

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 Towanda Historic District

other names/site number N/A

### 2. Location

street & number Roughly bounded by Fifth, Elizabeth, River & Kingsbury N/A not for publication

city, town Towanda

state Pennsylvania code PA county Bradford code 015 zip code 18848

### 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	Noncontributing	
<u>441</u>	<u>41</u>	buildings
<u>1</u>		sites
		structures
		objects
<u>442</u>	<u>41</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 1

### 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.

Signature of certifying official \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

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:) \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of the Keeper \_\_\_\_\_

Date of Action \_\_\_\_\_

**6. Function or Use**

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic Single Dwelling

Commerce/Trade - - Department Store

Government/courthouse

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic Single Dwelling

Commerce/Trade - Department Store

Government/courthouse

**7. Description**

Architectural Classification

(enter categories from instructions)

Greek Revival

Queen Anne

Classical Revival

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

foundation Stone

walls Brick

Weatherboard

roof Metal

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

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The Towanda Historic District is located on a hilly tract next to the North Branch of the Susquehanna River. The streets form an irregular grid which is oriented to the river bank; the district's shape is similarly irregular. The predominant architectural styles are Greek Revival and Queen Anne, with Gothic Revival, Second Empire and Italianate styles also represented. Buildings in the downtown range in scale from the dominant bulk of the Bradford County Courthouse (National Register 1986 photo #27) down to two and three story commercial buildings on narrow plots; residential scale runs from small cottage-like houses up to rambling Queen Anne mansions on large lots. The structures are either brick or frame construction, as stone buildings are few. While some buildings date from the early years of the 19th and 20th centuries, the vast majority date from Towanda's economic heyday, which spanned the years 1830-1900. Though most of the downtown business district is included, the district is predominantly residential.

In the downtown area, south of Plank Road, Towanda's grid is regular with the majority of streets following North-South and East-West alignments. North of Plank Road, streets are generally laid out in relation to York Avenue, which runs toward the northwest. The streets nearest the River: North Main, William and River, align with the downtown grid, reflecting earlier development patterns. Streets parallel to the River represent older neighborhoods, while streets conforming to the York Street axis date primarily from the Victorian period. The commercial area is centered on Main Street in the southern part of the Historic District with the county courthouse roughly at its center; residential areas are located on the hill to the west and in the northern arm of the district.

Commercial buildings in the Towanda District (photos #9, 16, 20, 22) are generally three stories in height and of brick construction. They are placed directly on the sidewalks and are joined in the central business district by a few larger commercial structures like the Hale Opera House (photo #18). The several large churches similarly front on the sidewalk (photos #19, 21). Only the Bradford County Courthouse is set in an open courtyard. The Courthouse and the Episcopal Church are the notable stone structures in the district.

Residential structures are divided between brick and frame construction, and are less closely sited. A few of the older houses front directly on the sidewalk, but most early houses have small front yards (photos 3 & 4), and larger dwellings are often set in more extensive lawns. In the Victorian neighborhoods (photo #23), open space becomes the norm, with the mansion scale buildings often having grounds of one acre or more. The later houses are more often of frame construction, reflecting the region's lumbering industry.

While three buildings survive in the district from around 1815, only one, the house of town founder William Means, 110 Bridge Street (photo #1), possesses notable architectural value. Built in 1816, this frame Federal three-bay structure has a dentiled cornice, window heads decorated with a swag and garland motif, a round topped second story window with graceful curvilinear muntins, and a porch supported by fluted Ionic columns. The entrance has sidelights and transom with slender Ionic columns immediately flanking the paneled door. The Means house was moved half a block in 1885, but pictorial evidence shows that its integrity is intact.

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The Towanda district has a rich variety of Greek Revival houses. The earliest definitely dated example is the Towanda Academy of 1835 at 514 State Street (photo #2). Built of common bond brick, this small building features three brick Doric pilasters on its facade topped by a dentiled frieze and projecting cornice. More ornate is the Baird House at 100 River Street, c. 1835 (photo #3), which is also common bond brick. It has two Ionic columned porches, geometric cast iron grills over the frieze windows, and a dentiled cornice supported by small, pendant brackets. With the frame M.C. Mercur house, 14 Second Street, c. 1835 (photo #4), the full-blown temple-form house with massive two story fluted Ionic columns appears in the District. Other features of this house are a raised porch, which combines with the elevation of the lot above street level to make this facade truly impressive, and an ornate entrance featuring four engaged Ionic columns, sidelights and transom, and a paneled door. The Dr. Samuel Huston house at 109 York Avenue, c. 1835 (photo #5), is a temple-form cottage with symmetrical wings. This frame building has Doric pilasters, a recessed porch with square Doric columns, and bracketed eaves.

Later examples of Greek Revival include the Ulysses Mercur house of 1851, 208 Third Street (photo #6), a frame building with two story pilastered corners whose Doric capitals are embellished with an egg-and-dart pattern; a massive frieze and dentiled cornice with iron window grilles define the roofline. The full-width porch is carried by Ionic fluted columns, the entrance surround is massive, and the window heads have ornate curved appliques. The later James Macfarlane house at 21 Main Street, c. 1858 (photo #7), begins to adopt features of the then nationally prevalent Italianate style, including extra-wide eaves, square plan and extensive bracketing, while retaining the iron frieze grilles and the massive pilastered and corniced entrance treatment of the Greek Revival house.

