

United States Department of the Interior National Park Service National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name Mount Airy Historic District
other names/site number Mount Airy Park; Prospect Avenue

2. Location

street & number Prospect Avenue not for publication
city, town Bethlehem vicinity
state Pennsylvania code PA county Lehigh code 077 zip code 18013

3. Classification

Ownership of Property
 private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal

Category of Property
 building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

Number of Resources within Property
Contributing 27 Noncontributing 2
buildings
sites
structures
objects
Total 2

Name of related multiple property listing:
NA

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Brent Glass 8/17/88
Signature of certifying official Date
Brent Glass, Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.
Signature of commenting or other official Date
State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I, hereby, certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register.
 removed from the National Register.
 other. (explain:)

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/single dwelling**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Colonial RevivalTudor RevivalQueen Anne

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stonewalls BrickStoneroof Slateother TileWood

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The Mount Airy Historic District of the city of Bethlehem is an area of large, ornate houses erected between 1895 and 1930. Mount Airy contains a wide sampling of late 19th century eclectic and early 20th century revival styles in a variety of materials, of which brick, frame, and stone are the most common. The district includes Prospect Avenue between Eighth and 15th avenues and contains 27 contributing residential buildings and two non-contributing houses erected in the 1970s. The former typically are two-and-one-half- or three-story, single-family dwellings following the ridge along Prospect Avenue, most of them built from 1910 until 1930. The integrity of these houses is high. The district boundaries exclude adjoining areas of less finely detailed, densely situated two-story single, double, and row houses circa 1900 to 1980.

Mount Airy was laid out in small 25- to 40-foot-wide lots, usually sold in multiples, so that plot size varies. The 1910-1930 buildings often fill an entire block each or share them with only one or two others, and are set back as much as 50 feet from the curb. The expansive grounds, extensive plantings and circular drives create a suburban-estate ambiance. The 1895-1909 houses are closer together than the later buildings, and usually stand 10 to 20 feet from the curb.

Although the houses vary in style, the period, mass and construction quality are consistent throughout the district. These residences are made of solid materials of the finest grades. Walls generally are eight-inches thick or more; window and door frames are heavy and durable. Detailing is substantial.

Twenty-one of the 27 contributing houses were constructed from 1910 until 1930. These buildings usually are of two-and-one-half stories and have center entrances, some with porches. Detailing tends to be restrained, often in stone. Roof brackets are common. Gable roofs flanked by chimneys and dotted with dormers dominate these houses. The result is an imposing impression of quiet wealth.

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Mount Airy Historic District

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Six of the contributing buildings date from 1895 through 1909. They have two-and-one-half or three stories and frequently are of brick or stone on the first floor with wooden shingles or stucco/half timbering on the second and third floor and gables.

Styles represented in the later, more numerous Mount Airy houses include: Colonial, Dutch, French Renaissance, Spanish and Tudor Revival. Of these, Colonial Revival is the most common. Queen Anne and Shingle style dwellings are found in the earlier group.

The Colonial Revival residences are of brick, clapboard or stone and usually have three or five bays, six-over-six windows with shutters and slate roofs. The circa 1925 H. G. Lewis residence, 375th 13th Avenue is an example of this type. This symmetrical, clapboard house, has six-over-six windows. The Austin D. Mixsell house at 1220 Prospect Avenue, circa 1912, is a brick, five-bay Colonial Revival dwelling.

The Tudor Revival residences, the circa 1930 Robert house, 1024 Prospect Avenue, for instance, are very large and rambling, with rough brick walls and hand-hewn slate roofs. The elaborate detailing is displayed in carved limestone doorways with Tudor arches and multiple-panel leaded windows, some with stained glass. Repeated half-timber gables add to the casual lack of formal symmetry which makes these homes impressive yet welcoming.

The French Renaissance Revival-influenced architecture also is asymmetrical and features steeply sloping wooden-shingle roofs with half dormers and walls of brick. The C. E. Siebecker house, built about 1930 at 1521 Prospect Avenue of brick and stucco, is an example of this style.

The lone Spanish Revival residence, the circa 1912 H. P. Phelps house at 920 Prospect Avenue, is symmetrical, of brick and stucco, and is roofed with red tile.

Among the earlier dwellings, the circa 1895 A. S. Shimer house is an excellent example of the Queen Anne style, and typical of the configuration and material use common to Mount Airy houses of 1895 to 1909. This two-and-one-half-story building with three-story round tower is constructed of brick on the first floor and is shingled on the upper levels.

