

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Mentzer Building

and or common

2. Location

street & number 3 West Main Street not for publication

city, town Ephrata vicinity of

state PA code county Lancaster code

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name GNP Associates

street & number P.O. Box 121

city, town Denver vicinity of state CO

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder of Deeds, Lancaster County Courthouse

street & number 50 North Duke Street

city, town Lancaster state PA

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Lancaster County Survey has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date 1983 federal state  county local

depository for survey records Pennsylvania Bureau for Historic Preservation

city, town Harrisburg state PA

## 7. Description

Condition

excellent  
 good  
 fair

Check one

unaltered  
 altered

Check one

original site  
 moved date \_\_\_\_\_

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Mentzer Building stands at the corner of Ephrata's Market district where Main and State streets intersect at an oblique angle. Though the site is irregular, the building that was erected is nearly square with its principal facade facing onto Main Street. The main elevation is designed in a sophisticated regional variation on the Queen Anne with brick pilasters subdividing the wall and suggesting interior divisions of space. That articulation is reflected on the side elevation, while the rear is plain befitting its service role. Segmental and round headed windows, small paned sash and a handsome galvanized metal cornice complete the exterior above the first story. That story has been altered twice, once in the 1940s when a barber shop was added at the side on the triangular open space, and again in the 1950s when the original porch was removed and the 1880s shop window system and cast iron columns were covered by modern metal. Investigation reveals that with the exception of the porch columns (clearly visible in period photographs) the other materials are restorable. The interior is similarly intact though showing changes that reflect the many changes in use that have included school classrooms, barbershops, electric supply store, meeting rooms, and retail clothing sales. However, the principal stair, grained wood trim and doors are intact, giving the building a completeness of finish that is rare in commercial buildings.

The first floor of the commercial facade was subdivided according to its various functions, and is reiterated in the composition of the upper stories. At the left hand corner is a double door framed on the left by a brick pier and on the right by a cast iron pier (originally covered by wood) with a shop window beyond. An alternating pattern of windows and doors into the shops continued across the front, with cast iron columns framing the doors, and small paned glazed transoms above the shop windows. The doors of the shop openings have been replaced, but the original leaves of the doors to the upstairs have been retained, though rehung backwards, apparently in appreciation of the plainer surface of the interior over the elaborate panel of the exterior. Protecting the entrances was a wood columned porch which by 1920, had grown to two layers, with one porch of spindle turned knee braces and brackets on round columns on the top step, and an additional range of columns in similar detail at the curb. That was presumably the result of changes over time.

Above, the fenestration and wall articulation reflect the system of the first floor. A tall, narrow single window is placed above each first floor opening, while paired windows, separated by two-story high pilasters are in register with the shop windows. Windows are segmental headed on the second story, and round headed on the third floor, with decorative brick framing the windows and forming impost bands as a device to express the architectural forces. Pilasters marking the major interior spaces project from the wall at the ends and center, with recessed panels and raised courses on the pilaster giving them the effect of a classical order. Smaller pilasters carried on corbels frame the single windows of the third floor, which in turn are capped by splayed inverted pyramids resting on the Hermes heads of the keystones of those openings. An elaborate corbelled frieze and pressed metal cornice interrupted by pier caps that denote each pier completes a remarkably integrated facade.

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The side elevation repeats major themes, but with paired windows framed by pilasters as the typical bay. Windows, like those of the front are one-over-one with an added small paned Queen Anne sash on the second story. The side elevation is now largely screened at the base by a circa 1945 one-story brick barber shop which fills the left over space of the site behind the basement area way in the bay closest to Main Street. It should also be noted that although brick appears to be hard, pressed brick, deterioration and texture show it to be a softer material, which like so many buildings in the region, has been painted to protect the surface.

The rear wall is essentially without articulation, with only projecting piers marking the subdivision of spaces, and regular registers of segmental two-over-two sash. The first floor is screened by a story high porch whose round columns and shed roof are essentially intact, though one corner of the porch roof was "bent" to accommodate the later fire escape that unifies the building with its neighbors by giving the effect of the rear multi-story porches that are common in the area. A handsome X-braced Victorian door survives at the rear shop opening giving further evidence of the nature of original detail.

After several generations of changes to the commercial space, little of the original detail is visible. Cast iron columns stand in the rear room and under the dropped ceiling the more elaborate ceiling survives. The interior partitions on the other hand, were clearly intended to be flexibly located to permit their adjustment depending on the needs of the first floor tenants which have at various times included two separate shops, and most recently one large appliance store. Much of the original shop window system is also visible behind modern materials.

