

**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 Watson-Curtze Mansion

and/or common Erie Historical Museum

2. Location

street & number 356 West Sixth Street ___ not for publication

city, town Erie ___ vicinity of Congressional District 24

state Pennsylvania 16507code county Erie code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input 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	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" 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 School District of the City of Erie

street & number 1511 Peach Street

city, town Erie ___ vicinity of state PA 16501

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Erie County Courthouse

street & number 122 West Sixth Street

city, town Erie state PA 16501

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Erie Co. Historic Survey has this property been determined eligible? yes no
Northwest Institute Survey

date Erie Co. (1976), Institute (1982) ___ federal state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records Erie City Planning Office

city, town Erie state PA

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>N/A</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Erie Historical Museum's Watson-Curtze mansion is a massive, three and one-half stories, two bay brownstone mansion located at 356 West Sixth Street, Erie, Pennsylvania. West Sixth Street was the preferred residential area for Erie's wealthy of the 1880s and 1890s. The mansion is the best preserved example of all the comparable homes on West Sixth Street. The 1891-92 mansion and carriage-house were designed by Green and Wicks of Buffalo, New York and feature many elements of the Richardsonian Romanesque style: a short tower, smooth piers with decorated capitals, transomed windows, carved tynpanum, deep-set windows and eaves close to the walls. The interior of the mansion is comprised of twenty-four rooms, five bathrooms, seventeen closets, twelve fireplaces, a solarium and an elevator shaft with original car (not currently operable). Some original loft structures remain in the carriage house. Among the original decorative elements of the mansion are: stained glass windows; oak flooring; damask wall coverings; mosaics; ornately carved and pierced woodwork; stenciled, hand-painted and plasterwork ceilings, canvas wall paintings; brass, silver and stained glass light fixtures and marble and tile fireplaces. The exterior masonry needs cleaning and repointing. While the overall integrity of the mansion is good, the 1979 installation of a sprinkler system caused damage to wall paintings and much restoration work is needed to flooring, woodwork, stained glass windows and friezes.

The mansion facade conveys a palatial feeling with solid masonry cut in a rough finish. The original tile roof with flashing tidge was destroyed in the 1950s. Five chimneys and seven dormers give the mansion a striking silhouette.

The first floor has an entry way, a reception hall, a drawing room, a library, a dining room, a den, a bathroom, the kitchen, pantry and storage rooms. Woods and decorative details vary from room to room. The drawing room and the library have the original plasterwork ceilings. The den has an inset, quadruple arched ceiling stenciled with shield patterns. Oak flooring in the drawing room, the reception hall and the dining room has been restored. Many light fixtures have been lost; others are being restored and replaced. Exotic marble decorates the fireplaces. The entry way ceining and the reception hall fireplaces have mosaics executed by Louis C. Tiffany artisans. Wall paintings of peacocks are in the reception hall alcove. Cherubs are on the friezes in the dining room and on the stained glass windows and acid etched globes in the dining room. A pattern combining natural and classical elements is on the three stained glass windows in the alcove of the reception hall. A stained glass geometric design is on the windows of the main staircase. The pantry has its original shelving and marble sink but the kitchen fixtures and appliances are missing. The elevator has its original car but the works and the shaft are not currently operable.

The second floor besides closet and storage rooms contains four family bedrooms, a sitting room, three bathrooms and two servant bedrooms. Each bedroom has a distinctive woodwork material and pattern. Two bedrooms have the original stenciled or hand-painted ceilings. A corner fireplace with a round window is found in the center bedroom. This window consists of

**United States Department of the Interior
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**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Erie Historical Museum, Erie, PA

Continuation sheet Watson-Curtze Mansion Item number 7

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Page 1

Description, continued

pressed glass flowers of various shades held in place by a structure of lead tracery. Linoleum tile covers the original oak flooring except in the sitting room and the east servant bedroom and hall. Bathroom floors are original. The hallway ceiling has original inset painted panels. A balcony off the main staircase is trimed with pierced and carved woodwork. This balcony is a unique structure for a Green and Wicks house according to Richard Guy Wilson of the University of Virginia.

