

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
REGISTRATION FORM

Name of Property

Historic name Park Dinor

Other names/site number Lawrence Park Dinor

Location

Street & number 4019 Main Street, Erie N/A not for publication

City or town Lawrence Park Township N/A vicinity

State Pennsylvania code PA county Erie code 049 zip code 16511

State/Federal Agency Certification

I, the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for termination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally statewide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Jean A. Cutler
Signature of certifying official

1-30-04
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 commenting or other official Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

Park Dinor, Erie County, PA

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6. Function or Use
=====

Historic Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Commerce/Trade Sub: Restaurant
 Domestic Single Family Dwelling

Current Functions (Enter categories from instructions)

Cat: Commerce/Trade Sub: Restaurant
 Domestic Single Family Dwelling

=====
7. Description
=====

Architectural Classification (Enter categories from instructions)

 Other: Diner

Materials (Enter categories from instructions)

foundation concrete
roof metal
walls porcelain steel

other steel
 fiberglass

Narrative Description (Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)
See continuation sheet

=====
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 is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield information important in prehistory or history.

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

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or a grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance (Enter categories from instructions)

Architecture

Period of Significance 1948

Park Dinor, Erie County, PA

Significant Dates 1948

Significant Person (Complete if Criterion B is marked above)
N/A

Cultural Affiliation N/A

Architect/Builder Paterson Vehicle Company
Paterson, NJ

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

See continuation sheet - Section 8 - 1

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS)

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary Location of Additional Data

State Historic Preservation Office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Name of repository: _____

Park Dinor, Erie County, PA

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than an acre -

UTM References (Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17	581442	4666727	3	_____	_____
2	___	_____	_____	4	_____	_____

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.):

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

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Virginia Andersen

organization Lawrence Park Historical Society date July 15, 2002

street & number 4019 Iroquois Ave telephone (814) 899-6693

city or town Erie state PA zip code 16511-2030

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Maps

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

Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

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

Property Owner

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

name George Gourlias

street & number 4019 Main Street telephone (814) 899-4390

city or town Erie state PA zip code 16511

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**National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet**

Section number 7 Page 1

Park Dinor

Erie County, PA

Narrative Description

The Park Dinor is a Silk City prefabricated stainless steel and porcelain diner manufactured by the Paterson Vehicle Company of Paterson, N.J. and assembled on this site in 1948. It is a one story rectangular building located on a narrow 40-foot by 125-foot lot on the south side of Main Street, a three-block long business area in Lawrence Park Township, which is a suburb of Erie, PA. Nearby are a variety of businesses including a gift shop, bakery, barbershop, hardware store, beauty shops, etc. The lot size was determined around 1910 by the General Electric Company who purchased 800 acres for a new factory and adjacent company planned community for plant workers as well as others. The original diner measured 40 feet long by 14 feet wide. Because of the size of the lot, the diner was placed with the narrow side facing Main Street. At the same time a 13-foot by 11-1/2 foot concrete block kitchen was added to the back. A roofed back concrete slab porch behind the kitchen of the diner was added at a later date. Also erected in 1948 was a 384 square foot cottage at the rear of the lot. It is a contributing resource. A gravel parking lot on the west side of the diner is shared with neighboring businesses. The diner has maintained its functional and aesthetic integrity through fifty-five years and a succession of owners.

The diner sits on a concrete block foundation with a full basement accessed from the kitchen area. The basement has a concrete floor. The subfloor of the diner employs steel I- beams, wood framing and concrete, covered by the ceramic tile flooring of the diner.

There are two stainless steel entrance doors with vertical oval windows. One door is flanked by two horizontal windows on the north or street side and has a concrete entry landing which is covered by a flat roofed overhang supported by iron railings. The second door is in the center on the west side of the diner and flanked by two sets of five horizontal windows which, with the windows on the north side, form a horizontal course along the visible sides of the building. This motif is continued in a band of horizontally fluted stainless steel. The windows are framed in wood on the inside and stainless steel on the outside. A small fiberglass awning runs over the windows on

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Park Diner

Erie County, PA

the west side. The block kitchen at the rear (south) leads to an open porch about four feet deep which runs the width of the diner. One 2/2 window on the south side is under the porch roof.

The east side faces a narrow alley and is completely covered with fifteen, three-foot by eight-foot metal panels. They are pierced by two stove exhaust pipes and an exhaust fan from the cooking grill.

