

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 Lutz, John F., Furniture Co. & Funerary
other names/site number Lutz, John F., Property

2. Location

street & number 3559 & 3561 St. Lawrence Avenue not for publication
city, town St. Lawrence vicinity
state Pennsylvania code PA county Berks code 011 zip code 19606

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>3</u>	<u>0</u> buildings
	<u> </u> sites
	<u> </u> structures
	<u> </u> objects
<u>3</u>	<u>0</u> Total

Name of related multiple property listing:
N/A

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 Dr. Brent Glass, Exec. Dir. 12/6/95
Signature of certifying official Date
PA 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): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

Name of Property

County and State

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

- Domestic, single family dwelling
- Industry / Manufacturing
- Commerce / Trade, Specialty Store
- Funerary

- Domestic, single family dwelling
- Commerce / Trade, Specialty Store
- Vacant / not in use

7. Description

Architectural Classification (enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Italianate

- foundation Stone, concrete
- walls Brick, concrete block
- Weatherboard
- roof Metal
- other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The John F. Lutz Property contains three contributing nineteenth century resources: a combination house/shop, a warehouse/showroom, and a carriage house. Located at 3559 and 3561 St. Lawrence Avenue (State Rt. 562) near the center of Borough of St. Lawrence, the John F. Lutz Property contains three buildings tightly arranged on a T-shaped, hillside lot which begins on the north side of St. Lawrence Avenue, widens at midpoint and ends at the alley. The first building is a brick and frame, two-story combination residence/shop, built in the Italianate style in 1878, with two small additions built in 1885 and 1910 respectively. It is situated close to the street at the top of an embankment fronted by a retaining wall. A large brick furniture warehouse/showroom, built in the Italianate style in 1900 with additions built in 1928 and 1955, is situated behind the residence/shop on the east side of the lot. Its mass, scale and placement on the hill above and behind the house dwarfs the buildings in the surrounding residential neighborhood. Mature trees, however, soften the intrusion of this commercial building on the neighborhood. A two-story brick carriage house, built in the Italianate style in 1896, is located opposite the furniture warehouse/showroom on the west side of the lot. All buildings on the lot are well maintained and retain a high degree of integrity.

St. Lawrence Borough, a community of fewer than 2,000 people, is located about 6 miles east of the center of the City of Reading. Lots were first laid out on St. Lawrence Avenue, known first as the Oley Turnpike, in 1876. The street is a quiet, well-maintained, residential neighborhood with domestic scale buildings built in the Romantic and Victorian styles between 1870 and 1920. The architecture reflects both urban and rural influences of the day. Some of the more modest homes are of a late Federal Vernacular style more common to the rural areas of Berks County. Other homes are large and of the more flamboyant styles found in Reading. These styles include Queen Anne, Gothic Revival, Italianate, Mansard and some American Modern Movement Four-Square. Most homes are single detached dwellings. Some are semi-detached dwellings reflective of the urban influence. A few of the larger homes have been converted to apartments.

Buildings on the Avenue range from two to three stories and many are two and a half stories. There is a mixture of frame and brick masonry structures. Many buildings incorporate both types of construction. The mixture of building sizes, styles and materials is unified by the strong line of the Avenue. Most properties on

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the north side of the street present steep embankments or retaining walls along their fronts which define the street spatially and emphasize its curvilinear character.

St. Lawrence Borough does not have a defined "downtown." Its few commercial and public buildings were a part of the residential landscape. A Classic Revival style school building, now used for offices and apartments, is a short distance east of the John F. Lutz Property, where St. Lawrence Avenue intersects Brumbach Street. Next to the school building is the Gothic Revival style general store and post office now rented for offices and other commercial enterprises. One block to the west of the John F. Lutz Property is the Borough Office and Community Building. To the rear of the John F. Lutz Property is the municipal park.

The John F. Lutz Property site, which has been subdivided into 3559 and 3561 St. Lawrence Avenue, is just under one acre in area. The lot, which has 100.7 feet of frontage on the Avenue, is 250 feet deep. It rises about twenty five feet in elevation from front to rear and measures 204.7 feet wide on the alley. The width of the lot changes halfway from front to back. The front of the property is defined by a concrete retaining wall and a lawn embankment that provides a platform on which the residence/shop building sits. Access to the site is via a ramped drive that extends from St. Lawrence Avenue along the west side of the residence/shop, passing between the furniture store and the carriage house to the rear alley. Although the furniture warehouse/show-room and carriage house may be seen from the street, their presence is not especially evident when traveling on the Avenue.

The residence/shop building was built of brick in the Italianate style in 1878. Although modest in size it has an imposing appearance because of its setting above street level. It is 20 feet wide, 45 feet deep and fronts on a full width wooden porch. Supported by brick piers, the porch features full height wood columns at each end and at mid-point (placing this column on center with the central window). There are two engaged half-columns at the other corners of the porch. The columns are 9" in diameter and have a slight taper. The base and capital of the columns have a simple torus mold and square plate. The cornice of the porch roof is supported by a row of small brackets that are placed close to one another so as to suggest dentiling.

The front façade is two-stories with three symmetrical bays on each floor. It has a gable roof with the eave parallel to the street. The main roof cornice is supported by large wood brackets at each end of the eave and at the third points between the windows. These brackets are laminated and are detailed with wood stencil detailing. Between the large brackets are smaller laminated and detailed brackets. The wide frieze board between the large brackets is detailed with appliqué work.