The side door to the stair to the upper levels opens onto an unadorned hall with a wood stair and molded banister that rises to a small landing lighted by a window. That window opens onto a narrow rear alley cut out of the building volume. At the landing, the hall is given interest by a handsome Queen Anne oak stair with an elaborate newel and handsome turned balusters supporting a wood rail. That stair is paralleled by a hall that runs across the axis of the building with broad, "grained" trim and raised panel doors opening into the surrounding spaces. The hall terminates in a pair of doors that both open into what is now a large room on the east side of the building, but which was probably two rooms when the building was first built. Other, smaller rooms open onto the front, with similar trim giving them a level of finish that is unusual for this sort of building. Presumably, that reflected the intended level of tenants -- the Building and Loan Society, law offices, and the like. At the rear in the north west quadrant, the room retains the pressed metal ceiling, with metal egg-and-dart molding, massive window and door surrounds, and an especially handsome door with chamfered edges and round panels.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
prehistoric	archeology-prehistoric	community planning	landscape architecture	religion
1400-1499	archeology-historic	conservation	law	science
1500-1599	agriculture	economics	literature	sculpture
1600-1699	X architecture	education	military	social
1700-1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian
X 1800-1899	X commerce	exploration settlement	philosophy	theater
1900-	communications	industry	politics government	transportation
		invention		other (specify)

Specific dates 1889 Builder Architect

## Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Mentzer Building is an exceptionally sophisticated and nearly intact Queen Anne commercial and office building that stands at the principal intersection of Ephrata's Main and State streets. Its prominent site represents the significance of the Mentzer family who had long been instrumental in the economic growth of the region, operating a cigar manufactory as well as being involved with the principal financial institutions. The building itself marks the coming of age of Ephrata as a small regional market, with its shops bringing the wonders of the late nineteenth century consumer age to the town. Finally, the building is of note as the location of the town meetings that occurred in April 1891 when the idea of incorporation of the community was first broached and then approved. If the building played a major role in the past, it is now principally significant as a "small town skyscraper" that describes the architectural sophistication available in Ephrata in the last years of the nineteenth century, and as a memorial of the old Ephrata families.

The role of the building in the life of the community is apparent in the prominent place that it is given in Milton Heinicke's History of Ephrata (Ephrata, 1975). His section entitled "Local History" begins, "The Mentzer Building --- The Mentzer Building was erected in 1889 by A. W. Mentzer, and at the time it was built was considered a small town skyscraper." That account mentions the range of tenants that followed, including the school system of the borough, stores, financial institutions, church groups, and lodges. The earliest tenants of the first floor were men's and ladies ready-to-wear stores on the west and east halves respectively. Later, Ivan Mentzer, the grandson of the builder occupied one part of the first story as an electrical and appliance store, a use which has persisted to the present. A five- and ten-cent store was followed by J.J. Newberry Co. in 1919. Upper levels have a similar varied history with at least one barber shop as a tenant throughout most of its years, making the building a center for business communication. The Heinicke account remembers it as "... strictly off limits for women." After the school left the third floor, the Ephrata Building and Loan Association, and a music studio occupied the rooms, while the Jehovahs Witnesses vied with several lodges for room. With that history the central place of the building in the social events of the community can be understood. It was, of course, there too, that the town meetings about incorporation occurred in April of 1891.

If the building has played an ongoing role in making space for the developing businesses, that was no doubt one of the intentions of its builder Allen W. Mentzer. Mentzer was a member of an established Pennsylvania Dutch family, who began as a merchants, and by the 1880s operated a cigar manufacturing business that made a finished product from

(Continued)

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the local tobacco farming. Banking and finance were natural interests of the family as well. His son, John (b. 1862) became one of the early physicians and later operated the family business (immediately to the rear of the Mentzer buildings) and in turn his son Ivan (b. 1892) graduated from Elizabethtown College and opened the electrical business that was operated in the building.

The Mentzer Building is itself of note as a handsome Queen Anne commercial building which, though altered, survives nearly intact under the 1950s metal shop part of the first floor. Of particular interest is the architecturally sophisticated description on the exterior of the interior spaces; the two shops of the first floor and the access to the third story are indicated by the position of the doors and shop windows. By continuing the same rhythm on the second and third floors, of single windows above doors and double windows above shopfronts, the architect (for it must be assumed that this is not a builder design) united the facade, from base to cornice. The position of the two story pilasters, on the main front, give a suggestion of the rooms in each quadrant and the stair at the side. That it is not totally accurate is perhaps artistic license. The variations of texture, the variety of pressed bricks, and the parallel forms in pressed metal all go towards making a handsome period piece that is richer than the typical building of small town America's Main Street.