The small 384 square foot pre-fabricated cottage behind the diner on the property was also erected in 1948. It was used as living quarters for the original owners who sold the diner in 1960. It contains a kitchen area, living room, one bedroom and a bathroom. It is now a rental unit. Although now covered with vinyl, the cottage is basically unchanged. The building is considered as contributing since it was erected at the same time as the diner and is in the same tax parcel as the diner.

The Park Diner has the typical counter-aisle-booth configuration beneath the vaulted gloss of a curved porcelain panel ceiling with stainless steel ribs. It has seating for sixteen at the counter, one free standing table, and five booths, for a total seating capacity of about forty.

The east side interior wall is faced with stainless steel panels (sunburst pattern) and lined with food preparation areas including a refrigerator, grill, cooler and steam table. At the rear of the diner are two small restrooms and a very small irregular shaped telephone booth which is now used for storage. The full sized basement is also used for storing supplies.

The diner has retained its interior and exterior integrity with few changes. The vaulted ceiling and the monitor roofline remain the same (See photos #2 and #3.) The sheet metal monitor roof is a split semi circle divided by a straight piece. This was a standard feature of Silk city diners until the early 1950s when the design was changed to a less costly flat roof style. The light blue and beige ceramic tiles on

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Park Diner

Erie County, PA

the walls and counter base, the ceramic tile floor covering, and the restrooms are original. The fryer and grill were replaced in their original locations. The stool and booth coverings are not original.

These changes do not alter the character of the diner itself and the major additions - the front porch entry, rear kitchen and back porch additions - were functional changes and do not detract from the character of the diner. The rear kitchen holds an extra refrigerator, freezer, oven, sink, and has storage space. The bulk of the cooking is done behind the counter.

The exterior red, white and blue color scheme was completed in 1995. The original color scheme was white and gray with light blue awnings.

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Park Dinor

Erie County, PA

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Park Dinor is significant under Criterion C as a distinctive example of mid-Twentieth Century commercial architecture that has been disappearing from our built landscape. Diners are an American invention, designed for efficient service and low maintenance with the use of tile floors and wainscoting, enameled ceiling and stainless steel. After World War II, workers desired low cost, fast food service - and a diner located near their places of employment provided that service. Unlike earlier diners that catered to highway traffic business, the Park Dinor has always been a community oriented eatery with repeat customers. Its period of significance is 1948, the date of its erection.

The spelling of d-i-n-o-r is unique to Western Pennsylvania. No one has come up with an explanation of why or when this happened. In its most strict definition, a diner is a prefabricated structure, factory built, trucked and rebuilt on a prepared site - different from the more conventional building constructed on-site at a particular location.

The diner concept is attributed to Walter Scott of Providence, RI, who first offered prepared food from a converted horse drawn freight wagon. In Worcester, MA, Sam Jones improved the idea by providing a lunch counter with stools. Then Thomas H. Buckley of Worcester, MA, started the first diner manufacturing company, eventually erecting diners in over 275 towns in various parts of the country. Diners became known as "diners" around 1924; previously, they had commonly been called lunch carts.

By around 1913, approximately seventy-five diner manufacturers were in business. Diner Mite Diners, Atlanta, GA; Kullman Industries, Lebanon, NJ; Paramount Modular Concepts, Oakland, NJ and Deraffele Manufacturing Company, New Rochelle, NJ are among the handful of manufacturers still in business today.

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Park Dinor

Erie County, PA

Founded in 1886 by the Cooper Family and headed by Everett Abbott Cooper, the Paterson Vehicle Company (PVC) was located in Paterson, NJ on East 27th Street and 19th Avenue. PVC built horse drawn freight wagons, and in the early 1900's, auto, truck and bus bodies, as travel conveyance shifted to these modes. In 1927, Irving Brooks Cooper, one of five sons involved in the business, began production of mass-produced diners. The company patented a system of arc-welded steel construction which created a strong and durable diner. The diner took its name from the city that was famous for its silk weaving factories. Silk City Diners were famous for two things: mass production (usually 8 at a time) and a resultant low price, the lowest unit price among all manufacturers. Diners could be ordered with different seating capacities and a limited range of external and interior colors. From the late 40's to the early 1960's, volume averaged about a hundred units a year.

