

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

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

For HCRS use only

received

date entered

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

**1. Name**

historic SHORT'S HOTEL

and/or common PALACE HOTEL

**2. Location**

street & number 90 South Pearl Street N/A not for publication

city, town North East N/A vicinity of congressional district 24th

state Pennsylvania code 42 county Erie code 049

**3. Classification**

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

**4. Owner of Property**

name Edward Orton

street & number 33 East Main Street

city, town North East N/A vicinity of state Pennsylvania

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Recorder of Deeds Office - Erie County Court House

street & number West Sixth Street

city, town Erie state Pennsylvania

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title N/A has this property been determined eligible?  yes  no

date N/A  federal  state  county  local

depository for survey records N/A

city, town N/A state N/A

## 7. Description

**Condition**

excellent  
 good  
 fair

deteriorated  
 ruins  
 unexposed

**Check one**

unaltered  
 altered

**Check one**

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

**Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance**

The Palace Hotel is a brick building three stories in height. There are five bays along the main or west facade, and nine bays along the south facade.

The architectural design of the structure is a commercial adaptation of High Victorian Italianate. This style is characterized by the treatment of the windows which are double-hung, with either semi-circular or segmental arch heads. Lintels are made of cut stone and there are keystones in each arch. Windows are symmetrically disposed throughout the entire facade.

Of particular note is the three-part entablature topping the building. It consists of a cornice supported by bold paired brackets, paneled frieze, and decorative brick architrave. The roof is flat. The three chimneys on the south side are capped with an ornate pattern.

Other than the removal of the original porches and balconies, the exterior of the building has not been extensively altered. Over the years the interior has undergone certain changes to adapt to various uses. The building ceased to function as a hotel in the early 1960s and was remodeled into a banquet hall and ball room. Practically none of the original fixtures on the upper floors remain. There are, however, plaster arches over hallway entrances with fancy capital work on pilasters. A large open stair leads up the three stories.

The setting of the building maintains its integrity with few recent intrusions. The former iron fence enclosing the park to the south is gone, and that area is now used for parking.

A stone plaque containing the inscription "Thort's Hotel Erected A.D. 1877" is mounted between the first and second stories at the southwest corner of the building.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" 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      1877      Builder/Architect      Unknown

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

The Palace Hotel represents the sole remaining evidence of Samson Short's plan to harness North East's economic fortunes to the railroad in the latter decades of the 19th century. Short had prospered from extensive lumbering operations in Elk and Potter Counties. He was a considerable customer of the Philadelphia and Erie Railroad which passed through St. Marys and Ridgeway. When that line was finally completed to Erie in 1864, Short decided that the area would soon offer opportunity for profitable investment. Nearby was little North East, seeking someone with money and a knack for building and starting new industry. In 1867 Short moved to North East and immediately began to buy property, particularly along the Lakeshore and Michigan Southern Railroad tracks at the southern end of the borough. It was Short's intention to create a major manufacturing and commercial center for the town here, by capitalizing on expanded passenger and freight traffic. The hotel which he erected in 1877, was to serve as the show-piece and business hub of this development.

Short was an entrepreneur - a selfmade individual who left home at 16 and owned his first sawmill at the age of 24. By the 1850s he was one of the largest lumber operators in Pennsylvania, cutting 5 million board feet of pine annually. With the discovery of oil at Titusville, demand for timber increased - as did prices. The Civil War stimulated trade further, and when it was over Short was a wealthy man and ready for new challenges.

Upon his arrival in North East Short purchased several lots on Wall, Clinton, and Pearl Streets adjacent to the railroad. With bricks from his own yard, he began building stores and houses. At the same time he formed a banking partnership with Colonel Amos Gould and A. W. Blaine. His son Alfred who had moved to North East in 1870, was hired as Cashier. Short was now well positioned to shape the rapid growth predicted for North East in the coming decade. The town was surrounded by rich farmland - grape culture was starting to boom. It was anticipated that its population would be 5,000 by 1880 - a five-fold increase.

The hotel situated just one block from the depot, cost \$26,000 to construct and featured the most recent amenities.