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The side-hall entrance is on the west side of the front façade. The entry door is paneled with a single large pane of glass in the upper half. The door is surrounded by a single light transom. The window openings are 4/4 double hung sash, twice as long as they are wide. The openings are framed to the surface of the brick and the top of the wood frame is arched and has a molded profile. The frame appears to have been applied over a single flat wood lintel. Each window has paneled shutters and the original hardware.

The first-floor interior of the original dwelling consists of a side hall, with the staircase to the rear of the hall, and parlor. Behind the hall/parlor was a kitchen/dining room which measured 10' wide x 15' deep. To the rear of this section was a small, one-story room with a shed roof measuring 8' wide x 5' deep. This room was large enough to hold the cook-stove and nothing else. All preparation, staging and dining were done in the adjacent kitchen/dining room. The stove-room is now converted to a laundry room and the kitchen/dining room is now a modern eat-in kitchen.

The second floor of the kitchen wing contained a bed chamber which continues in that use today. Two bed chambers and a connecting access hall and staircase were located over the front (hall/parlor) section of the house. Today, these two small bed chambers have been combined into one master bedroom.

In 1885 a two-story frame addition was built on the west side of the house which doubled the length of the front façade. Measuring 20' wide x 17' deep, it has a rubble coursed stone foundation. The clapboard siding is the type typically called "German" siding, with 5" to weather. Three equally spaced windows on the second floor are in alignment with a central entry and two windows on the first floor. The entry is a wide double leafed door. Each leaf is paneled and has a long narrow single pane of glass in the upper half. Above the door is a two lite transom. The windows, frames and shutters match those of the residence. The roof cornice of the shop is a simple box cornice with crown molding.

The first floor of this addition was used as a shop for the manufacture of furniture. The second floor was used for storage. There is a connecting doorway between the shop wing and the house on each floor. The shop is one step lower than the residence. Today, this wing is used as a picture framing shop. The second floor continues as a storage area.

In 1910 a two-story frame addition was built onto the northeast corner of the house. Measuring 17' wide x 13' deep this addition provided a dining room on the first floor with a new side entrance and porch as well as a bathroom and another bedroom on the second floor. Also, a small, flush toilet room was built next to the stove-room; access was from the outside.

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A porch enclosed circa 1920 along the west side of the residence behind the shop provides a protected entry to the kitchen. Another porch, enclosed circa 1935, protects the rear entrance to the shop. These two porches are interconnected.

There is a cellar under the original section of the residence and under the shop addition. An exterior door at the north east corner of the shop leads to the shop basement.

As mentioned above, the main block of the house has a gable roof with the eave parallel to the street. The two story kitchen wing has a low pitched shed roof that drains to the east. The one story stove-room has a shed roof that drains to the west. These roofs have standing seam metal roofing. The roofs of the additions have flat seam metal roofing. The 1910 northeast addition has a low pitched roof that drains to the west and forms a shallow valley with the shed roof over the kitchen wing. The 1885 shop addition has a low pitched shed roof that drains to the north. The roofs over the front porch and east side entry are low pitched and have the appearance of flat roofs.

With the exception of the attic windows, which are small two over two double hung windows, and the stove-room which has one large two over two window, all windows in the residence and shop are four over four double hung windows of the same size and proportion as those on the front but do not have arched trim and some lack shutters.

The west side, rear, and east side elevations are not as elaborate as the front façade. On the west side of the shop, the fenestration is two windows on the second floor aligned over two on the first floor. Only the first floor windows are shuttered. The exposed gable end of the residence has two attic windows. The kitchen wing has one window on the second floor and two windows and a right side door on the first floor. The first floor windows and door of the kitchen wing are now obscured by the enclosed porch. The porch is enclosed with vertical beaded board siding and two large sixteen lite fixed sash windows.

The rear (north side) elevation is a complex of one and two story elements, porches, wings, chimneys, down spouts, and irregular fenestration. There is a sloping exterior cellar door on the northeast corner of the 1885 shop addition and an enclosed porch covering the rear entry to the shop.

The east side elevation also varies. Those portions of the residence that are most visible from the street are treated with a little more care. The windows on the east side of the main portion of the residence are shuttered as is the south side of the northeast wing. The east side entry is protected by a handsome Italianate style

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porch. The wide molded cornice of porch roof is supported by two free standing and two engaged square columns. The fenestration on the east side is irregular.

The historical/architectural integrity of the residence/shop is high. The current owners have restored a number of rooms by removing inappropriate wall paper, built-in shelving, etc., and restoring some of the wood trim. The kitchen is modern, the stove-room is now a laundry, and the small, flush toilet room is now a powder room with access from the laundry room. A partition was removed to turn two bed chambers into a master bedroom, otherwise, all interior partitions, floors and ceilings and all exterior elements are original.

The John F. Lutz Furniture warehouse/showroom was built in three stages. The original four story building, built in 1900, is 35' wide x 95' deep. Because of the slope of the lot, the north end of the building was built into the bank thus providing direct access to the second floor from the alley. In 1902, when a trolley line was built along the alley, a painted sign reading "FUNERALS — EMBALMING — UNDERTAKING" was painted on the north wall. No longer clearly visible, the sign was indented for the trolley riders.

The brick exterior walls are load bearing. Central wooden beams supported by wood columns run the length of the building. Wood 3" x 10" joists at 16" on center span the walls and central beam. The length of the building is divided into nine bays. The building is expressed on the exterior by brick pilasters and iron tie rod star bolts at every floor level. There is no pilaster between the last two bays at the south end. They were eliminated to accommodate the installation of large sliding doors at the ground level.