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Mount Airy *Historic District*

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The integrity of the Mount Airy District is high. The majority of contributing buildings is intact and well preserved. Three private residences have been altered for other uses, but remain contributing. In each case, changes made to the houses reflect sensitivity to the integrity of the original designs.

The Eugene Grace Mansion has become Holy Family Manor, a nursing home operated by the Roman Catholic Archdiocese of Allentown. A large addition was made to the back of the building and the Prospect Avenue facade was altered. All the new work is in character with the original. The brick matches; windows continue to be white and multi-paned; the roof is gabled and slate covered; pediments carry on the Colonial Revival theme. The mass of the addition is hidden from Prospect Avenue by the mansion facade. The C. A. Buck house is now a residence for priests. A large addition in white stone was made to the rear of the building, in a style similar to the house. The mass here, too, is concealed by the main mansion. The Mixell mansion is a nunnery and has an added chapel indistinguishable from the original fabric.

Few other residences have been altered. The front porches were removed from the Clarence Wolle and G. H. Wolle houses, but the latter is being rebuilt. Family rooms have been added to the George Wolle and Paul Walter houses, both concealed from the street. A small reception area for a pediatrician's office was attached to one side of the Phelps residence. In each case the additions are in the style and materials of the existing residences.

Two 1970s single-family residences on Prospect Avenue are not contributing. One is a two-story building at 1134, the other a ranch-style house at 1113. Both these houses have low, sloping roofs, and floor-to-floor heights are less than in the original buildings. Although the newer houses are well built by contemporary standards, they are not so substantial as the contributing buildings. Further, their aluminum siding and asphalt shingling are exceptions to the district. Nonetheless, because of their small number they do not significantly diminish the district's significance.

The integrity both of building and character has been respected in Mount Airy. Unlike other areas of executive housing in Bethlehem, this neighborhood has retained its appeal for upper-income families and are well maintained.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

nationally statewide locally

Applicable National Register Criteria A B C D

Criteria Considerations (Exceptions) NA B C D E F G

Area of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

Industry
Architecture

Period of Significance
1895-1930

Significant Dates
NA

Cultural Affiliation
NA

Significant Person
NA

Architect/Builder
various

State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.

The Mount Airy Historic District is a historically and architecturally significant area of Bethlehem. It is the only extensive collection of early 20th century, large, high-style houses in the city. Mount Airy was the principal residential enclave of Bethlehem Steel executives during the period in which their firm was one of the country's leading steel manufacturers.

The industrial pre-eminence of Bethlehem began in 1829 with the establishment of the Lehigh Canal, which made it possible for manufacturers to ship their products to wide markets. The Lehigh Valley Railroad, which further increased the range and speed of shipping; the zinc industry, and the iron companies were established in Bethlehem by the 1850s. By 1886, Bethlehem Iron Works had emerged as the prime local industry and reached national importance by securing United States Government armaments contracts. At the turn of the century, Bethlehem Steel was supplying arms for European war efforts.

In the second half of the 19th century the first industrial leaders in Bethlehem built imposing dwellings on Fountain Hill or East Market Street. These magnates had acquired fortunes in land speculation and transportation and in iron, steel, zinc, and other heavy industries. Their domiciles on Fountain Hill stand near their steel plants and railroad offices, and their houses on East Market Street expanded the community in downtown Bethlehem created by the 18th century Moravian settlement.

In 1904, Charles Schwab bought Bethlehem Steel Company, the firm which overshadowed all other industries in Bethlehem in scale and production. Schwab promoted new men to executive positions. As they acquired wealth and influence, these executives erected their own residences, alternatives to the Victorian mansions erected by their predecessors. Fountain Hill and the fashionable portion of East Market Street already were built over, and land was scarce. The new men of money and power moved to an up-to-date area reflecting their new importance. That was the origin of Mount Airy.

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Mount Airy was popular during the last years of the 19th century and the first third of the 20th century. Although Mount Airy straddled the old road from Bethlehem to Allentown, traffic was rerouted in 1870 to Broad Street, reducing outside intrusion. The shift in traffic patterns preserved Mount Airy's suburban setting which was attractive to affluent businessmen. In contrast to their predecessors who dwelt on East Market Street and on Fountain Hill, the later generation of executives did not seem interested in living within sight of their mills and offices. Instead of a view of and proximity to business centers, the high ridge centering on Mount Airy Park provided bucolic breezes and vistas.

