west approximately 20 feet to west line of 228 State Street; proceed south approximately 220 feet to south curb of Poplar Street; proceed west approximately 80 feet to west line of 233 Poplar Street; proceed south approximately 60 feet to south line of 233 Poplar Street; proceed east approximately 480 feet to west line of 304 Pine Street; proceed south approximately 160 feet to south curb of Pine Street; proceed west north west approximately 380 feet to East curb of Fifth Street; proceed south approximately 500 feet to north curb of Bridge Street; proceed east north east approximately 320 feet to west curb of Fourth Street; proceed east approximately 200 feet to point opposite the west line of 500 Third Street; proceed south approximately 710 feet to north curb of Elizabeth Street; proceed east approximately 490 feet to west curb of Second Street; proceed north approximately 413 feet to a point opposite the south line at 507 Second Street; proceed east approximately 406 feet to the east curb of Main Street; proceed south 150 feet to place of beginning.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

At the district's southern edge, a profusion of modern properties and a lack of potentially contributing structures in the Main Street axis defines the boundary. In the southern residential neighborhood just uphill, the boundary was set due to a diminishment of architecturally valuable resources. In the vicinity of Bridge, Pine, Poplar and State streets on the western edge of southern mass of the district, historic resources were excluded due to a lack of architectural worth. The "waist" of the district's western boundary, (Ward and Lombard Streets, and Plank Road) was caused by modern intrusions and empty space. The boundary on Fourth Street in the Chestnut, Huston area, and the placing of the boundary on rear property lines along York Avenue was designed to exclude post-World War Two residential development. Beyond #375 York Avenue in the northern arm of the district, modern strip development begins. Similarly, the east side of York Avenue north of #326 York consists of recent buildings. The area beyond the rear property lines on Locust Avenue consists of empty space or buildings lacking architectural value. The eastern boundary varies only to exclude intrusive buildings and open space in the Chestnut Street vicinity and large modern commercial buildings between State and Park Streets.

National Register of Historic Places
Towanda Historic District
Photographs

1. [110 Bridge](#) Towanda Historic District
 2. Towanda, PA
 3. Zubler, James
 4. 1991
 5. Bradford County Historical Society
 6. North
- Note: Item numbers 2-5, as they appear above, are the same for all of the following photos and, therefore, are not included in the photographic listing below.

1. [314 State](#) Towanda Historic District
6. North

1. [106 River](#) Towanda Historic District
6. West

1. [14 Second](#) Towanda Historic District
6. West

1. [109 York](#) Towanda Historic District
6. West South West

1. [208 Third](#) Towanda Historic District
6. West

1. [21 Main](#) Towanda Historic District
6. East

1. [22 William](#) Towanda Historic District
6. East

1. [401-429 Main](#) Towanda Historic District
6. Southeast

1. [302 Third](#) Towanda Historic District
6. West

1. [200 Chestnut](#) Towanda Historic District
6. Northwest

National Register of Historic Places
Towanda Historic District
Photographs

- | | | |
|----|----------------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. | 227 Poplar | Towanda Historic District |
| 6. | East | |
| 1. | 304 York | Towanda Historic District |
| 6. | East North East | |
| 1. | 305 York | Towanda Historic District |
| 6. | West South West | |
| 1. | 308 York | Towanda Historic District |
| 6. | East North East | |
| 1. | 416 Main | Towanda Historic District |
| 6. | West | |
| 1. | 311 York | Towanda Historic District |
| 6. | Southwest | |
| 1. | 601 Main | Towanda Historic District |
| 6. | Southeast | |
| 1. | 1 Main | Towanda Historic District |
| 6. | Southeast | |
| 1. | 428 Main | Towanda Historic District |
| 6. | West North West | |
| 1. | 105 Main | Towanda Historic District |
| 6. | East | |
| 1. | 322 Main | Towanda Historic District |
| 6. | West North West | |
| 1. | 217 and 301 York | Towanda Historic District |
| 6. | Northwest | |
| 1. | 118 York | Towanda Historic District |
| 6. | East North East | |

National Register of Historic Places
Towanda Historic District
Photographs

- | | | |
|----|--|---------------------------|
| 1. | 106 Main | Towanda Historic District |
| 6. | West South West | |
| 7. | House destroyed. | |
| 1. | Bridge - 400 Block | Towanda Historic District |
| 6. | Northeast | |
| 1. | Courthouse | Towanda Historic District |
| 6. | East South East | |
| 1. | Intersection of State and Main | Towanda Historic District |
| 6. | Southwest | |
| 1. | Main - 400 Block, even side | Towanda Historic District |
| 6. | North North West | |
| 1. | Main - 400 Block, odd side | Towanda Historic District |
| 6. | Northeast | |

