

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 for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For conditions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

I. Name of Property

Historic name Saxonburg Historic District

Other names/site number n/a

II. Location

Street & number Portions of East & West Main, North & South Rebecca, North & South Isabella, Pittsburgh, Butler, and State Streets not for publication N/A

City or town Saxonburg vicinity N/A

State Pennsylvania code PA county Butler code 019 zip code 16056

III. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1986, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

[Signature]
Signature of certifying official Title _____ Date 12/19/02

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of commenting or other official Date _____

State or Federal agency and bureau _____

National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other (explain): _____	_____	_____

Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously-listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
54	10	buildings
		sites
		structures
2		objects
56	10	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

one

Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

- DOMESTIC/single dwelling
- DOMESTIC/secondary structure
- RELIGION/religious facility
- COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store
- DOMESTIC/hotel

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

- DOMESTIC/single dwelling
- DOMESTIC/secondary structure
- RELIGION/religious facility
- COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store
- COMMERCE/TRADE/restaurant
- DOMESTIC/hotel
- VACANT/NOT IN USE

Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

- MID-19TH CENTURY/Greek Revival
- MID-19TH CENTURY/Gothic Revival
- LATE VICTORIAN/Italianate
- LATE VICTORIAN/Queen Anne
- LATE VICTORIAN/Eastlake
- LATE 19TH & 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Late Gothic Revival
- LATE 19TH & 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Colonial Revival
- MODERN MOVEMENT/Ranch
- NO STYLE

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation STONE/sandstone; BRICK; CONCRETE
 walls WOOD/weatherboard; SYNTHETICS; STONE
 roof SYNTHETICS/asphalt; STONE/slate; METAL
 other _____

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

Refer to continuation sheets

Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "X" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing)

A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.

B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.

C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.

D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

(Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.

B removed from its original location.

C a birthplace or a grave.

D a cemetery.

E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.

F a commemorative property.

G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # _____

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

ENGINEERING

TRANSPORTATION

Period of Significance

1831-1952

Significant Dates

1831

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Roebing, John A.

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other

Name of repository:

D. Geographical Data

Acres of Property 9 acres

U.S.G.S Quadrangle: Saxonburg, PA & Curtisville, PA

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17	599830	4511720	3	17	600510	4511480
2	17	600490	4511610	4	17	598540	4511340
				5	17	600020	4511260

N/A See continuation sheet.

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

E. Form Prepared By

Name/Title David L. Taylor, Principal

Organization Taylor & Taylor Associates, Inc. **date** April, 2002

Street & number 9 Walnut Street **telephone** 814-849-4900

City or town Brookville **state** PA **zip code** 15825

Additional Documentation

(Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

- A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- A sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

Property Owner

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

Name _____

Street & number _____ **telephone** _____

City or town _____ **state** _____ **zip code** _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Project (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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**Saxonburg Historic District
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7. Description

The Saxonburg Historic District (Photos 1 through 16; Figs. 1 through 4) is a mixed-use residential/commercial/institutional historic district of nine acres encompassing an essentially flat tract of land containing the historic area of the Borough of Saxonburg, which is located in rural southeastern Butler County, Pennsylvania, approximately thirty miles northeast of Pittsburgh. The Saxonburg Historic District contains a total of sixty-six resources, two of which are historic objects (both cast iron fences) and sixty-four are buildings. One additional property, the John Roebing House at 120 West Main Street (Resource No.4; Photo 2; Fig. 3) was listed previously in the National Register (NR 11/13/76); this property appears on the district map and within the Resource Inventory which accompany the nomination, but it is not included in the tabulation which appears in Section 5. The Saxonburg Historic District is located on the north and south sides of West Main Street, the community's principal historic commercial thoroughfare. West Main Street follows an east-to-west direction through the community. From east to west, West Main Street is intersected by North and South Rebecca Street, North and South Isabella Street, Pittsburgh Street (extending southward from West Main Street), and State and Butler Streets, which extend northward from Main Street. No alleys are found within the district. Isabella and Rebecca Street are named for members of founder John Roebing's family, Butler and Pittsburgh Streets retain the historic names which indicate their ultimate destination, and the naming of Main and State Streets reflects the use of traditional street-naming custom. The majority of the properties in the district are of wood construction, set on foundations of stone, and in addition to representing traditional Germanic building traditions, also reflect the Greek Revival, Italianate, Eastlake, Dutch Colonial Revival, and Late Gothic Revival styles of design.

