

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 2501 - 31 Charles Street

and/or common Same

2. Location

street & number 2501 - 2531 Charles Street

N/A not for publication

city, town Pittsburgh vicinity of

state Pennsylvania code county Allegheny code

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<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 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	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" 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 checked="" 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 Northside Associates

street & number 1437 Western Avenue

city, town Pittsburgh vicinity of state Pennsylvania

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. County Office Building

street & number 400 Ross Street

city, town Pittsburgh state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title PA. Historical and Museum Commission has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date September 13, 1983 federal state county local

depository for survey records Bureau for Historic Preservation

city, town Harrisburg state Pennsylvania

7. Description

Condition

excellent
 good
 fair

deteriorated
 ruins
 unexposed

Check one

unaltered
 altered

Check one

original site
 moved date _____

LNA

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

This row of 25 two-story-plus-Mansard brick houses are each thirteen feet wide. The row rises with the street, stepping up about two feet every fifth house. Every fifth house is emphasized by their full width shingled gable with cornice returns, as compared to the other houses which have gabled dormers set into the mansard roof. Both the wide gables and dormers have twin windows with a simple sunrise motif incised in the wood over the windows. A band of diagonally cut shingles stretches the length of the mansard roof, visually pulling the houses together. The cornice treatment is varied throughout the row. Every other five buildings has a cornice supported by corbelled brick. The windows of the facade are twin double sash, 1/1, with a wide moulded mullion between the sashes. The entrances contained doors of a simple five-paneled design, and a narrow glass transom. The visible portion of the foundation consists of cut sandstone capped by a straight-cut water table.

The rear facade of the row is unornamented and functional. Each house is two bays wide, and has a single dormer in the rear roof. The mansard does not continue around the building. Behind the buildings is a four-foot-wide walkway and a tall retaining wall against a hillside.

In plan the buildings are simple and good examples of the narrow housing built for speculative purposes toward the end of the 19th century. The first floor has two equally-sized rooms divided by a transverse running stairway. These rooms are still used for their original purposes: as parlor/living room and kitchen/dining area for the units. The stairway separates two bedrooms on the second floor and ends in a third bedroom on the third floor. Each house originally was heated by fireplaces, the chimneys remain, although the mantles have been removed.

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 checked="" 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/ 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 type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1887

Builder/Architect William A. Stone, Developer

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

As the cities of Pittsburgh and Allegheny grew in the 1880's, a ravine in the old City of Allegheny became the site of a concentration of speculative real estate development. The row of houses on Charles Street was erected 1887 in the ravine, given the name "Pleasant Valley" by its developers. The houses on Charles Street, along with earlier speculative housing projects, comprised the largest concentration of rental housing under common ownership in Allegheny. This housing can be tied directly to the Federal Street and Pleasant Valley Street Railway, a horse-drawn street car line that had its terminus in the Pleasant Valley area. The railway was later modified to become Pittsburgh and Allegheny's first electric railway. A number of prominent Pittsburghers served on the board of directors of the railway. Among them was the developer of the speculative housing, William Alexis Stone. He was a prominent lawyer who managed a brilliant career in Pennsylvania politics, culminating in a term as Governor (1899-1903). Stone also was a primary defender of the city of Allegheny in the annexation battle with Pittsburgh.

In 1868, the Federal Street and Pleasant Valley Railway was granted a charter that allowed it a right-of-way on any street in the city of Allegheny. The line was completed in 1871 and as the name implies, the main line was along Allegheny's primary north-south street, Federal Street, and up into the narrow run parallel to Brighton Road. The company advertised the latter area as "Pleasant Valley". However, little development occurred in the valley between 1873-1880 because of the nationwide depression of that era.

In the early 1880's, Pittsburgh and Allegheny began to flourish again, and Pleasant Valley became a prime area for residential expansion. Between 1883 and 1885 ordinances were passed to grade, pave, curb, and construct a main sewer the length of Charles Street. In 1885 William A. Stone successfully developed speculative row housing along Brightridge Street near the entrance to Pleasant Valley. Two years later he built the long 25-unit row on Charles Street. The houses in the Charles Street row are 13 feet wide and 35 feet deep, and all have two rooms per floor with a single room under the Mansard roof on the third floor. The Charles Street row is nearly identical to the rows on either side of Brightridge Street, and another 25-unit complex developed by Stone, Hamilton Place (demolished), that stood 100 yards north of the Charles Street row on the opposite side of the street. Seventy-five houses were built in the three complexes, making the developments the largest group of speculative rental housing in the old city of Allegheny.