National Register of Historic Places
Towanda Historic District

The Towanda Historic District is located on a hilly tract next to the North Branch of the Susquehanna River. The streets form an irregular grid which is oriented to the river bank; the district's shape is similarly irregular. The predominant architectural styles are Greek Revival and Queen Anne, with Gothic Revival, Second Empire and Italianate styles also represented. Buildings in the downtown range in scale from the dominant bulk of the [Bradford County Courthouse](#) (National Register 1986) down to two and three story commercial buildings on narrow plots; residential scale funds from small cottage-like houses up to rambling Queen Anne mansions on large lots. The structures are either brick or frame construction, as stone buildings are few. While some buildings date from the early years of the 19th and 20th centuries, the vast majority date from Towanda's economic heyday, which spanned the years 1830-1900. Though most of the downtown business district is included, the district is predominantly residential.

In the downtown area, south of Plank Road, Towanda's grid is regular with the majority of streets following North-South and East-West alignments. North of Plank Road, streets are generally laid out in relation to York Avenue, which runs toward the northwest. The streets nearest the River, North Main, William and River, align with the downtown grid, reflecting earlier development patterns. Streets parallel to the River represent older neighborhoods, while streets conforming to the York Street axis date primarily from the Victorian period. The commercial area is centered on Main Street in the southern part of the Historic District with the county courthouse roughly at its center; residential areas are located on the hill to the west and in the northern arm of the district.

Commercial buildings in the Towanda District are generally three stories in height and of brick construction. They are placed directly on the sidewalks and are joined in the central business district by a few larger commercial structures like the [Hale Opera House](#). The several large churches similarly front on the sidewalk ([1 Main St.](#) and [105 Main St.](#)). Only the Bradford County Courthouse is set in an open courtyard. The Courthouse and the Episcopal Church are the notable stone structures in the district.

Residential structures are divided between brick and frame construction, and are less closely sited. A few of the older houses front directly on the sidewalk, but most early houses have small front yards, and larger dwellings are often set in more extensive lawns. In the Victorian neighborhoods ([217 York Ave.](#)), open space becomes the norm, with the mansion scale buildings often having grounds of one acre or more. The later houses are more often of frame construction, reflecting the region's lumbering industry.

While three buildings survive in the district from around 1851, only one, the house of town founder William Means, [110 Bridge Street](#), possesses notable architectural value. Built in 1816, this Federal three-bay structure has a DENTIL cornice, window heads decorated with a swag and garland motif, a round topped second story window with graceful curvilinear muntins, and a porch supported by fluted Ionic columns. The entrance has sidelights and transom with slender Ionic columns immediately flanking the paneled door. The Means house was moved half a block in 1885, but pictorial evidence shows that its integrity is intact.

The Towanda district has a rich variety of Greek Revival houses. The earliest definitely dated example is the Towanda Academy of 1835 at [314 State Street](#). Built of common bond brick, this small building features three brick Doric pilasters on its façade topped by a DENTIL frieze and projecting cornice. More ornate is the Baird House at [106 River Street](#), c.1835, which is also common bond brick. It has two Ionic columned porches, geometric cast iron grills over the frieze windows, and a DENTIL cornice supported by small, pendanted brackets. With the frame M.C. Mercur house, [14 Second Street](#), c.1835,

the full-blown temple-form house with massive two story fluted Ionic columns appears in the District. Other features of this house are a raised porch, which combines with the elevation of the lot above street level to make this façade truly impressive, and an ornate entrance featuring four engaged Ionic columns, sidelights and transom and a paneled door. The Dr. Samuel Huston house at [109 York Avenue](#), c. 1835, is a temple form cottage with symmetrical wings. This frame building has Doric pilasters, a recessed porch with square Doric columns, and bracketed eaves.