The Park Dinor was placed on its current location in 1948. A small pre-fab cottage was erected at the same time at the rear of the property as living quarters for the first owners, Mr. and Mrs. Harold Curtis. The diner has been in continuous operation since 1948 with the exception of brief periods during ownership changes. The original owners operated the diner until approximately 1960 when it was taken over by William and Jeanne Hammill and renamed the B&J Dinor for a short period of time. Subsequent owners were Thelma Parker, Charles and Dorothy Spiegel, and Dennis and Sally Scott. George Gourlias, the present owner, leased the property in 1991 and purchased it in 1995.

The first owners of the Park Dinor saw a need for a quick and inexpensive eating place in Lawrence Park in 1948. Before the war, workers moving to the area were often housed as "boarders" in the company-built rowhouses in Lawrence Park. Some women operated restaurants in their homes serving breakfasts, suppers, and packing lunches for the single workers. After the war, with the economy on the rise and the emergence of women in the factories, this phase of caring for workers gradually ended. The huge General Electric Company plant located about one-half mile west of the diner site employed thousands of

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workers in the manufacture of refrigerators, air conditioners, locomotives, etc. Although the company had two cafeterias and the township had several other eating establishments, these facilities were not adequate for the many trainees, apprentices and single people in the area.

In 1930, Erie area directories listed six diners in the county; the 1958 Directory listed twenty-one. In Erie County today, there are five factory built diners: Crossroads Dinor, Edinboro, PA., which is actually an adapted streetcar converted to a diner and to which a dining room has been added. The Girard Dinor, 222 West Main Street, Girard, PA, a factory-built diner that reportedly opened in 1913, has been remodeled and added to. It has a vaulted barrel roof extending onto the sidewalk. The Union City Dinor, Union City, PA, a 1926 diner was manufactured by the Mulholland Company, located in nearby Dunkirk, NY. This diner closed its doors in 2003. Hagerty's Bar & Dinor, 1930 West 26th St., Erie, PA, was also a 1948 Silk City diner. Formerly known as the Boston Dinor, it was originally located between 7th and 8th Streets on Peach Street in the central business district of the City of Erie. This diner was moved in the 1970's when Erie was restructuring its downtown area. It is now an annex to a bar and has recently undergone extensive remodeling. A traditional roof covers the diner roof, the windows were replaced, and all cooking areas were demolished. All that remains is a small counter section with several stools.

There is one Silk City diner on the National Register, the Village Diner in Red Hook, New York, built in the 1920's. The previously listed 1939 Clarksville Diner (originally on Route 1 in Plainsboro, NJ) was moved to Decorah, IA, where it was restored, opened, and defunct by 1998. It was subsequently sold to a French television network and shipped to Paris where it serves as a building lobby.

The Park Dinor is a particularly well preserved example of a streamlined, prefabricated diner. It is significant as a representative example of a Silk City Diner and retains integrity in terms of setting, design and materials. Representative of its type, its function is readily apparent to passerbys - diner means good food, reasonable prices, friendly service. This distinctive type of modern architecture has become increasingly rare.

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Section number 9 Page 1

Park Dinor

Erie County

Books, articles, other sources used:

Baeder, John, Diners, Harry N. Abrams, Inc. Publishers, 1995

Butko, Brian and Patrick, Kevin. Diners of Pennsylvania. Stackpole Books, Publishers, 1999.

Curtis, Larry, son of original owner, Harold Curtis, email contact, May and June 2003

Erie (Erie County, PA) City Directories. Atkinson Erie Directory Co., Publishers, Pittsburgh, PA. 1948-1981.

Erie Suburban Directories. R.L. Polk & Co., Publishers. Detroit, MI. 1982-1996.

Gutman, Richard J. S., American Diner, Then and Now, Harper Collins, Publisher, 1993.

Shaver, Peter, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Walker, Betty Lou, Volunteer Researcher, Passaic County Historical Society, Paterson, NJ

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Park Dinor

Erie County, PA

Boundary Description

Erie County Deed Book 452, Page 2033

Boundary Justification

Lot size was determined by General Electric Company when they plotted Lawrence Park around 1910. The boundary comprises the land historically associated with the diner.