In his autobiography the developer of the speculative housing, William A. Stone wrote that he "made considerable money in the organization of street railways in Allegheny City." Originally a man of modest means, raised in rural northern Pennsylvania, his involvement in the railway and the associated housing gained for him the prominence and the money needed to launch his statewide political career. Throughout his career Stone was a part of the Republican political machine that ran the state from the 1880's until 1920. He served four terms in Congress (1891-1899) and one term as Governor of Pennsylvania (1899-1903).

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

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

For NPS use only:
received
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 2

SIGNIFICANCE

By the early 1880's, Pittsburgh and Allegheny were once more prospering and the population increasing. With the population expanding and moving into the surrounding ravines and hills, the railway, and Pleasant Valley in general, began to prosper. Stone erected the rows of speculative housing in 1885 along Brighton Place (now Brightridge Street). Twenty-five party-wall row houses were built along a block-long section of the street between Brighton Road and Taggart Street. All but two of the buildings are still standing. The two-story houses are 13 feet wide, 35 feet deep, and have two rooms per floor. Rental advertisements for the Brighton Place rows appearing in the 1885 Pittsburgh Commercial Gazette emphasized the fact that these houses were along the Pleasant Valley Railway. In 1888, real estate agents reported that there was considerable inquiry for "lots on the new electric line".

An examination of the 1900 census for the City of Allegheny reveals the ethnic background and employment of the people who were living in the speculative housing. The occupations of the tenants of the buildings include laborers, railroad workers, skilled tradesmen, clerks, and shopkeepers. The number of people per household was not unreasonable for the size of the buildings (each house has four bedrooms). The tenants of the rows were of modest means, but were not as poor as their much-studied contemporaries in the overcrowded company housing near the steel mills of the region.

Although a few of the speculative housing tenants were native Americans, most were foreign born. The immigrant tenants almost exclusively came from Germany, Ireland, and England. There were no Italians, Poles, or "Slavs" (people from Middle-European countries) listed as living in the buildings. The city of Allegheny did not attract the waves of turn-of-the-century immigrants that settled in Pittsburgh and in the mill towns along the Monongahela River. The lack of more recent immigrants in the rows is an indication of the difference in ethnic make-up between Pittsburgh and Allegheny.

In the early twentieth century, social reformers criticised Pittsburgh for the housing condition of the mill workers. However, Stone's rows of speculative housing resemble the apartment courts that evolved in the early twentieth century, more than the contemporary housing found around Pittsburgh's mills. The Brighton Place houses were equipped with indoor plumbing, provided space in the rear of the rows, and were given character through architectural detail. These features were virtually unheard of in the company housing for the mill workers, and were most likely undertaken to increase the appeal, as well as the revenue of the buildings.

In the middle third of this century the development of automobile-related suburbs caused many of the residential areas of the old city of Allegheny to go into decline. The Pleasant Valley area lost its importance as a neighborhood close and convenient to the mills, factories, and central business district of the old city. The rows of housing deteriorated through the 1950's and 1960's.

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

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

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet

Item number 8

Page 3

SIGNIFICANCE

Throughout the 1900's some of the houses on Brightridge Street (old Brighton Place) have passed to private owners. In the early 1970's the rows were acquired and rehabilitated in an attempt to deal with the blighted conditions of the Charles Street Valley section of Pittsburgh's Northside. The rehabilitation was largely cosmetic and did not alter the plan of the buildings or much of the architectural detail. Some of the badly deteriorated doors and windows were replaced.

