

**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 Wrightsville Historic District

and/or common N/A

**USE THIS COPY
FOR DUPLICATING**

2. Location

street & number Bounded by Susquehanna River - East; Vine St - North; Fourth St. - West; Willow St - South N/A not for publication

city, town Wrightsville N/A vicinity of

state PA code 42 county York code 133

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple (see attached sheets)

street & number

city, town N/A vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. York County Courthouse, Recorder of Deeds Office

street & number 28 East Market Street

city, town York state PA

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title York County Historic Sites Survey (see attached sheet)
has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1981-1982 federal state county local

depository for survey records (1) PA Historical and Museum Comm. (2) Historic York, Inc

city, town (1) Harrisburg (2) York state PA

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The borough of Wrightsville lies at the head of a broad, fertile, limestone valley along the west bank of the Susquehanna River in south-eastern Pennsylvania. The town extends for approximately one mile, running north to south, along the riverbank.* To the north and south of the borough run parallel wooded ridges, trending northeast to southwest, with the north face of the south ridge scarred by a still-operational limestone quarry. Starting around Third Street, the valley floor slopes to meet the river's edge, and Wrightsville's residential areas are built on this slope. At the foot of the slope is Front Street and the former canal and railroad rights of way, along which Wrightsville's industrial district developed.

Wrightsville's grid plan dates from the second decade of the 19th century and was laid out as two separate towns. The area bounded by Hellam Street, the Susquehanna River, Limekiln Alley and Fourth Street was laid out in 1811, and the the north of Limekiln Alley was added in 1813. These two tracts were known as Wrightsville. South of Hellam Street, a second town, known as Westphalia, was laid out in 1811 and 1812. The two villages existed independently until 1834, when they were incorporated as Wrightsville Borough.

The majority of dwellings in Wrightsville are small, vernacular workers' houses. With the exception of Front Street, Hellam Street, and Locust Street, where the larger brick and stone houses stand, these frame dwellings are the houses that generally line Wrightsville's streets. The typical Wrightsville worker's house is a 2½ story structure, 2 to 4 bays wide, often with an asymmetrically arranged fenestration pattern and a 1 or 2 story shed-roofed rear extension. Cornices are absent, and roofs tend to be of raised-seam metal. Chimneys are generally on a gable end, but in the south ward, a fair number of central chimneys are present. There is usually a front porch present, and very often there is a side porch on the rear extension. These houses, viewed on an individual basis, are very plain and rather undistinguished. However, as a group they offer an interesting glimpse into the lives of Wrightsville's 19th century laboring class.

Wrightsville's more substantial houses line Front, Hellam, and Locust Streets, and date from as early as the 1790's. They are primarily brick or stone, and loosely conform to specific architectural styles, although these styles appear somewhat later in Wrightsville than in more urban settings. Georgian/Federal style houses are 2½ storys, brick or stone, and generally appear in 2/3 Georgian townhouse form, although there are a few large 5 bay structures. Very often these Georgian/Federal houses have corbelled saw-tooth brick cornice work, and corbelled-brick gable rake boards. Greek Revival influences appear in the forms of heavy projecting cornices, attic frieze windows, and front door sidelights, although these are generally used on Georgian/Federal structural forms.

*There are approximately 380 major buildings in the proposed Wrightsville District, of which 350 are significant and contributing and 30 are intrusions

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

Wrightsville Historic District York County

Continuation sheet Description Item number 7 Page 2

For NPS use only
received
date entered

The dominant post-Civil War style in Wrightsville's middle-upper class housing is the Italianate. Heavy, bracketed wooden cornices, and segmentally arched 2/2 windows topped by segmental lintels occur frequently as do brick cornice work and corbelled, segmental window hoods. As with the Greek Revival, Italianate ornamentation in Wrightsville is applied to fundamentally Georgian forms. Other post-Civil War styles in Wrightsville include Mansard, which occurs infrequently, and Shingle Style/Queen Anne, of which there are a few very fine examples.