The base and cornice are flush with the pilasters. The transition of the base and cornice with the wall is by means of a three step corbel. The resulting effect is one of a recessed panel of brick between pilasters. The red brick is of running bond with a header course every eleven courses. With the exception of the large sliding doors which have wood beam lintels, all openings have arched lintels of triple coursed rowlock bricks.

The ground floor was accessed by a large sliding door that allowed for enclosed loading of vehicles with a man door a short distance away. The ground floor, which had a concrete floor, was used as a shop to repair and refinish furniture, to unload and load furniture and caskets, and to trim (add linings and hardware) caskets. An exterior stairway near the northeast corner afforded public access to the floors above where furniture was stored and on display.

With the exception of a row of columns and a stairway near the northwest corner that connects the second to the fourth floors, all floors are open and without partitioning. The outside walls are bare brick. All

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the floors, except the first floor, are wood and all beams and joists are exposed.

A four story addition, built in 1928 to the south end of the original building, is 50' wide x 54' deep. The addition includes a five story elevator tower at the northwest corner. To accommodate the sloping grade, the first and second floors of the addition are about two and one-half feet lower than the original building. Transition between floor levels is by means of steps. The third and fourth floors of the addition are at the same level as those of the original building.

The addition's walls are of load bearing brick. The interior has steel columns and beams that support wood joists. On the exterior, a concrete foundation supports a plain running bond brick wall. There is no expression of the building on the exterior except for some irregular spacing of windows. Neither is the low pitched roof evident. Stepped parapeted walls are at the gable ends. The elevator tower has a flat roof. The wall openings have steel lintels, the brick above the lintels is continuous of the wall pattern. The windows are steel sash with twelve lites. The central six lites pivot while the top and bottom lites are fixed.

The ground floor of this addition was designed to provide space for funerary functions furniture storage. A public entrance led to a room where caskets were displayed. Another room where embalming was performed had a direct access to an enclosed garage space. Both of these rooms had plastered walls and ceilings. The rest of the first floor was unpartitioned open space with exposed joists, beams and bare brick outside walls. This area was a shipping, receiving, garage area for the funerary business, allowing bodies to be transported out of public view. A section also served as well as a tool, supply and furniture storage area.

Another public entrance led to the second floor where spaces were arranged to provide display areas and sales offices for the furniture business. There were also restrooms in this section. The sales offices were partitioned interior spaces with plaster ceilings and walls and wood floors. The display area was bear, unpartitioned space with exposed beams and joists and brick outside walls. Access to the third and fourth floor furniture showroom and storage facilities was via a stairway located next to the elevator. There were no permanent partitions on the upper floors and the brick walls and steel framing are all exposed.

Also in 1928, a separate, one-story addition measuring 16' wide x 42' deep was built on the east side of the original 1900 building abutting the north east corner of the 1928 four-story addition. Its brick work and windows match that of the four story addition. It served as the boiler room.

A two-story addition, built in 1955 on the northeast side of the original building measures 54' wide x

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70' deep. Its floor levels are in alignment with those of the original building. A portion of the two-story addition's ground floor is unexcavated to allow for the hillside slope. The walls are of load bearing concrete block. The interior building has exposed steel columns and beams with steel bar joists, and exposed block walls. There are no interior partitions. On the exterior, the block walls are painted, door and window openings have flat steel lintels, the windows are of fixed aluminum sash, and the roof is flat.

Access to the furniture warehouse/showroom is, with one exception, from the west side. It is the west side elevation that is the most interesting and expressive of the warehouse/showroom.

To allow for the change in grade, the base course of the original building (north end) rises along with the grade and the ground floor openings are made shorter until there are none in the two most northern bays. The floor level of the four story addition is about two and one-half feet lower than in the original building. The transition is accomplished between these structures by means of the five story elevator tower. At the ground level of the 1928 addition both man doors and garage doors are of vertical beaded boards. The sliding garage doors in the original building have large fixed sash of 18 lites each. The man door is paneled with beaded board. There is a steel roll-up door at the elevator tower. The tower is emphasized by a vertical row of windows that extend to the fifth floor. The garage doors in the four-story addition are also of beaded boards with fixed divided sash.

The north elevation of the original, 1900 building is divided by pilaster into three bays although the actual building is of two equal bays. The load of the central beam is carried by an interior column about three feet from the north wall. This may have been done to prevent structural failure of the arched lintels over the windows in the central bay. The gable of the low pitched roof is expressed by the recessed central panel being higher than the corner ones. A full width loading dock, of concrete, runs the width of this section. There is a solid double leafed door with a single lite transom above.

The east side elevation of the original, 1900 building is partially obscured by the two story concrete block addition. What is visible (part of the second floor and the third and fourth floors) is a mirror image of the pilastered, recessed paneled walls of the west side.

On the east side, the transition between the four-story original building and the four-story 1928 addition is accomplished by the one story boiler room addition that interlocks the two. The east side elevation of the four-story, 1928 addition has more windows than the west side elevation and those windows vary in width resulting in an irregular fenestration pattern on the east side. The fenestration pattern on the west side is also

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irregular. The windows on the west side, while all the same width, are placed at irregular intervals.

Much of the south side elevation of the furniture warehouse/showroom is hidden from the street by the residence/shop in front. The fenestration is somewhat irregular but the whole is unified by a large stepped parapet that bears a large painted sign bearing white sans serif lettering on a black background. The topmost line has the word "FURNITURE" in 3' high letters centered within the parapet. The second line contains the words "JOHN F. LUTZ" in 5' high letters centered on the face of the wall. The third line contains the word "INC." in 1-1/2' letters centered on the face of the wall. The parapet is capped with a glazed terra cotta coping and the sign is lighted by overhanging lights.

