

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 an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, 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.

1. Name of Property

historic name CENTRAL AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 16-50 Central Avenue, 1-5 West Main Street, 40 Clark Street [] not for publication

city or town Lancaster [] vicinity

state New York code NY county Erie code 029 zip code 14086

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this [X] 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 as set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property [X] meets [] does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant [] nationally [] statewide [X] locally. ([] see continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Richard Perpoint

DSHPO

9/17/14

Signature of certifying official/Title

Date

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 certifying official/Title

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the 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

Central Avenue Historic District

Erie County, New York

Name of Property

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(check as many boxes as apply)

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

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

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
17	2	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
17	2	TOTAL

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

Historic and Architectural Resources of the Village of Lancaster, Erie County, New York

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions)

COMMERCE/TRADE/financial institution, specialty store,
department store, restaurant

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store, business
restaurant

SOCIAL/meeting hall

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

GOVERNMENT/city hall

GOVERNMENT/city hall

EDUCATION/library

RECREATION AND CULTURE/music facility

RECREATION AND CULTURE/music facility, museum

SOCIAL/civic

GOVERNMENT/fire station, post office

DOMESTIC/single dwelling, multiple dwelling, hotel

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions)

Commercial Italianate, Queen Anne

foundation various: stone, concrete

Colonial Revival

walls various: brick, stucco, asbestos shingle,

No Style

synthetic

roof various: asphalt shingles, metal, rubber

other n/a

Narrative Description

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

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8. 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 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 that 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 boxes that apply.)

- A** owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B** removed from its original location
- C** a birthplace or 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.)

9. 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 Building Survey # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal Agency
- Local Government
- University
- Other repository: _____

Areas of Significance:

(Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Community Planning and Development

Period of Significance:

ca.1860 - 1940

Significant Dates:

ca. 1860, 1894, 1896, 1931, ca. 1935, 1936,

1940

Significant Person:

N/A

Cultural Affiliation:

N/A

Architect/Builder:

George G. Metzger, Architect

Unknown

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CENTRAL AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT – NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION OF PROPERTIES

The Central Avenue Historic District is a contiguous, intact historic commercial enclave, representative of economic growth and prosperity in the village of Lancaster in the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century. It contains a grouping of mostly late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, 2- to 3-story masonry two-part commercial buildings located within the village of Lancaster, Erie County, New York, roughly 11 miles east of Buffalo. The district covers an area of approximately 3.8 acres centered along Central Avenue, with a few properties on West Main Street and Clark Street, in the commercial center of the village. This group of buildings is located within a larger locally-designated district, and represents the most intact, contiguous group of commercial buildings along Central Avenue. Lancaster's commercial corridor originally developed along West Main Street and Central Avenue to accommodate those traveling through the village, as well as serving the families of employees lured by the industrial development in and surrounding the community. However, a majority of original buildings within the district boundaries were lost in the 1890s as fires devastated the core commercial area. Over the course of the following 40 years, the commercial corridor was rebuilt and remains the focal point of the Village of Lancaster today.

The district consists of 17 contributing buildings and 2 non-contributing buildings. The majority of contributing resources were constructed in the late nineteenth century in the Commercial Italianate or Queen Anne styles. Those properties determined to be non-contributing are severely altered in materials and have lost key character-defining features. Surrounding the historic district are buildings of more recent construction, generally dating to urban renewal efforts in the 1960s and 70s. However, the nominated district retains a high level of architectural integrity that speaks to the lasting importance of the commercial streetscape in the identity of the village. Streets are typically blacktop paved, single lane with flanking street parking, granite curbs, and brick and stamped concrete sidewalks that extend to the building facades, dotted with new decorative streetlights and several small trees, part of a 2003 street improvement project.¹

The Central Avenue Historic District meets the registration requirements outlined in the *Historic and Architectural Resources of the Village of Lancaster, Erie County, New York* Multiple Property Documentation Form. The MPDF outlines two historic contexts for the Village of Lancaster, the first being *Settlement and Development of the Village of Lancaster, 1807-1849*. The second, which encompasses the dates of the Central Avenue Historic District and pertains to the development of commercial downtown Lancaster, is the *Socioeconomic Growth and Maturity of the Village of Lancaster, 1850-1949*. The district contains resources that predominantly fall into the Property Type II: Commercial and Industrial Architecture, which encompasses commercial buildings of the Italianate and Queen Anne styles present on Central Avenue. The district meets the registration requirements for Property Type II which states,

¹ Approximate street widths are as follows: Central Avenue is 40' wide, Clark Street is 20' wide, and West Main Street is 50' wide.

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Property Type II resources must be shown to be clearly reflective of the pattern of mercantile and industrial development in Lancaster during the Period of Significance. If significance is based upon Criterion C, they must exhibit readily identifiable characteristics of a particular style or must be the product of a designer or builder whose role in the Village or region is clearly definable. They must possess a high degree of integrity, retaining the form, massing and detailing with (sic) define the individual style of architecture.²

The district also contains one resource that falls into the Property Type I: Residential Architecture, the Potter-Eaton House. Moved from its original setting nearby on Main Street in 1940 to prevent its demolition, the house is now home to the Village of Lancaster Historical Society and is located at the rear of the Opera House at 40 Clark Street. Property Type I includes buildings of late nineteenth and twentieth century revivals, including the Colonial Revival style typified by the Potter-Eaton House. It also meets the registration requirements for Property Type II, which are comparable to those previously noted.

STREETS OF THE CENTRAL AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT

The Village of Lancaster is approximately 2.65 square miles and features two main intersecting thoroughfares: Broadway Street (U.S. Route 20) running east to west and Central Avenue beginning at Broadway and running north to the Town of Clarence. Cayuga Creek and its narrow tributary, Plumb Bottom Creek, meander east to west through the village center. The Central Avenue Historic District is primarily located in an area nestled between Cayuga Creek to the west and Plumb Bottom Creek to the north, an ideal location for the small village which first utilized the creeks to power early milling industries.

Streets within the Village of Lancaster do not strictly follow a grid pattern, but generally run east-west and north-south. The streets contained within the boundaries of the historic district generally retain their original layout, although surrounding streets have been significantly modified over time. The Central Avenue Historic District is primarily located on Central Avenue, which runs north-south, with a handful of buildings along the adjacent side streets of West Main Street and Clark Street, both of which run east-west. The lots tend to be similar in size and rectangular in shape, with few variations. Typical of historic commercial streetscapes, there is little to no space between individual buildings within the district and buildings are placed on the lots fronting the sidewalk and commercial thoroughfare.

² David L. Taylor, *National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form: Historic and Architectural Resources of the Village of Lancaster, Erie County, New York*, Taylor & Taylor Associates, Inc. (Waterford, NY: New York State Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation, 1999), F-5 – F-6.

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The streetscape within the district was modified in 2003, when the village reconstructed Central Avenue to with new decorative streetlights, granite curbs, and brick and stamped concrete sidewalks.³ Despite these changes, the work done was sensitive to the character of the enclave of historic commercial buildings, and the area retains a pedestrian-oriented setting. The street is paved with blacktop with single lanes going in either direction and flanking parallel street parking. Buildings are generally separated from the road by sidewalks that average 13ft in width with rounded curbs. There are contemporary brick signage piers placed along the sidewalks, which were also part of the 2003 Central Avenue reconstruction project. Several small trees, barely reaching to the roofs of two-story buildings, are planted approximately every 40 feet along the pedestrian sidewalks, and, given their size, were likely planted as part of the 2003 streetscape updates.

North-South Streets

Central Avenue, formerly known as Railroad Street, was one of the first major thoroughfares in the village, constructed as early as 1810. It begins at Broadway Street and runs north as Central Avenue to Pleasant View Drive, where its name changes to Harris Hill Road. It passes through the town of Lancaster and eventually ends near the town of Clarence. It is crossed by the historically important east-west route of Main Street, Route 5, along the way, making Central an important feeder street to Main Street.

The portion of Central Avenue within the historic district primarily features Italianate style commercial buildings as is evident by the round-headed windows and modestly denticulated cornices of the Cushing Block at 33-37 Central Avenue and the Raynor Exchange/Braun Building at 16 Central Avenue. While the Lancaster Opera House/Town Hall at 21 Central Avenue, complete with ornate clock tower, exhibits these Italianate features, it also contains elements of Queen Anne styling with its asymmetrical facade and leaded-glass transom at the main entry. Central Avenue also features several vernacular brick commercial buildings with no distinct architectural style, such as 46 and 50 Central Avenue.

East-West Streets

West Main Street intersects with the west side of Central Avenue at a slight angle. West Main historically ran west to Aurora Street and was a major transportation route though the village since Broadway Street did not cross Cayuga Creek until the "Broadway Cut Off" was constructed in 1936.⁴ The "Broadway Cut Off" refers to a project in which Broadway Street was extended to cross Cayuga Creek at the foot of Central Avenue to connect with East Main Street.⁵ Historically, when traveling from the east on Broadway through Lancaster, one would have to take a series of roads, including West Main Street and Central Avenue, in order to continue onto East Main Street. With the "Broadway Cut Off," West Main Street and Central Avenue were no longer

³ James S. Keysa, ed., *Lancaster, New York: Architecture and History* (Lancaster, NY: Village of Lancaster Historic District Commission, 2007), xi.

⁴ *Buffalo Courier-Express*, "Officials Ready to Speed to Lancaster Cutoff Task," Sunday April 5, 1936, 4.

⁵ East Main was renamed "Broadway Street" at this time.

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necessary for east to west travel through the village. Additionally, West Main Street was rerouted south during the Urban Renewal efforts in the 1960s and 1970s.

Originally a bustling commercial corridor with densely packed, 1 ½- to 2 ½-story frame commercial buildings, the section of West Main Street located beyond the district boundaries saw the majority of buildings torn down and replaced by rambling one-story commercial buildings with large parking lots during the 1960s. The streetscape features within the district, including sidewalks, streetlights, and setbacks along West Main Street, match those along Central Avenue, with the only difference being angled street parking. Immediately beyond the district's boundary, the streetscape changes, as the sidewalks are paved with concrete and the streetlights have a more industrial appearance. Buildings on West Main Street within the Central Avenue Historic District include the Italianate commercial buildings at 4 and 5 West Main Street characterized by their arched window openings and the Queen Anne building at 1 West Main Street complete with corner turret.

Clark Street extends from Central Avenue to the west and School Street to the east. It first developed ca. 1900, but only east of Plumb Bottom Creek. It originally connected to Central Avenue by bridge and footpath, and the first road connection to Central Avenue was constructed ca. 1915. Within the district, the street has a single lane of traffic each way. There is a narrow concrete sidewalk, and buildings have a moderate setback with room for a small front yard. There is one building within the district on this street, the Colonial Revival style Potter-Eaton House, now the Lancaster Historical Society, at 40 Clark Street, complete with grand entry porch and door with exaggerated sidelites.

ARCHITECTURE

The architecture of the Central Avenue Historic District reflects a period of development in the decades surrounding the turn-of-the-century. The commercial corridor in the village was originally composed of a group of wood-frame buildings, primarily situated along West Main Street and Central Avenue, that were built between the 1820s and 1860s, related to advancements in transportation as well as the rise in population of the steadily growing village. They were much more densely placed along West Main Street than Central Avenue. However, the majority of existing resources within the district were built between 1890 and 1930. New buildings in the area were largely of brick and stone, materials that were more fire resistant and permanent, demonstrating the increase of wealth in the village. The buildings within the Central Avenue Historic District represent an intact enclave of the rare remaining historic commercial buildings from the 1860s to the 1930s that survived the urban renewal efforts in the 1960s and 1970s. There are no buildings in this district less than 50 years old.

The district is primarily composed of two-part commercial blocks or two and three-story masonry mixed-use buildings with businesses on the first floor and residential units or offices on the upper floors. Their

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architectural elements represent popular styles of the late 1800s, including the round arch windows and modest denticulated cornices of the Italianate style and the asymmetrical decorative facades of the Queen Anne style. Besides the Lancaster Town Hall and Opera House, designed by George J. Metzger ca. 1894, the other buildings have no known architects, suggesting that they were designed by builders.

RESOURCES

There are a total of seventeen contributing resources in the Central Avenue Historic District. These contributing resources are commercial and mixed-use commercial/residential buildings. No resources within the district have previously been listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

The following list, organized alphabetically by street, provides a brief description of each individual property included in the district. When determining an individual building's status as "contributing" or "non-contributing" to the district, date of construction, massing, and retention of original building materials were the primary factors considered. Storefront modifications and updates are common here, and reflect the continued commercial use of these buildings for decades; storefront changes alone do not necessarily render a building non-contributing to the district. Buildings that are non-contributing are generally ones that are significantly altered in form and material, or have lost key character defining features.

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CENTRAL AVENUE – WEST SIDE (even)

16 Central Avenue ca. 1894

Raynor Exchange Building/ Braun Building

Constructed for: Ernest Feyler

Contributing primary building

3-story, 10-bay flat-roof irregularly shaped masonry building with Italianate styling. 1st story features modern brick infill and irregularly placed contemporary plate glass windows and double entry doors. Upper windows typically in symmetrical rows, 1/1 wood sash double hung within segmental arch openings with decorative brickwork and rusticated stone sills. Decorative corbelled brickwork at cornice, carved stone block that reads "Raynor Exchange 1894."