Industrial architecture in Wrightsville, located primarily in the Front Street area, exhibits traits characteristic of 19th century industrial architecture in general. Buildings are generally brick on fieldstone foundations, rectangular, 1½-3½ storys in height, banked, with pilastered exterior walls, segmentally arched or jack-arched lintels, and corbelled brick cornice work. Most of the exceptions to these rules lie in the Wrightsville Hardware Company Complex on Water Street, where some of the major buildings have trapezoidal shapes, owing to the fact that the railroad right-of-way bisected the parcel diagonally. Also in the Wrightsville Hardware Complex is a large 2½ story weatherboarded-frame industrial building, with tall, narrow windows topped by shallow-peaked lintel boards. Many of Wrightsville's late 19th century- early 20th century industrial buildings, notably Riverside Foundry and Susquehanna Casting have been demolished or drastically altered. However, the Wrightsville Hardware Complex, the McConkey Building, the Wrightsville silk mill, and the limekilns still possess a high degree of integrity.

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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1790-1920

Builder/Architect N/A

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Wrightsville's significance rests on four areas - transportation, industry, architecture, and military. (1) As a transportation center, Wrightsville was an early Susquehanna River crossing point, and was the eastern terminus of the Monocacy Road. Wrightsville also served as the northern terminus of the Susquehanna and Tidewater canal and as the eastern terminus of the York and Wrightsville Railroad. (2) Wrightsville's waterfront began to develop as an industrial area soon after the openings of the Susquehanna and Tidewater Canal and York and Wrightsville Railroad in 1840. Preeminent among the town's early industries were lumber and metals, with quarrying and limeburning also playing an important role. (3) Architecturally, Wrightsville shows the only concentration in York County of corbelled brick cornice work and window labels on residential buildings. These motifs occur frequently east of the Susquehanna, and in Wrightsville, but are uncommon in the rest of York County. Wrightsville also has York County's only sizeable stock of mid-late 19th C. worker's housing, as well as examples of most 19th C. architectural styles. (4) Wrightsville's military significance stems from its role in the Civil War. On June 28, 1863, a skirmish between confederate forces and Pennsylvania Militia occurred in the borough, during which the militia retreated across the mile-long wooden bridge over the Susquehanna and burned it. Thus Wrightsville became the point farthest east that Confederate forces would reach during the war.

Wright's Ferry was in operation as early as 1730 between the sites of present-day Wrightsville, on the west bank of the Susquehanna, and Columbia, on the east. In 1733, the Penn family issued a license to John Wright for the operation of his ferry, thus signaling the westward push of white settlers into what was to become York County.* In addition to serving as the western terminus of one of the most important Susquehanna River crossing points, the settlement which became Wrightsville was also the eastern terminus of the Monocacy Road, which was extended southwestward into Maryland in 1739.

In 1814, three years after the adjoining towns of Wrightsville (North of Hellam Street) and Westphalia (South of Hellam Street) has been laid out, the first bridge to cross the mile-wide Susquehanna at this point was completed, making the crossing of the river easier for greater numbers of settlers, and giving Wrightsville greater importance as a pass-through point as York County grew and prospered. Other bridges to cross the Susquehanna at Wrightsville date from 1834, 1869, 1930 and 1972, of which only the 1930 and 1972 bridges remain.

* The Wright's Ferry Mansion in Columbia, Lancaster County, was listed on the National Register on November 20, 1979.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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

Wrightsville Historic District , York County
Continuation sheet Significance Item number

8

Page 2

For NPS use only

received

date entered

Wrightsville became a focal point of canal transportation in south-central Pennsylvania in 1840 with the opening of the Susquehanna and Tidewater Canal. The canalization of the lower Susquehanna had been a bone of contention between the rival economic spheres of Philadelphia and Baltimore since 1820, and consequently it wasn't until 1835 that a bill chartering a canal company of Baltimore investors was able to overcome the opposition of Philadelphia interests in the Pennsylvania legislature. By the time the 45 mile long waterway was completed in 1840, it has cost \$3,500,000, and at \$85,000 per mile - twice the norm - it was the third most expensive canal to be constructed before the Civil War. The Susquehanna and Tidewater was a commodious waterway, and this largeness of scale, in combination with the Chesapeake and Delaware Canal's southern access to Philadelphia across the Delmarva Peninsula, contributed to the decline of the older, smaller, Union Canal, which linked the Schuylkill at Reading with the Susquehanna at Middletown. The most important products carried by the S & T were coal and wood, and tolls collected peaked in 1855 at \$211,141. The Susquehanna and Tidewater Canal Company operated the waterway until 1872, when operations were taken over by the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad. The canal ceased operations in 1896 after it was extensively damaged by a storm.

