

Slatington Historic District

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Slatington Historic District

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The Slatington Historic District was listed on the [National Register](#) of Historic Places in 2004. Portions of the text below were adapted from a copy of the original nomination document. [†] Adaptation copyright © 2008, The Gombach Group.

The Slatington Historic District is a mixed-use residential/commercial/institutional historic district of 165 acres. The district encompasses the traditional core of the downtown and surrounding residential neighborhoods within the northeast Pennsylvania Borough of Slatington, which is located on the west shore of the Lehigh River in northern Lehigh County. The Slatington Historic District contains a total of 561 resources and one property previously listed in the National Register (the Fireman's Drinking Fountain, National Register, 1981).[1] Of the 561 counted resources, 508 (91%) contribute to the character of the Slatington Historic District and 53 (9%) are non-contributing. Of the 561 unlisted resources in the district, 559 are buildings, and two bridges are contributing structures. Approximately twenty percent of the resources in the Slatington Historic District pre-date 1890, approximately seventy-five percent of the resources were constructed between 1890 and 1930, and the remaining approximately five percent post-date 1930. The architecture of the Slatington Historic District varies from modest vernacular residences[2] and commercial buildings to spacious and highly detailed homes and business blocks, a diverse collection of churches, and the 1889 Slatington Borough Hall, a historic governmental building. Numerous strong examples of period styling are found throughout the Slatington Historic District in its domestic, commercial, and institutional architecture. Most domestic architecture is of wood, while the district's commercial and institutional architecture is executed both in wood and brick, with brick predominating. Many of the homes retain spacious verandas and historic dependencies. Larger dependencies (carriage houses, barns, etc.) are included in the resource count, while smaller outbuildings (sheds, small automobile garages, etc.) are treated as small-scale features and are not represented in the count. The Slatington Historic District retains integrity in each of the seven qualities: location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.

The Slatington Historic District is located on both sides of Main Street (Pennsylvania Route 873), which is the community's principal historic commercial thoroughfare. Main Street runs in an east-to-west direction as it enters the northeastern corner of the district from the Slatington-Walnutport bridge, before making a ninety-degree turn to the south one block beyond Second Street. Thereafter Main Street follows a north-south pattern to the district's southern boundary. Other streets run parallel and perpendicular to Main Street and between many of the streets are unnamed alleys. Moving from north to south, the following streets and alleys run in an east-west direction within the district: Iron and Ridge Alleys, North Street, Sell Alley, Main Street, Dowell Street, Short Alley, Church Street, Centre Avenue (little more than an alley), Kite Alley, Franklin Street, Ash Avenue (also little more than an alley), Snyder Alley, Washington Street, Ruch Alley, South Street, Kern Street and Ridge Alley. From east to west, the following

run in a north-south direction: Railroad and Walnut Streets, Vine Alley, Hill Street, Fairview and Park Avenue, First Street, Chestnut Alley, Second Street, Middle Alley, Main Street, Long Alley, Fourth Street, Oak Alley, and Fifth and Sixth Streets.

All streets in the Slatington Historic District are paved. Some historic slate sidewalks are extant and enhance the overall historic character of the district. Sidewalks are found on both sides of most streets and parking is permitted in nearly all areas of the Slatington Historic District. Street lighting employs modern cobra-head fixtures powered by overhead lines throughout the district and traffic signals are found along Main Street.

In the central business district portion of the Slatington Historic District, most buildings occupy their entire lots, with no front or side lot setbacks. Some commercial properties have paved parking areas along the rear of their lots. Institutional buildings, represented primarily by several churches, typically have setbacks on all sides and may include lawns, planting areas, or paved parking. Landscaping throughout the Slatington Historic District includes residential lawns both large and small and many streets with mature shade trees. Two large non-contributing public housing buildings are in the Slatington Historic District; one is at the corner where Main Street makes a sharp turn and the other is adjacent to the site of the Slatington High School (not extant) east of Second Street.