Approximately eighty percent of the properties in the district are residential in character; the balance of the properties are of an institutional or commercial character. The Saxonburg Historic District retains integrity in each of the seven qualities of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. Of the sixty-six counted resources, fifty-six (85%) contribute to the character of the district and ten (15%) are non-contributing. Most non-contributing resources are buildings erected following the 1831-1952 period of significance of the district; the extent of alteration of one property has resulted in a loss of historic

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architectural integrity and its resulting treatment as a non-contributing resource. In addition to the domestic and commercial architecture of the district, the institutional growth and maturity of the community is represented by two historic churches, St. Luke's Lutheran (Resource No.44; Photo 15) and the Memorial United Presbyterian Church (Resource No. 2; Photo 1; Fig. 2). The architecture of the Saxonburg Historic District includes modest vernacular residences,¹ two former hotels, small-scale Italianate commercial buildings, and only a few high-style residences and churches. As noted above, most of the district's historic architecture is of wood; St. Luke's Church (Photo 15) is of stone construction. Many homes retain historic porches and some have historic dependencies, including barns, sheds, and outbuildings of indeterminate use, all of which are included in the resource count. Two homes (Resource No. 6; Photo 3) and Resource No. 56) retain historic cast iron fences along their front lot perimeters; the fences (counted as Resource Nos. 6a and 56a) are included in the resource count and significantly enhance the historic character of the streetscape. Approximately seventy percent of the resources in the district pre-date 1900, approximately twenty percent of the resources were constructed between 1900 and 1930, and the remaining approximately ten percent post-date 1930. Approximately eighty percent of the buildings are of a residential character; the balance are of a commercial or institutional character.

The district retains much of the historic street plan which founder John Roebling laid out in 1831 when he emigrated here from Germany to establish his new community. He platted a grid of streets and spacious building lots, long and narrow in dimension, allowing for homes and shops to be erected at the front of the lots—most of which faced Main Street. The rear of the lots was intended for agricultural use² The original lots have been subdivided to create tracts of a "village" character rather than an agrarian dimension. A typical subdivision practice is that of the original Ferdinand Baehr property at the northeast corner of West Main Street and North Isabella Street. In 1831, John Roebling's ownership of this lot reflected a frontage of 240 feet

¹The term, "vernacular," when used in this context, conforms to the definition which appears in Ward Bucher's **Dictionary of Building Preservation**: a building built without being designed by an architect or someone with similar formal training; often based on traditional or regional forms."

²Roebling's own shop, wherein he invented "wire rope," is extant on North Rebecca Street, several hundred feet north of and outside the district in a community park named for the founder of the village. The shop was moved a small distance as a preservation measure.

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and a depth of 1,221 feet. Subsequent subdivisions of the lot have resulted in the existing 66-foot frontage and a depth of 111 feet for the Baehr house (Resource No. 12)

All streets in the district are paved. Some historic brick sidewalks are extant and enhance the overall visual character of the district. Street lighting employs modern cobra-head fixtures powered by overhead lines. No traffic signals are in the district.

Most buildings in the Saxonburg Historic District are detached from one another. Historic commercial buildings on Main Street occupy their entire frontage, with little front or side lot setbacks. Some of the residences in the district are built flush with the sidewalk, while others have modest front yards. The German Evangelical Protestant Church at 101 South Rebecca Street (later a United Presbyterian Church; Resource No. 2; Photo 1; Fig. 2) occupies a commanding site at the head of Main Street and St. Luke's Lutheran Church (Resource No. 44; Photo 25) is at the corner of Main and State Streets and is surrounded on three sides by a grassy lawn. Landscaping in the district includes lawns and mature shade trees.