The third floor has a ballroom, a bathroom, a billard room, a sitting room and three storage rooms. Original wall and ceiling decorations are preserved in the ballroom. The ballroom also has a balcony for musicians. Original oak flooring needs re-finishing. A half-story for storage is totally intact while the basement has been substantially remodeled.

The carriage house facade is the same brownstone material as the house. The original tile hip roof with flashing ridge has been replaced. The first floor and the second floor apartment for the gardener were altered when planterium equipment was installed in 1959. Loft structures do remain.

A greenhouse built of matching brownstone, which stood to the west of the carriage house, was torn down in the 1950s. A garden on the east and north sides of the property, which is documented by interviews and historic photographs, no longer exists. A ginko tree and a copper beech tree, however, still flourish. Original outdoor paving is found in the rear of the mansion.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1891-92 Builder/Architect Green & Wicks, Architects

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Erie Historical Museum's Watson-Curtze mansion and carriage house, located at 356 West Sixth Street in Erie, Pennsylvania, are the most unique examples of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture in Erie County and, according to Dr. Kenneth Ames of the Winterthur Museum, are important national expressions of the style. Designed by Green and Wicks of Buffalo, New York, decorative elements--ornate stone exterior, elaborate woodwork, canvas wall paintings, stained glass windows and mosaics--are presented in remarkably integrated and idiosyncratic ways. The mansion and carriage house are associated with two prominent Erie residents: H. F. Watson, a paper manufacturer, and F. F. Curtze, a banker and philanthropist.

Built in 1891-92, the house exemplifies the elaborate, asymmetrical aesthetic of Richardsonian Romanesque. Green and Wicks whose buildings in Buffalo and Erie represent various styles (Chateau, the Classical Revival of the original Albright-Knox Gallery, works influenced by McKim, Mead and White) here have produced a unique setting for nineteenth century wealth and taste. Dr. Kenneth Ames, Teaching Associate at the Winterthur Museum and Adjunct Associate Professor of Art History at the University of Delaware, in a report to the Museum stated that "the Curtze Mansion is a remarkable and somewhat idiosyncratic example of late nineteenth-century architecture. As far as I can tell, it is not replicated in the immediate area. In fact, the more I looked at the house, the more I am inclined to suspect that it is not replicated anywhere. While the style of the building might loosely be described as Richardsonian Romanesque, the building is personal enough to easily distinguish it from other prominent houses in the style. From the viewpoint of an architectural historian, I would argue that the Curtze Mansion is an important example of style not only locally but nationally." (Page 2, Report to the Erie Historical Museum for National Endowment for the Humanities Self Study Planning Grant.)

Decorative motifs such as cherubs, peacocks, acanthus leaves and shells appear in many forms including wood, stained glass, stone, canvas paintings and lamp globes. The craftsmanship is striking. Woodwork is carved, pierced and hand finished. Mosaics and certain lighting fixtures are definitely the work of Louis C. Tiffany according to Alastair Duncan author of Tiffany Windows. The stained glass windows, friezes and wall coverings are attributed to Louis C. Tiffany artisans.

Harrison F. Watson (1853-1904) was the founder of the Watson Paper Company. He came to Erie in 1874 from Mercer County and lived in several eastside and westside rented houses before achieving the status of a West Sixth Street home owner. The Watson Paper Company made coal tar roofing paper and he had agents in New York, Nashville and other cities. Watson was an amateur entomologist and the specimen drawers in his den use to hold his collection (since destroyed). Mrs. Watson (1852-1923) was active !

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**National Register of Historic Places
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Erie Historical Museum, Erie, PA

Watson-Curtze Mansion Item number 8

Continuation sheet

For NPS use only

received

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Page 1

Significance, continued

in local and state gardening groups. There is still a Carrie T. Watson Garden Club in Erie. After Mrs. Watson's death in 1923, their daughter Winifred, who had married into another famous manufacturing family, the Griswolds, sold the mansion to Frederick Felix Curtze. Mr. Curtze was a banker and a patron of the arts. His successful career illustrates the upward mobility of second generation German immigrants in late nineteenth century Erie society. After his death in 1941, his widow and two children donated the mansion and the carriage house to the School District to be used for the "promotion of the education of all persons." Since 1942 then the building has been the site of the Erie Historical Museum (formerly the Erie Public Museum founded in 1899 as part of the Erie Library).