The name Mount Airy is associated with the development of three parcels of land at Bethlehem's West boundary. Shipley and Ashbrook began development in 1879, but with little effect. In 1895, Wolle, Kemerer, and Leinbach developed "West Side" subdivision and began constructing several large, high-style houses. The largest development was "Mount Airy," created by B. Luther Shimer in 1900 from the Shimer farm, Mount Airy Park. All three parcels together formed one area that became known as Mount Airy.

Shimer advertised his real estate endeavor in newspapers and the City Directory, attracting the attention of steel executives flush with cash. Top Bethlehem Steel executives received annual bonuses based on company profits. With the success of Bethlehem Steel armaments and armor plate sales for World War I, large bonuses gave company officers the money to build their own impressive houses, and they bought up the last remaining Mount Airy property between 1910 and 1930. So prominent was the impact of Bethlehem Steel profits on the area that Mount Airy even was referred to as "Bonus Hill."

Schwab himself owned the site which later became 1427, 1505 and 1521 Prospect Avenue. Company President Eugene Grace bought the circa 1897 classical Revival style Edward Williams residence at 1317 Prospect and several surrounding lots. Next door is the circa 1912 Classical Revival style residence of Vice President for Raw Materials Charles Austin Buck. Auditor Frederick A. Schick built a Tudor Revival house at 1306 Prospect Avenue about 1915. Also about that year, William Frank Roberts, general superintendent of the Lehigh plant, put up at 1318 Prospect Avenue a Colonial Revival dwelling, and his counterpart at the Saucon plant, Richard Fitz Randolph, erected a house in the same style at 1324 Prospect. Schwab sold his Mount Airy property, and among the buyers were John Grace, Eugene's brother and fellow Bethlehem Steel executive, and a Dr. Paul Walter. Grace put up a circa 1913 Arts and Crafts-influenced English cottage at 1427 Prospect Avenue, and Walter built a large stone Colonial Revival home about a dozen years later.

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Mount Airy Historic District

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Bethlehem officials and other top businessmen continued to move to Mount Airy even after mansion building stopped in 1930, continuing Mount Airy's status as Bethlehem's chief upper-class neighborhood. Eventually, however, like Fountain Hill before it, Mount Airy became less prominent due to lack of space for additional building and the development of a new fashionable neighborhood, Saucon Valley. Unlike Fountain Hill, where many of the houses were converted to multi-family uses, Bethlehem Steel executives who relocated to Saucon Valley frequently sold their Mount Airy dwellings to other prosperous citizens for use as their personal homes.

The houses of Mount Airy are architecturally important in Bethlehem, constituting the sole major collection of large, high-style, 20th century houses in Bethlehem. Only two other aggregations of large, high-style houses exist in the city, both of which pre-date Mount Airy. The proposed Fountain Hill Historic District houses and the East Market Street dwellings in the proposed Central Bethlehem Historic District extension were built between the late 1850s and 1905. The massive Chateausque, Gothic Revival, Italianate and Second Empire styles of those areas differ from the styles which predominate in Mount Airy. Those earlier grand houses are more exuberant and historically fanciful than those which followed in Mount Airy.

Mount Airy is historically significant for its association with the leading early 20th century executives of Bethlehem Steel Corporation, the city's major industry, during its period of peak prominence. It is architecturally significant as forming the only collection of early 20th century large, high-style residences in Bethlehem.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional data:

- State historic preservation office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Specify repository:

Bethlehem Public Library

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 33.3

UTM References

| | | | |
|---|------|-------------|---------------|
| A | 1,8 | 4,6,5,7,4,0 | 4,4,9,6,5,0,0 |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| C | 1,8 | 4,6,6,5,9,0 | 4,4,9,6,3,4,0 |

| | | | |
|---|------|-------------|---------------|
| B | 1,8 | 4,6,6,5,5,0 | 4,4,9,6,5,4,0 |
| | Zone | Easting | Northing |
| D | 1,8 | 4,6,5,7,4,0 | 4,4,9,6,3,2,0 |

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title James G. Whilden Jr., Architect/Philip Michael Clark
organization Spillman Farmer Architects/PHMC date December 1, 1987
street & number Bethlehem Plaza/State Museum telephone 215-865-2621/783-0395
city or town Bethlehem/Harrisburg state PA zip code 18018/1710

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BIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES - MOUNT AIRY

1. Bethlehem City Directories, Vols: 1890 - Present; R.L. Polk & Co., publishers, Bethlehem Public Library, 11 West Church Street, Bethlehem, PA 18018
2. Bethlehem Globe Times Obituary Files; Bethlehem Public Library, 11 West Church Street, Bethlehem, PA 18018
3. Cotter, Arundel, The Story of Bethlehem Steel, New York: The Moody Magazine and Book Co., 1916.
4. Heller, William J., History of Northampton County and the Grand Valley of the Lehigh (2 vols.). New York: The American Historical Society 1920 Vol. I and II.
5. Lehigh County Courthouse - County Recorder of Deeds - Subdivision Plans, 5th and Hamilton Streets, Allentown, PA.
6. Semi-Centennial Souvenir History of the Borough of South Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, 1865-1915, Quinlin Printing Co. (no date).
7. Yates, W. Ross Bethlehem of Pennsylvania - The Golden Years 1841-1920 Bethlehem, PA: Lehigh Litho, Inc. 1976.