The furniture warehouse/showroom has been vacant since 1990. With the exception of normal wear, the building is in good condition. Some original windows and doors have been blocked in to accommodate the various additions and some windows have been partially or completely paneled closed to provide for a variety of vents or to provide more wall space on the interior. Where openings have been paneled over, most of the original window frames and sash are still intact.

The two-story carriage house, built in 1896, is 24' wide x 34' deep. Its long dimension runs counter to the slope of the land. The gable roof is supported by 4" x 5" purlins that rest on the end masonry walls and on two king post trusses that are located at third points. An unusual feature of the building is that the second floor is suspended from above by iron rods from the trusses. The iron rods hold up a 3" x 12" central beam and 3" x 12" wood joist at 24" centers ledgered onto the central beam.

The building is expressed on the exterior by brick pilasters that support the trusses. A brick base course and cornice are flush with the pilasters. The transition of the base and cornice with the wall is by a three step corbel. The result is a recessed brick panel between pilasters. The brick is running bond with a header course every eleven courses. The cable ends also are strengthened by pilasters at third points. The central recessed panel is higher than the corner panels and helps to express the gable roof. A simple exposed wood lintel spans the wall openings.

The carriage house was originally designed to house horses and carriages but was last used for motor vehicles. Access is along the east side, ground floor. Bi-fold garage doors of beaded vertical board with six lite fixed sash provide wide openings for vehicles. One leaf of one bi-fold door provides a man door. Wood columns support a heavy wooden lintel over the garage doors and carry the brick wall above. The pilasters are also carried by the lintels by means of corbeling the bricks. The floor and ceiling of the northern most bay are

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higher than that of the rest. A pair of hinged doors, located above the end bays, provides loading access to the second floor. Man access is via a staircase located at the southeast corner, just inside the first bay.

The first floor has a concrete floor and is one large open space. There are no interior partitions. All horse stalls and harness storage racks were removed to accommodate motorized vehicles. The outside walls are exposed brick and all beams and joists are exposed. The second floor, as mentioned above, is suspended from above by iron rods from trusses, all exposed. The outside walls are exposed brick, the floor is wood.

The north side elevation has a single six over six double hung window in the first floor central bay and a small four lite hinged window in the attic above the recessed brick panel. Two capped chimneys on the gable end are expressed as an extension of the pilasters.

The west side elevation has three windows at ground level. The fenestration is somewhat unusual in that the window in the central panel is tallest and is four over four double hung. The south end window and north end window have the same head height but the sill height differs. The window in the south end panel is a two over two double hung window with a two lite transom above. The north end window is the same but without a transom. The north side is similar to the south side except that there are no chimneys

The original standing seam metal roof has been replaced with asphalt shingles, and some of the doors are in need of repair but the overall integrity of the 1896 carriage house is good.

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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

Period of Significance

1878-1945

Significant Dates

1878

1896

1900

1928

Significant Person N/A

Architect/Builder Unknown

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

The John F. Lutz Property is significant for commerce and architecture under National Register Criterion A and C. Its period of significance, 1878-1945, begins with construction of the first building on the property, the earliest extant commercial resource on the site, and spans subsequent generations of family owners who continued the family furniture and funerary business on the site. Growth of the business is characterized first by additions to the 1878 building, then by construction and subsequent additions to other buildings on the property. It is important to note that the 1878 building was also the family home. There is a strong tradition in Berks County for home occupations in which a portion of the family residence was devoted to income producing endeavors. The buildings on the property reflect both growth of the family business and changing commercial architectural trends.

The property is associated with the Lutz family. Mary Ann Lutz purchased two building lots on the north side of the Oley Turnpike (now St. Lawrence Avenue) in Exeter Township, Berks County for \$200 in 1878. Here she had a modest home and small barn built for herself and her youngest child, John F. Lutz, age 15. Mary Ann had been widowed in 1865 with five children under the age of 14. The family farm in Alsace Township, described in the estate papers as "hilly, barren, and full of stones," was sold and equal shares of the proceeds were distributed to the children. We know little of Mary Ann's existence between the time of her husband's death in 1865 and the time she purchased the lots in 1878. We do know the four older children (one boy and three girls) all married and John F. Lutz, the youngest, remained at home with his mother. John F. Lutz had been apprenticed at a young age to a cabinet maker and undertaker. After 2-1/2 years of apprenticing he worked in local mills and he began to make and sell furniture on his own to help support himself and his mother. He made chairs, tables, cupboards and other practical items to be sold locally. He made his furniture on the property, using the barn for his shop. He displayed his wares in the front room of the house, hanging the

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chairs high on the walls.

As a furniture maker, John F. Lutz was often called upon to build coffins. The linking of furniture maker and undertaker was a long standing tradition in Berks County and elsewhere. The furniture maker could make coffins for the deceased and, as evidenced by his early apprenticeship which included undertaking, the care of the dead was also expected. By 1884, at age 21, John F. Lutz was well established as a furniture maker and undertaker. Since embalming was commonly done in the home of the deceased, he needed only a small portion of the 1-1/2 story barn behind the house to store embalming fluids and a horse drawn hearse.

The next year, in 1885, he built a two-story frame addition on the west side of the house to accommodate his growing furniture business. The first floor of the addition was devoted to his shop and display area, the second floor was used for furniture storage. In 1888 John married and moved his new wife into his mother's house.