WEST MAIN STREET INTERSECTS

24/26 Central Avenue ca. 1935

Contributing primary building

2-story, 3-bay flat-roof rectilinear masonry building with stone foundation. Features nearly full width storefront, with three consecutive fixed windows and two separate entry doors. First story entrance with contemporary double entry doors and second story entry features historic wooden entry door with large single light. Contemporary awning separates 1st and 2nd story. 2nd story windows are typically 1/1 wood sash double hung; central bay features a tripartite and end bays are paired. Continuous stone sill and soldier course brick lintel. Stone roof coping.

30 Central Avenue ca. 1900

Contributing primary building

2 1/2-story front gable frame building with modest Queen Anne styling; rusticated stone foundation, synthetic wood and asbestos siding, asphalt shingle roof. Features nearly half-width contemporary storefront with narrow wooden, fluted pilasters and recessed entry way with separate 1st and 2nd story entry doors, both wooden with large single light and transom window above. Windows typically 6/1 wood sash double hung, oriel window at second story. Gable end features wood shingle siding, pent roof, and single window. Gable dormer at side roof.

32 Central Avenue ca. 1897; ca. 1935 facade addition

Non-contributing primary building (significantly altered)

2-story, 2-bay brick facade attached to a front-gable frame building; stucco siding, asphalt shingle roof. Features full width contemporary storefront and off-center contemporary entry door, contemporary awning. Windows typically sliding replacement units with 9-simulated divided lights and stone sills.

34-36 Central Avenue ca. 1897; ca. 1960 storefront alterations

Contributing primary building

2-story, 4-bay flat roof rectilinear masonry commercial building; parged foundation; orange brick facade, rest of elevations are red brick. Two separate storefronts expand the width of the building with fixed light windows

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and two separate recessed entry doors. 1st and 2nd stories separated by wood panel sign and stone belt coursing forms sills of 2nd story windows. Windows typically single or paired 1/1 wood sash double hung. Low relief panels in frieze, arcaded corbelled brick at cornice and red tile coping.

44 Central Avenue **ca. 1915**

Non-contributing primary building (alteration)

2-story flat-roof rectilinear masonry building with rear 1-story mass; stone veneer at facade. Features full width contemporary store front with recessed contemporary entry door. Windows typically paired contemporary vinyl replacements with large fixed upper lights and smaller awning lower lights.

46 Central Avenue **ca. 1927**

Contributing primary building

2-story flat-roof rectilinear masonry building; stone foundation. Features full-width storefront with large fixed windows and central, slightly recessed contemporary entry door with three-light transom above. Separate contemporary entry door to second story at south side with single-light transom above. Leaded glass transom spans width of building. Windows typically paired 1/1 vinyl replacement units with brick sills and continuous soldier-coursed band above windows.

50 Central Avenue **ca. 1927**

Redmen's Lodge/Oriole's Nest No. 120

Contributing primary building

2-story flat roof rectilinear masonry building; concrete block construction with brick facade and 1-story brick rear massing. 1st story features synthetic panel siding with wood trim and fixed wood windows, recessed entry door. Windows typically paired 1/1 vinyl replacement units with brick sills and continuous soldier-coursed band above windows.

CENTRAL AVENUE – EAST SIDE (ODD)

21 Central Avenue **ca. 1894; 1976-1978 restoration**

Lancaster Town Hall and Opera House

Architect: George J. Metzger

Contributing primary building

3-story hipped roof masonry building with a raised basement and elements of Italianate and Queen Anne styling; stone foundation, and standing seam metal roof. Features a slightly asymmetrical facade with medina sandstone belt coursing, off-center clock tower, rounded arch entry way with contemporary entry door, leaded glass fanlight. Windows are a mixture of paired and tripartite, mostly replacement with medina sandstone sills and lintels. Third story windows have rounded arch openings. Modillions at eaves. Front gable dormer with decorative woodwork. Contemporary 2-story masonry rear addition with stone foundation and standing seam metal roof.

CLARK STREET INTERSECTS

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25 Central Avenue

ca. 1920; ca. 1960s storefront alterations

Former Bank of Lancaster

Contributing primary building

2-story, 2-bay, flat roof rectilinear masonry commercial building with modest Italianate styling. Features full width contemporary storefront with recessed central entry, fixed second story windows with wood casing. The south elevation includes original windows openings with stone sills, brick and stone pilasters and corbelled brick lintels, contemporary brick infill. Wooden denticulated cornice.

27 Central Avenue

ca. 1905; ca. 1990 facade alteration

Former Post Office

Constructed for: Julius Israel

Contributing primary building

2-story flat roof rectilinear masonry commercial building with modest Italianate styling; stone foundation. Former full-width storefront infilled with contemporary brick veneer, decorative wooden pilasters at corners and door surround, primary entry door is contemporary glass and metal, secondary historic wooden entry door. First story windows typically contemporary casement, each with 20 simulated divide lights. First and second stories divided by contemporary cloth awning. Second story includes two sets of tripartite windows, each 8/8 simulated divided light replacements, with running stone sill, jackarch brick lintels. Decorative corbelled brickwork at cornice.

31 Central Avenue

ca. 1895, ca. 1900 stepped parapet addition

Former Fire House

Contributing primary building

2 1/2-story masonry stepped parapet facade with modest Italianate features attached to front gable masonry building; stone foundation, painted brick, asphalt shingle roof. Features full-width storefront with central entry, cast iron decorative pilasters and historic wooden entry door with transom. Second story features rounded arch window openings with stone sills and 1/1 vinyl replacement windows. Gable end includes paired window with segmental arch and stone sill, contemporary 1/1 replacements.

33-37 Central Avenue

ca. 1896; ca. 1990 alterations

Cushing Block

Constructed for: Franklin S. Cushing

Contributing primary building

3-story, 9-bay flat-roof rectilinear commercial masonry building with Italianate styling. Features two separate storefronts, each with fixed contemporary windows and three separate contemporary entry doors. The Southernmost storefront has a concave pent metal roof, and the northernmost has a contemporary cloth awning, 1/1 replacement windows throughout, third story features rounded arch window openings. Decorative diamond shaped brickwork between 2nd and 3rd stories and at cornice. South side elevation features painted "ghost" signage towards the top of the building.

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39-41 Central Avenue

ca. 1895, ca. 1915 alterations

Contributing primary building

2-story flat-roof rectilinear commercial building with modest Italianate styling; brick facade, rusticated concrete block construction, stone and concrete block foundation. Asymmetrical facade features two separate storefronts, with fixed contemporary windows and contemporary entry doors. Separate entry at south end of facade features rounded brick arch opening. Irregular fenestration with windows at southern end of facade lower than windows at northern end. Southern windows 1/1 replacements and northern windows paired 1/1 replacements. All window openings feature extended stone sills. Corbelled brick under sills and at cornice.

43 Central Avenue

1896

Maute Block

Constructed for: John N. Maute

Contributing primary building

3-story flat-roof rectilinear masonry building with Italianate styling; stone foundation. 1st story facade features 2/3rds width storefront infilled with contemporary brick and fixed windows. Recessed, off center entry with cast iron support and semi-circular door opening and contemporary glass panel entry door. 2nd story includes two oriel windows with fixed-light replacement windows, decorative garland-and-swag details and dentil band. Southern end of 2nd story features single-bay recessed loggia with similar ornamentation as oriel windows. The 3rd story features 1/1 wood sash double hung windows with semi-circular arched transoms and arched brickwork. Cornice features highly decorative corbelled brickwork and centrally located date stone reading "Maute Block" and "1896." South side elevation features "ghost" signage painted towards the top reading: J.N. Maute Hardware, Tinning, and Plumbing.

CLARK STREET – NORTH SIDE (odd)

40 Clark Street (on 21 Central Ave tax parcel)

ca. 1895, moved 1940

Potter-Eaton House

Contributing primary building

2 1/2-story hipped roof frame building with Colonial Revival styling; concrete block foundation, wood clapboard siding, asphalt roof. Features centrally located single-bay rounded open entry porch with rounded columns, spindlework balustrades at porch and roof level. Historic wood panel entry door flanked by large leaded-glass sidelights. Windows typically 1/1 wood sash double hung topped with flat hoodmolds, Palladian window at second story. Dentils and modillions at cornice. Front-gable pedimented dormers 12 lights on the bottom sash and intersecting tracery windows on the top sash, spindlework balustrades between dormers and at roofline. 1-story rear addition.

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WEST MAIN STREET – NORTH SIDE (odd)

AT CENTRAL AVENUE

1 West Main Street

ca.1860s; altered ca. 1890

Contributing primary building

2 ½-story mansard-roof masonry building with Queen Anne and Italianate styling; stone foundation, asphalt shingle roof. Full width contemporary storefront with corrugated metal siding large plate glass windows, recessed contemporary entry door. Windows at 2nd story typically 1/1 wood sash double hung replacement units set within semicircular arched window openings with stone sills. Double wooden brackets at the cornice and flat roof dormers at mansard level with decorative wooden window casing and dentils. Southeast corner of building features turret at mansard level.

5 West Main Street

ca. 1880

Contributing primary building

3-story, 4-bay flat roof masonry commercial building with Italianate styling; stone foundation. Storefront features two separate entry doors, contemporary to the west and to the east historic wood door with large single light, flanked by sidelights, two large fixed display windows. Full-width copper pent roof separates 1st and 2nd story. Windows typically 1/1 replacement units, some 2/2 wood sash double hung units. Stone sills, decorative cast iron pediment lintels at 2nd story and semicircular arches at 3rd story. Corners of building feature brick quoins, corbelled brick cornice and terracotta coping.

WEST MAIN STREET – SOUTH SIDE (even)

AT CENTRAL AVENUE

4 West Main Street

ca. 1895; ca. 1970 storefront alteration

Contributing primary building

3-story, 3-bay flat roof masonry commercial building with modest Italianate styling; stone. Features full width recessed ca. 1970s storefront with projecting display cases at various heights atop piers of long, thin brick. Contemporary plate glass entry door and window. Large sign separates first and second stories. Windows typically boarded up with wood, stone sills, set inside segmental brick arches. Decorative corbelled brick at the cornice.

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CENTRAL AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT – STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE:

SUMMARY

The Central Avenue Historic District is significant under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development and Criterion C in the area of Architecture as an intact enclave of primarily commercial architecture dating between ca. 1860 and ca. 1935. The district encompasses a notable collection of mostly Italianate and Queen Anne commercial styles, reflective of a time of prosperity in the Village of Lancaster. The once bustling commercial center in the village thrived as the result of industrial development and improvements in transportation technologies, including better road systems, railroads, and eventually the electric trolley. This group of historic commercial buildings, with the prominent and individually significant Lancaster Opera House as its centerpiece, stands out among adjacent modern commercial development. At the heart of the village, these significant buildings are associated with prominent businesses and figures in Lancaster's history at the turn of the twentieth century.

By the 1860s, there was a firmly established commercial corridor along West Main Street and Central Avenue known as Railroad Street. Lancaster's commercial center, originally wood-frame construction, was devastated by fires in 1894 and 1896 but was rebuilt in the next few decades with mixed-use commercial/residential buildings of brick construction. East to west through traffic, as well as the 1894 establishment of the Buffalo, Belleview, and Lancaster Electric Car, a trolley line which traveled from Buffalo to Lancaster and Depew through the heart of the village, continued to encourage development along West Main Street and Central Avenue. The mid-1930s saw the slow decline of the village's traditional commercial center, largely due to changes in traffic patterns, the growing popularity of the automobile, and the economic crisis of the Great Depression. With Urban Renewal efforts in the 1960s and 70s, many of the original commercial buildings along West Main Street were lost, demolished to create a new larger shopping center (now mostly vacant). Despite these losses, the Central Avenue Historic District stands out from the surrounding area as a contiguous, pedestrian-oriented commercial area that retains much of the original turn-of-the-century architectural and historic character.

PERIOD OF SIGNIFICANCE

The period of significance for the Central Avenue Historic District is representative of a second wave of development in the Village of Lancaster from ca. 1860 to 1940, documented in the historic context, *Socioeconomic Growth and Maturity of the Village of Lancaster, 1850-1949*, in the village Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF). This context documents the development of Lancaster's commercial downtown from the first brick commercial building constructed to the last. This marks a period of great economic success in Lancaster, which is evident in the relatively high style architecture and quality of building materials. The

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period of significance ends in 1940, with the relocation of the 1894 Potter-Eaton House from its location at 802 East Main Street to its current site at Clark Street, to save it from demolition. The period of significance also encompasses the notable construction of the "Broadway Cut Off" in 1936, which connected Broadway Street to East Main Street and eliminated the need for east-west travel through the commercial corridor. This event marked a radical transformation in the physical street plan of Lancaster, one that shifted from the pedestrian-oriented local business needs to one that began to cater to automobile traffic. This project was part of a larger commercial reorganization occurring in Lancaster, that also spurred the removal of the Potter-Eaton House. By 1940, the Lancaster faced an era of developmental decline in the village's traditional downtown commercial sector, exacerbated by the Great Depression in the 1930s and the increasing freedom that came with the automobile, which gave rise to centralized shopping plazas and malls outside of traditional historic commercial downtowns.