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It was described as the finest public house in the county outside of Erie, and one of the best between Buffalo and Cleveland. Rooms were equipped with running water pumped by a steam engine from a sixty foot well. Each contained a marble wash bowl and marble topped tables. Gas lights and heat were introduced in 1882, electrification in 1896. Balconies ringed the upper stories. To the south was a tree-filled park and fountain surrounded by an iron fence. Guests had free use of the adjacent livery stable.

For the entertainment and relaxation of his guests, Short erected two other buildings on the property - an annex which contained a barbershop and pool room; and an opera house which offered both theater and vaudeville. The latter ran for 26 seasons.

To the west on both sides of Wall Street were Samson Short's various manufacturing enterprises - Samson Fertilizer & Chemical Co., Short Manufacturing Co., U.S. Canning Co., a lumber yard and a sawmill. The tracks of the railroad spur leading to these plants are still there.

Two events conspired to defeat Short's plan for a commercial district. The first was the disastrous fire which swept away the heart of Main Street in 1884. When the shops and professional offices which lined that street re-emerged they were modern and made of brick. This insured that the town's principal business base would remain where it was. The second was the collapse of the Peoples Savings Institution of Erie County (into which Short had merged his own bank in 1883) during the financial panic of 1893. That ended Short's industrial adventures. He had already sold the Samson Fertilizer & Chemical Co. in 1891, and now disposed of the the sawmill and U.S. Canning Co.

When Short died in 1899 he was still a wealthy man, worth something over \$300,000. The North East Sun declared he had been a man of enterprise and public spirit who had accumulated a great deal of property. A few years earlier in 1895 the Sun had said, "Mr. Samson Short...(has) been at the very head of nearly all our business enterprises for the past twenty years. (He has)...contributed much to the prosperity and growth of the town." Yet today if one walks around that area of town in which he built so much; the only identifiable proof of this important legacy is the name "Short's Hotel" chiseled in stone on the facade of one large brick building.

History of Erie County Pennsylvania. (Chicago: Warner, Beers & Co., 1884), I, 735, II, 149.

### 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .36  
Quadrangle name North East  
UMT References

A 1 7 5 9 6 0 0 4 6 7 3  
Zone Easting Northing  
C  
E  
G

B  
D  
F  
H  
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal boundary description and justification Beginning at a point at the intersection of the north line of the Lakeshore and Michigan Southern Railroad Co. with the east line of Pearl Street; thence east 65 1/2' along the land of said railroad company to the west line of Lake Street; thence north along west.  
List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state PA code 027 county Erie code 027  
state code county code

### 11. Form Prepared By

name/title John R. Claridge Executive Director  
organization Erie County Historical Society date March 7, 1983  
street & number 417 State Street telephone (814) 454-1813  
city or town Erie state Pennsylvania

### 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

\_\_\_ national \_\_\_ state X local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

title Larry E. Tise, State Historic Preservation Officer date

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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

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Directory of North East Borough and Township, May 1877.  
(North East: W.E. Belnap & Company), pp. 51, 95.

Directory of the Borough of North East for 1900-1. (North East: Cushman Brothers), p. 15.

Loop, A.I., "100 Years of North East," North East Breeze, 20, 27 September 1934, 9 May 1935.

Hartly, Ralph L., "North East's Years of Grandeur---The Short Family Were Builders in the Early Life of a Progressive Community," North East Breeze, 26 August 1969.

Hartly, Ralph L., "The Fabulous Samson Short," North East Breeze, 29 October 1980 - 18 February 1981.

Green, Walter R., "North East Pennsylvania, 1850-1890" (unpublished BA thesis, Mercyhurst College, 1981), pp. 7-8, 20.

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line of Lake Street  $227\frac{1}{4}$ ' more or less to a point  $42\frac{1}{2}$ ' south from south line of alley in rear of Earl Hotel; thence west parallel with north line of said railroad company  $58\frac{1}{3}$ ' to a point; thence south parallel with Lake Street  $40\frac{1}{2}$ ' to a point; thence west parallel with north line of said railroad company land 17' to a point, being east line of a 2' alley; thence south 38' more or less to the north wall of the Palace Hotel; thence west along north wall of Palace Hotel to the east line of Pearl Street; thence south along east line of Pearl Street 168' more or less to the place of beginning.