The buildings in the district are of a conventional rectilinear form (Photos 1 through 16). Individual frontages range upward from approximately twenty feet. Some commercial buildings are flat-roofed or have shed roofs which slope gently from front to back, while others are gable-roofed with "boomtown" fronts³ and others have gambrel roofs. Some historic chimneys have been retained but most have been removed in the course of retrofitting heating systems and replacing roofs. Most of the buildings in the district rest on substantial foundations of ashlar sandstone. Most residential buildings in the district are gable-, pyramidal-, hipped-, and gambrel-roofed. The churches have gabled and hipped roofs. Fenestration is generally flat-topped, except for the churches which exhibit lancet- and round-arched window forms; the church windows are glazed with religious art glass.

The vast majority of the buildings in the district are of wood construction. Many of the buildings erected in the 1830s and 1840s by the first German settlers are of heavy timber

³The "boomtown front" is a typically rectangular facade which rises well above a gable-end-oriented roof, giving the appearance that a building is larger than it actually is.

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construction, many with brick and straw inserted into the cavities between the framing. Among these buildings are the German Evangelical Protestant Church (Photo 1), the John Roebling House (Photo 2; Fig. 3), the Helmbold House (Photo 14), the Hotel Saxonburg (Photo 9), and the Kuntz-Steubgen House (Resource Nos. 2, 4, 12, 14, 15, 18, respectively). Other properties erected during the first decades of settlement retained the heavy timber frame construction but without extraneous materials inserted into the wall cavities. Such early construction technology was eventually supplanted by balloon framing in the middle years of the nineteenth century and throughout the balance of the period of significance. Only a few properties are of masonry construction.

Most of the architecture of the Saxonburg Historic District is modest both in its scale and ornament. The district's earliest buildings are built in local variants of the Greek Revival style, followed chronologically by Italianate-style design for some commercial buildings, Eastlake influence for some residential decoration, and Craftsman and Dutch Colonial Revival for some of the last buildings erected during the period of significance of the district. Interspersed among these are the vast majority of the buildings in the district, which are derived from no formal architectural style, but rather reflect the vernacular building traditions of this community throughout the period of significance.

The Greek Revival is the earliest extant style within the district, although it does not appear in a formal derivation of the design mode. Greek Revival design tenets appear on the Helmbold House (Resource No. 14, 210 West Main Street; Photo 4) and in the Saxonburg Hotel (Resource No. 15, 220 West Main Street; Photo 9) in the properties' trabeated entrances with transom sash and sidelights and in the partial return on the cornices on the gable ends.

The Italianate style is represented in the Dr. Edward Mershon Office & Residence at 209 West Main Street (Photo 7), the Schroth Harness Shop at 225 West Main Street (Photo 12), and the Maurhoff Building (Photo 13) at 259 West Main Street (Resource Nos. 16, 23, and 32, respectively).

The Eastlake style is best seen on two homes, 125 West Main Street (Resource No. 6; Photo 3) and 246 West Main Street (Resource No. 31), while the Late Gothic Revival style was

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used in the design of the 1927 St. Luke's Lutheran Church at 310 West Main Street (Resource No. 44; Photo 15).

The Dutch Colonial Revival, with its characteristic gambrel roof, appears in four commercial buildings: the 1916 Schroth Barber Shop at 231 West Main Street, the Kornfelder Building at 251 West Main Street, and the building at 319 West Main Street and its rear dependency (Resource Nos. 24, 28, 49, and 50, respectively). One Dutch Colonial Revival residence is in the district, the c. 1925 home of Ronald Bauman at 324 West Main Street (Resource No. 54).

Many of the individual properties in the Saxonburg Historic district reflect no particular style or influence, but represent the vernacular buildings traditions of Butler County and of the German pioneers who settled the community.

As noted in the introductory paragraph, the Saxonburg Historic District clearly retains historic and architectural integrity. The overall character of the district is intact and represents the community throughout its one hundred twenty-year-long period of significance. Some demolition has occurred in the business district and newer commercial buildings appear at the intersection of corners of West Main on corners which formerly contained historic architecture. Alterations to buildings within the district include storefront renovations along Main Street, and the application of non-historic siding and the installation of replacement windows throughout the district. The newer buildings and physical alterations are widely dispersed throughout the district and do not detract significantly from the ability of the nominated area to reflect its appearance throughout the period of significance.