Among the significant natural features of the Slatington Historic District is Trout Creek, which flows through a portion of the northeastern reaches of the district and is spanned by the 1901 Morgan Memorial Bridge (George Opliners, engineer). It was along this waterway that Nicholas Kern's c.1845 sawmill and gristmill (not extant) were located and marked the beginning of settlement in the area that would become Slatington. Trout Creek divides the community into the neighborhoods locally known as "upper" Slatington-south of Trout Creek — and "lower" Slatington-north of the creek. The topography rises significantly between "lower" Slatington and "upper" Slatington," hence the names. The community's earliest settlement occurred in lower Slatington. The buildings dating from the period of initial settlement of the community are not extant; most of the earliest properties in the Slatington Historic District are stone buildings dating from the 1820s. One c.1850 stone industrial building in lower Slatington (32 Factory Street) was associated with the predominate nineteenth-century slate mantle industry in the community.

The buildings in the Slatington Historic District are of a conventional rectilinear form; some churches and private residences exhibit rounded bays. Frontages of the individual buildings range upward from approximately twenty feet. The commercial buildings are generally flat-roofed or have shed roofs which slope gently from front to back. Some historic chimneys have been retained, but most have been removed in the course of retrofitting heating systems and replacing roofs. Most of the buildings in the Slatington Historic District rest on substantial foundations of brick and stone; both rock-faced and smooth-dressed concrete block and structural tile were employed for the foundations of some buildings built after the beginning of the twentieth century. Most residential buildings in the Slatington Historic District are gabled, pyramidal, hipped, and gambrel roofed; the few French Second Empire style buildings in the district exhibit the Mansard roof which is characteristic of the style. Institutional architecture employs hipped and gabled roofs. During much of the period of significance, roofs were clad in slate, often installed in decorative patterns. Many properties retain historic slate roofs and while others have been re-roofed with asphalt shingles, nearly all of the Slatington Historic District's Queen Anne style turrets and towers retain their original slate cladding —

testimony to the nearly lost skills of nineteenth and early twentieth century slaters.

The majority of the Slatington Historic District developed during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century and most buildings are punctuated by tall and narrow patterns of fenestration. Art glass, both religious and secular, is found throughout the district. Art glass includes both lavish and modest residential applications, prism-glass transoms on commercial buildings, and religious art glass in the district's seven churches.

The architectural styles represented in the Slatington Historic District include most of the design modes popular during the Slatington Historic District's long period of significance. The vast majority of the community's vernacular settlement architecture was replaced by significantly more substantial architecture as the community matured. The Slatington Historic District's earliest extant buildings date from the first through the fourth decades of the nineteenth century; most of these are associated with Slatington's pioneer Kern family and all are vernacular in character. The earliest building in the Slatington Historic District is the stone barn erected in 1807 by John Kern (1777-1851); with the 1894 opening of Diamond Street, the western portion of the barn was removed and replaced by a timber framed gable end.

Many buildings in the Slatington Historic District are derived from no formal architectural style, but rather reflect the vernacular building traditions of this community throughout the period of significance. These vernacular buildings contribute significantly to the broad-based architectural character of the district as a whole.

The [Greek Revival](#) style was little-used in Slatington and appears only in stylistic references on the residences at 239 and 801 Main Street. The [Italianate](#) was the first formal design mode to enjoy popularity in the wake of the birth of the burgeoning slate industry in the 1840s. Most Italianate style architecture in the Slatington Historic District lies along Main Street and is of a commercial character, including the c.1850 McKenna Building at 560 Main Street, 624-666 and 632-666 Main Street, 658 and 662 Main Street. The Italianate style was followed by buildings built in the French Second Empire, Gothic, and Late Gothic Revival, Italian Villa, Romanesque Revival, Neo-Classical and Colonial Revival styles. Italian Villa design in Slatington is limited to four substantial buildings which embrace eclectic principles of design but are capped by Italian Villa style belvederes, including the 1850 Neff House hotel at 700 Main Street, the property at 306 East Church Street, the Thomas Kern House at 908 Main Street, and the house at 61 Dowell Street, which includes a belvedere atop the flat upper surface of a Mansard roof. This stylistic device may represent the work of an unidentified local architect or builder.