Later examples of Greek Revival include the Ulysses Mercur house of 1851, [208 Third Street](#), a frame building with two story pilastered corners whose Doric capitals are embellished with an egg-and-dart pattern; a massive frieze and dentil cornice with iron window grilles define the roofline. The full-width porch is carried by Ionic fluted columns, the entrance surround is massive and the window heads have ornate curved appliques. The later James Macfarlane house at [21 Main Street](#), c.1858, begins to adopt features of the then nationally prevalent Italianate style, including extra-wide eaves, square plan and extensive bracketing, while retaining the iron frieze grilles and the massive pilastered and corniced entrance treatment of the Greek Revival house.

The district also contains a plethora of more modest Greek Revival houses ([109 York Ave.](#)), many with the facing gable with or without a wing configuration. These are concentrated in the North Main/William Street area, although examples are present in other neighborhoods.

A number of Gothic Revival houses of high quality are present in the district. The earliest is the brick David Cash house of 1845, [302 Third Street](#), a large structure with three steep Gothic gables at attic level, embellished with ornate verge boards, and a large double second story window in a lancet shaped arch above the triple arched entrance. A full porch is supported by trefoil columns and features elongated Tudor arches and a projecting center bay. The Presbyterian Church of 1855, [5 Court Street](#), is a tall, narrow brick structure with a central crenellated tower, lancet windows, stylized buttresses and elaborate brick corbelling. A similarly styled brick store building a block away at 300 Main Street, c. 1855, features upper windows in lancet shaped arches, corbelled brickwork, and retains one of its two original storefronts. The frame Mahlon Mercur house of 1857, [200 Chestnut Street](#), has triple Gothic dormers, carved verge boards and a large double window in a lancet shaped opening on its side face; many of the windows are triangular paned Tudor types. The frame Ethan Smith House at [10 York Street](#), c. 1867, has only one central peaked dormer, again with a double window in a single lancet-shaped opening. Its verge boards are more in a Carpenter Gothic mode, and a three sided bay with Tudor-arched openings protects its entrance.

Finally, [SS Peter and Paul Church](#) represents a dignified strain of Gothic Revival that is related to the Presbyterian Church in its simplicity. Built in 1869-1879 at 1 Third Street, its main decorative feature is light colored stone highlights, which contrast with the brickwork of the walls. Window hoods, buttresses and the main entrance are all embellished with light colored stone.

While Italianate is heavily represented in the business district, relatively few houses were built in this style. The E. Ashmun Parsons House, [304 York Avenue](#), c. 1867, features the characteristic corner tower, heavily pilastered and bracketed, and bracketed eaves; several windows have unusual projecting roofs above, supported by bracketing. The Edward Overton, Jr. house, [305 York Avenue](#), c. 1873, has a hipped roof with a facing gable at the front, supported by brackets. Heavy window hoods and a powerful bracketed surround to the main door, along with a highly embellished porch, complete the treatment. There are a large number of simple Italianate commercial buildings and parts of the downtown benefit from a

number of adjacent Italianate structures, giving the view a strong sense of visual unity.

One reason for the relative absence of the Italianate style was the pervasiveness of the Greek Revival which continued to exert a strong influence on architectural form to the end of the 19th Century resulting in a mid-century vernacular form that was popular from the late 1860's to the 1890's ([28 Main St](#)). These two-story structures are scattered throughout the Victorian era neighborhoods and exhibit the following features: square shape, usually with a rear wing or ell, low hipped roof with exaggerated overhang, plain frieze and narrow end boards, 2/2 or 1/1 windows, often with segmental arched hoodmolds and/or paired windows, Greek Revival entry with transom and side lights. Often these mid-century vernacular examples have front and/or side porches with strong Italianate detailing.

The Second Empire style is represented by several good buildings within the district. A notable commercial example is [416 Main Street](#), c. 1880, a four story building with fish-scale slate on the face of the Mansard roof, elaborate fourth-floor window treatment and a heavily bracketed cornice. A frame house at [311 York Avenue](#), which was built around 1874 by local contractor S. W. Little, shares the same slatework. It is marked by a very strong cornice atop the Mansard and a pilastered entrance surround.

A number of district buildings are in the Romanesque Revival style. The Hale Opera House at [601 Main Street](#), 1886, built by Coddling & Hale, is a four story brick structure which combines the round arches and ascending organization of the Richardsonian Romanesque with some Queen Anne detailing. The Episcopal Church, [1 Main Street](#), c. 1889, combines the blunt stonework and conical towers of the Romanesque with Gothic features. Built in 1888 at 428 Main Street, the brick [Citizens National Bank building](#) features an octagonal corner tower with stone highlights and terra-cotta decorative panels; ground floor treatment features carved stone arches spring from engaged triple marble columns. The Methodist Episcopal Church at [105 Main Street](#), c. 1890, is also brick with stone detailing executed in limestone. A tower frames each corner of the façade, stone is used for window hoods and the cornice treatment, while the arched entrances spring from engaged columns. A large brick house at [108 Chestnut Street](#), c. 1891, also mixes stone window hoods into its façade; much of its third floor treatment adds shingle-style elements.