The district also contains a plethora of more modest Greek Revival houses (photo #8), many with the facing gable with or without a wing configuration. These are concentrated in the North Main/William Street area, although examples are present in other neighborhoods.

A number of Gothic Revival houses of high quality are present in the district. The earliest is the brick David Cash house of 1845, 302 Third Street (photo #10), a large structure with three steep Gothic gables at attic level, embellished with ornate vergeboards, and a large double second story window in a lancet shaped arch above the triple arched entrance. A full porch is supported by trefoil columns and features elongated Tudor arches and a projecting center bay. The Presbyterian Church of 1855, 5 Court Street, is a tall, narrow brick structure with a central crenellated tower, lancet windows, stylized buttresses and elaborate brick corbeling. A similarly styled brick store building a block away at 300 Main Street, c. 1855, features upper windows in lancet shaped arches, corbeled brickwork, and retains one of its two original storefronts. The frame Mahlon Mercur house of 1857, 200 Chestnut Street (photo #11), has triple Gothic dormers, carved vergeboards and a large double window in a lancet shaped opening on its side face; many of the windows are triangular paned Tudor types. The frame Ethan Smith house at 10 York Street, c. 1867, has only one central peaked dormer, again with a double window in a single lancet-shaped opening. Its vergeboards are more in a Carpenter Gothic mode, and a three sided bay with Tudor-arched openings protects its entrance.

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Finally, SS Peter and Paul Church represents a dignified strain of Gothic Revival that is related to the Presbyterian Church in its simplicity. Built in 1869-1879 at 1 Third Street, its main decorative feature is light colored stone highlights, which contrast with the brickwork of the walls. Window hoods, buttresses and the main entrance are all embellished with light colored stone.

While Italianate is heavily represented in the business district, relatively few houses were built in this style. The E. Ashmun Parsons House, 304 York Avenue, c. 1867 (photo #13), features the characteristic corner tower, heavily pilastered and bracketed, and bracketed eaves; several windows have unusual projecting roofs above, supported by bracketing. The Edward Overton, Jr. house, 305 York Avenue, c. 1873 (photo #14), has a hipped roof with a facing gable at the front, supported by brackets. Heavy window hoods and a powerful bracketed surround to the main door, along with a highly embellished porch, complete the treatment. There are a large number of simple Italianate commercial buildings and parts of the downtown benefit from a number of adjacent Italianate structures, giving the viewer a strong sense of visual unity (photo #9).

One reason for the relative absence of the Italianate style was the pervasiveness of the Greek Revival which continued to exert a strong influence on architectural form to the end of the 19th Century resulting in a mid-century vernacular form that was popular from the late 1860's to the 1890's (photo #15). These two-story structures are scattered throughout the Victorian era neighborhoods and exhibit the following features: square shape, usually with a rear wing or ell, low hipped roof with exaggerated overhang, plain frieze and narrow end boards, 2/2 or 1/1 windows, often with segmental arched hoodmolds and/or paired windows, Greek Revival entry with transom and side lights. Often these mid-century vernacular examples have front and/or side porches with strong Italianate detailing.

The Second Empire style is represented by several good buildings within the district. A notable commercial example is 416 Main Street, c. 1880 (photo #16), a four story building with fish-scale slate on the face of the Mansard roof, elaborate fourth-floor window treatment and a heavily bracketed cornice. A frame house at 311 York Avenue (photo #17), which was built around 1874 by local contractor S.W. Little, shares the same slatework. It is marked by a very strong cornice atop the Mansard and a pilastered entrance surround.

A number of district buildings are in the Romanesque Revival style. The Hale Opera House at 601 Main Street, 1886 (photo #18), built by Coddling & Hale, is a four story brick structure which combines the round arches and ascending organization of the Richardsonian Romanesque with some Queen Anne detailing. The Episcopal Church, 1 Main Street, c. 1889 (photo #19), combines the blunt stonework and conical towers of the Romanesque with Gothic features. Built in 1888 at 428 Main Street, the brick Citizens National Bank building (photo #20) features an octagonal corner tower with stone highlights and terra-cotta decorative panels; ground floor treatment features carved stone arches springing from engaged triple marble columns. The Methodist Episcopal Church at 105 Main Street, c. 1890 (photo #21), is also brick with stone detailing executed in limestone. A tower frames each corner of the facade; stone is used for window hoods and the cornice treatment, while the arched entrances spring from engaged columns. A large brick house at 108 Chestnut Street, c. 1891, also mixes stone window hoods into its facade; much of its third floor treatment adds shingle-style elements.

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An unusual commercial building, the Kingsbury/Chamberlain building of 1887 at 322 Main Street (photo #22), has been the home of the local Masonic Lodge since its erection. This Eclectic structure is executed in light colored brick, with extensive polychrome brick Victorian Gothic embellishment. The window hoods and cornice reflect an Eastlake influence, and the stone elements all have carved decoration.

Queen Anne houses represent one of the main elements in the Towanda district. The brick house at 101 York Avenue, c. 1880, displays the characteristic corbeled chimney, rambling plan and ornately spindled porches of the style. The frame Dan Turner house, 217 York Avenue, 1897 (photo #23), displays varied wall treatment, twin gables and very elaborate spindled porches, including a porte-cochere. The frame 301 York Avenue, c. 1892 (photo #23), displays some classically derived details, including a third story Palladian window and Tuscan order porch columns. The wall treatment is complex, and a corner octagonal tower is featured. The George Decker House, 118 York Avenue, 1897 (photo #24), is a frame Free Classic variant. Paired Ionic columns support the porch and porte cochere, and the octagonal corner tower has a swag and garland motif below its cornice, which is dentiled to match the main cornice. An unusual second story porch has a round arch supported by very short columns, and the attic window is a multi-part bay topped by a broken pediment.