The York and Wrightsville Railroad was, as with the Susquehanna and Tidewater Canal, largely a product of Baltimore interests. Indeed, "five of the seven officials of the York and Wrightsville Railroad were Baltimore citizens" (Livingood, p.133). A line running from Baltimore to York had been proposed as early as 1827, largely as an alternative to Baltimore's beleaguered canal project. But, as with the canal, the Baltimore investors found their efforts blocked in the Pennsylvania legislature by Philadelphia interests. Finally, in 1832, a charter for the line was issued, and in 1835 the Pennsylvania legislature created the York and Wrightsville Railroad Company. By 1840, the line was completed.

Although Wrightsville had had a rail link with the State Works at Columbia since 1834, when tracks were laid on the Columbia-Wrightsville bridge, the new line expanded Wrightsville's horizons by providing rail links with Baltimore and Pittsburgh, and by putting the town on a major line to Philadelphia.

The York and Wrightsville Railroad became part of the Northern Central system in 1854, which in turn became part of the Pennsylvania Railroad in 1870. The Columbia-Wrightsville bridge carried its last passenger train in 1954, while freight service continued until 1958. The tracks were then removed between Wrightsville and Hellam, and in 1964, the bridge itself was dismantled.

The Susquehanna and Tidewater Canal and York and Wrightsville Railroad provided an ease of access to raw materials and a convenience for distribution which made Wrightsville an ideal place for industrialization after 1840. The town's industries developed primarily along Front Street, near the canal and railroad, and preeminent among these were the lumber and metals industries. Wrightsville's lumber industry involved the pro-

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

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

Wrightsville Historic District, York County

Continuation sheet Bibliographical Ref. Item number 9

Page 1

For NPS use only

received

date entered

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

Books

- Boynton, Robert S. The Chemistry and Technology of Lime and Limestone. (New York: John Wiley and Sons), 1966, pp. 3, 75, 204, 340.
- Edward, Richard. The Industries of Pennsylvania: York County. (Philadelphia), 1881.
- Livingood, James Weston. The Philadelphia-Baltimore Trade Rivalry. (Harrisburg: The Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission), 1947, pp. 54-57, 61, 64-66, 70-78, 116, 129, 132-139.
- Prowell, George R. History of York County, Pennsylvania. (Philadelphia: Pomeroy, Whitman & Co.), 1907, pp. 415-417, 599, 605-608, 926, 929, 931-932.
- Smeltzer, Gerald. Canals along the Lower Susquehanna, 1796-1900. (Prepared for the Historical Society of York County), 1963, pp. 5-8, 38-50.

Booklets

- Anonymous. Donsco, Inc.; 1906-1981. (N.P.: N.P.), 1981, pp. 2-5, 7, 12-13.
- Nye, W.S. & John F. Redman. Farthest East. (N.P.: N.P.), 1963.

Maps

- Fowler, T. M. Wrightsville, York County, Pennsylvania. (Fowler & Mayer), 1894
- Nichols, Beach. Atlas of York County, Pennsylvania. (Philadelphia: Pomeroy, Whitman & Co.), 1876, p. 33.
- Sheaver, W. O. & D. J. Lake. Map of York County, Pennsylvania. (Philadelphia 1860.

Letters

from John D. Denney, Jr. - Railroad Historian - dated November 4, 1982.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See attached sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property 129.5

Quadrangle name Columbia West, PA

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A

1	8	3	6	9	3	0	0	4	4	3	1	9	6	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

B

1	8	3	6	9	4	6	0	4	4	3	1	9	4	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

C

1	8	3	6	9	4	6	0	4	4	3	1	8	0	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

D

1	8	3	6	9	7	2	0	4	4	3	1	5	2	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

E

1	8	3	7	0	1	4	0	4	4	3	0	9	8	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

F

1	8	3	6	9	7	2	0	4	4	3	0	8	0	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

G

1	8	3	6	9	7	4	0	4	4	3	1	0	2	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

H

1	8	3	6	9	5	4	0	4	4	3	1	0	0	0
Zone	Easting				Northing									

Verbal boundary description and justification

* Boundaries fall within Wrightsville Borough as shown on attached sheet.