SETTLEMENT AND DEVELOPMENT OF THE VILLAGE OF LANCASTER (1807-1849)

NOTE: Much of the information provided in this brief history of the Village of Lancaster has been summarized and paraphrased from the more thorough historical background presented in the related MPDF. For a more detailed history of the Village of Lancaster, please refer to the multiple property documentation form, Historic and Architectural Resources of the Village of Lancaster, Erie County, New York.

The location of the settlement originally known as Cayuga Creek, the present-day Village of Lancaster, was rich in natural resources, making it ideal for settlement and growth. The fertile soil and proximity to Cayuga Creek would eventually allow the early settlement to become first a thriving farming area and then an industrial community. Though the first settler, Edward Kearney, built his log house in 1807, the land was densely forested and difficult to transverse. The establishment of transportation routes in the early nineteenth century was vital to initial growth at the site of the present village of Lancaster as a small trade center for the local agricultural community. In the earliest times, the area was reached by various Indian trails, including the Iroquois Trail (now Route 5). In 1808, the Holland Land Company constructed a dirt road from Alden to Buffalo, through what would become the village of Lancaster, which greatly improved accessibility to the small settlement. This road was first known as Buffalo Road and subsequently called Cayuga Creek Plank Road, West Main Street, and Broadway within the village of Lancaster. The road was originally constructed as a dirt road, just wide enough for a wagon, but later became a wooden road, consisting of logs with wood planks running lengthwise nailed to the logs, hence the name "Cayuga Creek Plank Road."⁶ Once early roads were established, the settlement began to grow next to Cayuga Creek, which was ideal for hydro power. Milling was one of the first industries in the area, and mills were located along the creek, close to the current Central Avenue Historic District.

Improvements to transportation modes and systems continued to be important in the early development of the Lancaster. During the initial settlement period, other than walking, a horse carriage was the primary means of

⁶ Keysa, *Lancaster, New York*, 98.

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transportation to and from the developing village. The Pioneer Line was established in 1827 as a stagecoach service which ran along Broadway Street from Buffalo to Lancaster and then eastward along Buffalo Road. This brought travelers through the heart of what would become the commercial downtown and created a need for goods and services. At the site of the present-day Municipal Building, at the foot of Central Avenue, Edward Kearny built a tavern known as the American House (demolished 1930), which became a popular stop among those traveling the stagecoach line. This sparked a small commercial district in the settlement because, as travelers stopped to rest, they often were in need of services and goods, and businesses were established to accommodate the travelers' needs. Early businesses included a post office, general stores, and hotels.

The travel route through the settlement was also vital to early development of the commercial core. Broadway Street did not always connect at the foot of Central Avenue as it does today. Originally, Buffalo Road (now Broadway Street) was located completely north of Cayuga Creek, but a series of floods pushed the creek northward until it became necessary for travelers to change their route.⁷ Buffalo Road could not continue between Aurora Street and the foot of Central Avenue because this was a low lying part of Cayuga Creek prone to flooding, thus West Main Street was constructed ca. 1810 as a detour. Railroad Street (now Central Avenue) was shifted east to connect with the eastern portion of the disconnected Buffalo Road. West Main Street and Railroad Street became part of the major thoroughfare of the developing settlement. When heading west through the village to Buffalo, one would begin on East Main Street, turn north onto Central Avenue, west on West Main Street, and south on Aurora Street to reach Broadway Street. This travel pattern through the commercial downtown continued for more than a century and contributed to the early success of businesses on Central Avenue and West Main Street, bringing travelers through the heart of the village to stop and purchase goods and services.

Perhaps the most significant catalyst for the village's population growth and development occurred in 1842 with the establishment of the Buffalo & Attica Railroad, north of the village line, which greatly improved transportation of goods and people to and from Lancaster.⁸ It was likely that the northern portion of Central Avenue (formerly Railroad Street) developed during the 1840s to connect the train station north of the village to the developing village center.⁹ As a result of improvement in access to markets, new industries were able to develop in the Lancaster area, including tanneries, iron furnaces, foundries and a glass factory. This growth in industrial development further increased the population by attracting workers and their families to the area.

⁷ Harley E. Scott and Edward J. Mikula, *Tales of Old Lancaster* (Lancaster, NY: Cayuga Creek Press, 1981), 5.

⁸ David L. Taylor, *National Register of Historic Places Multiple Property Documentation Form: Historic and Architectural Resources of the Village of Lancaster, Erie County, New York*, Taylor & Taylor Associates, Inc. (Waterford, NY: New York State Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation, 1999), section E, page 3.

⁹ The name "Railroad Street" changed to "Central Avenue" ca.1890s.

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The New York State Legislature established the town of Lancaster in 1833, subdividing the town of Clarence and changing the name of the Cayuga Creek settlement to "Lancaster," a name taken from an old English dukedom.¹⁰ The village of Lancaster was incorporated in 1849 and is the third oldest incorporated village in Erie County, after Springville and Gowanda, both to the south of the Buffalo. The settlement had a steadily growing population up until the time of Lancaster's incorporation. Initial settlers to the area hailed primarily from New England and Pennsylvania and were followed by German immigrants who arrived during the 1830s. Irish immigrants fleeing the Irish Potato Famine arrived in the 1840s. At the time of incorporation, there were 124 families with a population of 677 residents. There are no extant resources from this period located in the Central Avenue Historic District.

SOCIOECONOMIC GROWTH AND MATURITY OF THE VILLAGE OF LANCASTER (1850-1949)

At its incorporation, the settlement still consisted of a relatively small-scale residential area, surrounding an equally modest business district along Railroad Street (now Central Avenue) and West Main Street.¹¹ Walking remained the primary means of travel and most residents lived within close proximity of the commercial downtown. In addition to residential development on surrounding streets, many of the business owners lived in the upper stories above their shops or in small houses behind them. In 1849, a number of wealthy Dutch merchants and manufacturers from Friesland, Holland moved to the village and became community leaders and business owners.¹² A significant wave of Dutch immigration to the United States occurred from 1845 to 1855, primarily the result of religious and economic dissatisfaction.¹³ The influx of Dutch immigrants caused land prices in the village to rise from 30 dollars to 50 dollars per acre, and the population more than doubled, from 677 in 1849 to 1,518 in 1866.^{14,15} The sudden swell in population and economic growth expanded the market for local businesses, triggering a boom in commercial architecture to house them.

The community continued to grow at a steady pace from the 1860s to the 1890s, and several institutions and organizations developed with it. By the mid nineteenth century there were several churches housing Presbyterian, German Methodist, German Lutheran, and Roman Catholic congregations.¹⁶ During the latter half of the nineteenth century, several school houses and social institutions were established, and in 1874, the first fire company in Lancaster was founded. As industry in Lancaster changed and developed, the

¹⁰ "Early History of Community," April 15, 1948. (*Clipping from Lancaster Historical Society Files*)

¹¹ Taylor, *MPDF: Village of Lancaster*, section E, 5.

¹² *Ibid.*, section E, 4.

¹³ Herbert J. Brinks, "Dutch Americans," *Countries and Their Cultures*.? <http://www.everyculture.com/multi/Du-Ha/Dutch-Americans.html>.

¹⁴ H. Perry Smith, ed., *The History of the City of Buffalo and Erie County: With Illustrations and Biographical Sketches of Some of its Prominent Men and Pioneers*, Vol. I, (Syracuse, NY: D. Mason & Co., 1884), 458.

¹⁵ Taylor, *MPDF: Village of Lancaster*, section E, 4.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, section E,3.

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demographics of the population changed. By the 1890s, new immigrants from Poland, Italy, the Ukraine, the Balkans, Hungary, Russia, Yugoslavia and Czechoslovakia came to work in the surrounding factories, fueling the expansion of businesses as well as road improvements to connect them. In 1884, Lancaster was said to have:

[...] two flower mills, one carriage factory, the Lancaster glass works, one iron foundry, three breweries, two planing mills, one tannery, one malt house, one bedstead shop, two cabinet shops, three tin shops, two meat markets, one drug store, four general stores, three grocery stores, two tailor shops, one harness shop, three hotels, four blacksmith shops, one basket shop and numerous saloons.¹⁷

Transportation continued to progress in the second half of the nineteenth century, and the village continued to grow due to the expansion of railroads. May 14, 1883 marked the arrival of the first train on the Delaware, Lackawanna, and Western Railroad. Lancaster was also accessible via the Lehigh Valley Railroad, which opened its line in 1889. The 1840s era Buffalo & Attica Railroad was joined with seven other rail lines to create the New York Central Railroad.¹⁸ Additionally, roads improved and stage coach services thrived as the village's population grew. J.A.B. Shirman ran a stage coach line on Central Avenue and ran travelers from the railroad stations, down Central Avenue and east on Broadway, formerly East Main Street.¹⁹ Road improvements included the introduction of the first oil burning street lamps in 1867; these were not replaced with electric lamps until the late 1890s.²⁰

It was during this period that the contributing resources at 1 West Main Street and 5 West Main Street were constructed. After construction, 1 West Main Street changed hands between many saloon and restaurant owners. The building at 5 West Main and may have originally been home to M. Windling's saloon and restaurant, but it was also an early butcher shop. These were among the earliest brick buildings in the commercial downtown, reflecting an increase in the community's wealth and interest in creating a more permanent commercial core.

Fire in the Commercial District and Post-Fire Reconstruction

By the late 1800s, there was a well-established business district along Central Avenue and West Main Streets consisting of generally two-story wood-frame commercial buildings and dwellings on Central Avenue and smaller, more concentrated buildings along West Main Street. Wood-frame buildings dominated the

¹⁷ Ibid, section E, 6.

¹⁸ Ibid., section E, 6.

¹⁹ Scott and Mikula, *Tales of Old Lancaster*, 49.

²⁰ Smith, *History of Buffalo and Erie County*, 459.

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commercial corridor, as they were relatively inexpensive and could be built more quickly to serve the growing population. However, the main commercial area was devastated by fires in 1894 and in 1896. With the abundance of wood-frame buildings and the lack of an established system to distribute water at that time, both fires spread quickly and did considerable damage.²¹ Several of the destroyed buildings were located within the boundaries of the Central Avenue Historic District, and resources in the district were constructed to replace them.

On April, 4, 1894, a fire began in a barn behind Mrs. E. Mosack's butcher shop at 524 Central Avenue, spread down the south side of West Main Street, crossed over to the other side of Central Avenue and then south.²² After enduring for three to four hours, the fire destroyed buildings and property amounting to over \$100,000 in damages. Among the buildings destroyed were the Reyner Estate Exchange Block, at 520-522 Central Avenue, and Dr. Samuel Potter's house and barn at 804 East Main Street, all of which were promptly rebuilt.²³ The brick buildings at the northern corner of West Main Street (1 and 5 West Main Street) were damaged but salvageable because of their brick construction.²⁴

The fire of 1896 started in an abandoned soap factory at 514-516 Central Avenue, owned by Hoffeld & Co., and spread rapidly down both sides of Central Avenue.²⁵ Firemen were unable to reach it in time because the "engine hose carts" and other firefighting equipment were being stored in other parts of the village while the firehouse was being built. The fire crossed Central Avenue, and among the destroyed buildings were the original hardware store of J.N. Maute and the Cushing Block.²⁶ The fire was put out before it spread to West Main Street, but the total damage amounted to \$45,000.²⁷ This fire was the catalyst for installation of a water distribution and fire hydrant system in the village between 1896 and 1900.²⁸

Despite losses in the downtown commercial architecture, there was enough wealth and prosperity in the village to warrant the reconstruction of the commercial downtown. In fact, the population had risen from about 1,600 in 1880 to 3,750 in 1900, and lost buildings were home to businesses that provided vital goods and services to

²¹ Donald MacDavid, "Cushing's Drug Store," *The Lancaster Legend: Newsletter of the Lancaster Historical Society* 9, no. 2 (Summer 2002): 2.

²² Mrs. E. Mosack's butcher shop at 524 Central Avenue once stood on what is now 10 Central Avenue. MacDavid, "Cushing's Drug Store," 2.

²³ The original Raynor Exchange building was located on the site of the current Raynor Exchange/Braun Building at 16 Central Avenue. The Potter House that remains today was rebuilt on the site of the earlier house, and moved to its current site within the district in 1940.

²⁴ *The Lancaster/Depew Bee*, "Out of the Past: Great Fire of 1894," April 14, 1994.

²⁵ The Hoffeld & Co. Soap Factory site is now the location of 34-36 Central Avenue.

²⁶ The former Maute Building and Cushing Building were located in the boundaries of the district.

²⁷ *The Lancaster Times*, "A Disastrous Fire!: A Portion of Central Avenue Swept by Flames," October 22, 1896.

²⁸ Taylor, *MPDF: Village of Lancaster*, section E, 7.

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villagers.²⁹ Many business owners had new, more substantial brick buildings constructed after the fire, and these form the commercial corridor today. Some buildings, like the Raynor Exchange, the Cushing Block, and Maute Block, all extant resources, were rebuilt almost immediately because the businesses they held had already established success in the village. Several new wood-frame commercial buildings were constructed to give displaced businesses a location to reopen, but they were subsequently replaced with more substantial brick and stone buildings over approximately the next 40 years. During the subsequent years of post-fire development, the population rose from 3,750 in 1900 to 7,040 in 1930, signaling a need for continued construction of commercial buildings to accommodate the growing population.