A few houses display Stick Style influences, but only the Albert Long house (302 Second Street, 1884) qualifies as a true example. Important features include extensive stickwork bracketing, wall surfaces with diagonal, vertical or horizontal wood siding, and an unusual bay with central chimney, triangular attic windows and S-curved cutaways just below the attic gable end.

Perhaps the most unusual of Towanda's buildings is the Flemish Renaissance Revival public library at 106 Main Street (photo #25). Donated to the town in 1897 by Frank Welles, this brick 1 1/2 story building has two fanciful stepped gables with lacy spires and finial. A tiny oval window in the main gable is framed by terra-cotta cherubim. The steep slate roof has several tiny decorative gables with peaked, bell-curved roofs. Corners have corbeled quoins, and the foundation takes a battered shape.

Finally, the Bradford County Courthouse (National Register, 1986 photo #27) of 1897 is a monumental structure in the Beaux Arts Classical style. The pedimented street facade has massive pilasters above a rusticated base; an anthemion surrounded by olive branches proclaims "Justice, Law, Mercy" in the pediment. A tall octagonal dome rises 70 feet above first floor level, and is roofed with brown-green glazed terra-cotta tiles. The rear block of the building is rough cut limestone, comparatively unembellished, and the interior is both remarkable and well preserved.

The Riverside Cemetery, located east of William Street and south of Walnut Street, is the one contributing site in the district. It contains gravestones interspersed with monuments from the early nineteenth century to the late twentieth century. Most burials date to the nineteenth century. David Wilmot is buried in this cemetery.

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The Towanda Historic District displays a high degree of integrity. Only 8.4% of the 483 buildings are non-contributing, and many of these are historic structures which have lost their architectural detailing to poorly planned renovations (photo #28); these buildings still have their integrity of siting and massing, and thus detract less from the district's "feel" than modern intrusions. Route 6 has had its deleterious effect on Towanda, primarily through congestion and grime, and most of the modern buildings in the district are connected to automotive use, like gas stations and garages. Some non-contributing buildings are business district replacements for buildings lost to fires or demolition (photo #29). Most of the non-contributing structures are located on Main Street. In age, some examples date from the interwar period and have lost their integrity due to alteration (photo #30), but most are from the 1950's and 1960's.

While some blocks have been seriously impacted by intrusions (photo #29), the majority of the business district still maintains its historic facade-line and density. In the residential areas of Towanda, non-contributing structures are almost unknown. Residential blocks with near-perfect integrity are the norm, and a wave of sensitive restoration efforts within the district in recent years bodes well for Towanda's preservation future.

**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)     A     B     C     D     E     F     G

Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE  
COMMERCE  
POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

Period of Significance

1812 - 1940

Significant Dates

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Significant Person

Wilmot, David

Architect/Builder

N/A

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

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

See continuation sheet



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The Towanda Historic District contains the commercial and primary residential neighborhoods of Towanda, which is the County seat of Bradford County. The town was the most important commercial center in the County throughout the 19th Century, and contains the longtime homes of nationally significant political figures David Wilmot and Ulysses Mercur. Towanda's collection of buildings represents the broadest selection of building types and styles within the County: the earliest date from the second decade of the 19th Century, and the resources run through the era of the Great Depression. Towanda's architecture reflects the town's status as a center of government and manufacturing.

Founded by William Means, who settled on the site around 1786, Towanda was located on the wagon road which ran north to Tioga (later Athens) and on the North Branch of the Susquehanna River, which provided access to markets both downstream and upstream. Means himself was a boatman by trade; he soon added a distillery, tavern and ferry to his little empire. When Bradford County was organized in 1812, Means was influential in locating the County seat in Meansville, as the town was then known; court was held in his tavern until the courthouse was finished in 1816. By that year, five taverns were licensed in the village, several merchants were trading there, a tannery had been built, and a number of grist mills and sawmills were operating in the vicinity. By 1825, the population was 225, and in 1828, the Borough of Towanda was incorporated.

In 1832, Towanda possessed 63 houses and more than 30 tradesmen. Two doctors and seven lawyers served the needs of the town, which had become the primary market and service center for the surrounding farms. A bridge across the river was completed that year, and the Towanda Academy (photo #2) at 314 State Street was founded in 1835. Among its teachers were Henry Hoyt, later Pennsylvania Governor, and O.H. Platt, who was elected to the U.S. Senate from Connecticut. Stephen Foster, the beloved songwriter, studied at the Academy in the winter and spring terms of 1840.

The extension of the North Branch of the Pennsylvania Canal to the New York line was begun in 1836. Lack of funds caused suspension of work in the mid-1840's, but the channel was finally completed in 1854, connecting Towanda with the New York State canal system and improving access to markets for Towanda goods. Commercial and industrial growth mushroomed; from a population of approximately 300 in 1830, the town had grown to 912 in 1840, and increased slightly to 1,175 in 1850. In 1847, a disastrous fire consumed the Courthouse and two business blocks, but the lost buildings were quickly replaced. The construction of the 17 mile Barclay Railroad in 1854 supplied the town with unlimited coal, and the pace of industrial development quickened. In 1858, local interests purchased the canal from the state and began work on the Pennsylvania and New York Railroad. Population had increased by about a third in 1860, reaching 1,622.

