

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms* (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, styles, materials, and areas of significance, enter only the categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900a). Type all entries.

1. Name of Property

historic name West 21st Street Historic District
other names/site number N/A

2. Location

street & number 125-262 West 21st Street, 2014-2125 Sassafras Street N/A not for publication

city, town Erie N/A vicinity

state Pennsylvania code PA county Erie code 049 zip code 16502

3. Classification

Ownership of Property

private
 public-local
 public-State
 public-Federal

Category of Property

building(s)
 district
 site
 structure
 object

Number of Resources within Property

Contributing	35	Noncontributing	0
buildings	_____	sites	_____
structures	_____	objects	_____
Total	35	0	_____

Name of related multiple property listing:

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

4. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this nomination request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of certifying official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property meets does not meet the National Register criteria. See continuation sheet.

Signature of commenting or other official

Date

State or Federal agency and bureau

5. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register.
 See continuation sheet.
 determined eligible for the National Register. See continuation sheet.
 determined not eligible for the National Register.
 removed from the National Register.
 other. (explain): _____

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Act

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Current Functions (enter categories from instructions)

Domestic/Single Dwellings

Domestic/Single Dwellings

7. DescriptionArchitectural Classification
(enter categories from instructions)

Materials (enter categories from instructions)

Colonial Revival

foundation Stone

Queen Anne

walls Brick

Italianate

Wood

roof Asphalt

other

Describe present and historic physical appearance.

The West 21st Street Historic District of the City of Erie is located in an area with a concentration of late 19th and early 20th Century residences which exhibit a variety of architectural styles including Italianate, Queen Anne, Romanesque, Victorian and Colonial Revival. The houses range in scale according to the lot size. The homes were erected between 1857 and 1939 and are generally of frame or brick construction. The district includes thirty five buildings within two blocks along West 21st Street between Peach and Myrtle Streets.

The residential buildings in the 100 block of West 21st Street between Peach and Sassafras Street differ in style, scale and materials from those buildings in the 200 block between Sassafras and Myrtle Streets. There are fewer homes on larger lots in the 100 block than in the 200 block. Although the number of homes is a direct result of the larger lots, it should be noted that a school and a church consume substantial lots within this block. The residential buildings in the 100 block were built between 1850 and 1900 and are all of brick construction.

The five contributing residences in the 100 block of West 21st Street represent five different architectural styles. The Italianate Style is represented by the Heman Janes resident at 125 West 21st Street, constructed in 1857 and the oldest building in the district. The home is set back 25 feet from the street and is centered on a large lot. The building has been remodeled with the addition of one room and alterations to the once open veranda. The home, however, retains original features such as the bracketed cornice, Victorian tracery at the entrance, and an octagonal cupola with a domical roof which is unique to the district.

The Colonial Revival Style is represented by 139 West 21st Street. Also centered on a large lot, this residence is constructed of buff colored brick and features a massive porch with Corinthian columns and a bracketed dentiled cornice. Three pedimented dormers adorn the roof which is accented with a cornice matching that of the porch roof. A three car garage was constructed onto the rear of the building to accommodate its present use as a funeral home. The addition is constructed of matching brick and does not detract from the outstanding character of the building.

The residences at 120, 130 and 151 West 21st Street represent the Chateaue, Queen Anne and Victorian Styles respectively. The two former residences retain a high degree of integrity without alterations. The home at 151 West 21st Street is

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been altered with the construction of a two story addition across the facade. The original Victorian detailing survives along the east and west elevations which remain without alteration.

The three additional buildings within the 100 block include the 1893 Simpson Methodist Church, 1930 brick rectory adjacent to the church, and the 1910 school which has been remodeled for use as a health care facility but still remains a contributing building.

The residential buildings in the 200 block of West 21st Street were constructed between 1870 and 1930 and are generally of frame construction in the Victorian Style and are of a smaller scale than those in the 100 block of West 21st Street. However, two brick homes and one stone home within this block compare in size to those in the 200 block.

There are twenty-three contributing buildings in the 200 block. The majority of the contributing buildings are two to two-and-a-half story fram homes featuring Victorian detailing such as 214 and 257 West 21st Street. Gable roofs, bracketed cornices, decorative window surrounds, porches, and clapboard siding are the common features.