Continued commercial development along West Main Street and Central Avenue was encouraged by the construction of the Buffalo, Belleview, and Lancaster Electric Railway. A trolley line was constructed from Buffalo to Lancaster and Depew called the Buffalo, Belleview and Lancaster Electric Railway (BB&L). By 1893, the BB&L trolley went as far as the corner of Sawyer and Central Avenues, approximately one-half mile north of the district. There were two cars running from Lancaster to Cheektowaga and then two running from Cheektowaga to the Buffalo City Line. The concept of running the line down Central Avenue was initially met with opposition by homeowners, as well as stage coach drivers on Central Avenue who transported passengers from the railway into Lancaster and knew it would make their services obsolete. Progress won out in the end, and by May of 1894, the electric rail was completed on Central Avenue. The BB&L carried more than 500,000 passengers during 1896 and 1897.³⁰ The final route of the electric car through the village of Lancaster from Buffalo was along Como Park Boulevard, then north on Church Street to Broadway, west on Broadway (which was then called East Main Street) to Central Avenue, and traveled north until it turned west on Sawyer Avenue.³¹ This route brought passengers from Buffalo and surrounding suburbs through the heart of Lancaster's commercial downtown. The BB&L Trolley service went out of business on December 31, 1931, at a time when many streetcar lines were shut down in the Buffalo area, due largely to the growing popularity of buses and automobiles.³²

During the late 1800s and early 1900s, many improvements were made to the Lancaster streets. Electric street lamps were first introduced in 1897, when Earnest Feyler signed a contract with the village to provide electricity to twenty streetlights with his early electric generator, located in the basement of the Buffalo Dry Goods Store at 16 Central Avenue. Roads in the village of Lancaster were not paved with brick until 1912. Broadway was paved with yellow brick and red brick down the middle to signify where the trolley line traveled

²⁹ 1880 WNY Business Directory, 259. Ibid., section E,7.

³⁰ Scott and Mikula, *Tales of Old Lancaster*, 48-50.

³¹ Keysa, *Lancaster, New York*, 144.

³² Ibid., 94.

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and West Main Street, along with several other roads, was paved with red brick. Roads were not paved with blacktop until the early 1930s, when cars and busses were becoming more prevalent on the roads.³³

1940-TODAY: AUTOMOBILE AGE, URBAN RENEWAL, AND PRESERVATION EFFORTS

As was the case for many communities throughout the United States, the Great Depression played a significant role in the decline of development in the commercial downtown of Lancaster. The 1930s saw a great decline of small businesses in Lancaster's Central Business District. As was common throughout the country during the Great Depression, Lancaster experienced large-scale unemployment that continued throughout the decade and several businesses were forced to close.³⁴ From 1930 to 1940, the once rapidly growing population only rose by approximately 240 people. After ca. 1935 there were no new buildings within the historic district boundaries, clearly demonstrating the decline of development in Lancaster's historic commercial corridor. The final building constructed in the Central Avenue Historic District is located at 24-26 Central Avenue. Prosperity briefly returned in the village during World War II with industrial development in surrounding areas, including the Curtiss-Wright aircraft facility in nearby Cheektowaga. After the war, however, the village of Lancaster never regained its former status as a dynamic commercial center.³⁵

The economic struggles of the Great Depression era, coupled with the growing popularity of the automobile, mark the end of development in the Central Avenue Historic District. Although buses started to run along Central Avenue in the 1920s, the impact of the automobile became especially apparent in the 1930s, as residents continued to travel further distances from the traditional downtown corridor. Significant changes were made to the character of the village of Lancaster as it struggled to become attractive again. The period of significance for the Central Avenue Historic District ends in 1940 with the move of the Potter-Eaton House from East Main Street/Broadway to Clark Street, to protect it from new commercial development. This commercial development was prompted by the 1936 construction of the "Broadway Cut Off," which connected Broadway to East Main Street. This modification to Broadway Street occurred during a time when it was common to make roads more automobile friendly by reducing road obstacles and straightening routes.³⁶ At this time, East Main Street was renamed "Broadway Street." This change in the road pattern effectively eliminated any need for through traffic to travel on Central Avenue or West Main Street, which aided the decline of businesses after the 1930s.³⁷ With the rise in automobile ownership, road improvements, and suburban living, Lancaster saw further decline in its downtown commercial district. Typical of the era, as residents were lured from city and village centers by centralized auto-oriented shopping plazas and, later, shopping malls offering large, modern

³³ Ibid., 100.

³⁴ Taylor, *MPDF: Village of Lancaster*, section E, 8.

³⁵ Ibid., section E, 9.

³⁶ Richard Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture* (Lanham, MD: AltaMira Press, 2000), 15.

³⁷ Keysa, *Lancaster, New York*, 94.

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stores and amenities, the pedestrian-oriented commercial downtown became less desirable and businesses suffered.

In the 1950s and 60s several residential subdivisions were established in the village of Lancaster, including the Como Park Subdivision and 74 new home sites on Central Avenue constructed by Columbia Builders.³⁸ Businesses along Central Avenue and West Main Street continued to stay open until the 1960s with this residential growth nearby. But in March of 1961 there was yet another fire that destroyed a large part of the north side of West Main Street.³⁹ From 1967 to 1973, there was a push for urban renewal projects in the historic commercial corridor in an attempt to make the village attractive to shoppers once again. It was during this period that West Main Street was cut off from Aurora Street, and the majority of buildings on West Main Street were demolished to make way for a new single-story retail building and a large parking lot.⁴⁰ This was an effort to make Lancaster's downtown commercial district more automobile friendly and modern, but it eliminated half of the historic commercial downtown, damaging its character of a century before.

Changing attitudes about preservation of Lancaster's remaining historic downtown were evident when a historic district commission formed in the mid-1980s and subsequently established an historic district.⁴¹ The original local historic preservation district boundaries included properties along Broadway Street from east of the village line to Central Avenue and along Central to Brookfield Place. The district was enlarged in 1998 to include properties along Broadway to Aurora Street, along Aurora to Pleasant Avenue and Pleasant Avenue to Central.⁴² In January of 2007, new legislation for the central business district was adopted in order to create guidelines for signage, property usage, lot requirements, etc.⁴³ Additionally, in March of 1999, Taylor & Taylor Associates prepared a Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) of the *Historic & Architectural Resources of the Village of Lancaster, Erie County, New York*.

ARCHITECTURE OF THE CENTRAL AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT

Before the fires devastated downtown Lancaster, the commercial buildings lining West Main Street and Central Avenue were largely two-story frame buildings, although there were constructed of brick. After the fires, many of the business owners chose to rebuild in the same locations with more fire resistant masonry construction instead. While two of the commercial buildings predate the fire, the rest of the buildings range from 1894-

³⁸ Taylor, *MPDF: Village of Lancaster*, section E, 9.

³⁹ Keysa, *Lancaster, New York*, 96.

⁴⁰ Taylor, *MPDF: Village of Lancaster*, section E, 9.

⁴¹ Keysa, *Lancaster, New York*, IX.

⁴² *Ibid.*, X.. Although of local significance, many areas of the local historic district do not meet the standards for the National Register. The Central Avenue Historic District represents the largest, intact and contiguous enclave of commercial buildings that meet the National Register standards, within this larger, locally designated district.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, XII.

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1935. Buildings within the district are generally characterized as two-part commercial blocks, two- to three-stories tall with retail space on the ground floor and apartments or office space on the upper floors. The majority were built of brick. Fenestration varies from building to building but typically includes flat-topped to rounded or segmental arched openings and some with more decorative stone sills or lintels. Many buildings contain windows with modern replacement sash units set into the historic masonry openings. Roofs are generally flat, although some have a gradual slope downward toward the rear elevation. Some cast-iron storefronts remain intact. However, several buildings have been modified over time, receiving new storefronts, windows, facades, and artificial siding.⁴⁴ Some alterations occurred as the result of a 2008 New York Main Street Award for facade improvements.⁴⁵

Victorian Two-Part Commercial Blocks

Architectural historian Richard Longstreth defines a typology of commercial buildings, independent of applied ornament, in his book *The Buildings of Main Street*. Here, he identifies the "two-part block" as the "most common type of composition used for small and moderate-sized commercial buildings throughout the country." Buildings of this category feature two distinctive portions, an articulated (an often more detailed and ornamented) ground level storefront, with an upper portion of one or more stories of similar detailing and elaboration. A number of the buildings within the district are Victorian two-part commercial blocks, which were generally popular between 1850 and 1870 but often continued to be constructed decades later. Such buildings tended to be characterized by additive, ornate components, especially embellished cornices, decorative window and door surrounds, and cornices or stringcourses between each floor. More decorative features were made possible because of technological advances which made mass-produced decorative building components more easily available and affordable. This trend was popularized in an attempt to make individual buildings stand out within commercial areas.⁴⁶ The highly ornate features of Victorian two-part commercial blocks are evident in the Italianate and Queen Anne styling of several buildings within the district.

Italianate (1850-1885)

Italianate was a leading style for nineteenth-century commercial buildings. The style emerged in the 1830s as part of the picturesque movement, which drew inspiration from the informal and rambling Italian farmhouses and villas. In the United States, the style was popularized in the writings and pattern books of architectural theorists such as Andrew Jackson Downing. In New York, the Italianate style proliferated throughout cities, towns and rural areas from the 1850s until the turn of the century. Sometimes referred to as the Bracketed style, perhaps the key distinguishing feature of the Italianate style is its decoratively cut, often scrolled brackets, which were typically used in abundance to support door and window hoods and to embellish the prominent

⁴⁴ Taylor, *MPDF: Village of Lancaster*, section F, 6.

⁴⁵ "New York Main Street Awards," Funding History. <http://www.nyshcr.org/Programs/NYMainStreet/FundingHistory.htm>.

⁴⁶ Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street*, 29-31.

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cornice. Since commercial buildings, unlike grand residential estates, typically feature one or two prominent elevations, the picturesque elements of the style were generally more limited to certain key elements and details applied to a primary façade. Italianate style commercial buildings are generally characterized by tall, narrow window openings, a cast-iron first floor facade and second floor brick facade and a bracketed decorative cornice.⁴⁷

The Central Avenue Historic District has many representative, relatively modest examples of commercial Italianate buildings, including the Maute Block at 43 Central Avenue, and the Raynor Exchange/ Braun Building at 16 Central Avenue, 31 Central Avenue, and 4 West Main Street, most of which of which are generally characterized by rounded arch window openings and denticulated cornices. The building at 1 West Main Street also features some Italianate elements, including rounded arch windows and double brackets at the cornice. The district also contains more "high style" examples, including the Lancaster Opera House/Town Hall at 21 Central Avenue, which features a highly decorative clock tower.⁴⁸ Designed by leading Buffalo architect George J. Metzger, who was adept at designing in the commercial Italianate style, the Lancaster Opera House is a signature building in Lancaster and represents the more decorative, picturesque qualities of the style. While these were all constructed after the general period in which Italianate commercial buildings were popular, it was not uncommon to find a lag in styles in smaller, more rural villages.

Queen Anne (1880-1910)

Named for the early eighteenth century British monarch, the Queen Anne movement began in England in the 1860s. The Queen Anne style in England had a wide variety of sources and inspirations, from Medieval Tudor-era half-timbered structures, to the more classically inspired Renaissance-era designs of the Elizabethan and Jacobean periods. Gothic influences were also apparent in the Queen Anne style. This wide variety of historical and constructional sources all merge in the Queen Anne style in the United States. The eclectic style is characterized by irregular forms, massing and shapes, and a wall surface which is frequently broken by recesses, projections, towers, and bays. One of the most common elements found in both high-style and vernacular examples is the widespread use of patterned or shaped shingles, available in a myriad of shapes and designs. Queen Anne style commercial architecture is less common than residential examples.

The Central Avenue Historic District has two buildings in the Queen Anne style, both of which are characterized by decorative asymmetrical facades: The building at 1 West Main Street, with its turret at the southeast corner, and 30 Central Avenue, with its oriel window and shingled gable end. The Lancaster Town Hall and Opera House at 21 Central Avenue also features elements of Queen Anne style with its asymmetrical facade and decorative front gable dormer.

⁴⁷ "Italianate in Buffalo: 1840-1885," Buffalo as an Architectural Museum. <http://buffaloah.com/a/archsty/ital/index.html#era>.

⁴⁸ The Lancaster Opera House/Town Hall also features elements of Queen Anne style with its asymmetrical facade and leaded glass transom at the main entry.

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Academic Approach to Two-Part Commercial Blocks

From the 1890s to the 1920s, there was a shift from the ornate commercial architecture of the Victorian Era toward a more "academic approach" to the commercial designs. This "academic approach" was characterized by architecture with more balance and order to the designs and streetscapes, often drawing inspiration from Classical architectural sources. While individual Victorian commercial blocks were meant to attract attention, commercial blocks in this new era were designed to create unity in the design of the commercial downtown. This allowed certain highly decorative buildings to stand out. Buildings of this era were generally very plain with few, if any, decorative features.⁴⁹ As many of the buildings within the district coincide with this era, there are several commercial buildings with little to no ornamentation or distinct architectural style within the district that create a sense of order and balance along the commercial streets and allow buildings such as the Lancaster Town Hall and Opera House or the Maute Block to stand out as community landmarks. Minimally decorated buildings within the district were constructed ca. 1897-ca. 1935 and include 24 Central Avenue and 50 Central Avenue.