The rows comprising 838-62 Brightridge Street are good local examples of 19th century speculative rental row housing which preceded apartment construction. They also represent the development of the Pleasant Valley area of Pittsburgh's Northside (the former City of Allegheny) which was directly stimulated by the Federal Street and Pleasant Valley Railway. William A. Stone, an influential lawyer and investor in the railway, was the developer of three principal concentrations of this type of row housing: 838-62 Brightridge Street, rows facing Hamilton Place (demolished), and 2501-31 Charles Street. These projects for their time comprised the largest concentration of rental housing under common ownership in the City of Allegheny. Stone, a primary defender of the City of Allegheny in its annexation battle with Pittsburgh, gained prominence and income from the railway and the associated housing projects which helped him launch a statewide political career.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received
date entered

Continuation sheet Bibliographical References Item number 9

Page 2

- Burgoyne, Arthur G. All Sorts of Pittsburghers, (Leader All Sorts, Oct., Pittsburgh, 1892).
- Encyclopedia of Contemporary Biography of Pennsylvania, (Atlantic Publishing and Engraving Company, New York, 1889).
- "Federal Street and Pleasant Valley Railway Company." The Street Railway Journal Souvenir (Oct., 1891, pg. 19)
- Fleming, Robert H. Pittsburgh and Environs, (American Historical Society, Chicago, 1922)
- "Inclines Planes and People - Some Past and Present Ones." Western Pennsylvania Historic Magazine (Oct., 1963, v. 46)
- Jordan, John W. Encyclopedia of Pennsylvania Biographies, (Lewis Publishing Company, New York, 1916).
- LuBove, Roy, Twentieth Century Pittsburgh. (John Wiley and Sons, Inc., 1969)
- Stone, William A. Tale of a Plain Man, (Published by the author, Pittsburgh, 1917).
- Wilheim, Carl, Complete History of the City of Allegheny, Pennsylvania, (Published by the author, Pittsburgh, 1891).

MAPS

- Atlases of Pittsburgh and Allegheny (G.M. Hopkins Co., Philadelphia 1872, 1882, 1890, 1901).
- Atlas of Allegheny, Pa. (G.M. Hopkins Co., Philadelphia, 1907).

PUBLIC RECORDS

- Allegheny County Charter Book, v. 12, pg. 219.
- Allegheny County Deeds of Property.
- Allegheny County Plan Books.
- City of Allegheny, Municipal Records, 1883-1885.
- City of Allegheny, Record of Building Permits Issued, 1894-1900.
- City of Allegheny, Twelfth Census of the United States, 1900.

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

For NPS use only

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

received

date entered

Continuation sheet Owners of property

Item number 4

Page 2

The following owners are not part of the Northside Associates:

Mr. Henry Lewis
855 Brightridge Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15212

Mrs. Concetta Peter
856 Brightridge Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15212

Mrs. Ora Mae Harvey
859 Brightridge Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15212

Mrs. Florence Connolly
840 Brightridge Street
Pittsburgh, PA 15212

9. Major Bibliographical References

Archives of Industrial Society, University of Pittsburgh, Palmer Collection, "History of the United Traction Company of Pittsburgh."

Biographical Directory of the American Congress (Government Printing Office, Washington, 1928).

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 1

Quadrangle name Pittsburgh West Quadrangle

Quadrangle scale 7.5 minute

UTM References

A

17	583280	4479800
Zone	Easting	Northing

B

17	583260	4479600
Zone	Easting	Northing

C

--	--	--

D

--	--	--

E

--	--	--

F

--	--	--

G

--	--	--

H

--	--	--

Verbal boundary description and justification

The raer property line of those buildings on Charles Street between U.T.M. points at Zone 17, E.583-260, N.4479-760 and E. 583-280, N.4479-800.

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

state n/a code county code

state n/a code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Patricia A. McLaughlin & Charles H. Uhl