The homes on the north side of the street suffer from some degree of remodeling. Typically, the clapboard siding has been covered with aluminum, and aluminum windows have replaced the original wood sashes, or the cornice brackets were removed, or the porches altered. Homes such as 246 and 250 West 21st Street have experienced a combination of these alterations, and like their counterparts, they contribute to the district because they retain their general appearance and original scale.

There are three prominent residences which differ in scale, material and style from the Victorian homes. First is the Henry Shenk home at 209 West 21st Street. It is a large stone Romanesque Style building situated on a large gently sloping lot. Second is the substantial Colonial Revival brick home at 231 West 21st Street which occupies a large lot. It features an elaborate porch, decorative window surrounds, and a bracketed cornice. Finally, a massive Colonial Revival brick residence with large porch, shuttered windows and a clay tile roof survives at 241 West 21st Street. These homes retain excellent detailing and a high degree of integrity.

Three other buildings within the 200 block are c. 1920 brick buildings of two-and-a-half stories. One of these was constructed as a single family residence and the others were constructed as apartments. The building at 230 West 21st Street represents the former, and those at 226 and 230 West 21st Street represent the latter.

Another residence in the 200 block is located at 223 West 21st Street. This is a c. 1920, two story, brick, Tudor Revival Bungalow with an elaborate clay tile roof. The home survives in excellent condition without any alterations.

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The homes along Sassafras Street represent four different architectural styles. The building at 2022 Sassafras is a Victorian brick residence. The buildings at 2124 and 2125 Sassafras are similar to those within the 100 block of West 21st Street. 2124 Sassafras is a substantial Colonial Revival brick residence. These are all contributing buildings.

The home at 2014 Sassafras constructed in c. 1910 and is similar to buildings of the same vintage in the 2-0 block of West 21st Street.

Many of the residential buildings within the district have been converted to multi-family use but, in most cases, the homes retain their original scale, materials and detailing. This small, concentrated district provides a good cross-section of housing styles which were popular during the period between 1850 and 1939.

8. Statement of Significance

Certifying official has considered the significance of this property in relation to other properties:

 nationally statewide locallyApplicable National Register Criteria A B C DCriteria Considerations (Exceptions) A B C D E F G**Areas of Significance (enter categories from instructions)****Period of Significance**
1857 - 1939**Significant Dates**
N/A

Architecture

Commerce

Cultural Affiliation
N/A**Architect/Builder**
Various**Significant Person**Shenk, Henry, Heman, Janes**State significance of property, and justify criteria, criteria considerations, and areas and periods of significance noted above.**

The West 21st Street Historic District is an architecturally and historically significant area of south Erie. The district is architecturally significant because of its concentration of mid-nineteenth to early twentieth century buildings retaining high integrity. The homes within the district are representative of the type of homes constructed by the middle and upper classes in Erie between 1857 and 1939. The district is also historically significant because it was home to several of Erie's most prominent businessmen and citizens such as Heman Janes, co-founder of Standard Oil Company, and Henry Shenk, contractor of many important buildings in Western Pennsylvania.

South Erie began as a small settlement at Peach and 26th Streets in 1812. The settlement was known as "Federal Hill" or "Eagle Village" and was located in Millcreek Township one mile south of the town of Erie. The intersections of two major roadways, the Waterford Turnpike (Peach Street) and Ridge Road (26th Street), was the impetus for settlement and reason for continued growth of Federal Hill and the vicinity.

Much of the real estate between the town of Erie and Federal Hill was purchased between 1830 and 1840 due to planned improvements to the harbor, the surveying of the Beaver and Lake Erie Canal between Pittsburgh and Erie, and the organization of a railroad between Erie and Sunbury. Combined, these events alluded that Erie was destined to be a great and prosperous business center. Therefore, large tracts of land in South Erie were purchased by land speculators, prominent Erie citizens, and businessmen such as General Charles M. Reed and Heman Janes.

The growth of trade and commerce along the Waterford Turnpike (Peach Street) attracted commerce and residents to South Erie. The area was initially settled by Scotch-Irish immigrants, but who were progressively replaced by industrious Pennsylvania Germans. The business district of South Erie was concentrated between 18th and 26th Streets along Peach Street and residential neighborhoods began to infill the adjacent blocks. Recognizing South Erie's significance, commercially and residentially, influential citizens organized South Erie into its own borough in 1866. One of the influential citizens was Heman Janes.