Interviews:

Mrs. Caroline Lutz
Mr. & Mrs. John J. Somerville
Mr. & Mrs. Paul Walter

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Beginning at a point on the southeast corner of Eighth and Prospect Avenue, thence east 210.5 feet along the south side of Prospect Avenue to the northeast corner of property at 821 Prospect Avenue, thence southwest 196.75 feet along the east property line to a point on the north side of Franklin Alley, thence west along the north side of Franklin Alley 166.75 feet to the southeast corner of Eighth Avenue and Franklin Alley, thence north along the east side of Eighth Avenue approximately 65 feet, thence west across Eighth Avenue 144.35 feet to the southwest corner of property at 903 Prospect Avenue, thence following rear property lines south 2 feet, west 39.65 feet, north 44.35 feet, west 74 feet, south 2 feet, and west 126.5 feet to a point on the west side of Ninth Avenue, thence south approximately 12 feet along the west side of Ninth Avenue, thence west 162 feet to the southwest corner of property at 1007 Prospect Avenue, thence south 26 feet to the southeast corner of property at 1019 Prospect Avenue, thence west 188.5 feet to a point on the west side of Tenth Avenue, thence south 67 feet along the west side of Tenth Avenue to the northwest corner of Tenth Avenue and Franklin Alley thence west 105.1 feet to the southeast corner of property at 359 Tenth Avenue.

Thence north 173 feet to the northwest corner of property at 359 Tenth Avenue, thence west 30 feet, thence north approximately 166 feet to a point on the south side of Prospect Avenue, thence west along the south side of Prospect Avenue approximately 286 feet to a point at the southwest corner of Eleventh and Prospect Avenues. Thence south 875.06 feet along the west side of Eleventh Avenue to the northeast corner of Eleventh Avenue and Spring Street, thence west along Spring Street 509.32 feet to the southwest corner of property at 1317 Prospect Avenue, thence north 390 feet, thence west 230 feet to a point on the east side of Thirteenth Avenue, thence north along the east side of Thirteenth Avenue 227.82 feet, thence west 281 feet to the southwest corner of property at 375 Thirteenth Avenue, thence following property lines south 37.67 feet, west 116.04 feet and south 220 feet to a point on the north side of Calypso Avenue, thence west 358 feet along the north side of Calypso Avenue to the northeast corner of Calypso and Fifteenth Avenue.

Thence north along the east side of Fifteenth Avenue 515 feet to the southeast corner of Fifteenth and Prospect Avenues, thence east 755 feet along the south side of Prospect Avenue to the southeast corner of Thirteenth and Prospect Avenues, thence north 185 feet along the east side of Thirteenth Avenue to the southeast corner of Thirteenth Avenue and West Market Street, thence east 1779.62 feet along the south side of West Market Street to the southwest corner of Eighth Avenue and West Market Street; thence south 299.5 feet along the west side of Eighth Avenue to the Point of Beginning.

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Mount Airy Boundary Justification

The boundary contains the contributing large, high-style buildings that are associated with the executives of Bethlehem Steel Company. On all sides of the district the boundary excludes considerably smaller single houses and duplexes on much smaller lots. These excluded buildings are not in keeping with the scale, layout, and architecture of the buildings within the proposed historic district.

ALLENTOWN EAST QUADRANGLE
 PENNSYLVANIA
 7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

SW/4 ALLENTOWN 15' QUADRANGLE

5965 III NE
 (NAZARETH)

TH OF PENNSYLVANIA
 NVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES
 AND GEOLOGIC SURVEY

5965 III NW
 (ATASAUQUA)



75° 22' 30"
 40° 37' 30"

Mount Airy Historic District
 Lehigh County - Zone 18
 American East Guard

HARROW PA 611 17 MI
 HELLERTOWN 38 MI

470 000
 FEET
 D
 A E 465 740 N
 B E 466 550 N
 C E 466 590 N
 E 465 740 N