Residential Architecture – Colonial Revival (1880-1955)

Growing interest in classical design and greater regard for more "correct" composition encouraged the development of the Colonial Revival style. Colonial Revival houses typically have massing and detail derived from Colonial and Federal prototypes, but the size and scale of Colonial Revival houses are larger than those of the original models. Most Colonial Revival buildings have contained rectilinear massing, broken perhaps by bay windows; symmetrical facades with central entrances; front porches with columns and classical balustrades; relatively uniform roofs, sometimes elaborated on the façade by a cross gable or a row of dormers; and window shutters. Palladian windows, corner pilasters, and garland-and-swag trim are common decorative elements. Materials used range from wood clapboard and shingle to brick and stone. Often the entry door is accented with a decorative surround or entry porch, a feature far less common to original Colonial houses.

The Central Avenue Historic District features one Colonial Revival building: the Potter-Eaton House at 40 Clark Street, characterized by its accentuated front entry door with sidelites and rounded entry porch, symmetrical fenestration, and decorative cornice with dentils and modillions.

NOTABLE BUSINESSES AND PEOPLE IN THE CENTRAL AVENUE HISTORIC DISTRICT

Buildings within the Central Avenue Historic District held businesses during the late 1800s and early 1900s that provided essential goods to residents and were associated with prominent merchants, organizations, and

⁴⁹ Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street*, 39-40.

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citizens, all of whom left a lasting impact on the character of the village of Lancaster. A small commercial center had already been established along West Main Street and Central Avenue by the 1890s, but as the population grew and the electric street car made the businesses accessible to a wider range of people, there was a higher demand for a wide variety of goods and services in Lancaster's commercial downtown.

Downtown Lancaster's streetscape is centered around the Lancaster Town Hall and Opera House, located at 21 Central Avenue, which was constructed between 1894-96. For centuries, it was common for towns to have an opera house that served as a multifunctional gathering space that was a combination music hall and governmental building. The Lancaster Town Hall and Opera House is one of the last remaining buildings of this type in the county. The fine building with both Italianate and Queen Anne styling was designed by prominent Buffalo architect, George J. Metzger (1855-1929).⁵⁰ The town hall and opera house served a number of other functions over time. Inside the building is a fifty-two foot by fifty-seven foot auditorium, ideal for dances, recitals, and musicals. Various spaces in the building were used during difficult times in the country's history. During the Great Depression, a distribution center was set up for food and clothing, and throughout World War II, there was a sewing room in the basement and parachutes were folded in the auditorium. After the war in the 1950s, the theater was used for the Civil Defense Headquarters, where plane spotter and air raid drills were organized. Additionally, the Lancaster Public Library was located on the first floor from 1896 to 1941, and the opera house once housed the post office, a printing company, the Erie County Civil Defense Headquarters, and the recreation department. As part of the village's bicentennial celebration, the building was restored in 1975, and September 20, 1981 marked the reopening of the opera house. After the rehabilitation, the Landmark Society of the Niagara Frontier awarded the opera house the Pewter Plate Award for an "outstanding renovation and operations of a historic venue." Since the rehabilitation, this community landmark has been home to the town offices on the basement and first floors and a performing arts center on the second and third floor. A contemporary two-story addition has been constructed on the rear of the building, but it reflects the architectural lines and design of the original 1894 portion.⁵¹

George J. Metzger (November 17, 1855- December 7, 1929) was a prolific architect whose career began at age twenty, and he later rose to the position of county architect of Erie County.⁵² He attended public school in Buffalo, but the location of his architectural training is unknown. His office was located in the German Insurance Building, 455 Main Street, downtown Buffalo. At the start of his career, he designed houses for prominent local families, including the home of Mr. Jacob F. Schoellkopf (demolished). One of his most noteworthy designs was for the 106th Armory State Arsenal on Masten Avenue (since altered). At the time of its construction, it was the largest armory in the United States, and its design brought Metzger a great deal of

⁵⁰Kossmar, Karen, "Lancaster Town Hall and Opera House," Buffalo as an Architectural Museum.
<http://buffaloah.com/a/bflobest/lancaster/lancaster.html>.

⁵¹ Lancaster Opera House, "Our History." http://www.lancopera.org/index.cfm?fuseaction=page.display&page_id=30.

⁵² Kossmar, "Lancaster Town Hall and Opera House."

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local acclaim.⁵³ His other works included Buffalo Public Schools 44 and 13 and several buildings at the University of Buffalo.⁵⁴ Following his retirement in 1919, he organized the Metzger Construction Corporation. This was a large private construction company involved in building the Children's Hospital, the Mayflower Apartments and many schools in the area.⁵⁵ He was married to Emma Nuhn and together they raised six children at 200 Bidwell Parkway in Buffalo.⁵⁶

The Queen Anne and Italianate style masonry building at 1 West Main Street is the earliest building in the Central Avenue Historic District, constructed around 1860. Early on, it changed hands between a number of Saloon and Restaurant owners. The upper two floors of the building were initially used as a hotel, but when Peter Link took over ownership in the late 1800s, the spaces were converted into apartments.⁵⁷ The roof was changed from a cross-gable roof to a mansard roof ca. 1890 to make room for the third floor to be converted into an opera house. However, use as an opera house was short lived, as it was soon overshadowed by Metzger's larger and more opulent opera house. The space was then used to hold various meetings, including those of the Temperance Society, the Lancaster Benevolent Association, and the Daughters of America.⁵⁸ Originally there were two storefronts that were rented out separately, but they were combined into one store ca. 1950, when "The Sugar Bowl" expanded and it has since remained one store.⁵⁹ The three-story brick building at 5 West Main Street is the second earliest building in the district, constructed ca. 1880. It is possible that the first tenant of this building was M. Windling's Saloon and Restaurant, as well as an early butcher shop.

The three-story brick Italianate commercial building at 16 Central Avenue, known both as the Raynor Exchange and later as the Braun building, was constructed on the site of the former Raynor Exchange building in 1894 to house Ernest Feyler's Buffalo Dry Goods Store. The store also had an early electric generator in the basement and it became the first building in the village to use electric lights. In 1897, Feyler signed a contract with the village to provide electricity to twenty streetlights in the village, and by 1900 power was expanded to provide electric lines to the entire village, overwhelming the generator. Ownership of the store was soon transferred to Frank F. Braun and Walter F. Adolf in the early twentieth century. The building currently is the home of the New York Store, which has been located in the building since 1956.

⁵³ Christopher N. Brown, "Historic Plymouth Avenue in the Kleinhans Neighborhood: A Survey of the History and Structures of Plymouth Avenue from Hudson Street to Porter Avenue in Buffalo, New York." <http://buffaloah.com/a/plymouth/cb/129.pdf>, 135.

⁵⁴ "George J. Metzger Rites Set Tuesday: Builder and Architect Dies After Heart Attack," *The Buffalo News*, December 9, 1929. <http://buffaloah.com/a/archs/metz/index.html>.

⁵⁵ "Metzger, George J." <http://dictionaryofarchitectsincanada.org/architects/view/1827>.

⁵⁶ Metzger was also a member of the National Guard for 30 years and retired as a colonel. He was a member of the American Institute of Architects and president of the Buffalo chapter two times. Metzger's many other affiliations included being a member of the Buffalo Club, the Buffalo Builders Exchange, the Buffalo chapter, Associated General Contractors, the Chamber of Commerce, the Automobile Club, the Concordia lodge of Masons, Keystone Chapter as a 33rd degree Mason, R.A.M., the Buffalo consistory, Lake Erie commandery, Knights Templar, and the Ismailia Temple. Brown, "Historic Plymouth Avenue," 135.

⁵⁷ Harley E. Scott, ed. *Tales of Old West Main Street* (Lancaster, NY: Cayuga Creek Press, 1998), 39.

⁵⁸ Keysa, *Lancaster, New York*, 98.

⁵⁹ Scott, *Tales of Old West Main Street*, 36.

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Earnest Feyler (September 19, 1869 - August 9, 1957) was a Buffalo native who first worked as a salesman for the Barnes-Bancroft Company. He opened the Buffalo Dry Goods Store and installed a dynamo at his store to light it, eventually expanding his power plant to supply power to the entire village. In 1902, he bought and served as the president of the Depew & Lancaster Light, Power & Conduit Company, which supplied power to the village. The company went on to serve nineteen towns and thirty-two communities. Feyler was also involved in the organization of several local banks. He was one of the founders and board members of the Bank of Lancaster and the South Side National Bank of Buffalo. He was the director of the Bank of Depew in 1919, Citizens National Bank in 1920, Ebenezer State Bank in 1921, and Liberty Bank in 1929. Additionally, Feyler was the director of Brott & Co. Investment Bankers, the Depew Finance Corp. and the Ebenezer Improvement Co. He was a member of the Lancaster Country Club and a 32nd Degree Mason. He resided in Lancaster with his wife, Katherine, and their two children.⁶⁰

The building at 27 Central was first constructed around 1905 for Julius Israel, for use as a post office. This location served as the post office for several decades, until the present Lancaster Post Office (NR 1990), located outside the district boundary at 5064 Broadway Street, was erected in the 1938-9. Before the construction of 27 Central Avenue, the post office had previously been located in the Lancaster Town Hall and Opera House.⁶¹ Once the post office was moved, Fanny Israel, wife of Julius, opened a ladies' clothing store in the building. Additionally, the building housed Mrs. Charles A. Schowten's candy store and Robert Humell's dentist office.

Julius Israel (1865-1948) was a prominent Lancaster merchant of one of the most highly regarded department stores in the village. He was born in Darkehmen, Germany in 1865, moved to Rochester in 1882 and settled in Lancaster in 1893, opening a store on West Main Street. By 1896, the store had become so successful that he moved it to 6 West Main Street, eventually expanding it to 8 and 4 West Main Street.⁶² He sold his store in 1929 to Henry Kahn of the New York Store, formerly the Buffalo Dry Goods Store, at 1 West Main Street. Israel was a member of the Depew Lodge 823 F&AM, the Lancaster Elks, Ismailia Temple, AAONMs, Rotary, Odd Fellows, Moose and the Lancaster Fire Department. He was a well-known and well liked merchant in the village.⁶³ Israel married Fannie Marx, originally from Horden, Germany, in 1890, and they had five children.⁶⁴

The building at 32 Central Avenue was built as a wagon and blacksmith shop owned by Albert Geyer (ca. 1865-January 8, 1913). Geyer was born in Alden, NY around 1865, of German decent. Geyer bought the Handel

⁶⁰ *Buffalo Evening News*, "Earnest Feyler Dies, Founded Twin Village Light & Power Co.," August 9, 1957, 26.

⁶¹ Jay Bee's Prominent Men of Lancaster Series, "Julius Israel, the Well Known and Popular Business Man of Lancaster," April 1, 1920. (*Clipping from Lancaster Historical Society Files*)

⁶² "Julius Israel."

⁶³ "Pioneer Merchant Julius Israel Dies," June 10, 1948, 17. (*Clipping from Lancaster Historical Society Files*)

⁶⁴ "Julius Israel."

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Blacksmith business ca. 1895 and ran it until his death. He was a member of the Lancaster Benevolent Association and lived with his wife and five children at 49 Central Avenue.⁶⁵

The Cushing Block, located at 33-37 Central Avenue, was originally the location of Cushing's Drug Store. This three-story brick Italianate commercial building was constructed ca. 1896 to replace the original Cushing Store, destroyed by the 1896 fire. Cushing's Drug Store supplied villagers with medicines and a variety of other products, including wine, liquor, tobacco, books, perfume, soaps; it also had a soda fountain. Cushing's was highly regarded and was the recipient of awards from drug manufacturers for the high number of prescriptions filled. This allowed the store to be the first to receive newly developed medicines. Other businesses located in the Cushing Block included the Telephone Company, a tailor shop, a law office, a barber shop, a dentist, a beauty shop, and fraternal organizations, among many others. The building was renovated in 1925 and large additions were made to the rear elevations around 1955.

Cushing's Drug Store was founded in 1892 by Franklin S. Cushing (1864-1933). Cushing was a Wyoming, NY native who studied pharmacy at the University of Buffalo before relocating to Lancaster in 1892. Not only did he found Cushing's Drug Store, he sold sand, ice, insurance, real estate, was village postmaster and village clerk, a director of Ellicott Drug Company, and maintained a farm. The drug store's ownership remained in the family until the 1980s, when it became clear that there was not the same market for a privately owned drug store.⁶⁶

The building at 34-36 Central Avenue was constructed at the site of the former Hoffeld and Co. Soap Factory, where the fire of 1896 began. The building was soon owned and operated by Frank T. Beeman and James Vandyck as a grocery and provisions store. By the 1920s it was a restaurant and store. Maurice J. Fitzgerald, owner of Fitzgerald-Knauber Men's clothing store at 24-26 Central Avenue, was a resident of the second story apartment in 1927. The Maute Block, located at 43 Central Avenue was built in 1896 to replace the original wood-frame Maute hardware store.⁶⁷ The store was originally owned by John N. Maute. The Mautes were a prominent family in Lancaster who owned and operated the Maute Iron Foundry, one of the early industries in Lancaster. The foundry, located on Holland Avenue between Plumb Bottom Creek and Broadway Street, was established in 1849 under different owners. Frank Maute purchased the foundry in 1859 and stayed in business until 1910, generally manufacturing agricultural tools and general castings. They also were responsible for manufacturing the iron sidewalks which once lined the streets of Lancaster. John N. Maute and his brothers were among some of the first employees of the Maute Foundry. John N. Maute's experience working in an iron

⁶⁵ "Albert Geyer," January 9, 1913. (*Clipping from Lancaster Historical Society Files*)

⁶⁶ MacDavid, "Cushing's Drug Store," 1-3.