organization Tom Mistick & Sons, Inc. date 11/14/83

street & number 1437 Western Avenue telephone (412) 322-1121

city or town Pittsburgh 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

Larry E. Tise

title State Historic Preservation Officer

date 11/18/84

For NPS use only

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

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

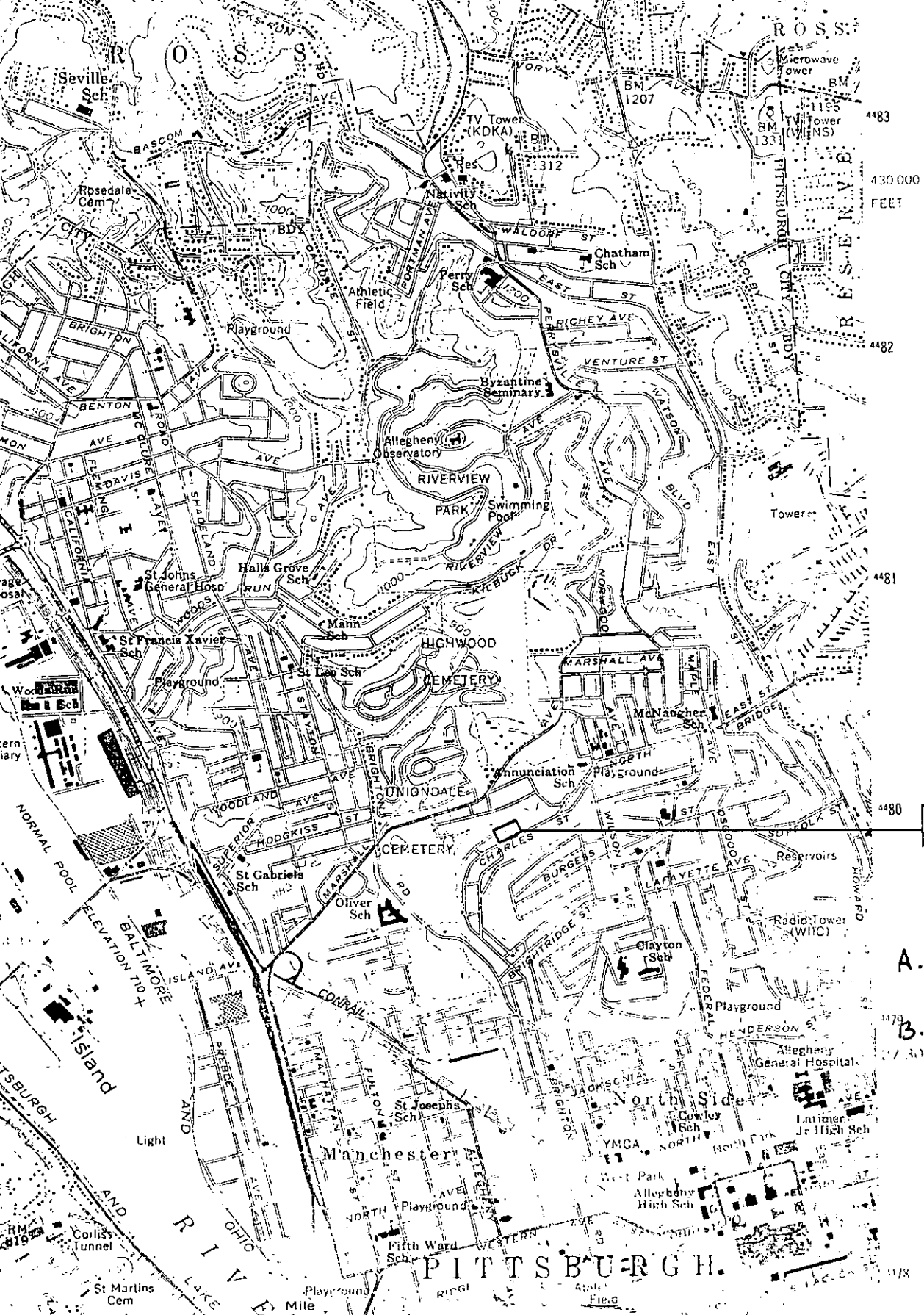
date

Chief of Registration

PITTSBURGH WEST QUADRANGLE
 PENNSYLVANIA—ALLEGHENY CO
 7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

50° 11' 30" SW
 (GALLIENUS)

81 2'30" 582 583 1 370 000 FEET 584 80 00' 40°30'



2501-2531 CHARLES ST.
 Allegheny County
 Zone 17, Pittsburgh
 Quad

- A. E 583 280
 N 4479 800
- B. E 583 260
 N 4479 760

PITTSBURGH.