The demand for furniture soon outgrew his ability to supply it, and he began to purchase furniture made by larger manufacturers to sell from his shop. In 1890 a three story frame barn (razed in 1990) was built at the northwest corner of the property to accommodate the growing furniture retail business. The upper level of the barn was used both as a warehouse and showroom for furniture. The lower level of the barn was used for funeral wagons, embalming supplies and furniture delivery wagons. The shop attached to the house was converted to a business office for the growing enterprise.

John's mother, Mary Ann Lutz, died in 1894. Her will specified that the property be sold and the proceeds be divided equally among the children. The property was sold, but to her son, John, who bought out his siblings shares.

In 1896 a stylish two-story carriage house was built south of the 1890 barn to house fanciful horse drawn hearses and teams of black horses used to draw them. By this time, Lutz was also purchasing most of his caskets from specialized manufacturers. He purchased the shells, then trimmed them with the lining and hardware specified by the customer.

In 1900 a large four-story brick building was erected on the northeast corner of the property. The first floor was used for furniture repair, refinishing and reupholstering; the trimming of caskets; and the shipping of furniture. Furniture was no longer manufactured on the site. Upper floors were used to warehouse and display furniture. An open shaft, rope pulled elevator was used to transfer furniture from one level to another. There is

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no evidence of central heat in this building, but patches in the flooring suggest that several coal stoves with circuitous stove pipes existed. The 1890 barn was then used for uncrating furniture and storage.

In 1902 a trolley line was built which ran along the alley behind the Lutz property. John seized the opportunity and painted a sign on the brick building erected in 1900. No longer clearly visible, the sign was located on the north elevation at eye level with the trolley passengers. It read, "FUNERALS — EMBALMING — UNDERTAKING" in white sans serif lettering on a black background.

John, his wife and four children needed more room in the house. In 1910 a two-story frame addition was built on the northeast corner of the house. It provided a dining room on the first floor with a new side entrance and porch as well as a bathroom and another bedroom on the second floor. Also, a small, flush toilet room was built next to the stoveroom; access was from the outside.

By the late 1920's it was becoming less common in urban areas to embalm the deceased in the home and hold services there. Rather, embalming was beginning to be done at funeral parlors and services were held in churches. There was a need to provide vehicles to take bodies to and from the place of embalming and from the church to the place of burial. The growing use of motorized vehicles necessitated the conversion of the carriage house at the Lutz property into a garage. The horses and horse-drawn hearses were retired.

In 1928 the original, 1878, 1-1/2 story barn was razed and a major four-story addition was made to the south end of the 1900 furniture warehouse/showroom. The first floor of the addition accommodated an embalming parlor which was directly accessible to an enclosed garage and the casket showroom. The second floor was used as a furniture sales office and showroom. Business offices remained in the shop addition of the house. The 1928 addition included a larger, electrically operated elevator with an enclosed shaft. Also in 1928, a one-story boiler room with a coal burning boiler was built on the southeast corner of the 1900 building. A centralized steam heating system was provided throughout the entire building complex.

John F. Lutz's son, J. Elmer, took over running the funerary services and decided that it would make good business sense to conduct the funerary business from a newly emerging type of facility called the "funeral home." J. Elmer began construction of a funeral home in the adjoining community of Mt. Penn and, by 1931, all funerary functions had been transferred to that location where it continues to operate today. The space vacated by the relocation of the funerary business was reallocated for the furniture retail business.

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Lutz, John F. Furniture Co., & Funerary

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John F. Lutz died in 1936. The furniture retail business continued to grow under the guidance of the second generation. Soon the Lutz family was renting vacant space throughout the Borough of St. Lawrence to warehouse furniture. Early in the 1950s the rear yards of adjacent homes were purchased and, in 1955, a modern two story addition was made to the east side of the furniture store. This addition allowed furniture to be warehoused at one site.

The business, John F. Lutz Inc., continued operations until 1968 when retiring family members sold to Diamond Brothers Furniture Company. Like their predecessors, Diamond Brothers retailed furniture manufactured elsewhere, primarily in the south. The new owners carried on the business as a "furniture outlet" until 1990 when they went out of business.

In 1990 the three story barn on the northwest corner of the property was razed because of its poor condition. What remains is the architectural history of a residence/shop and a complex of commercial buildings that depict the evolution of a successful family business.

Interviews and a search of newspaper files have failed to reveal the architects of any of the buildings. The similarity in style and detailing of the 1896 carriage house and the 1900 furniture warehouse/showroom indicate that the same architect may have been used for both buildings. It is likely that the builders of the carriage house and furniture warehouse/showroom and its additions were from Reading. At the time of construction the only contractors with the manpower, experience and expertise necessary for this size job were in the City of Reading. Also, the buildings on the John F. Lutz Property closely resemble the warehouse and factory buildings found in the north central section of the City of Reading, known today as the Rading Outlet District.

The village of St. Lawrence, incorporated into a Borough in 1927, developed along the Oley Turnpike a short distance from the Antietam Creek. The mid-1850's saw the development of several manufacturing interests here including two hat factories, a woolen mill, a glue factory, a commercial grist and saw mill, and the St. Lawrence Dairy. That successful commercial enterprises brought development is evidenced by the lots laid out in 1876 by Jacob Levan on some of his land holdings. It was two of these lots that Mary Ann Lutz purchased in 1878. By 1881 the village had fifty-four dwellings and two hundred and sixty inhabitants. A post office, general store, service organizations such as the Patriotic Order of the Sons of America (P.O.S. of A.) were established to serve the community. It was in this growing economic climate that John F. Lutz established his furniture and funerary business in 1884. Lutz was the only provider of these services in his immediate vicinity.