An unusual commercial building, the Kingsbury/Chamberlain building of 1887 at [322 Main Street](#), has been the home of the local Masonic Lodge since its erection. This Eclectic structure is executed in light colored brick, with extensive polychrome brick Victorian Gothic embellishment. The window hoods and cornice reflect an Eastlake influence, and the stone elements all have carved decoration.

Queen Anne houses represent one of the main elements in the Towanda district. The brick house at [101 York Avenue](#), c. 1880, displays the characteristic corbelled chimney, rambling plan and ornately spindled porches of the style. The frame Dan Turner house, [217 York Avenue](#), 1897 displays varied wall treatment, twin gables and very elaborate spindled porches, including a porte-cochere. The frame 301 York Avenue, c. 1892 displays some classically derived details, including a third story Palladian window and Tuscan order porch columns. The wall treatment is complex, and a corner octagonal tower is featured. The George Decker House, [118 York Avenue](#), 1897, is a frame Free Classic variant. Paired Ionic columns support the porch and porte cochere, and the octagonal corner tower has a swag and garland motif below its cornice, which is dentiled to match the main cornice. An unusual second story porch has a round arch supported by very short columns, and the attic window is a multi-part bay topped by a broken pediment.

A few houses display Stick Style influences, but only the Albert Long house ([302 Second Street](#), 1884) qualifies as a true example. Important features include extensive stick work bracketing, wall surfaces with diagonal, vertical or horizontal wood siding, and an unusual bay with central chimney, triangular attic windows and S-curved cutaways just below the attic gable end.

Perhaps the most unusual of Towanda's buildings is the Flemish Renaissance Revival public library at [106 Main Street](#)). Donated to the town in 1897 by Frank Welles, this brick 1 ½ story building has two fanciful stepped gables with lacy spires and finial. A tiny oval window in the main gable is framed by terra-cotta cherubim. The steep slate roof has several tiny decorative gables with peaked, bell-curved roofs. Corners have corbelled quoins, and the foundation takes a battered shape.

Finally, the [Bradford County Courthouse](#) (National Register, 1986) of 1897 is a monumental structure in the Beaux Arts Classical style. The pedimented street façade has massive pilasters above a rusticated base; an anthemion surrounded by olive branches proclaims "Justice, Law, Mercy" in the pediment. A tall octagonal dome rises 70n feet above first floor level, and is roofed with brown-green glazed terra-cotta tiles. The rear block of the building is rough cut limestone, comparatively unembellished, and the interior is both remarkable and well preserved.

The Towanda Historic District displays a high degree of integrity. Only 8.4% of the 483 buildings are non-contributing, and many of these are historic structures which have lost their architectural detailing to poorly planned renovations; these buildings still have their integrity of siting and massing and thus detract less from the district's "feel" than modern intrusions. Route 6 has had its deleterious effect on Towanda, primarily through congestion and grime, and most of the modern buildings in the district are connected to automotive use, like gas stations and garages. Some non-contributing buildings are business district replacements for buildings lost to fires or demolition. Most of the non-contributing structures are located on Main Street. In age, some examples date from the interwar period and have lost their integrity due to alteration (photo #30), but most are from the 1950's and 1960's.

While some blocks have been seriously impacted by intrusions, the majority of the business district still maintains its historic facade-line and density. In the residential areas of Towanda, non-contributing structures are almost unknown. Residential blocks with near-perfect integrity are the norm, and a wave of sensitive restoration efforts within the district in recent years bodes well for Towanda's preservation future.

NATIONAL REGISTER PROCESS IN PENNSYLVANIA
NOTIFICATION SHEET

See page 55 of the National Register Process in Pennsylvania for instructions.

The following information is required in order for us to process your registration form. Please complete both sides of sheet. Return this sheet along with your completed registration form to the Bureau for Historic Preservation, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission, Box 1026, Harrisburg, PA 17108.