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Park Dinor

Erie County, PA

OTHER DOCUMENTATION:

Photographs - 9

ALL:

Park Dinor, Erie County, PA

Photographer: Art Bennett

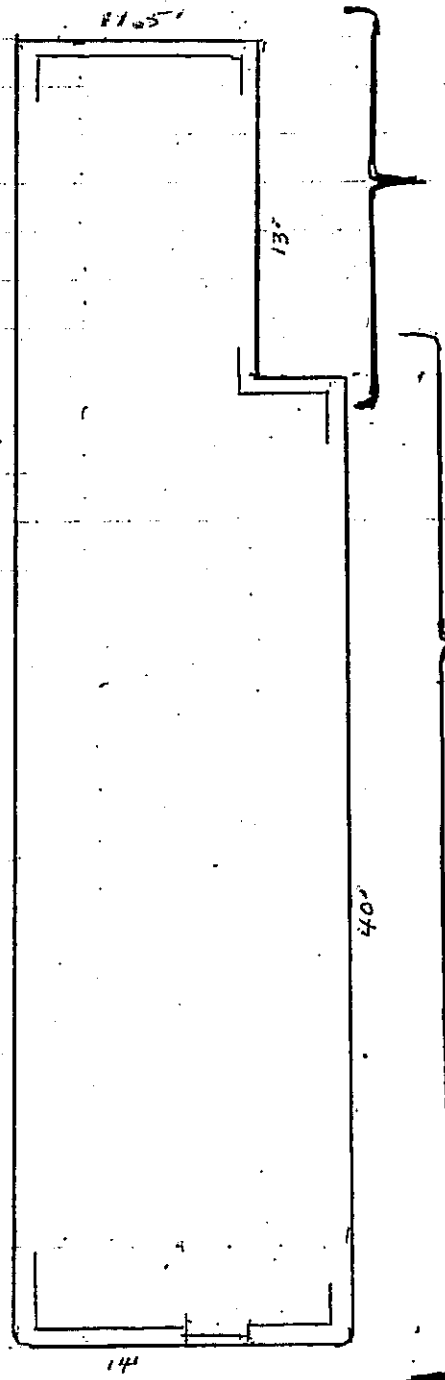
Location of negatives: 5436 East Lake Road, Apt. 310, Erie, PA 16511.

Date taken: June 5, 2002

- #1 Front Entrance facing Main Street (N)
- #2 Front/west side
- #3 West side facing parking area
- #4 South side showing add-on porch
- #5 Front/east side showing back wall
- #6 Inside view taken from front door
- #7 Food prep area (east wall)
- #8 Cottage- north view
- #9 Cottage- east view

PARK DINOR
ERIE, PA

FLOOR PLAN
3 pp.



SEE SHEET 3
FOR ENLARGED
VIEW OF THIS
AREA

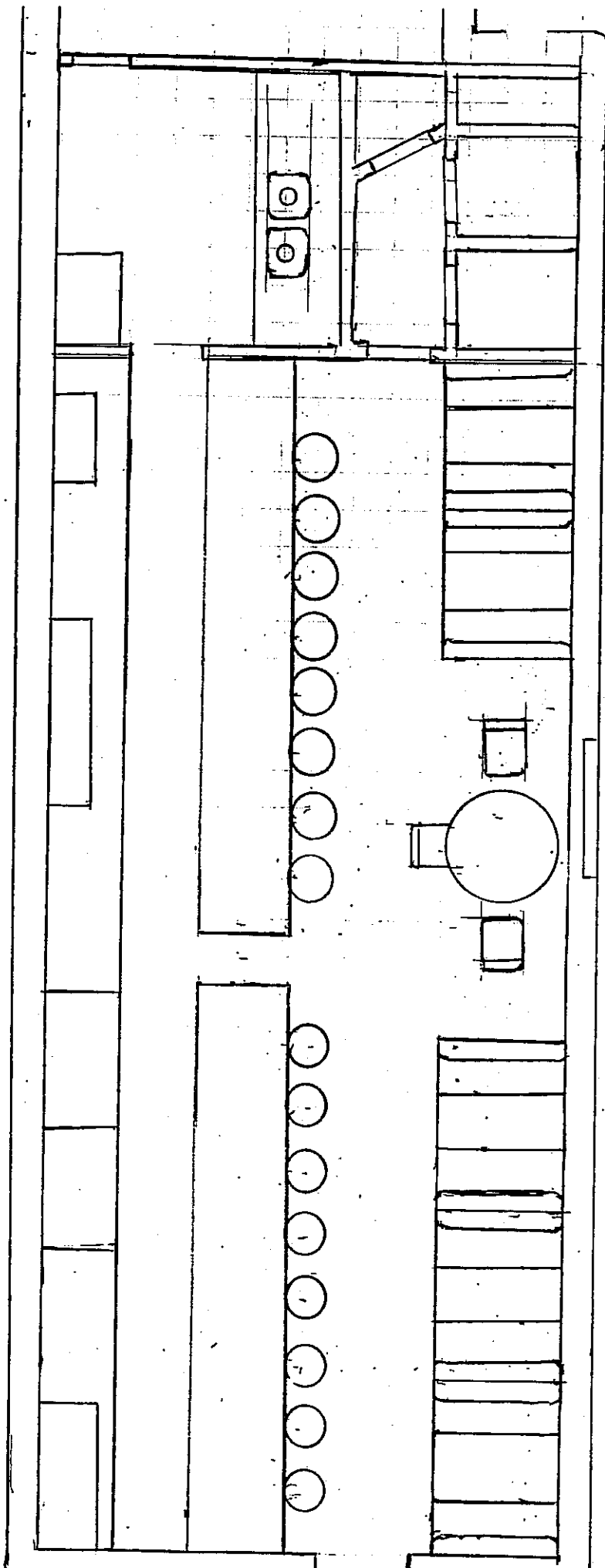
SEE SHEET 2
FOR ENLARGED
VIEW OF THIS
AREA