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There was a demand for his services and his business grew as evidenced by the continued expansion of commercially related buildings on his property. What was good for his business was also good for the community.

Between 1900 and 1930, John F. Lutz Inc. employed as many as 114 people. These people worked as drivers, delivery people, salespeople, warehouse people, casket trimmers, furniture repairers, refinishers and reupholsterers, clerks, and funerary staff. His was a commercial, not industrial enterprise. Lutz discovered early in his career that he could buy furniture built elsewhere more cheaply than he could manufacture it and he could sell it at a profit. Also, he was better able to keep up with a variety of furnishing styles and trends through multiple suppliers. He provided his customers with what they wanted and his business grew. He also sold service. He would customize, repair, refinish, or reupholster any new or used piece of furniture.

The buildings, built of dark colored brick in the style of their day, remain as evidence of a period of economic prosperity. Their stylish architectural features remain virtually intact, retaining the formal, reserved appearance that characterized successful businesses at the turn of the century. The nearest comparable buildings in appearance are found in the City of Reading in what is now known as the outlet district. These are turn of the century factory buildings now used solely as retail outlets for a variety of merchandise. Built of brick, most are four stories high with stylishly expressed exteriors and spartan interiors.

9. Major Bibliographical References

- Previous documentation on file (NPS): N/A
- 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 Less than one acre

UTM References

A

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

C

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B

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Zone Easting Northing

D

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See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundary includes all historically associated resources.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Robert E. Bartmann and Carole Epler

organization Robert E. Bartmann, AICP date September 10, 1995 (Revised)

street & number 1324 Pike St. telephone (610) 372-4992 / (610) 376-5684

city or town Reading state PA zip code 19604

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National Park Service

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Major Bibliographical References

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- Montgomery, Morton L. History of Berks County in Pennsylvania. Philadelphia: Everts, Peck & Richards, 1886.
- 35 Years of Progress. A report prepared by the Borough of St. Lawrence, Berks County, PA. 1963

Public Records

Office of the Recorder of Deeds. Berks County Court House, Reading, PA

Office of the Recorder of Wills. Berks County Court House, Reading, PA

Interviews

Adams, Elmer H. Architect and long-time neighbor to Lutz property. Age 87. April, 1995

Spatz, Elizabeth. Genealogy of the Lutz Family. April, 1995.

Yoder, James Russell, Jr. Son of Minnie Lutz Yoder (listed below), grandson of John F. Lutz and operator of the furniture business from the 1930's to 1968

Yoder, Minnie Lutz. Daughter of John F. Lutz and operator of the furniture business for many years. Age 101. April, 1995

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Name of Property
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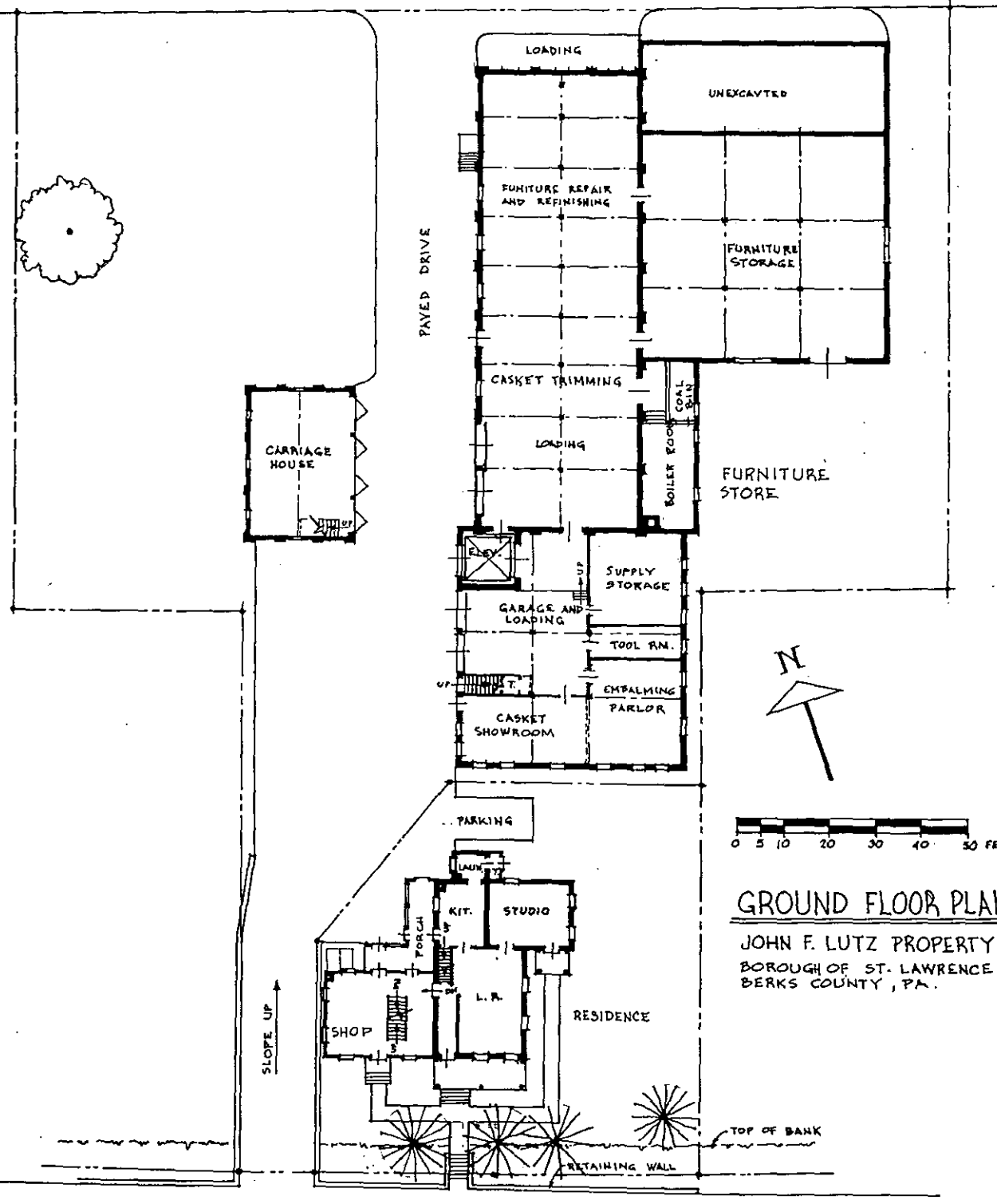
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Boundary Description