A. NAME OF RESOURCE (From Section 1 of Registration Form):

Towanda Historic District

B. LOCATION (From Section 2 of Registration Form)

Street & number Roughly bounded by Fifth, Elizabeth, River & Kingsbury Streets

City, town Towanda

County Bradford

C. NAME AND ADDRESS OF EACH OWNER OF INDIVIDUAL RESOURCE OR PROPERTY IN A HISTORIC DISTRICT (See page of the National Register Process in Pennsylvania for definition of "owner". If the owners include Federal agencies list these first followed by names and addresses of other owners. If additional space is needed attach information on plain 8 ½ x 11 inch sheets)

<u>N/A</u>	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____
_____	_____

D. NAMES AND ADDRESSES OF CHIEF ELECTED LOCAL OFFICIALS FOR COUNTY AND MUNICIPALITY IN WHICH RESOURCE IS LOCATED:

County Commissioner Chairman Name and Address –

William McNett
Bradford County Courthouse, Main Street
Towanda PA 18848

BUREAU FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
Public Participation Questionnaire
For
Proposed National Register Historic Districts

1. List local agencies and officials contacted including date of contact:

Tom Fairchild	Borough Manager, Borough of Towanda	Aug 1990
Tony Ventello	County Planner, Bradford County	Aug 1990
Kim Barnes	Program Analyst, Northern Tier Regional Planning and Development Commission	Aug 1990

2. What community neighborhood and/or preservation organizations serve or have interests in the area proposed as a historic district? Summarize meetings or other contact with these organizations.

The two groups having a principal interest in the National Historic District Nomination process were the Towanda Main Street Project and the Bradford County Historical Society.

The Main Street Project, a component of Towanda Heritage and Development, was instrumental in developing the proposal for the National Historic District Nomination which was submitted to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

The Main Street Project maintained a strong interest throughout the National Historic District Nomination process. In addition, the Project established a special subcommittee to monitor progress on the nomination, to serve as a forum for the exchange of ideas and also to coordinate volunteer activity.

The subcommittee, named the Historic Committee, met bi-monthly with the consultant during the information and retrieval stage of the National Historic Nomination process. Volunteers from the Committee helped to stimulate community interest and provided assistance in identifying and describing some of the historic structures. The Main Street Director, James Zubler, provided project coordination, assisted in the photographic and property recording process and worked to organize of the volunteers.

The consultant met with representatives of the Bradford County Historical Society on several occasions to discuss the need for historical resource materials, including early maps, newspaper collections, books, periodicals, and monographs that dealt with the history and development of Towanda.

As a resource for historic materials, the Towanda Public Library was involved throughout the National Historic District Nomination process. The consultant and volunteer coordinator Lillian Larrabee met with the librarian to discuss historical materials that were available in the Library archives.

3. Summarize media coverage and direct mail contact with property owners and residents regarding the proposed district:

Since the proposed district consisted of more than 450 properties, the Historic Committee, which provided coordination for the project, and the consultant did not communicate directly with district residents. However, a number of articles that described the proposed district and its historic resources as well as the nomination process were published in the Towanda Daily Review. Periodic reports also were made to the Towanda Borough Council regarding provisions and requirements of the National Historic District.

The articles that appeared in the Towanda Daily Review are appended to this report.

As part of the public advertising requirements, a public notice will be published in the Towanda Daily Review describing the National Historic District and offering residents an opportunity to make comments to the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

4. Summarize comments received from owners and residents regarding the proposed district:

No owner provided written comments to the Main Street Project or the consultant.

Residents of Towanda, who have shown a high respect for historic structures, were supportive of the nomination. Over the past five years, owners have conducted public tours of their buildings to help raise funds for historic preservation programs sponsored by the Main Street Project. The 1990 tour is described in a newspaper article which accompanies this nomination.

No negative comments were provided to the Borough, the Main Street Project, or the consultant.



**Commonwealth of Pennsylvania
Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission**

TOWANDA HISTORIC DISTRICT

BRADFORD COUNTY

has been entered in the

National Register of Historic Places

under provisions of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966

The National Register of Historic Places, kept by the United States Department of Interior, is the official list of the Nation's cultural resources worthy of preservation and includes properties significant in American History, Architecture, Archeology, Engineering and Culture. These resources contribute to an understanding of the historical and cultural foundations of the Nation.

Arund B. Davis

State Historic Preservation Officer

[Signature]

Director, Bureau for Historic Preservation

MAY 7, 1952

Date entered