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Heman Janes was interested in the success and residential growth of South Erie because of his real estate holdings which included the entire block along West 21st Street (then Simpson Street), between Sassafras and Myrtle Streets, known as the "Janes Subdivision." Mr. Janes, who amassed his early fortunes in lumber shipping and real estate, was most successful in the business of oil refining. He was an early advocate for shipping oil through pipelines and became a co-founder, and later, the head of Standard Oil Company. In 1857, while other wealthy entrepreneurs were constructing their large homes along West Sixth and Seventh Street in Erie, Mr. Janes constructed a substantial Italian Villa Style residence at 125 West 21st Street in the McNair Subdivision, the block adjacent to his subdivision. Mr. Janes resided in this house until his death in 1905 when the home was sold to Wilbur Graham, a prominent Erie builder who converted the home into two flats.

Although residential construction at mid-century was dominated by the construction of modest working class homes, it was the homes of the wealthy, like Heman Janes, which attracted the most attention. Mr. Janes attracted further attention by assisting in locating South Erie's first Methodist Church on West 21st Street. In 1859, Mr. Janes secured the lot at the corner of West 21st and Sassafras Streets for the construction of the Simpson Methodist Episcopal Church. The original building serviced South Erie until 1893, when it was replaced with the present day brick and stone building. His home and the church may have been Mr. Janes strategy in attracting residents to his subdivision.

A residential building boom occurred in Erie between 1860 and 1900 due to the substantial increase in industry which caused the city's population to triple. The opening of the Erie City Passenger Railway along Peach Street to 26th Street in 1870, opened South Erie to much of this construction. Three years later, South Erie was annexed as the Sixth Ward of Erie.

The population of the Sixth Ward itself increased from 1500 to 5200 between 1875 and 1900. The majority of the Sixth Ward residents worked for the railroad at Union Station on 14th Street, and others worked in the neighboring brick yards or iron foundaries. The homes of the working class were simple frame detached houses suited to the smaller lots like those found to the north of West 21st Street on West 22nd Street. However, the larger lots found in the Janes and McNair Subdivisions, which would accommodate a more substantial home, were desired by Erie's wealthier entrepreneurs and businessmen. Therefore, like the properties along Sixth, Seventh, Eighth, Ninth and Tenth Streets, West 21st Street became a desirable location for those who could afford it.

One individual who could afford it was Dr. B. A. Smith. In 1872, he constructed his residence in the Janes Subdivision at 246 West 21st Street. A year later, this prominent druggist and manufacturer of patent medicines, opened a pharmacy which he operated until his death around 1936. In 1882, Emil Streuber constructed his large Italianate home at 231-233 West 21st Street in the Janes Subdivision. Streuber was a principal in E. Streuber and Brothers, an extensive

Continued...

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tannery which began operations in 1861 under the direction of John Streuber, Emil's father. Upon his father's death in 1872, Emil was put in charge of the operations. Under his direction, the business became the leading tannery in the city.

Later that year, a substantial Romanesque Revival stone residence was constructed at the southwest corner of Sassafras and West 21st Streets. It was built by Mr. Henry Shenk, a prominent contractor in Western Pennsylvania. Mr. Shenk began his construction business in Erie in 1858. His company was known for its attention to detail and for manufacturing all interior trim in its own shop. Henry Shenk was responsible for the construction of the Y.M.C.A. Building (National Register 1986) and the Carnegie Library (National Register 1977), Pittsburgh. In Erie, a few of his contributions include the Erie Trust Company (G. Daniel Baldwin Building), the Government Building, and the Park Opera House. Although other Romanesque homes were constructed in Erie, such as the one at 356 West Sixth Street, Mr. Shenk's residence is an outstanding example and execution of the Romanesque Revival Style.

Residences were also being constructed in the McNair Subdivision to the east. Michael Liebel, Sr. constructed a residence for him and his son at 139 West 21st Street in 1882. The Liebels operated a wholesale liquor business until the 1890's when they became partners in the West End Brewing Company. During his residency at 139 West 21st Street, Michael, Jr. held the office of Mayor of Erie between the years 1905 and 1911. T. M. Nagle also constructed a residence in the McNair Subdivision at 130 West 21st Street around 1890. Mr. Nagle was the principal in the Nagle Engine and Boiler Works which he began in 1883. Mr. Nagle manufactured portable, stationary and agricultural steam engines that were shipped to all parts of the country including Maine, Florida, Texas and Colorado.