The site includes all lands defined as parcel 7178 and parcel 7037 of Map 5326, Block II of the Berks County Tax Maps also known as 3559 and 3561 St. Lawrence Avenue respectively. The site is flanked on the west by parcel 6163, also known as 3557 St. Lawrence Avenue and, on the east by 8007, also known as 3563 St. Lawrence Avenue.

Beginning at a point along the northern right-of-way line of St. Lawrence Avenue, a line coincident with the southern line of parcel 7178, and the western line of parcel 7178; thence proceeding northerly along said lot line for a distance of 120.9 feet to the northern line of parcel 6163; thence, westerly along said lot for a distance of 50.0 feet to the western most line of parcel 7178; thence, northerly along said line for a distance of 130.1 feet to the southern right-of-way line of an unnamed alley and the northern line of parcel 7178; thence easterly along said line for a distance of 204.9 feet to the eastern most line of parcel 7178; thence southerly along said line for a distance of 124.6 feet to the northern line of parcel 8007; thence westerly along said line for a distance of 54.0 feet to the western line of parcel 8007; thence southerly along said line for a distance of 126.3 feet to the northern line of parcel 7037 and northern right-of-way line of St. Lawrence Avenue; thence westerly along the northern right-of-way line of St. Lawrence Avenue, a line coincident with the southern line of parcels 7037 and 7178, for a distance of 100.7 feet to the point of beginning.