The Pennsylvania and New York track reached Waverly, New York, in November 1867, and completed the connection with Wilkes Barre in September 1869. Manufacturing operations were expanded or founded to utilize this easy access to distant markets. By 1870, population increased by half to 2,696. The Sullivan and Erie Railroad which served the Sullivan County coal fields, was partially opened in 1871, and heavy manufacturing and ironworking operations added to the town's industrial strength. Population leapt again to 3,814 in 1880. Coal gave way to lumbering in the vicinity, but new factories were still springing up, increasing population to 4,169 in 1890. In 1900,

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Towanda's population peaked at 4,663; by 1910, it had fallen to 4,281, then held steady through the onset of the Great Depression. Manufacturing was in a gradual decline as well. Elmira and Binghamton to the north, with better east-west transportation links, became the economic magnets within the region. Sayre, with its railroad shops, had some 600 more inhabitants than Towanda by 1900, and by 1920 almost doubled Towanda's population. By 1920, Athens had also surpassed it.

Founder William Means was responsible for setting his village off on a commercial course. Means had connections with Wilkes Barre merchants from his boating enterprises, particularly with Matthias Hollenback. The fine Federal house at 110 Bridge Street (Photo #1) which was built in 1816 by Peter Egner of Northumberland (builder of the first courthouse) is representative of Means' success and status. Henry Spalding was one of the merchants who settled in the village's early days; Spalding operated a store and tavern in the building still standing at 1 York Avenue, which was built in 1812. Joseph Montanye, who became the dean of Towanda merchants, was in business on his own by 1826. His general merchandise store building still standing at 317 Main was one of the first brick buildings in Towanda, replacing a structure burned in the 1847 fire. Montanyes house stands at 20 Main Street. C.S. Russell, was in business by 1826, selling hardware, and was later a partner in the large Codding and Russell firm. Russell's house stands at 512 Third Street.

The Borough's first bank was established in 1834, located at 209-11 Main Street. Joseph Kingsbury, bookseller, was established in 1837; his house is at 24 Main Street. Colonel John Means, grandson of the founder, lived in the Means' house and was the "Jacob Astor" of Towanda, having inherited much of the land in the downtown. He was also contractor for the North Branch Canal and later the Williamsport and Elmira Railroad. Means was a partner in the Means Rockwell & Co. Foundry, director of Eureka Mower, and manager and president of the Towanda Iron railworks. He also was a builder/developer of downtown property; in 1885, he moved the Means' house to its present location at 100 Bridge Street. Another notable commercial figure of the 1840's was Eleazar Fox, grandson of Rudolph Fox, Bradford County's first settler. Fox formed a partnership first with Joseph Montanye, then with Mahlon Mercur; by 1876, he was president of the Citizens National Bank. Fox's house is at 15 York Avenue.

Mahlon Mercur was a key figure in Towanda's commercial development. Born in the town, he attended the Academy and built the first planing mill. Mercur masterminded the Pennsylvania and New York Railroad, which laid its track on the towpath of the canal. The railroad was responsible for the continued commercial growth of the town, succeeding the canal in connecting Towanda with national markets. Mercur was also a developer of downtown real estate and ran his own bank. Mahlon Mercur built one of the significant houses in the district at 217 Chestnut (photo #11) around 1857. Later, Mercur was president of the Sullivan and Erie Railroad.

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Lawyer Edward Overton, who founded the Barclay Railroad and owned the coal deposits which the railroad exploited, was another key figure in commercial growth. His house is at 19 Main Street; the house next door, which was built around 1858 for son-in-law James Macfarlane (21 Main St, photo #7) is one of the district's notable houses. Macfarlane was a lawyer who was also trained as an engineer. He managed the Barclay mines and wrote a book Coal Fields of America, published in 1873, that was a standard text on the subject; Macfarlane was also a coal mining consultant who worked throughout the east. Attorney David Cash was also involved in the Barclay coal lands; his mansion at 302 Third St. (1845, photo #10) is one of the district's architectural jewels.

J.O. Frost (10 N. Main St.) started his furniture store in 1865; by 1870 it had grown into a furniture factory which soon became one of the town's biggest employers. Humphrey Bros. and Tracy, shoe and boot manufacturers, began operations in 1871. James Humphrey's house is at 302 Second St., Charles Tracy's at 101 York Avenue. The business district boasted a number of hotels. Only the American at 1 Bridge St. (c.1865), currently an apartment house, is extant. Prominent merchants connected to surviving buildings included R.M. Welles, dealer in agricultural implements (house, 227 Poplar) druggist H.C. Porter (house 361 York Avenue, store 323 Main ) and butcher George Neal (house 105 York Ave.) Elijah Parsons (house 22 William St., photo #8) and his son E. Ashmun (house 304 York Avenue, photo #13) owned and edited the Bradford Argus newspaper, while O.D. Goodenough (house 1 Mix St.) edited the Towanda Business Item.

The major new industry begun in the 1880's was the James H. Hawes toy factory, located just north of the district in a neighborhood called Toytown. The Hawes firm became one of the country's largest; William Hawes, James' son and successor, lived in the house at 363 York Ave. A new bank, the Citizens National (founded 1876) built a new building at 428 Main Street in 1886 (photo #20) designed by the architects Pierce and Dockstader of Elmira. The Hale Opera House of 1886 (601 Main St., photo # 19), the Episcopal Church at 1 Main Street (c. 1889, photo # 19) and the charming town library of 1897 (106 Main St., photo #25) expressed the civic pride of the town, which reached its peak population in 1900.