The neighborhoods of the Sixth Ward reached their capacity by the turn-of-the-century. The lots along the north side of West 21st Street in the Janes Subdivision accommodated several more moderate homes for individuals of the middle-income working class. A new school building was constructed in 1910 at the northeast corner of West 21st Street and Sassafras Streets to replace Public School No. 7 which was destroyed by fire several years earlier. Only a few new buildings were constructed along West 21st Street up to 1939.

The Great Depression and periods of modest growth, stagnation and decline in the region since the 1930's brought little new construction to the area. The people who could afford it moved to the seclusion of the suburbs leaving the city neighborhoods to those who could not afford to move. Many city homes have been converted to apartments and have suffered from some degree of remodeling.

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The homes in the West 21st Street Historic District have architectural significance because they are a well preserved concentration of the type of homes erected by the middle and upper classes on the south side of Erie between the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Sizeable homes designed in period high styles were built by the middle and upper classes during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in various neighborhoods of south Erie, including the area immediately south of the nominated district. These homes originally were similar to the nominated buildings in their size, styling and overall appearance. However, since their construction these other residences generally have been much more altered by remodelling than have the homes in the West 21st Street Historic District. Thus the nominated district is the best preserved concentration of the middle and upper class housing that was constructed during the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries on the south side of Erie.

9. Major Bibliographical References

F. W. Beers, Atlas of Erie County, Pennsylvania, F. W. Beers, A. D. Ellis, R.G.G. Soule, N.Y., 1865, Page 4

City of Erie Directories, Wm. P. Atkinson, Erie, 1880, 1885, 1895, 1897

City of Erie Tax Records (Microfilm), Roll 8 (Held by Erie County Historical Society)

John G. Carney, Tales of Old Erie, 1958, Pages 89-92

Combination Atlas Map of Erie County, Pennsylvania, Everts, Ensign & Everts, Philadelphia, 1876, Page 49

Erie Style, Tom Weber, The Old Erie Press, Erie, 1982

See continuation sheet

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

previously listed in the National Register

previously determined eligible by the National Register

designated a National Historic Landmark

recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # _____

recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____

Primary location of additional data:

State historic preservation office

Other State agency

Federal agency

Local government

University

Other

Specify repository:

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of property 12

UTM References

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

B	1	7	5	7	6	1	5	0	4	6	6	2	8	2	0
Zone	Easting								Northing						
D	1	7	5	7	5	8	8	0	4	6	6	2	5	2	0

See continuation sheet

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundaries of the West 21st Street Historic District are shown as a solid black line on the accompanying map entitled "West 21st Street Historic District."

See continuation sheet

Boundary Justification

The boundaries of the West 21st Street Historic District include those buildings contributing to the historical and architectural significance of South Erie. The district boundaries include those residential buildings within the two blocks along West 21st Street between Peach and Myrtle Streets.

See continuation sheet

11. Form Prepared By

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organization V/A/PHMC date August 1, 1989
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Historical Reference Book of Erie County, Pennsylvania, S. B. Nelson, Erie, 1896,
Vol. 1 & Vol. 2

History of Erie County, Pennsylvania, Warner, Beers & Company, Chicago, 1884

A. H. Mueller, Atlas of the City of Erie, Pennsylvania, Philadelphia, 1900

A. H. Mueller, Atlas of the City of Erie, Pennsylvania and Adjoining Subdivisions,
Philadelphia, 1917

John Nolan, Greater Erie: Plans and Reports for the Extension and Improvement of the
City, Erie, 1913

John E. Reed, History of Erie County, Pennsylvania, Historical Publishing Company, 1925