⁶⁷ White, Truman C., ed., *Our County and its People: A Descriptive Work on Erie County, New York*, Vol. 1, (Boston: Boston History Company, 1898), 572.

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foundry provided him with valuable skills and knowledge about tools, which proved useful in opening a successful hardware store.⁶⁸

The building at 46-50 Central Avenue was originally the clubhouse of Lancaster's branch of the Improved Order of Red Men (I.O.R.M.). The I.O.R.M. is America's oldest fraternal organization; beginning under a different name in 1765, it was organized as an underground society to promote freedom and liberty in the early colonies. The name of the organization was changed to the Improved Order of Red Men in 1835. Over time, it became a group dedicated to promoting freedom, friendship, and charity. The organization continued to expand and by the mid-1920s, there were "tribes" in forty-six states with a total of over 500,000 members. The Lancaster tribe of the Improved Order of Red Men owned the property when it was first constructed ca. 1927, and it remained in their hands until the Lancaster Lodge of Orioles bought the property in 1967. They owned it until 2000.

The Potter-Eaton House at 40 Clark Street was originally located at 802 East Main Street (Broadway Street). It was built in 1894 to replace the home of Dr. Samuel Potter, which was destroyed in the fire of 1894. It remained at the original location on Broadway Street until the death of Fanny Potter Eaton, daughter of Dr. Potter. In 1940, the house was given to the town and moved to its present location to save it from demolition. The house was moved a very short distance to a lot behind town hall, almost directly behind its original location. The house was relocated from its site nearby on East Main Street, which was used for an A&P Supermarket. Following its relocation, the Potter-Eaton House served more civic functions, as the Lancaster Public Library from 1941-1976 and the Lancaster Senior Citizens Center from 1976-1983. To celebrate the town's 150th anniversary in 1983, the building was used to house a museum operated by the Lancaster Historical Society, and this remains the present use.⁶⁹

Dr. Samuel Potter (1816-June, 13 1897) was a prominent doctor in the village of Lancaster during the 1800s. The Vermont native first moved to Lancaster in 1839 and opened an office on the original site of the Potter-Eaton house. Dr. Potter was the superintendent of the Lancaster Public Schools for 15 years. He was married twice and had a daughter from each marriage. His younger daughter, Fanny Eaton, inherited the Potter-Eaton House at the time of Dr. Potter's death. Fanny lived in the house until her death in 1938.⁷⁰

The commercial buildings of the Central Avenue Historic District had other businesses and business owners, demonstrating their versatility as markets changed over time. The Italianate building at 4 West Main Street was built to house Frank Schafer's Boots and Shoes Store and served as a dwelling on the 2nd and 3rd floors.⁷¹ Fitzgerald and Knauber Men's Clothing Store was originally at 24/26 Central Avenue and the upper apartment

⁶⁸ *Lancaster Enterprise*, "A Glimpse Into The Past: The Iron Foundry," July 27, 1939.

⁶⁹ Keysa, *Lancaster, New York*, 96.

⁷⁰ Harley E. Scott, "History of the Fanny Potter-Eaton House and its Occupants," *Lancaster Historical Society*, 1-2.

⁷¹ Scott, *Tales of Old West Main Street*, 10.

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was home to the Cretokos family, owners of the Sugar Bowl, located at 1 West Main Street. The modest Queen Anne style building located at 30 Central Avenue was originally built as the dwelling and barbershop of Ralph and Rose May. The building at 31 Central Avenue was originally the firehouse; later it became a ladies' and children's clothing store and Charles Schleb's shoe store. The building at 34-36 Central Avenue was originally owned and operated by Frank T. Beeman and James Vandyck as a grocery and provisions store. The Bank of Lancaster was originally at 39-41 Central Ave, but by 1916 it became the offices of the Iroquois Natural Gas Company, directed by superintendent Peter Adolf. Cornelius T. Rohl's garage was located at 44 Central Avenue. The building at 4 West Main Street was built to house Frank Schafer's Boots and Shoes Store and was residential on the 2nd and 3rd floors.⁷² Other businesses included the Bank of Lancaster's later building at 25 Central Avenue and a grocer and clothing store at 34 Central Avenue.

SUMMARY

The Central Avenue Historic District is significant under Criteria A and C as an intact and contiguous collection of primarily commercial architecture dating between ca. 1860 to ca. 1935 within the larger historic context of the *Socioeconomic Growth and Maturity of the Village of Lancaster, 1850-1949*, established in the MPDF. Located in the original commercial core of the village of Lancaster, the district represents a period of growth and prosperity for the commercial downtown in the decades surrounding the turn of the twentieth century, due to industrial growth and increasing ease of transportation, and is associated with prominent businesses, merchants, and citizens of Lancaster at the turn of the century. The district contains a grouping of mostly late nineteenth century and early twentieth century, 2- to 3-story masonry commercial buildings located within the village of Lancaster, Erie County, New York, roughly 11 miles east of Buffalo. The district covers an area of approximately 3.8 acres centered along Central Avenue, with a few properties on West Main Street and Clark Street, in the commercial center of the village. It forms the most intact historic commercial portion of a more substantial locally designated historic district in the village, which features a mix of residential and commercial buildings. Lancaster's commercial corridor originally developed along West Main Street and Central Avenue to accommodate those traveling through the village, as well as serving the families of employees lured by the industrial development in and surrounding the community. However, a majority of original buildings within the district boundaries were lost in the 1890s as fires devastated the core commercial area. Over the course of the following 40 years, the commercial corridor was rebuilt and remains the focal point of the Village of Lancaster today. These then-new buildings were of brick construction and primarily represent a collection of commercial Italianate, Queen Anne, and Colonial Revival style buildings.

⁷² Ibid., 10.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries are indicated on the attached boundary map with scale.

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the Central Avenue Historic District were drawn to encompass the largest intact and contiguous collection of historic resources located along Central Avenue, all reflecting a common commercial development era in the Village of Lancaster. Contributing to the Central Avenue Historic District are buildings within the boundary built within the district's defined period of significance (ca. 1860- 1940) and which retain a significant level of architectural integrity.

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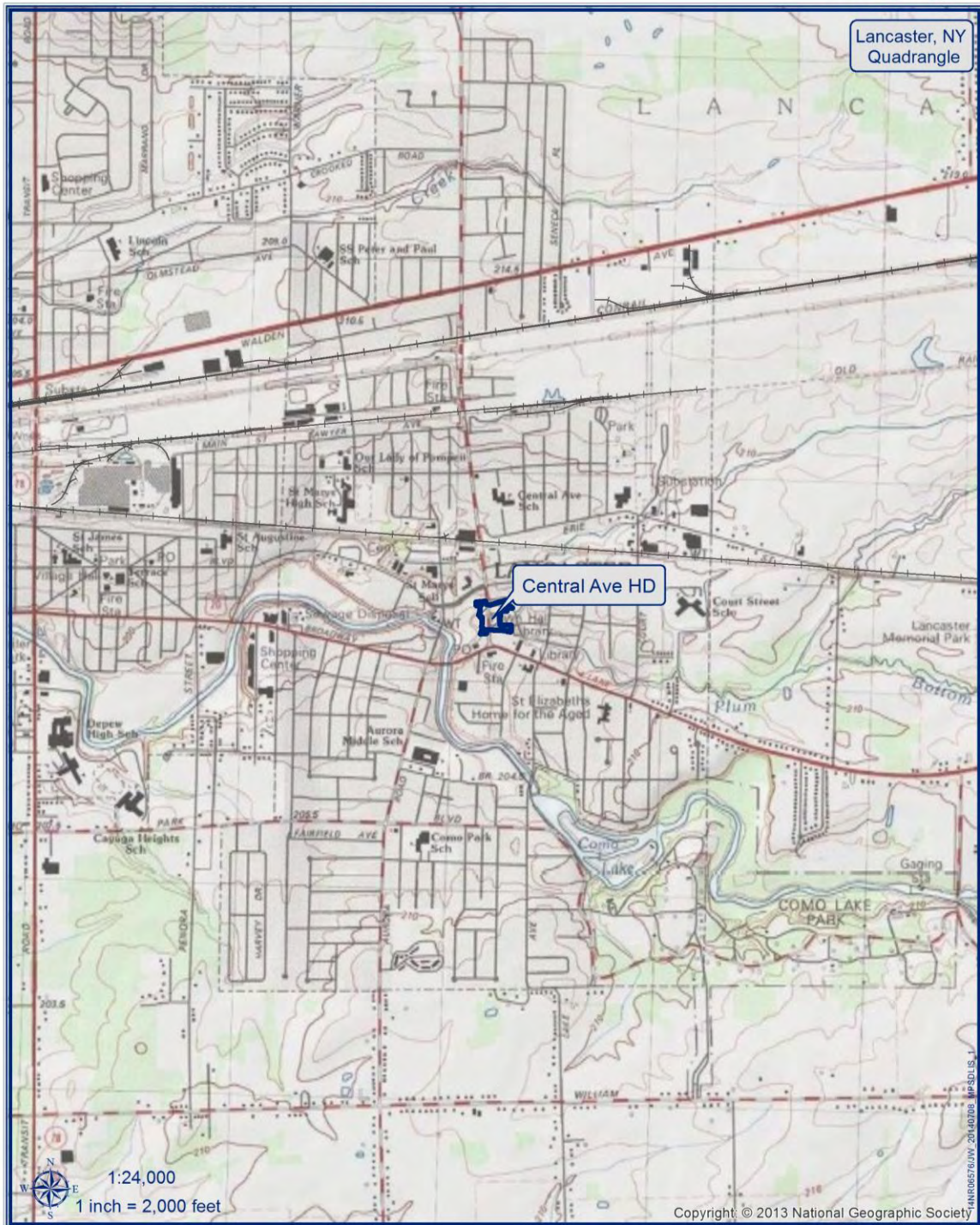
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Central Avenue Historic District

Town of Lancaster,
Erie County, NY



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter



 Central Ave. HD

Tax Parcel Data:
Erie Co. RPS
gis1.erie.gov/GC



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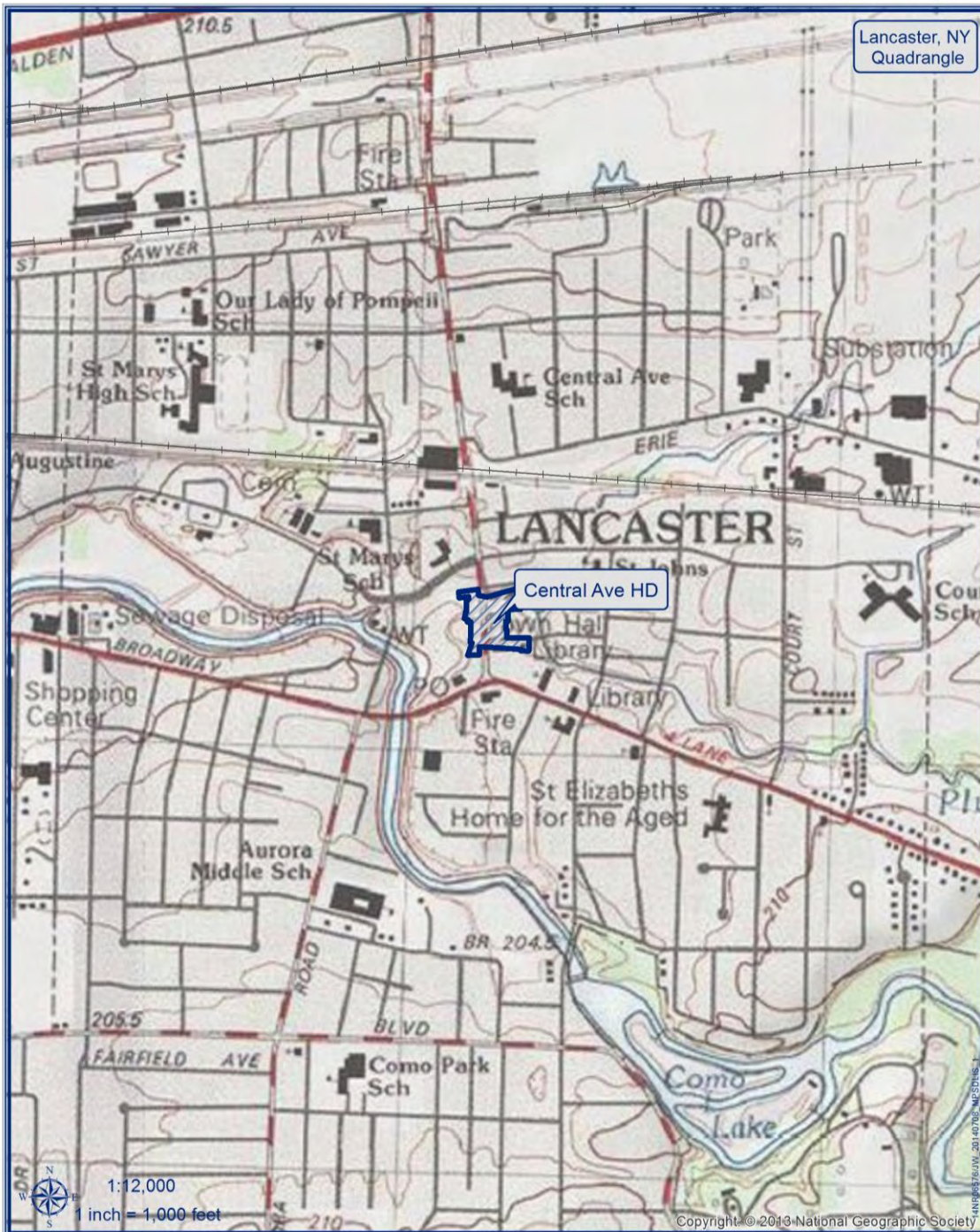
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Town of Lancaster,
Erie County, NY



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter



Central Ave. HD

Tax Parcel Data:
Erie Co. RPS
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Photo Log

Name of Property: Central Avenue Historic District
County: Erie County
State: New York
Photographer: Hannah Beckman, Clinton Brown Company Architecture
Date Photographed: March 14, 2014, May 6, 2014

Photos-

01: Lancaster Town Hall and Opera House, 21 Central Avenue, looking east.