Summarizing, the Saxonburg Historic District is an architecturally-cohesive residential, institutional, and commercial area containing modestly-scaled and -ornamented buildings which are situated along the principal street and intersecting streets in this rural southwestern Pennsylvania small town.

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The Saxonburg Historic District is significant under National Register Criteria B, and C. With reference to Criterion B, significance in the areas of *transportation* and *engineering* is established for the previously-listed John Roebling House (NR 11/13/76). Roebling, who, in addition to his role as a colonizer and founder of the community, was an engineer and in his Saxonburg shop (Fig. 7) invented "wire rope," which became known popularly as cable and which enabled Roebling to design suspension bridges, including the Brooklyn Bridge. Under Criterion C, the district is significant for its *architecture*, representing a variety of the individual architectural styles which were popular in America during the period of significance of the district. In addition to reflecting the patterns of formal architectural design, the district also contains diverse examples of vernacular building traditions, including Germanic construction techniques brought to the community by Roebling and his associates. The period of significance begins in 1831, when Roebling and his emigrant companions first settled Saxonburg, and ends in 1952, corresponding both to the National Register fifty-year guideline and to the approximate date of construction of the most recently-constructed of the district's historic buildings (the Robert Lee Sarver House, 320 West Main Street; Resource No. 51). While the Saxonburg Historic District contains some commercial architecture, its commercial influence was purely local and its reflection of broad patterns of commercial history is meager, and thus a Criterion A association with commerce was not appropriate.

John Augustus Roebling (1806-1869; Fig. 5) was born in Muhlhausen, in the

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Thuringia area of Saxony. He enrolled in the Royal Polytechnic Institute at Berlin and his course of study included both architecture and engineering, as well as hydraulics, languages, and bridge construction. During his studies of bridge building he learned of the work of James Finley, who had erected a pioneering but short-lived suspension bridge across the Schuylkill River in Pennsylvania. Upon completing his studies in 1826, Roebling spent three years in national service, most of which was passed building roads in Westphalia. Life in Prussia was in ferment, with widespread governmental oppression and restrictions on the rights of the individual, and following his national service, he left the government and returned home during the summer of 1829-1830.

An apparently happenstance meeting occurred with an old friend, another engineer named Etzler who had just returned from America. Etzler encouraged Roebling to organize a group of Thuringians to travel to America and organize a colony. However, government policies prohibited the emigration of skilled craftsmen or technicians and John Roebling and his brother, Karl, had to begin surreptitious plans to emigrate. In December, 1830 a broadside pamphlet entered local circulation bearing the title, "A General View of the United States of North America, Together with a Community Plan for Settlement." The piece was the undercover product of Roebling and Etzler.

The next spring, a small group of forty-four stalwart adventurers--men, women, and children alike--was organized and departed on an eleven-week passage to Philadelphia, where they disembarked on August 8, 1831. In his journal, John Roebling recorded his impressions of the city of 80,000 and its outwardly-appearing contrast with Germany:

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Nowhere does one see a person in rags; all, even the common workingmen, go very cleanly and neatly dressed. Every American, even when he is poor and must serve others, feels his innate rights as a man. What a contrast to the oppressed German population.¹

John and Karl Roebling each had \$400 and equal shares pledged to them by their brother, Hermann Christian, and by their colleague Ferdinand Baer. The brothers began to investigate possible sites for a new community and decided that the most promising areas lay across the Allegheny Mountains in western Pennsylvania or beyond, in Ohio. The group set out for Pittsburgh via the yet uncompleted Pennsylvania Canal. Karl Roebling contracted malaria during the trip, and upon arriving in Pittsburgh the group learned of lands nearby which were said to possess a healthful climate.

They settled on a tract in Butler County which would become their new home. The lands which they purchased had once belonged to Revolutionary War financier and signer of the Declaration of Independence Robert Morris. Roebling acquired 1,582 acres from Mrs. Sarah Collins for an average price of \$1.39 per acre; the transaction was dated October 28, 1831.