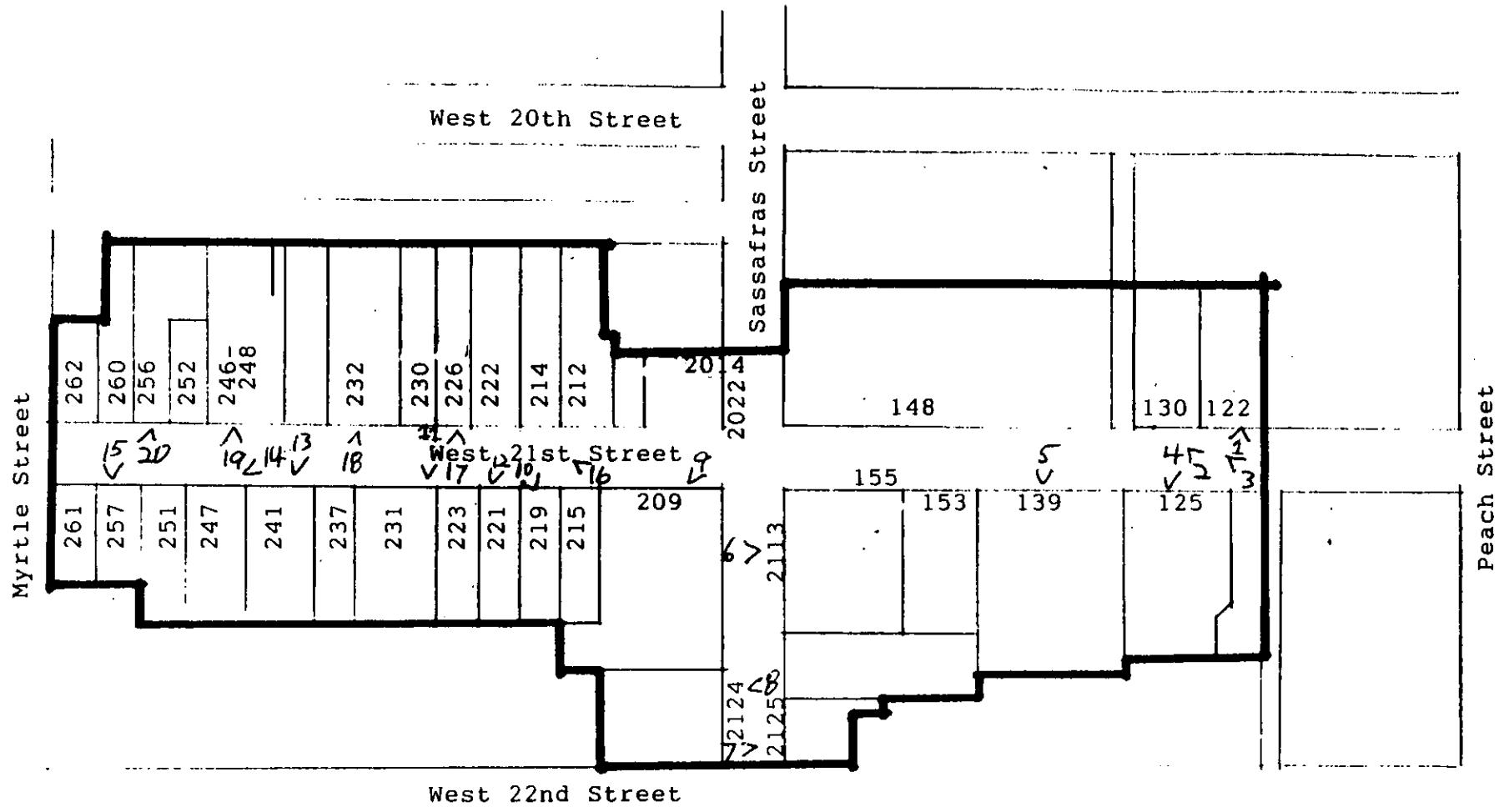
A Twentieth Century History of Erie County, Pennsylvania, John Miller, Chicago, 1909

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The boundaries exclude those properties to the north which are of a smaller scale and of low integrity. The west and south boundary exclude those properties of similar vintage and scale, but which have been severely remodeled and retain little original detailing. The eastern boundary of the district excludes those commercial properties along Peach Street.

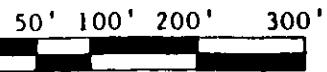


WEST 21ST STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT MAP

Erie County
District Boundaries

Non-Contributing Building

Map Scale



UNITED STATES
DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
GEOLOGICAL SURVEY

1959 "NE
SERIE NORTE

COMM
DEPART.
TOP