As the project of an important Ephrata family, as the home of numerous commercial enterprises and the setting for cultural and political events that shaped the town, and as a largely intact and restorable commercial exterior that represents its time and place, the Mentzer building deserves to be placed on the National Register of Historic Places.

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

Please See Attached

# 10. Geographical Data

Acree of nominated property 1/10 Acre

Quadrangle name Ephrata

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A 

118	3919	61410	414	418	11710
Zone	Easting				

B 

Zone	Easting				

C 


D 


E 


F 


G 


H 


Verbal boundary description and justification

Please See Attached.

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

state Pennsylvania code   county Lancaster code  

state   code   county   code  

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title George E. Thomas, Ph.D.

organization Clio Group, Inc.

date November 8, 1984

street & number 3961 Baltimore

telephone (215) 386-6276

city or town Philadelphia

state Pennsylvania

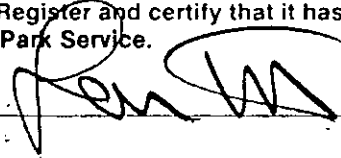
# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

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 National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature



title Larry E. Tise, State Historic Preservation Officer

date 11/17/85

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

date  

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date  

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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Mentzer Biography:

Ellis, Franklin and Samuel Evans. History of Lancaster County. Phila:  
Everts and Peck, 1883.

Heinicke, Milton H. History of Ephrata. Vol. II, Historical Society of  
Cocalico Valley. January 1975.

Historic Ephrata, Bi-Centennial Celebration at Ephrata Cloister. Ephrata,  
PA: "Review" Print, Sept. 29, 1928.

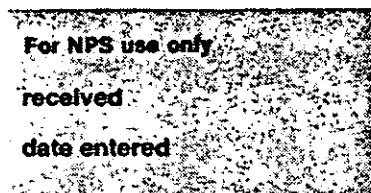
Klein, H.M.J. Lancaster County, Pennsylvania, A History. 1924. Vol II,  
pp. 104 - 05.

Recorder of Deeds, Lancaster County Courthouse, Lancaster, PA.

Snyder, John et al, Pennsylvania Resource Card, June 1983.