The [Gothic Revival](#) style appears in the Slatington Historic District both in domestic and ecclesiastic design from the 1850s through the 1890s. The Slatington Historic District's myriad double houses reflect vernacular adaptations of the Gothic Revival style in the steeply pitched gables which dominate their facades. These constitute the most prevalent building type found along Slatington's residential streets, and are typically of wood construction with laterally-oriented gable roofs which are penetrated by a steeply pitched center gable or paired gables on the facade. Representative examples of this design, and house type appear in the properties at 846-848, 1026-1028, and 1039-1041 Main Street, 49-51 North Street, 531-533 and 542-544 East Church Street, 447-449 and 451-453 West Church Street, and the adjacent properties at 640-642, 632-634, 624-626 and 628-620 West Franklin Street. Religious Gothic Revival style design includes the First Baptist Church of 1900 at the corner of Main and Second Street, the United Church of Christ on Fourth Street, St. John's Lutheran Church on Second Street, Trinity Church, also on Second Street and the former church, building at 323 Second

Street.

The French [Second Empire](#) style, with its distinctive Mansard roof, is represented in the Slatington Historic District by the homes of business and community leaders, including owners and managers of several of the slate quarries in the immediate environs. Among these are the aforementioned Neff House hotel at 700 Main Street, the Thomas Kern House at 908 Main Street, 751 and 701 Main Street, 61 Dowell Street, 65 Second Street (with a 1920s porch), and the "Billy Neff Apartments" at 105 Second Street.

The local slate industry was booming by the 1880s when the [Queen Anne](#) style was gaining in popularity. Local adaptations of this style incorporate a varied surface treatment and a lively profile, nearly always punctuated by a round or octagonal tower with a steeply pitched slate-clad conical roof. Art glass windows often appear in homes of this style within the Slatington Historic District and may include both stylized art glass motifs and multi-light colored glass windows which are typical of this late nineteenth century design mode. Queen Anne style design appears in the Slatington Historic District in the Henry Bittner House at 231 Main Street, 321 Main Street, the Alfred J. Kern House at 404 Main Street, the Henry Kuntz House at 370 Main Street, 554 Main Street, the Moose Lodge on Main Street, the James Haines House at 722 Main Street, 750, 888, 1050, 1108, 1116, 1152, 1201 Main Street.

The [Colonial Revival](#) style was born of the fervor of patriotism in the wake of the American Centennial of 1876. Buildings executed in this style may faithfully reproduce Colonial era architecture, or may simply borrow elements of the style, including frontispiece entrance and Palladian windows. Among the Colonial Revival style architecture in the Slatington Historic District are the houses at 213 Main Street, 435 Main Street, 1105 Main Street (a side-passage home with gable dormers and quarter-round fans in the pediments of the gable ends), 309 East Franklin Street, 434 West Washington Street, 431 East Washington Street, 47 Second Street, 356 First Street, and 343 Park Street. The Colonial Revival style house at 343 Park Avenue occupies the single largest residential building lot in the district and includes a matching garage, all sited with a commanding overlook oriented toward the Lehigh River to the east.

The [Dutch Colonial Revival](#), a twentieth century design mode, incorporates a characteristic gambrel roof and appears in the residential neighborhoods of upper Slatington, both in single and double houses. Representative examples include the properties at 543-545, 547-549, and 551-553 East Church Street, 666-668 and 300 West Franklin Street, 109-111 Fourth Street, and 209 Second Street. This style also appears on gambrel-roofed 1920s garages located at 445-447 Second Street and 218 First Street.