LAWRENCE PARK DINOR

FLOOR PLAN

L. R. HUBIAK FEB. 7. 2003

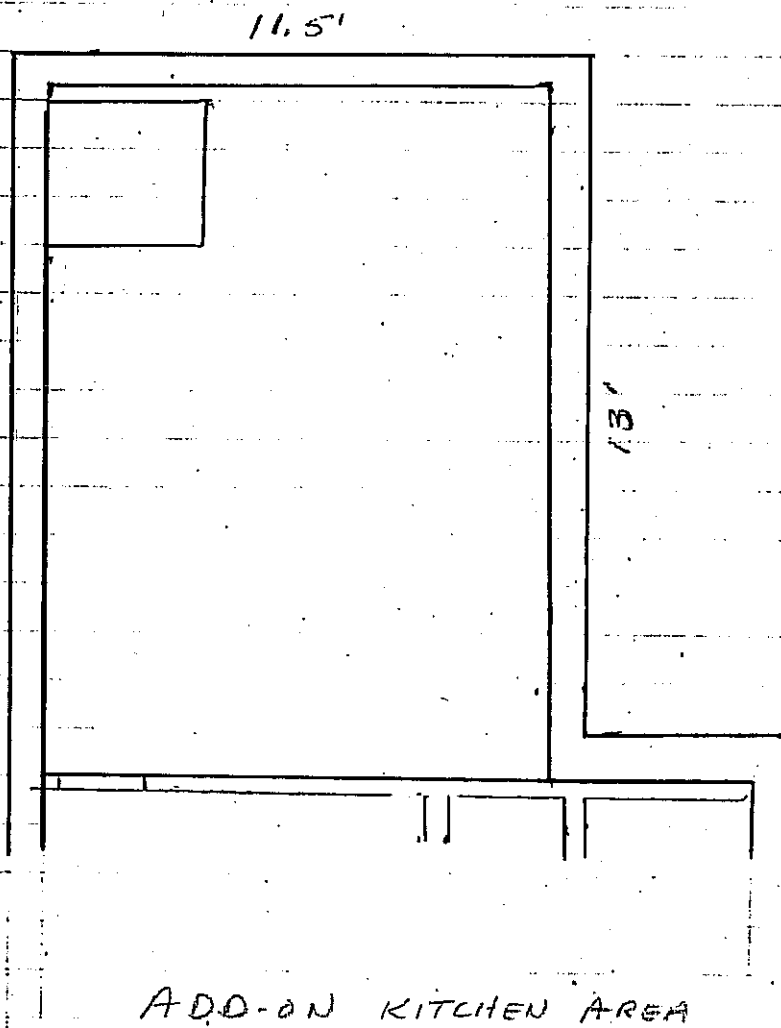
PARK DINOR
ERIE, PA.