02: Central Avenue, The Cushing Block at 33-37 Central Avenue, 31 Central Avenue, 27 Central Avenue, 24 Central Avenue, and The Lancaster Town Hall and Opera House at 21 Central Avenue, looking southeast.

03: 31 Central Avenue, The Cushing Block at 33-37 Central Avenue, and 39-41 Central Avenue, looking northeast.

04: Maute Block, 43 Central Avenue, looking northeast.

05: Central Avenue, at Plumb Bottom Creek, looking south.

06: 34-36 Central Avenue and 32 Central Avenue, looking southwest.

07: Potter-Eaton House 40 Clark Street, looking south.

08: 1 West Main Street and 5 West Main Street, at Central Avenue, looking northwest.

09: 5 West Main Street, looking north.

10: Southwest corner of Central Avenue, showing 16 Central Avenue and 4 West Main Street, looking southwest.

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Detail, 1866 Stone and Steward Atlas

Note the rough boundaries Central Avenue Historic District. The only building within the district that remains from this period is located on the northwest corner of (West) Main Street and Railroad Street (now Central Avenue).

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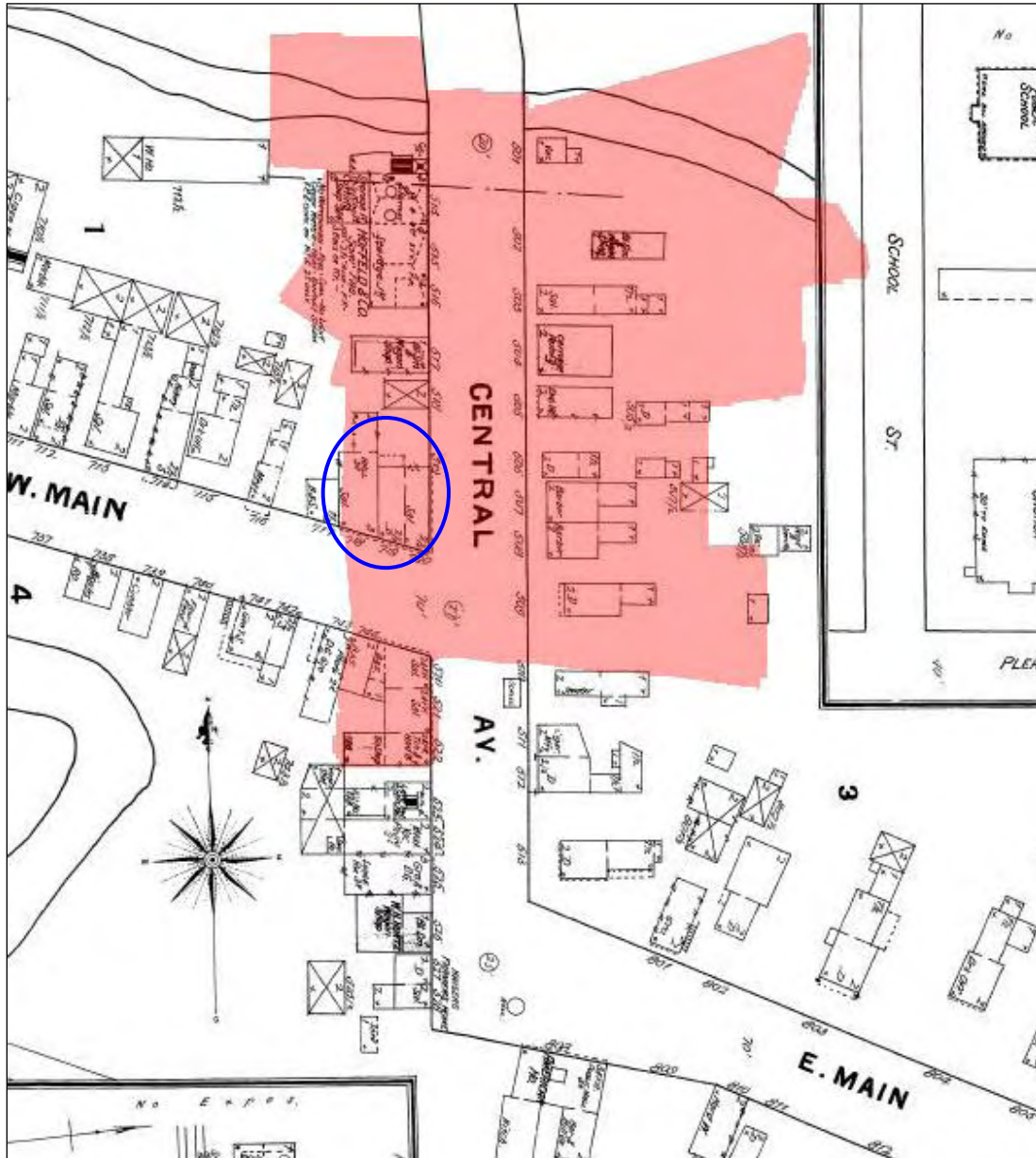
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Erie County, New York

County and State



Detail, 1892 Sanborn Map

Note the rough boundaries Central Avenue Historic District.
Buildings in the blue circle are the only remaining ones within the Historic District.

United States Department of the Interior
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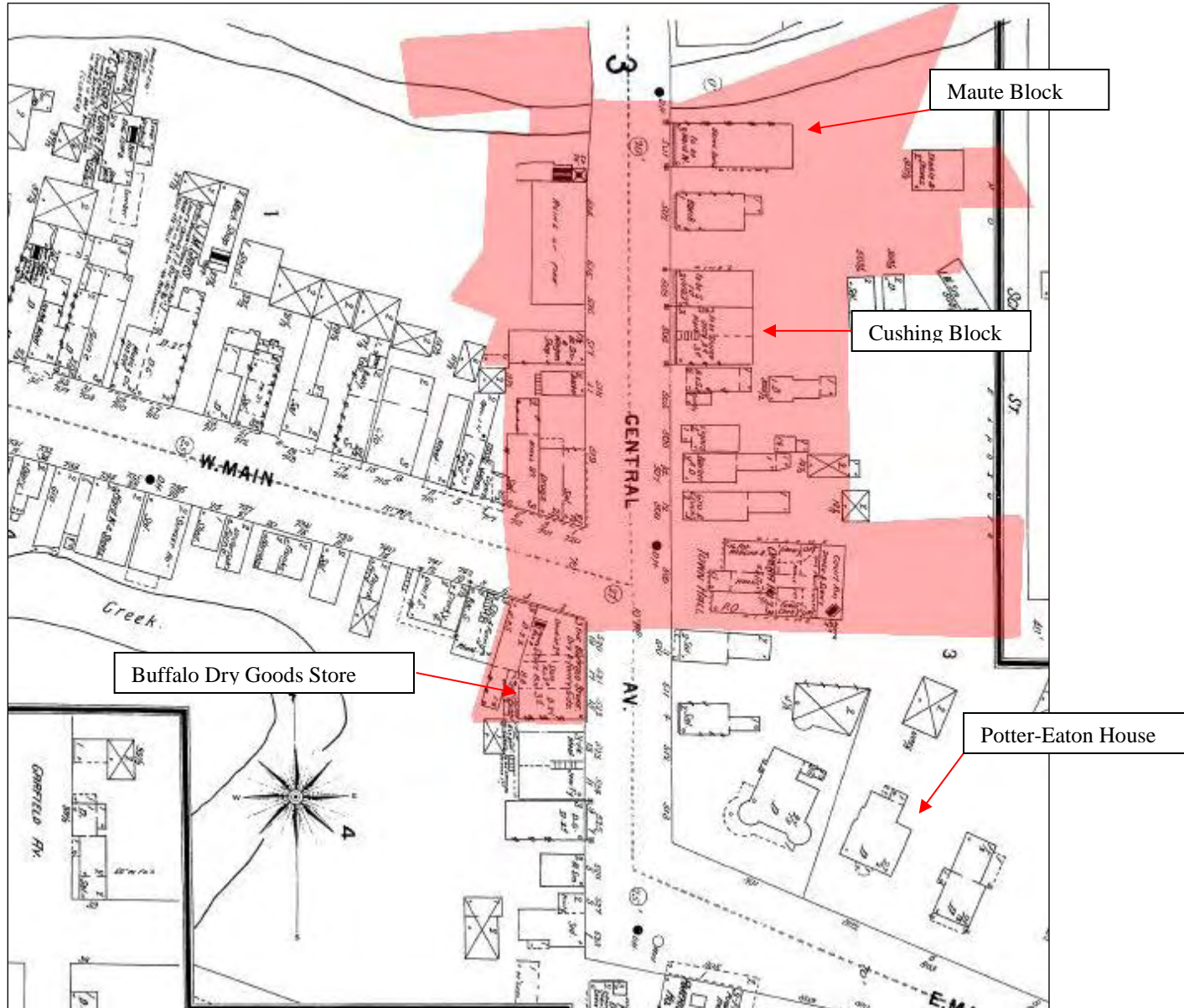
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Central Avenue Historic District

Name of Property

Erie County, New York

County and State



Detail, 1897 Sanborn map

Note the rough boundaries Central Avenue Historic District.
Note that many of the buildings are newly constructed after the fire.

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Central Avenue Historic District

Name of Property

Erie County, New York

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Detail, 1909 Century Map Co.

Atlas showing post-fire building footprints with brick buildings shown in red.

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Central Avenue Historic District

Name of Property

Erie County, New York

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Historic Images: Streetscape Photos



Central Avenue, view north, after 1896 fire
(photo courtesy of Lancaster Historical Society)



LIFE OF LANCASTER. This picture was taken around 1896 and the location is the corner of Broadway and Central Ave., after the fire and before Senator Davis' House was built. If anyone has any other information about this picture, we would very much like to hear about it. Photo is from the files of the Lancaster Historical

Society. It is from the estate of Clarence K. Porter and was donated by his niece Mrs. Henry Fairhead. The Society is in need of photos of people and events in the Town of Lancaster. If you have any, contact Ed Mikula, Town historian.