Carl V.S. Patterson, who invented the fluorescent X-ray screen, provided a late burst of industrial development with his Patterson Screen Co. Patterson lived in the house at 9 Huston St., and his partner Frederic Reuter lived at 309 York Ave. Patterson Screen was the forerunner of the large DuPont and GTE factories, which account for much of the town's current employment.

A large number of significant political figures are associated with the Towanda District. John LaPorte, son of an Azilum frenchman, was elected to the US Congress in 1833, and was also a substantial business figure (LaPorte and Mason Bank, 209-11 Main St). David Wilmot, Senator and Congressman, moved to Towanda in 1834 and lived there until his death in 1868. Serving in the House from 1845-1851, he was the author of the Wilmot Proviso, which was intended to limit the expansion of slavery. A foe of James Buchanan and a famous orator, Wilmot was a founder of the Republican Party in Pennsylvania and a major figure in its national councils. He was Judge of the 13th District and was defeated by William Packer in a bid for governor in 1857. Elected to the Senate in 1861, he resigned in 1863 due to ill health; Wilmot served as Judge of the US Court of Claims until his death. He lived at 227 Poplar (photo #12) from 1850 until 1867, when he moved to 207 York Avenue.

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Ulysses Mercur, David Wilmot's law partner and brother of Mahlon Mercur, was Towanda's other nationally significant political figure. Born in Towanda in 1818, he read law with Edward Overton. *Where Wilmot was known for his native oratorical skill and expansive personality, Mercur was noted for his diligent study of technical matters within the law and a rigidly conservative personality.* Like Wilmot, he was a founding Republican; elected to the US House in 1864, he served three terms. His primary contribution in Washington was sponsorship of the tariff law exempting coffee and tea, making both more affordable for the working class. Mercur joined the Pennsylvania Supreme Court in 1872 and became its Chief Justice in 1883. As a justice, he was considered rigid and old fashioned, unwilling to alter the precepts which he learned in his youth. Ulysses Mercur lived at 203 Third St. (photo #6) from 1851 until his death in 1887.

Other significant politicians include William Elwell, who arrived in 1833, was a State Representative in 1841-42 and lived at 106 River St. from 1854 to 1863. He became President Judge of the Columbia District in 1863 and moved then to Bloomsburg. Paul Dudley Morrow whose house is at 512 Third St., was a Judge in the Court of Claims and in 1874 President Judge of the Bradford District. *Edward Overton Jr. was elected to Congress in 1877; his house is at 305 York Ave. (photo #14)* Joseph Powell was elected to the Congress in 1874, and lived at 215 York Ave. William T. Davies was first a State Senator, then Pennsylvania Lieutenant Governor from 1887-91; his house is at 201 Second St. James Coddling (house at 213 Pine St.) was elected to Congress in 1897. Finally, George Kipp (302 Third St) was elected to the House of Representatives in 1907 and in 1911, dying in office during his second term.

The collection of architecture in the Towanda District is by far the largest and most varied in Bradford County. In the area of Greek Revival, it is rivaled only by Athens in quality, although Athens has many fewer examples. The Gothic Revival buildings constitute one of the best collections in north-central Pennsylvania. In the styles of the Victorian era, Troy and, to a lesser extent, Canton have examples of similar quality, but fall short in quantity. The Towanda business district contains an unparalleled collection of post Civil War buildings in the County. Again, Canton and Troy possess valuable small collections of such buildings; such large examples as the Hale Opera House (photo #18) and the Courthouse (photo #27) are without peer in the County.

*A number of builders and architects are associated with buildings located in the district.* Peter Egner built the first courthouse and the still extant Means house in 1816 (photo #1). James K. Vaughn was the architect of 304 York Avenue (photo #13), and James Fausey built 308 York Avenue, both in the late 1860's. The architectural firm of Fleming & Hollon moved their office from Philadelphia to Towanda at about that time. They designed a school and a bank in Towanda, both since razed, and a mansion for H.E. Packer at Jim Thorpe. J.E. Fleming lived at 516 Second Street. H.L. Lamoreaux designed the house at 201 Second Street in the 1870's; while S.W. Little built 311 York (photo #17) and William Kingsley built 305 Second during that decade. The architects Pierce and Dockstader of Elmira designed the Citizens National Bank in 1888 (photo #20) and a number of houses on York Avenue; Contractor J.H. Webb was associated with the Pierce building projects in the 1890's. The local builders Coddling and Hale erected the Hale Opera House (photo #18, 1886.) George Decker built his own house at 118 York (c 1897, (photo #24) and others, while both Thomas Bradley and N.W. King built several extent houses in the north end of the district in the 1890's. Well-known Cleveland, Ohio, architects Israel Lehman and Theodore Schmitt designed the County Courthouse (National Register, 1986 photo #27) in 1896, while W.B. Camp designed several extant

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houses in the 1890's. The firm of Darmonds, Ashmead and Bickley designed the Patterson House in 1918, and Patrick Frawley and a Mr. Vargeson were builders of the early twentieth century whose houses are extant.