The Erie Historical Museum's Watson-Curtze mansion and carriage house remain extraordinary examples of Richardsonian Romanesque architecture. They are vivid displays of the decorative and building arts of the 1890s. Former owners played important roles in the economic and cultural life of the community: Mr. Watson as a manufacturer and one of the charter members of the original Erie Art Club (1900) and Mr. Curtze as a banker and Museum benefactor. Since unconsidered practices of the past have caused damage to the buildings including the introduction of a poorly camouflaged and pervasive sprinkler system, restoration and administration of utmost care should be given to structures that so exquisitely represent a unique architectural and artistic heritage. Nomination to the National Register would bring prestige and recognition to this effort.

9. Major Bibliographical Reference

Blueprints in the Archives of the Erie Historical Museum.

Correspondence with the Buffalo and Erie County Historical Society, Sept., 1981.

Correspondence with Jack Quinan, Art History Department, SUNY, Buffalo, (con't.)

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property .93

Quadrangle name Erie North, Pa.

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	7	5	7	4	9	4	0	4	4	6	4	9	2	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification The nominated property occupies city lots 2094 and 2095 and part of lots 2091, 2092, 2093 and 2096. It runs 215 feet from east to west and 190 feet from north to south.

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

state	code	county	code
N/A		N/A	

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Catherine Callan West, Deputy Director

organization Erie Historical Museum

date March 23, 1983

street & number 356 West Sixth Street

telephone (814) 453-5811

city or town Erie

state PA 16507

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 5/12/83

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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

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

Erie Historical Museum, Erie, PA
Watson-Curtze Mansion

Continuation sheet

Item number 9

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Page 1

Bibliography, continued

October, 1981.

Correspondence with Richard Guy Wilson, Architectural History, University of Virginia, January, 1982.

Correspondence with J. Alastair Duncan, Senior Vice-President Nineteenth and Twentieth Century Decorative Arts, Christie's, July, 1982.

Kowsky, Francis R. et al. Buffalo Architecture: A Guide. (Cambridge, Massachusetts: MIT Press), 1981.

"The Legacy of E. B. Green." University of Buffalo Today, Fall, 1980.