40'

SHEET 2

PARK DINOR
ERIE, PA

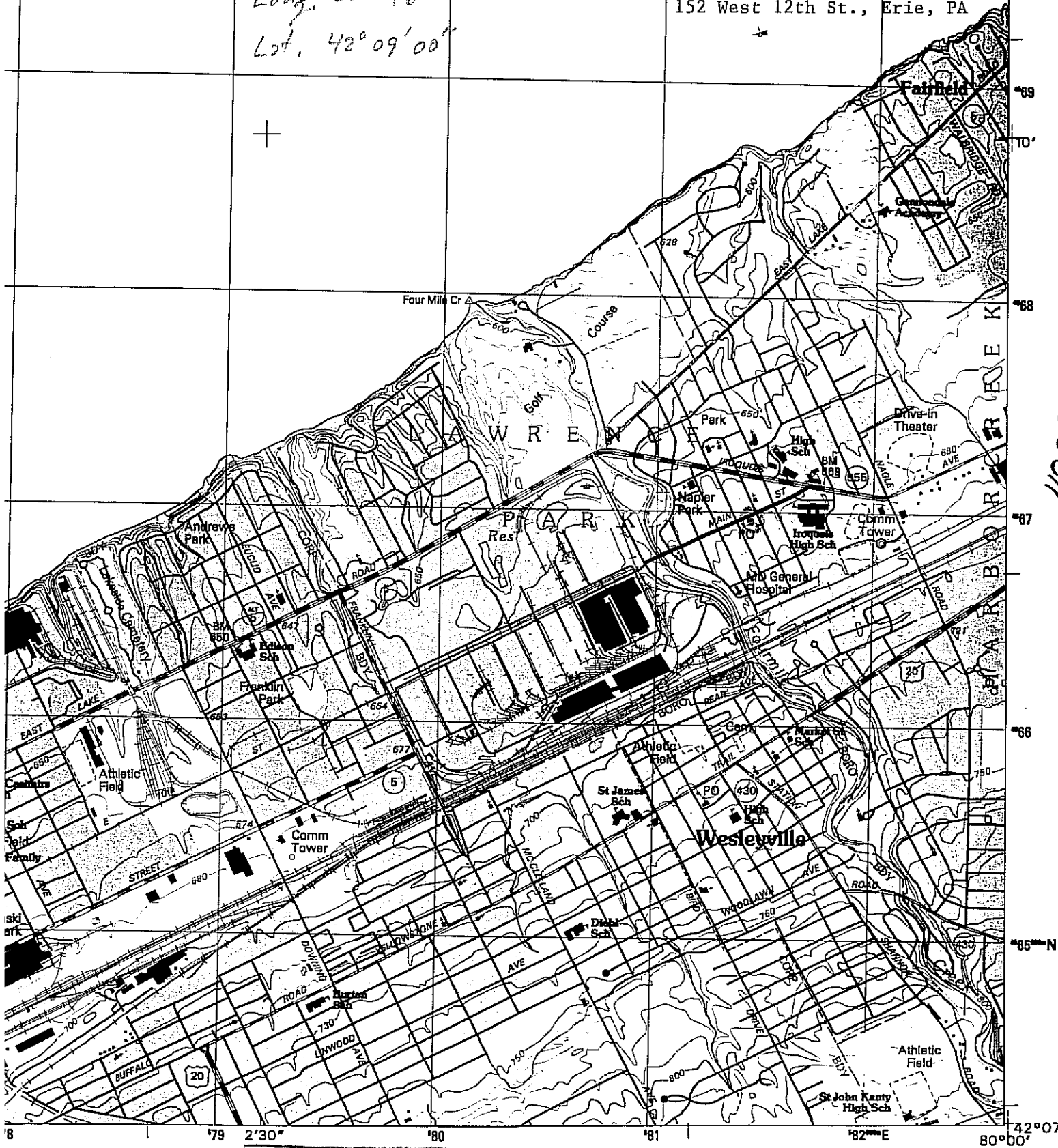


Approx.

Long. 80° 48'

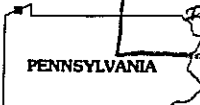
Lat. 42° 09' 00"

Rectenwald Blueprint
152 West 12th St., Erie, PA



11935

Erie North, PA
42080-B1-TF-024



INTERIOR - GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, RESTON, VIRGINIA - 1998

ROAD CLASSIFICATION

- Primary highway hard surface
- Secondary highway hard surface
- Light-duty road, hard or improved surface
- Unimproved road

Interstate Route U.S. Route State Routes