The Roeblings surveyed their new holdings into large residential/agricultural lots on each side of the principal east-west thoroughfare which would become Main Street within the Saxonburg Historic District. The individual lots in their plan varied between one hundred and two hundred feet in width and some extended to depths of as much as

¹Quoted in Goldinger, Ralph. *Historic Saxonburg and Its Neighbors*. (Apollo, Pennsylvania: Closson Press, 1990), p. 7.

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1,500 feet. The first homes were of log construction and anchored small farms of fewer than ten acres. The community was initially christened Germania, which was soon changed to Sachensburg (Fig. 6), which in turn was eventually anglicized to Saxonburg. Historian Ralph Goldinger described the distinctiveness of Roebling's new settlement:

The very fact that Saxonburg was pre-planned in such detail is itself unusual. Most communities in this area [the Butler County area] grew up rather haphazardly, but with his background in engineering, Roebling incorporated several extremely unique features into the layout of Saxonburg. Main Street runs directly east and west with the church conspicuously located at the eastern end--a focal point for residents and visitors. The ridge upon which Main Street lies is a natural dividing line between the Allegheny River and the Beaver and Ohio Rivers. At summer solstice the sun arises nearly over the white church at the top of Main Street and appears to travel down Main Street and ultimately over the horizon to the west.²

John Roebling erected a substantial two-story home near the east end of West Main Street (Resource No. 4; Fig. 3; NR 11/13/76), employing heavy timber frame construction with brick "nogging" inserted in the spaces between the framing members. Roebling selected the highest point in the village, near his home at the head of West Main Street, for the construction of a church (Resource No. 2; Fig. 2), which was completed in 1837.

²Ibid., p. 17.

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Roebing saw his new settlement grow and in 1837 accepted the position of Pennsylvania state engineer, which required his supervision of the construction of canals, locks, and dams. He knew the Pennsylvania Canal well, having traveled from Philadelphia to Pittsburgh on the Canal years before. At various locations in the more mountainous areas of the path of the Canal, the canal boats had to be moved across the summits using portage railways. This system required the use of hawsers of hemp, nine inches in diameter, which were used to tow the boats up the hillsides. Roebing recognized that these ropes were massive, difficult to handle, and broke frequently, adding both to the cost of operation and safety of the Canal.

Engineer Roebing studied the challenge of the frail hawsers in his modest shop (Fig. 7), which is extant in Saxonburg but stands several hundred feet outside the district boundaries along North Rebecca Street; it is separated from the district by several houses, a modern museum building, and a community park. In 1841 Roebing developed the twisted-wire cable, initially for use on the Pennsylvania Canal. Roebing had studied bridge engineering in his university days, and because his cable could support long spans and extremely heavy loads, he soon gained a reputation as a quality bridge engineer. In 1847 (some accounts record the date as 1848), he left Saxonburg and established a factory in Trenton, New Jersey, in closer proximity to the site of manufacture of the wire. John Roebing completed dozens of major works, the best known of which was the Brooklyn Bridge. In 1869, during the construction of the Brooklyn Bridge, Roebing's foot was crushed in an accident at the bridge site and he died after a long battle with tetanus. The

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bridge was completed under the supervision of John Roebling's son, Washington. The family firm operated as John A. Roebling & Sons and its successor firm, the Roebling Steel Company, went on to manufacture the wire rope used in many other suspension bridges. Such marvels of technology were made possible by the seminal nineteenth-century work of John Augustus Roebling, carried out during the time he lived in the community which he founded--Saxonburg, Pennsylvania. With respect to National Register Criterion B, the association of the Saxonburg Historic District with John A. Roebling is irrefutable.

The Roeblings departed Saxonburg in the late 1840s, by which time the community was firmly established. Saxonburg became a stable, although never particularly prosperous, rural southern Butler County hamlet, a character which it retained throughout the remaining century of the period of significance. Interspersed with residences, a small commercial district developed along West Main Street and served primarily a local clientele, including retail shops and several hotels, among which were the Union House and Roebling House (not extant) and the 1840 Hotel Saxonburg (Resource No. 15; Photo No.9), along with churches such as the 1837 German Evangelical Protestant Church (Resource No. 2; Photo No. 1) and the 1927-1928 St. Luke's Lutheran Church (Resource No.44; Photo No. 15), a school (not extant), and locally-oriented retail buildings, the most notable of which is the Italianate-style building erected by Dr. Edward Mershon (Resource No. 16; Photo No. 7).