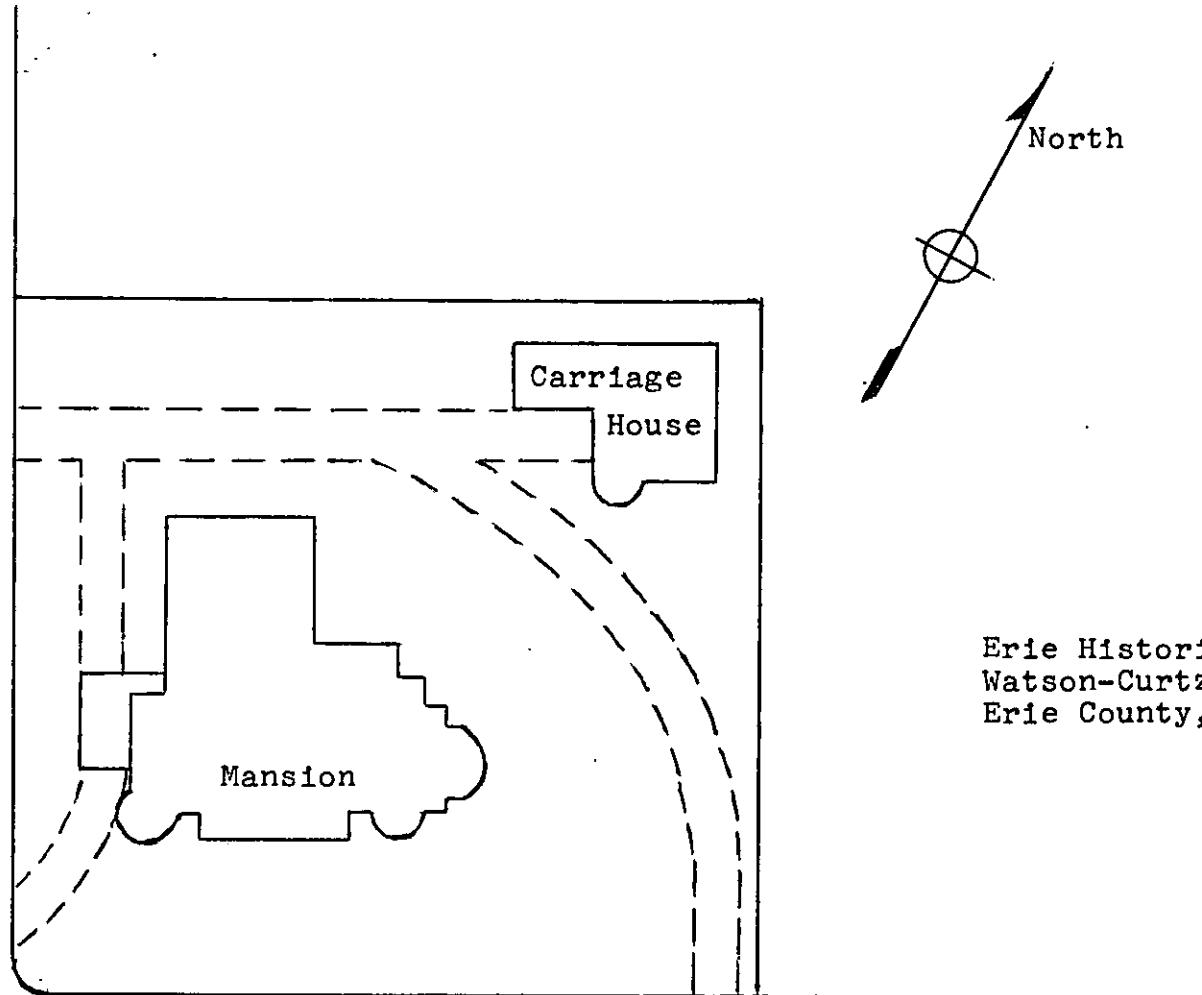
Ames, Kenneth. Report to the Erie Historical Museum for National Endowment for the Humanities Self Study Planning Grant. July, 1981.

Watson and Curtze Family Estate Files in the Erie County Courthouse, 122 West Sixth Street, Erie, PA 16501.

Newspaper Accounts, Biographies and Historic Photographs in the Archives of the Erie Historical Museum.