ALLEY

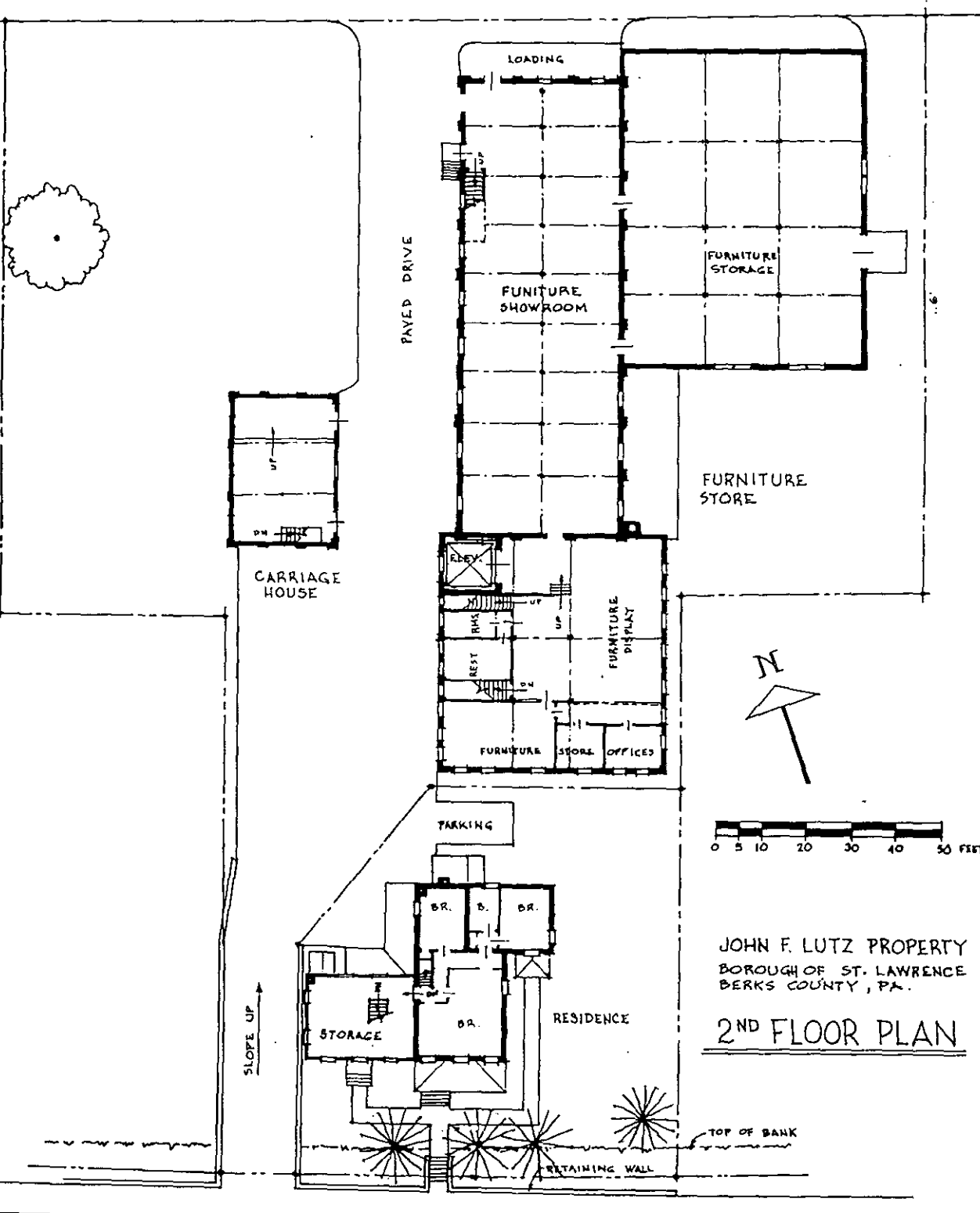


GROUND FLOOR PLAN

JOHN F. LUTZ PROPERTY
BOROUGH OF ST. LAWRENCE
BERKS COUNTY, PA.

ST. LAWRENCE AVENUE

ALLEY



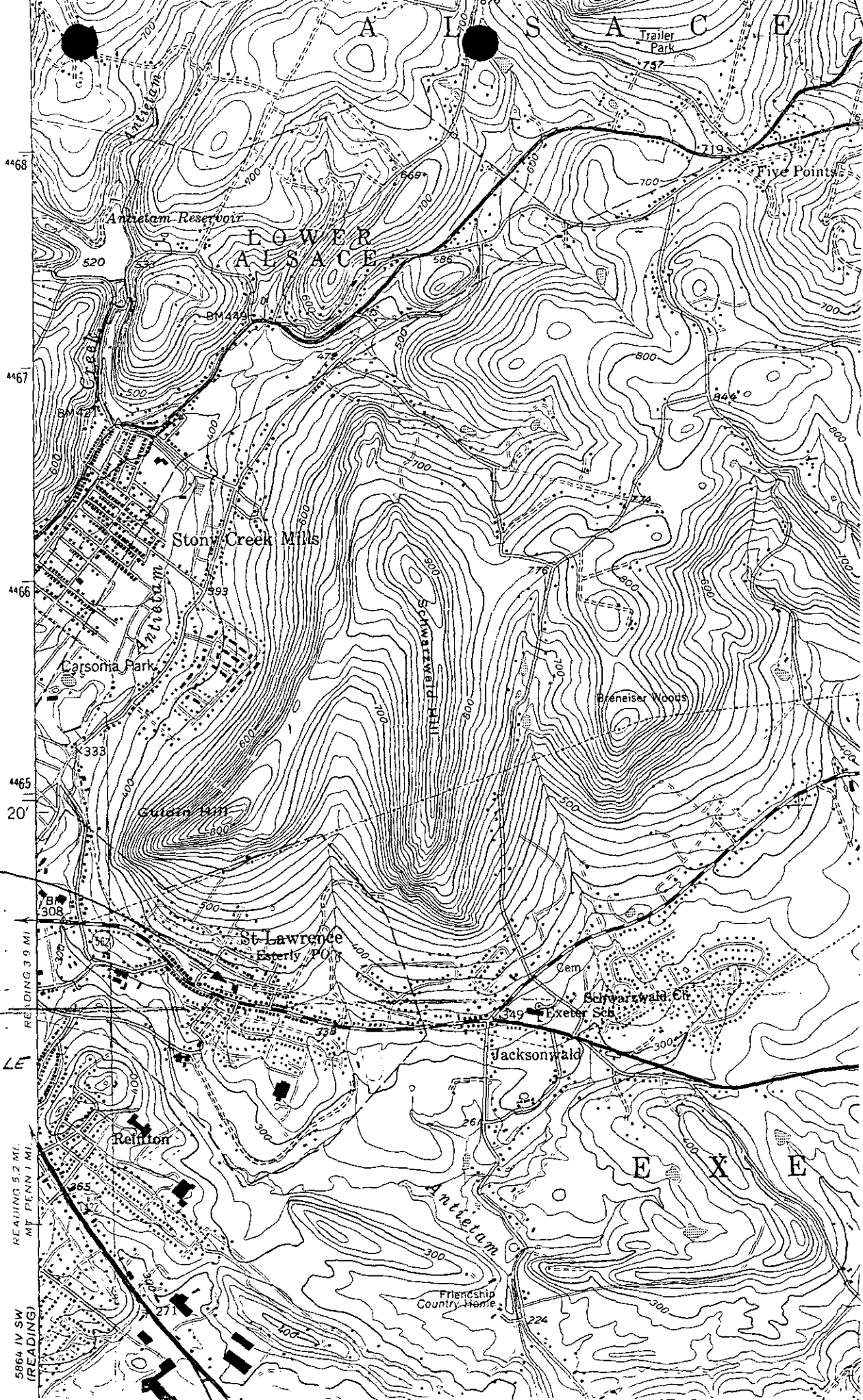
FURNITURE STORE

CARRIAGE HOUSE

JOHN F. LUTZ PROPERTY
BOROUGH OF ST. LAWRENCE
BERKS COUNTY, PA.

2ND FLOOR PLAN

ST. LAWRENCE AVENUE



LUTZ, JOHN F.,
 FURNITURE STORE /
 FUNERAL HOME
 BERKS COUNTY,
 PENNSYLVANIA
 IRDSDORO QUADRANGLE

Zone 18
 E 426576 N 4464073

5864 N SW (READING)
 READING 5.2 MI.
 MT. PENN. 1 MI.