Throughout the balance of the nineteenth century and continuing throughout the period of significance, Saxonburg changed very little from its earliest days. The town

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remained generally agrarian in character, characterized by only modest physical growth and with farmlands remaining on the periphery of the community. Butler, the county seat, became far more industrialized and Saxonburg became a "bedroom" community, both for Butler and eventually for Pittsburgh. The Butler County oil boom of the late nineteenth and early twentieth century brought no substantial change to Saxonburg, and while several boom towns (including Renfrew, Golden City, and McBride City) were not far away, Saxonburg failed to assume the character of an oil town. Saxonburg's economic benefit from the oil boom was confined primarily to the village's stores and hotels which catered to the oilmen and oil field workers of the day. Significant industrial growth never occurred in Saxonburg—the industry in closest proximity to the historic district is a small ceramics plant located outside the district north of West Main Street.

The Criterion C significance of the Saxonburg Historic District is established by the presence of examples of a variety of the architectural styles popular during the 1831-1952 period of significance. The earliest architecture of the district is architecturally-simple and vernacular in character, of timber frame construction, executed in the Germanic building traditions brought to the community by John Roebling and his companions, with brick and straw inserted into the cavities between the timber members. Even as the community continued to develop later in the nineteenth century, the architecture of the district remained modest and failed to reach the level of sophistication seen in the county seat of Butler. The community remained essentially rural, small in scale. The nineteenth-century architectural influences which appear in the district include the Greek Revival, Italianate, and Eastlake styles. Except for the Italianate-style store/home of Dr. Edward

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Mershon (Resource No. 16; Photo No. 7) and the Eastlake-style home at 125 West Main Street (Resource No. 6; Photo No. 3), Saxonburg's buildings are modest in design. The twentieth century brought with it a few properties executed in the Dutch Colonial Revival (the Roy Lassinger Shop and Residence, 319 West Main Street; Resource No. 49 and the Ronald Bauman House at 324 West Main Street; Resource No. 54). The Late Gothic Revival style appears in St. Luke's Lutheran Church (310 West Main Street; Resource No. 44) and the end of the period of significance and post-war design brought to Saxonburg the ranch-style house, seen in the 1952 home of watchmaker Robert Lee Sarver at 320 West Main Street (Resource No. 51). Summarizing, the Criterion C significance of the district spans the decades from the 1830s until the early 1950s, ranging from the traditional design preferences of Germanic folk architectural traditions coupled with some Greek Revival embellishments to the beginnings of post-World War Two architecture.

Viewing the Saxonburg Historic District in the context of other districts in the region, even in the twenty-first century this district exhibits a far stronger character of a early nineteenth-century village than do any comparable areas in relatively close geographical proximity. The Butler Historic District is a far more urban district, with substantial commercial, educational, and governmental buildings and imposing churches, erected in the county seat. The Emlenton Historic District, on the Butler/Venango County line, is physically larger than Saxonburg and is located on the banks of the Allegheny River and on the steep hillside immediately north of the river; it contains larger commercial buildings and residences than does the Saxonburg district, along with the refinery of oilman Harvey Crawford's Quaker State Oil Company. Like Emlenton,

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Zelienople, in southwestern Butler County, contains a more defined commercial district than does Saxonburg. The Harmony Historic District, adjacent to Zelienople, retains a village character comparable to that of Saxonburg; Harmony's principal importance lies in its association with the followers of George Rapp, who, like Roebling's followers were also Germans but came to Pennsylvania in search of a communal utopian existence. The architecture of the Saxonburg Historic District is of a more modest character than is found in the aforementioned districts. The Saxonburg Historic District, with its retained rural village character and its clear association with John Roebling, stands alone in the region as a distinct architectural entity with clear associations to an individual with irrefutable significance to the history of technology in America.