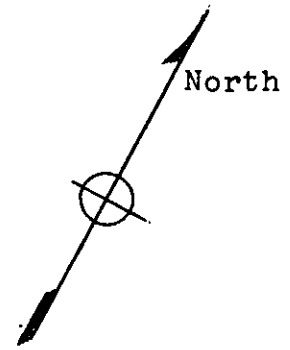
Site Map

Chestnut Street



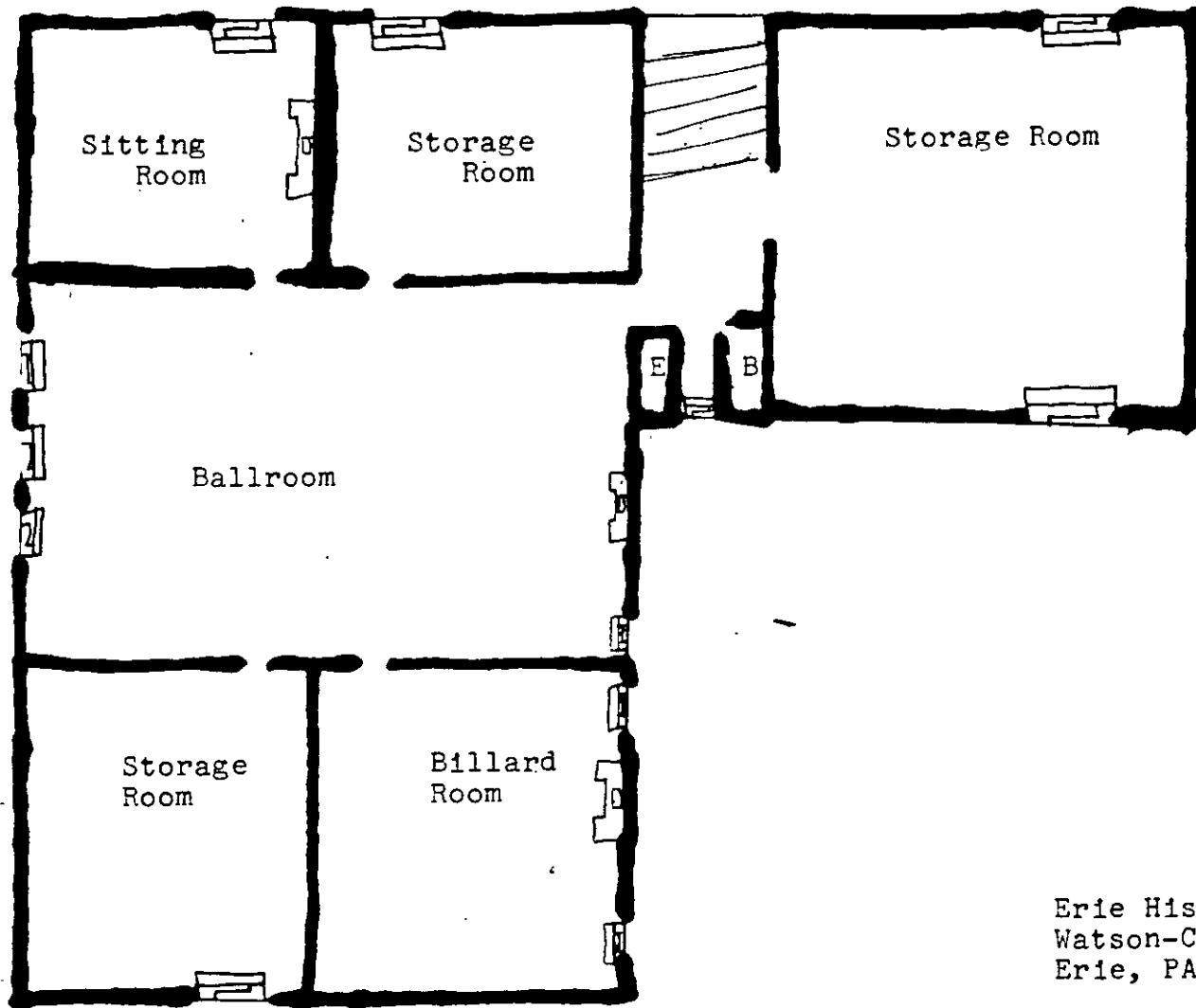
Carriage
House

Mansion



Erie Historical Museum
Watson-Curtze Mansion
Erie County, PA

West Sixth Street



Erie Historical Museum
Watson-Curtze Mansion
Erie, PA

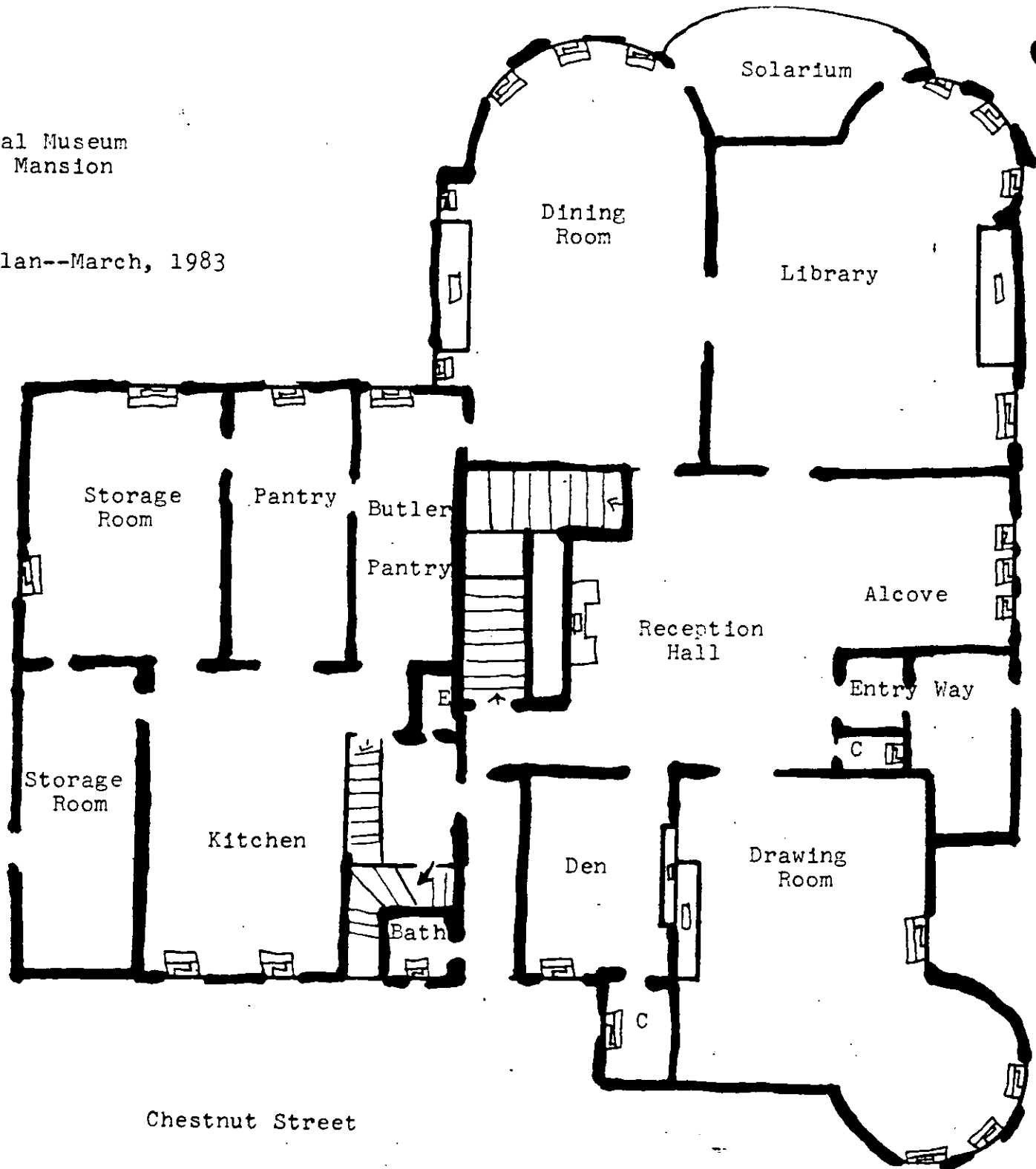
Third Floor--March, 1983

E=Elevator
B=Bathroom