In the area of Politics/Government, Towanda produced a large group of significant men which many small cities couldn't match. Senator and Congressman David Wilmot is a figure of national importance as is Ulysses Mercur as Pennsylvania Supreme Court Chief Justice and Congressman. Figures of state significance are James H. Coddling, John LaPorte, Edward Overton, Jr., Joseph Powell, and George Kipp, all members of Congress, and William T. Davies, Lieutenant Governor of Pennsylvania. More subtly, some of these men figured in the foundation of the national and state Republican Party, which dominated state and national politics for fifty years after the Civil War.

Towanda was the commercial hub of Bradford County for most of the 19th century, dominating the manufacturing realms and organizing the railroads which connected Bradford County with the outside world. Athens, though older than Towanda, took a peripheral economic role until the last years of the century. Its large cast-iron bridgeworks and smaller furniture factory provided most of its jobs. Athens' first bank wasn't organized until 1865, and its economic growth was dependent on the Pennsylvania and New York Railroad. Sayre was laid out in 1871, at the junction of the Pennsylvania and New York, the southern Central Railroad and the Geneva and Sayre Railroad. It was a pure railroad town, named after Robert Sayre, the railroad's president. A roundhouse (1873) and large railroad repair shop (1880) put the town on the map. It was incorporated in 1891, and was the largest town in the County by 1900. It rapidly eclipsed Towanda in economic growth although the courthouse and the established manufacturing sector kept Towanda thriving through the onset of the depression.

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

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: \_\_\_\_\_

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 145

UTM References

A	18	3791550	4626270
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C	18	3801100	4624340

B	18	380120	4625950
	Zone	Easting	Northing
D	18	379430	4624480

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Doug McMinn  
organization Thomas R. Deans Associates  
street & number 28 North Front Street  
city or town Milton

date January 28, 1992  
telephone (717) 742-9684  
state PA zip code 17847

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet

Towanda Historic District

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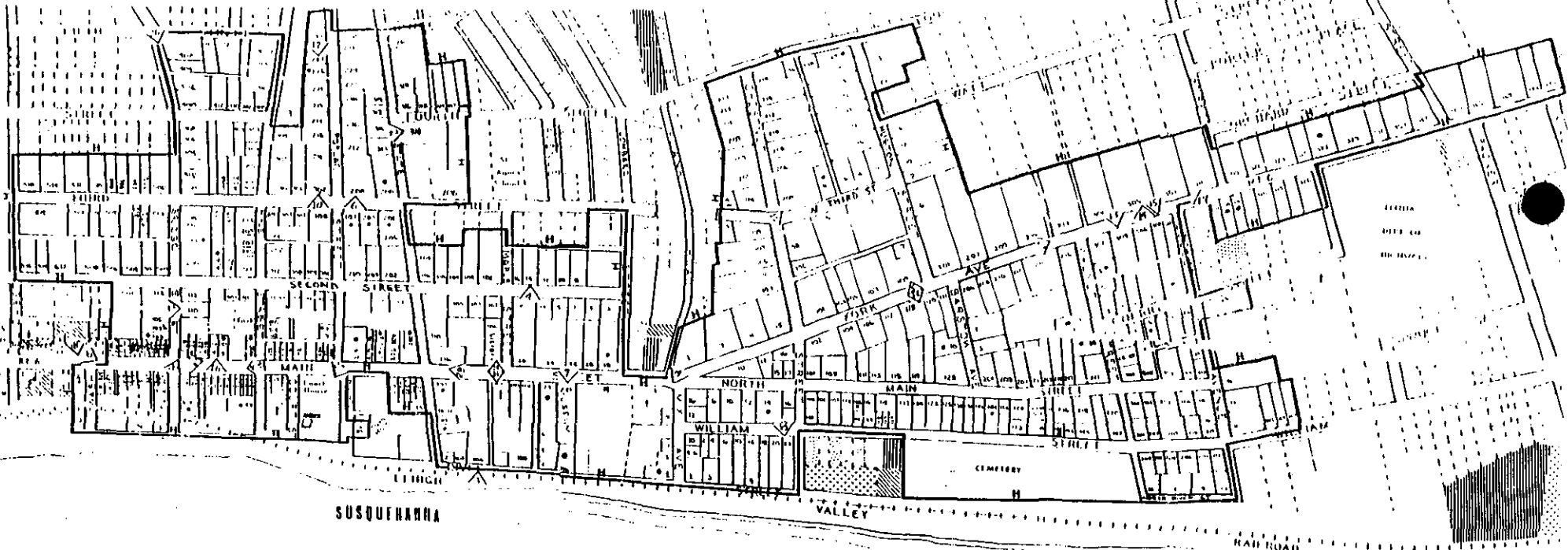
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MAPS

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Lake, Ames and Davidson, Atlas of Bradford County, 1858, Place of publication and publisher unknown.

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SUSQUEHANNA

Towanda Historic District

RIVER  
LEGEND

Bradford County Pennsylvania

	Single Family		Local Business
	Two Family		General Commercial
	Multi Family		Automotive
	Trailer		Highway Commercial
	Rural Farm		INDUSTRIAL

Designates Boundary of Proposed NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT

Non Contributing Structures Indicated by

Photo Number and Direction Indicated by

Scale 1" = 100'



United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Towanda Historic District