Corner of Broadway and Central after 1896 fire
(photo courtesy of Lancaster Historical Society)

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Central Avenue Historic District
Name of Property
Erie County, New York
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East Side of Central Avenue, ca. 1900
(photo courtesy of Lancaster Historical Society)



West Main Street Ca 1908
(photo courtesy of Lancaster Historical Society)

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Central Avenue Historic District
Name of Property
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Postcard, pre 1908, view south on Central Avenue
(photo courtesy of Lancaster Historical Society)



Central Ave in 1931, note cars and trolley share the road
(photo courtesy of Lancaster Historical Society)

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Central Avenue Historic District

Name of Property

Erie County, New York

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West Main Street, ca 1950, before Urban Renewal efforts in 1960s and 70s
(photo courtesy of Lancaster Historical Society)

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Central Avenue Historic District

Name of Property

Erie County, New York

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Historic Images: Individual Buildings, Businesses, and People



16 Central Avenue and 4 West Main Street, ca, 1900
(photo courtesy of Lancaster Historical Society)

United States Department of the Interior
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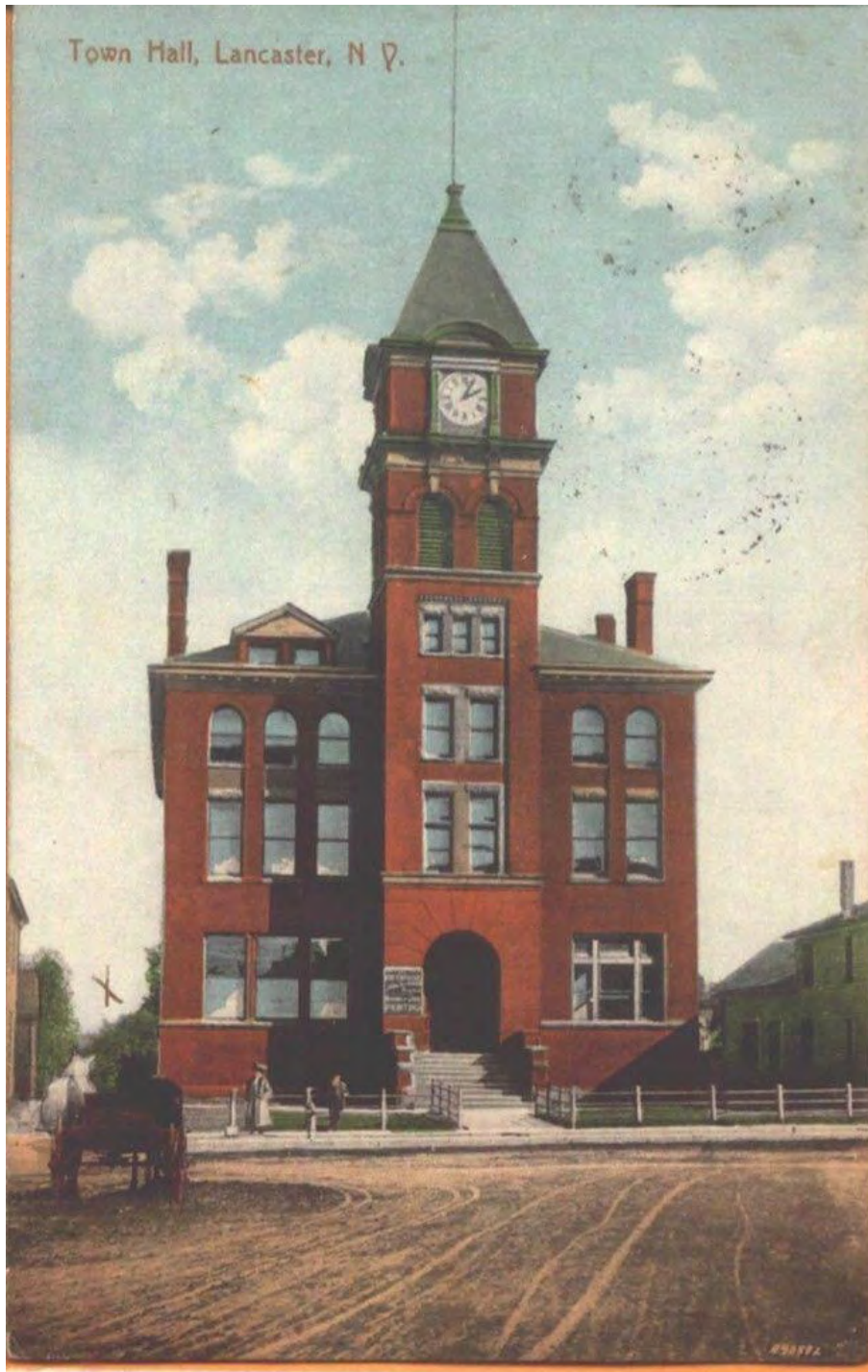
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Central Avenue Historic District

Name of Property

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Postcard depicting Lancaster Town Hall and Opera House, 21 Central Avenue (date unknown)

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Central Avenue Historic District

Name of Property

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25 Central Avenue, ca. 1920
(photo courtesy of Lancaster Historical Society)

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Central Avenue Historic District

Name of Property

Erie County, New York

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Cushing Block, ca 1896
(photo courtesy of Lancaster Historical Society)

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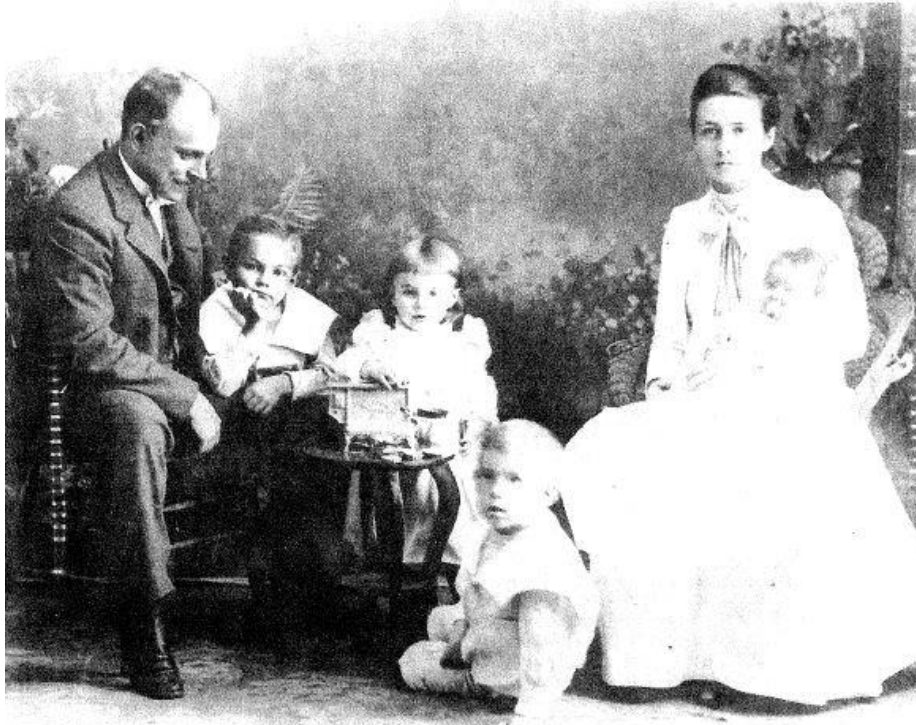
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Central Avenue Historic District

Name of Property

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Franklin S. Cushing Family ca. 1900
(photo courtesy of Lancaster Historical Society)

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Central Avenue Historic District

Name of Property

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The Maute Block at 43 Central Avenue and 39-41 Central Avenue, ca. 1915
(photo courtesy of Lancaster Historical Society)

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Central Avenue Historic District

Name of Property

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JOHN N. MAUTE,
—DEALER IN—
Stoves, Ranges, Hardware,
Paints, Oils, Glass, Sewer Pipé, Etc.

Particular Attention Paid to Plumbing, Tinning, Steam
Fitting and Furnace Work.

34 CENTRAL AVE., LANCASTER, N. Y.

John N. Maute Hardware Store advertisement (1902)
(photo courtesy of Lancaster Historical Society)

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Central Avenue Historic District

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46-50 Central Avenue, ca. 1925
(photo courtesy of Lancaster Historical Society)



46-50 Central Avenue, ca. 1956
(photo courtesy of Lancaster Historical Society)

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Section 11 Page 18

Central Avenue Historic District

Name of Property

Erie County, New York

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The Village of Lancaster Redmen Tribe, ca. 1900
(photo courtesy of Lancaster Historical Society)

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Central Avenue Historic District

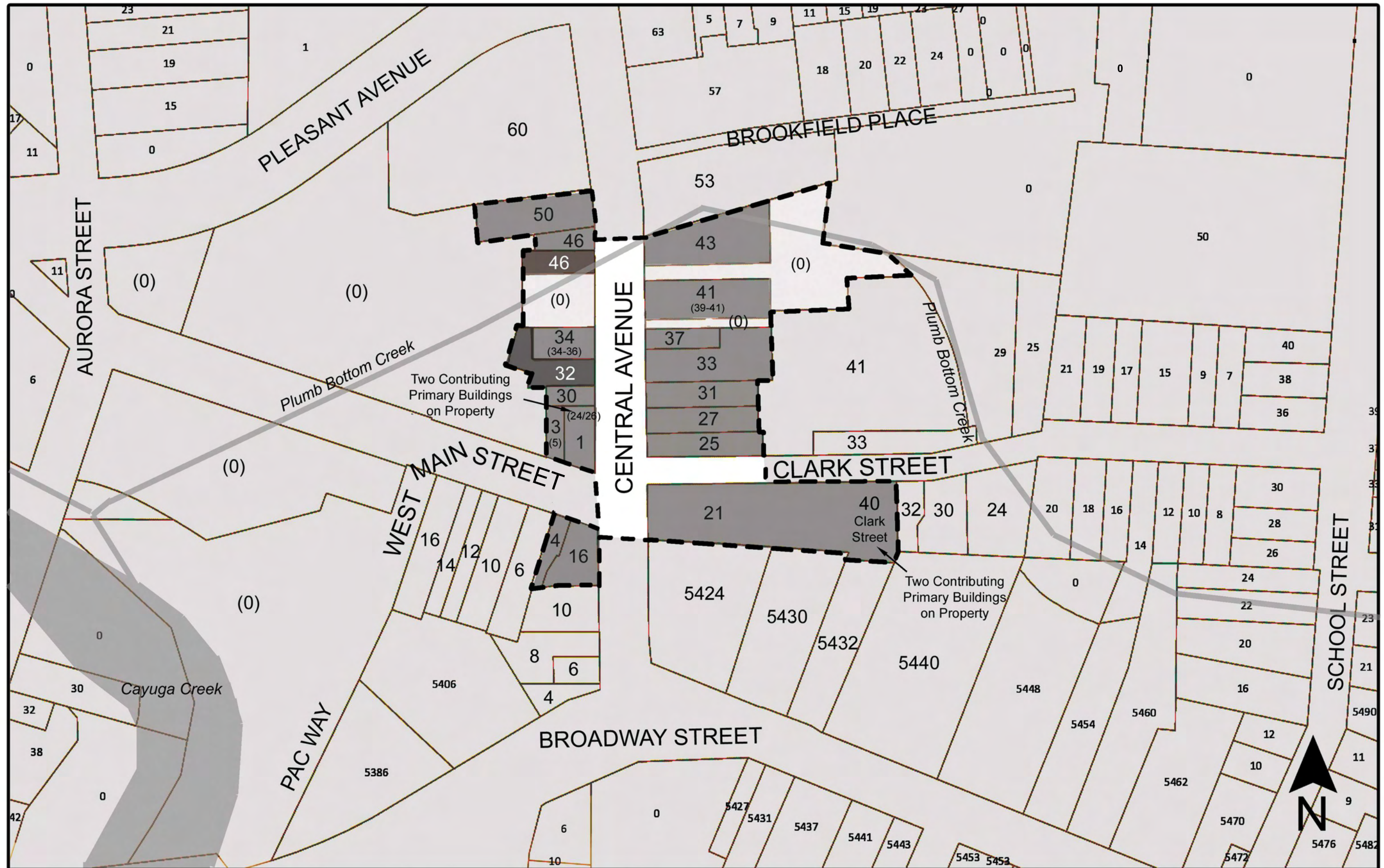
Name of Property

Erie County, New York

County and State



Potter-Eaton House at its original location on Broadway Street
(photo courtesy of Lancaster Historical Society)



VILLAGE OF LANCASTER

MAYOR PAUL M. MAUTE

MUNICIPAL BUILDING
5423 BROADWAY
LANCASTER, NY 14086



TELEPHONE: (716) 684-4891
FAX: (716) 684-4830

September 9, 2014

New York State Office of Parks,
Recreation and Historic Preservation
Division for Historic Preservation
P.O. Box 189
Waterford, New York 12188-0189

Re: Central Avenue Historic District
Lancaster, Erie County

Dear Ms. La Frank:

Thank you for considering our Central Avenue Historic district for nomination to the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

The Village Board of Trustees and I have discussed and reviewed comments from the Historic Preservation Commission and support their efforts. I hereby recommend approval of this district to the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Paul M. Maute".

Paul M. Maute
Mayor

PM;rw

Village of Lancaster
Lancaster Historic Preservation Commission

Lancaster Municipal Building • 5423 Broadway • Lancaster, NY 14086

September 8, 2014

Ms. Kathleen LaFrank, National Register Coordinator
NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation
Peebles Island State Park
Box 219
Waterford, NY 12188

Re: **National Register Nomination
Central Avenue Historic District
Lancaster (Erie Co.), NY 14086**

Dear Ms. LaFrank:

On behalf of the Village of Lancaster Historic Preservation Commission, which has had oversight responsibility in the preparation of this nomination utilizing the Village's recently awarded CLG grant, we wish to voice our support for National Register listing of the Central Avenue Historic District.

As historic stewards for the Village since 1986, we have strived to preserve and maintain our historic fabric in order not only to enhance property values but to also enhance the quality of life within the Village. We now have this tremendous opportunity to provide a new degree of status which also comes with some potential economic benefits to many of our businesses and property owners in our central business district. This opportunity is fully supported by our Village government, the business community and of course, the HPC.

The Village staff, the HPC and our consultant, Clinton Brown Company Architecture, have worked hard in preparing this nomination. We especially appreciate the efforts of the SHPO personnel who guided us in this process and look forward to the results of the Board's review on September 11. You have our sincere thanks.

Sincerely,



Michael J. Meyer, RA
Chair, Village of Lancaster HPC