Erie Historical Museum
Watson-Curtze Mansion
Erie, PA

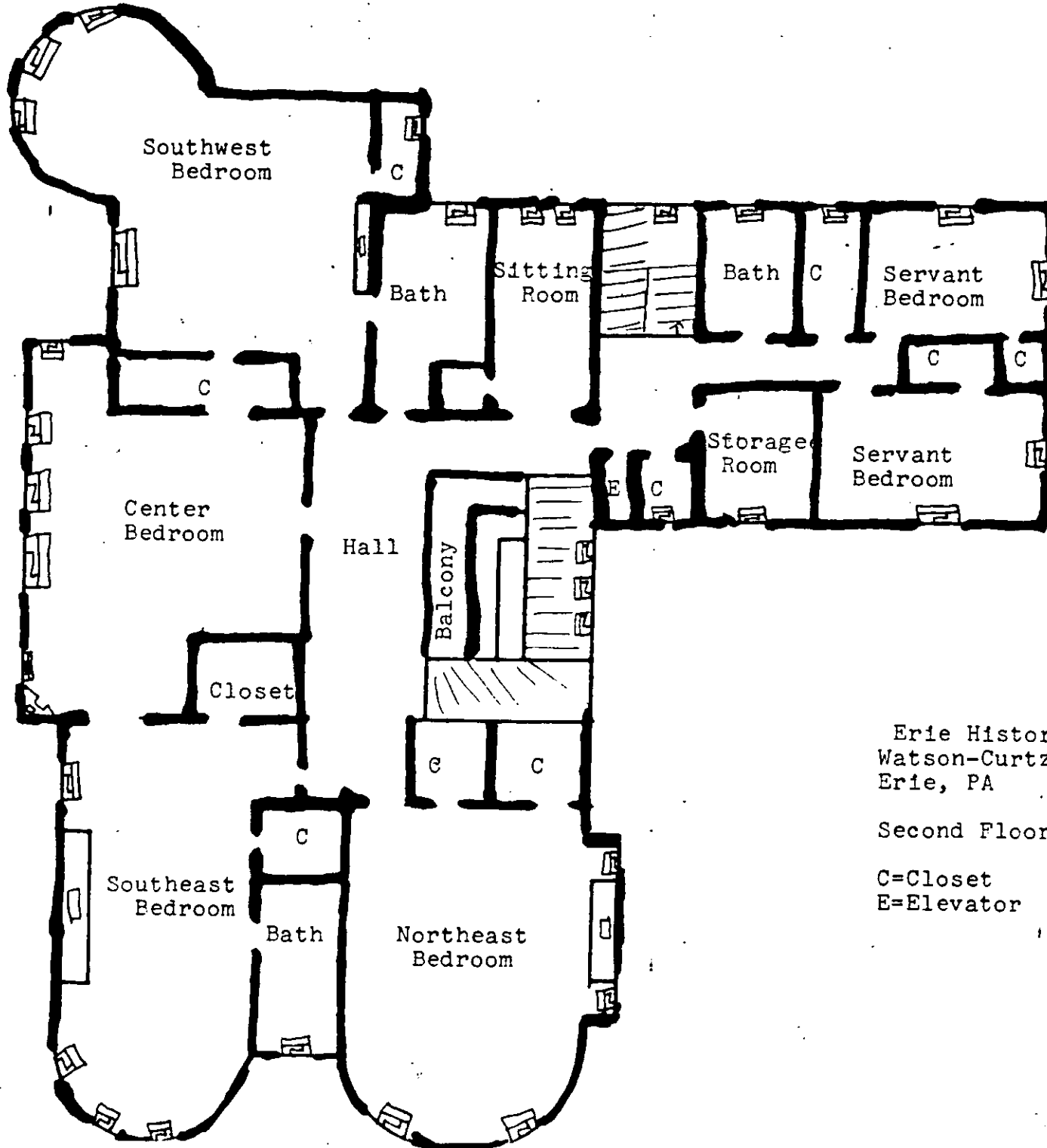
First Floor Plan--March, 1983

E=Elevator
C=Closet



West Sixth Street

Chestnut Street



Erie Historical Museum
 Watson-Curtze Mansion
 Erie, PA

Second Floor Plan--March, 1983

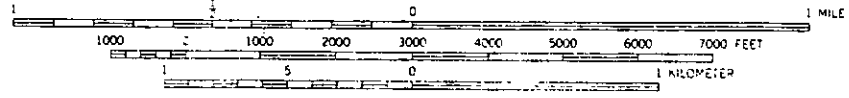
C=Closet
 E=Elevator

US Dept. of Interior
 Geological Survey
 Erie North Quadrangle
 Pennsylvania-Erie County
 7.5 Minute Series
 Revised 1975
 1957 Survey



572 7'30" 573 7 MI. TO PA. 5 574 575 576 PRESQUE ISLE (P.O.) 5.1 MI. AVONIA 12 MI. (ERIE SOUTH) 4968 11 SE 578 SWANVILLE 8.7 MI. 2'30" GIRARD 18 MI. 580

SCALE 1:24000



CONTOUR INTERVAL 10 FEET
 NATIONAL GEODETIC VERTICAL DATUM OF 1929