Section number 10 Page 1

## BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

Begin at a point on the curb at the south west corner of 601 Main Street; proceed approximately 250 feet east to a point on the western curb of River Street; proceed north approximately 1150 feet to the south curb of Park Street; proceed west approximately 25 feet to a point opposite the east line of Borough Building; proceed approximately 120 feet north to north line of Borough Building; proceed approximately 37 feet west to west line of Borough Building; proceed approximately 120 feet south to south curb of Park Street; proceed west approximately 250 feet to west curb of Main Street; proceed north approximately 180 feet to a point opposite the south line of 213 Main Street; proceed east approximately 200 feet to curb of unnamed alley; proceed north approximately 200 feet to north curb of State Street; proceed east north east approximately 220 feet to west curb of River Street; proceed north approximately 1480 feet to south curb of Chestnut Street; proceed west approximately 280 feet to west curb of William Street; proceed north approximately 450 feet to a point opposite the south line of Riverside Cemetery; proceed east approximately 300 feet to the east line of Riverside Cemetery; proceed north approximately 1400 feet to south curb of Locust Avenue; proceed west south west approximately 260 feet to west curb of William Street; proceed north north west approximately 340 feet to north line of 307 William Street; proceed west south west approximately 88 feet to the west line of 307 William Street; proceed south south east approximately 40 feet to north line of 15 Locust Street; proceed west south west approximately 100 feet to west line of 15 Locust Street; proceed south south east approximately 290 feet to south curb of Locust Avenue; proceed west south west approximately 220 feet to point opposite east line of 25 Locust Avenue; proceed north north west approximately 250 feet to north line of 25 Locust Avenue; proceed west south west approximately 80 feet to east curb of Cherry Street; proceed south south east approximately 240 feet to south curb of Locust Avenue; proceed west south west approximately 440 feet to west curb of York Avenue; proceed north north west approximately 160 feet to point opposite south line of 312 York Avenue; proceed east north east approximately 220 feet to east line of 312 York Avenue; proceed north north west approximately 470 feet to south curb of unnamed alley; proceed west south west approximately 210 feet to west curb of York Avenue; proceed north north west approximately 1160 feet to north line of 375 York Avenue; proceed west south west approximately 210 feet to west line of 375 York Avenue; proceed south south east approximately 530 feet to north curb of Oak Street; proceed east north east approximately 60 feet to point opposite rear line of 361 York Avenue; proceed south south east approximately 980 feet to south curb of Ann Street; proceed west south west approximately 100 feet to the west line of 311 York Avenue; proceed south south east approximately 1020 feet to north line of 207 York Avenue; proceed west south west approximately 390 feet to east curb of Watt Street; proceed south south east approximately 280 feet to south curb of Huston Street; proceed west south west approximately 150 feet to east line of 22 Huston Street; proceed north north west approximately 190 feet to north line of 22 Huston Street; proceed west south west approximately 70 feet to east line of 24 Huston Street; proceed west north west approximately 100 feet to north line of 24 Huston Street; proceed west south west approximately 120 feet to east curb of Fourth Street; proceed south south east approximately 900 feet to south line of 217 Chestnut Street; proceed east north east approximately 260 feet to east line of 209 Chestnut Street; proceed east approximately 380 feet to east line of 13 North Third Street; proceed south approximately 20 feet; to the south line of 107 Chestnut Street; proceed east approximately 75 feet to the east line of 107 Chestnut Street; proceed south east approximately 25 feet to the south line of 105 Chestnut Street; proceed east approximately 200 feet to the west line of 7 York Avenue; proceed south south east approximately 137 feet to the north curb of Plank Road; proceed east south east

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

## National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Towanda Historic District

Section number 10 Page 2

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approximately 262 feet to the east curb of Main Street; proceed south approximately 220 feet to point opposite south curb of Lombard Street; proceed west approximately 700 feet to east curb of Third Street; proceed south approximately 150 feet to south line of Catholic Church; proceed east approximately 160 feet to east line of unnamed alley; proceed south approximately 360 feet to south curb of Maple Street; proceed east approximately 70 feet to west line of 102 Second Street; proceed south approximately 160 feet to south line of 104 Second Street; proceed east approximately 60 feet to west line of 108 Second Street; proceed south approximately 260 feet to south curb of State Street; proceed west south west approximately 200 feet to west curb of Third Street; proceed north approximately 390 feet to north line of 106 Third Street; proceed west approximately 370 feet to west curb of Fourth Street; proceed north approximately 20 feet to north line of 110 Fourth Street; proceed west south west approximately 220 feet to west line of 110 Fourth Street; proceed south south east approximately 160 feet to north line of 326 State Street; proceed west south west approximately 160 feet to east curb of Henry Street; proceed south approximately 190 feet to south curb of State Street; proceed west approximately 20 feet to west line of 228 State Street; proceed south approximately 220 feet to south curb of Poplar Street; proceed west approximately 80 feet to west line of 233 Poplar Street; proceed south approximately 60 feet to south line of 233 Poplar Street; proceed east approximately 480 feet to west line of 304 Pine Street; proceed south approximately 160 feet to south curb of Pine Street; proceed west north west approximately 380 feet to East curb of Fifth Street; proceed south approximately 500 feet to north curb of Bridge Street; proceed east north east approximately 320 feet to west curb of Fourth Street; proceed east approximately 200 feet to point opposite the west line of 500 Third Street; proceed south approximately 710 feet to north curb of Elizabeth Street; proceed east approximately 490 feet to west curb of Second Street; proceed north approximately 413 feet to a point opposite the south line at 507 Second Street; proceed east approximately 406 feet to the east curb of Main Street; proceed south 150 feet to place of beginning.

### BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

At the district's southern edge, a profusion of modern properties and a lack of potentially contributing structures in the Main Street axis defines the boundary. In the southern residential neighborhood just uphill, the boundary was set due to a diminishment of architecturally valuable resources. In the vicinity of Bridge, Pine, Poplar and State streets on the western edge of southern mass of the district, historic resources were excluded due to a lack of architectural worth. The "waist" of the district's western boundary (Ward and Lombard Streets, and Plank Road) was caused by modern intrusions and empty space. The boundary on Fourth Street in the Chestnut, Huston area, and the placing of the boundary on rear property lines along York Avenue was designed to exclude post-World War Two residential development. Beyond #375 York Avenue in the northern arm of the district, modern strip development begins. Similarly, the east side of York Avenue north of #326 York consists of recent buildings. The area beyond the rear property lines on Locust Avenue consists of empty space or buildings lacking architectural value. The eastern boundary varies only to exclude intrusive buildings and open space in the Chestnut Street vicinity and large modern commercial buildings between State and Park Streets.



SUSQUEHANNA

VALLEY

CEMETERY

RAILROAD

Towanda Historic District

RIVER

Bradford County Pennsylvania

**LEGEND**

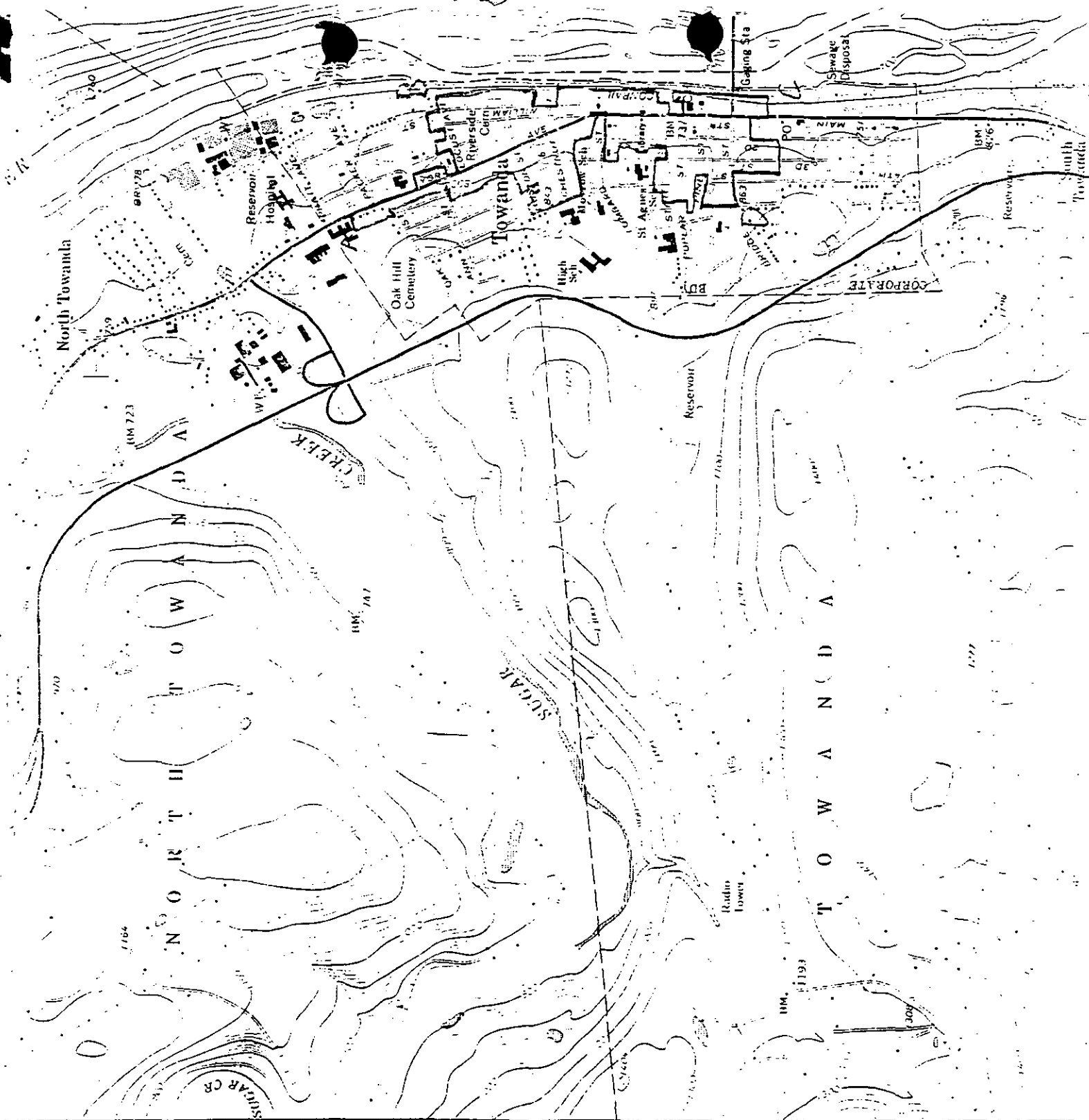
	Single Family		Local Business
	Two Family		General Commercial
	Multi Family		Automotive
	Trailer		Highway Commercial
	Rural Farm		INDUSTRIAL

Designates Boundary of Proposed NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT

Non Contributing Structures Indicated by

Photo Number and Direction Indicated by

Scale  
1" = 100'



47°30"

128°

4626

Towanda Historic District  
 Bradford County -  
 Towanda Square - 20.

A E 279550 N 4626270

B E 280120 N 4625950

C E 350100 N 4624340

D E 377430 N 4624480