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

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

state N/A code N/A county N/A code N/A

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Jay Barshinger, Administrative Assistant

organization Historic York, Inc.

date 1/11/83

street & number P.O. Box 2312

telephone (717) 843-0320

city or town York

state PA

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 _____

For NPS use only

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

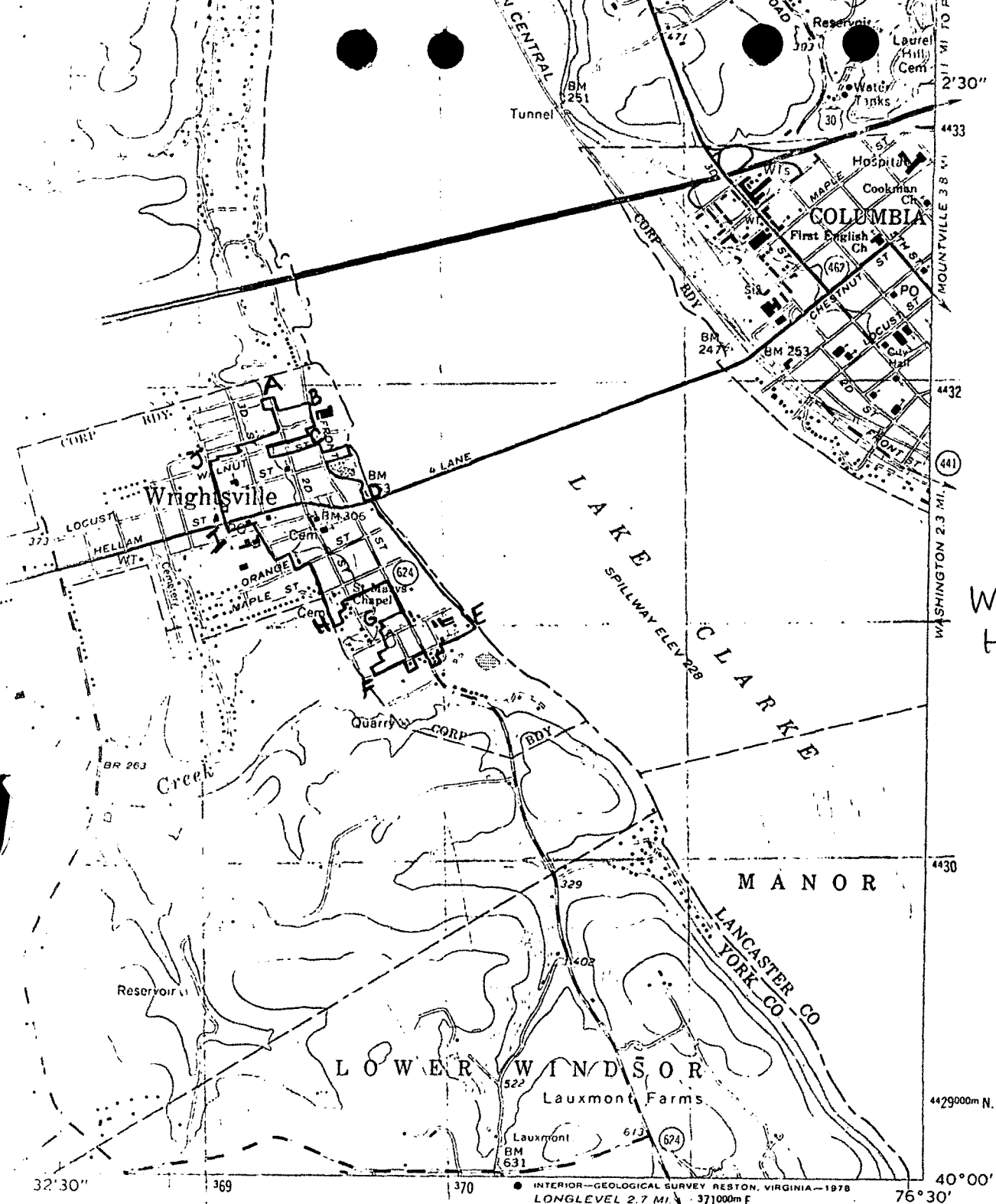
date _____

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date _____

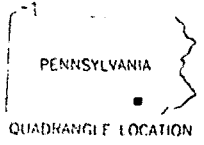
Chief of Registration



Wrightsville
Historic
District

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Heavy-duty ————— Light-duty
- Medium-duty - - - - - Unimproved dirt
- U.S. Route (dashed line with center bar)
- State Route (circle)



COLUMBIA WEST, PA.
SE/4 MIDDLETOWN 15' QUADRANGLE
N4000 — W7630/7.5

1964
PHOTOREPROD. 1977
AMS 5664 H. S. SERIES V851

(SAFE HARBOR)
5763 14 NW