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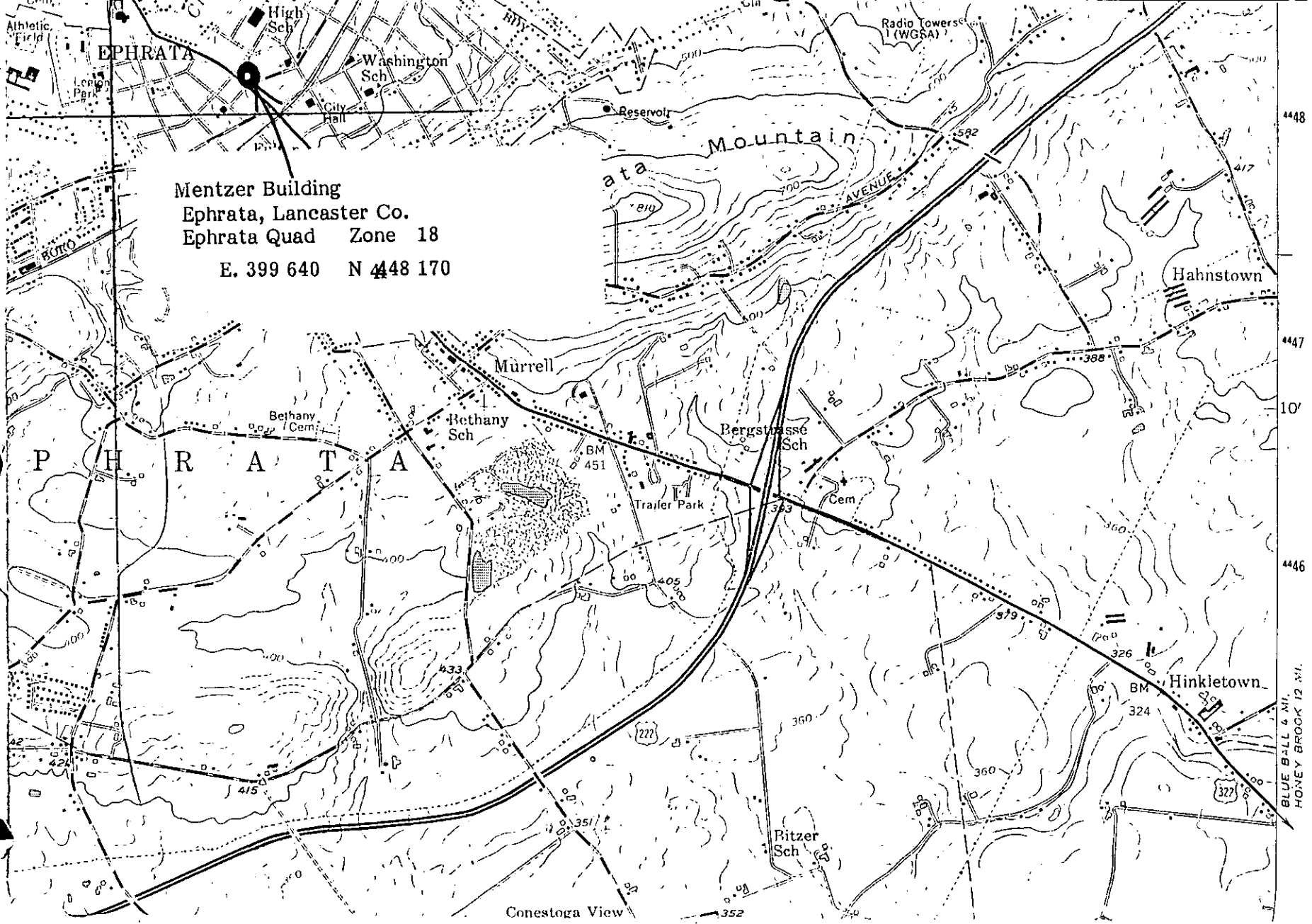
All that certain lot of land with buildings thereon erected situate on the easterly side of West Main Street and on the northerly side of North State Street in The Borough of Ephrata, County of Lancaster and Commonwealth of Pennsylvania, as shown on a plan prepared by Spotts, Stevens and McCoy, Inc., Consulting Engineers of Wyomissing, Pennsylvania, designated as Plan 8237-000-D-001, dated 9/15/75 being more particularly bounded and described per description furnished by Spotts, Stevens and McCoy, Inc., Consulting Engineers, dated 9/18/75 as follows:

Tract #1 (known as #12 and #16 North State Street and #1, #5, #7 and #9 West Main Street).

Beginning at a point in the intersection of the northerly right-of-way line of North State Street forty-eight (48) feet wide and the easterly right-of-way line of West Main Street eighty-seven (87) feet wide; thence along the easterly right-of-way line of West Main Street, North forty-one (41) degrees zero (0) minutes zero (0) seconds West one hundred five and thirteen one-hundredths (105.13) feet to a point; thence continuing along the easterly right-of-way line of West Main Street North forty-five (45) degrees fifty-three (53) minutes zero (0) seconds West two and twenty-three one-hundredths (2.23) feet to a point; thence leaving West Main Street, North forty-nine (49) degrees thirty-three (33) minutes zero (0) seconds East, passing through an iron pin at eleven and eighty-nine one-hundredths (11.89) feet a total distance of fifty and thirteen one-hundredths (50.13) feet to an iron pipe fence corner; thence North fifty (50) degrees forty-five (45) minutes zero (0) seconds East, through an iron fence and passing through an iron pin at sixty-five (65) feet and witnessed by another iron pin that is two (2) feet southerly from the property line a total distance of one hundred twenty nine and sixty one hundredths (129.60) feet to an iron pin in the angle point of the westerly side of Poplar Alley fourteen (14) feet wide; thence along the westerly right-of-way line of said Poplar Alley, South thirty-four (34) degrees fifty-six (56) minutes zero (0) seconds East one hundred sixty and sixty-three one-hundredths (160.63) feet to a point in the northerly right-of-way line of North State Street; thence along the northerly right-of-way line of North State Street, South sixty-eight (68) degrees seventeen (17) minutes zero (0) seconds West one hundred seventy-two and eight one-hundredths (172.08) feet to the point or place of Beginning.

Boundary Justification: The property is entirely the site of the Mentzer Building, its addition, and its access.





EPHRATA

Mentzer Building  
Ephrata, Lancaster Co.  
Ephrata Quad Zone 18  
E. 399 640 N 448 170

EPHRATA

Mountain

Hahnstown

Hinkletown

Conestoga View

BLUE BALL 4 MI.  
HONEY BROOK 12 MI.

448  
447  
10'  
446