The Neo-Classical Revival style draws — sometimes loosely — on design motifs from classical antiquity, and within the Slatington Historic District may embrace the use of applied ornament, as well as porches and porticos with classical columns and pilasters. This style is little used in the Slatington Historic District; the largest Neo-Classical Revival style commercial building in the Slatington Historic District is the Citizens Bank Building of 1930, located at Main and Second Streets. Domestic use of the Neo-Classical Revival style is limited to the home of Dr. Harry Kern at 856 Main Street.

The ubiquitous [American Foursquare](#), essentially square in plan and usually incorporating a dormered pyramidal or hipped roof and a hipped-roof front porch, is found on several residential streets in upper Slatington. Foursquares in the Slatington Historic District date from the 1910-1930 era, appear both in masonry and in wood, and in some cases

employ a first story of masonry and a second story of wood. Representative examples of this style include the properties at 867 Main Street, 426 and 420 East Franklin Street, and 214 Fourth Street, in a double house at 230-232 Second Street.

As noted in the introductory paragraph, the Slatington Historic District retains historic and architectural integrity. The overall character of the district is intact and represents the community throughout its nearly 150-year-long period of significance. Some demolition has occurred in the business district (including the 1990s loss of the former high school at the corner of Main and Church Streets) and newer buildings, including banks and convenience stores, appear on corners which formerly contained historic commercial architecture. Alterations to buildings within the Slatington Historic District include storefront renovations in the downtown area along with the application of non-historic siding and the installation of replacement windows in most portions of the district. Slate roofs, reflecting the product that made the community, have been replaced with asphalt, but it is not an exaggeration to state that more slate roofs have been retained here than in typical districts. Some homes reflect the removal of historic porches and trim. These alterations are widely dispersed throughout the district and do not detract significantly from the ability of the area to reflect its appearance throughout the period of significance. Most non-contributing resources are buildings erected following the 1807-1953 period of significance of the district; the extent of alteration of some other properties has resulted in their loss of historic architectural integrity and the resulting treatment as non-contributing resources. Viewed in its entirety, the Slatington Historic District is an architecturally cohesive residential and commercial area which is situated on a grid of streets in this northeastern Pennsylvania borough. The area retains integrity and contains more than five hundred substantial historic buildings of residential, commercial, and institutional character dating from the early decades of the nineteenth century through the mid-twentieth century.

Significance

The Slatington Historic District is significant for its association with industry and for architecture. The Slatington Historic District — beginning with the name of the municipality — possesses close historical ties to the Pennsylvania slate industry, which produced roofing slate, blackboards, school slates, and mantles throughout more than one-half of the nineteenth century and into the early decades of the twentieth century. The Slatington Historic District's more than 500 contributing buildings represent the range of domestic, commercial, and institutional design popular during the period of significance, which begins in 1807, the date of construction of the district's earliest extant building (the stone barn now associated with the house at 370 Main Street), and ends in 1953, corresponding to the 50-year guideline for National Register eligibility, by which time the district had assumed much of its present appearance. The Slatington Historic District contains locally distinctive examples of many of the styles of architecture popular from the mid-nineteenth through the mid-twentieth century. Along with formally designed homes are vernacular adaptations of many of the individual design modes as well as examples of purely vernacular architecture, which, although executed without reference to formal design tenets, are nonetheless the significant manifestations of local building traditions in Lehigh County.

In the late 1730s, Nicholas Kern entered the area where the "Warrior's Path" crossed the Lehigh River, which in those days was known as the west branch of the [Delaware River](#). Kern built the first house in the area, a log home (not extant) which he erected in 1741 at the present-day intersection of Main and Diamond Streets on the present site

of the 1890s Benjamin Kern house. Four years later he built a grist and saw mill on Trout Creek (not extant). The mill became known variously as Kern's Mill or Trucker's Mill, and early accounts, including a 1756 report from Benjamin Franklin to Governor Morris, referred to timber and boards emanating from Kern's or Trucker's.[3] For much of the next three-quarters of a century, the Kerns were virtually the only settlers in the area; by 1850 the pioneer families in the settlement included John Kern and his son Jonas, who had been joined by Henry Kuntz and Robert McDowell.

In the last decade of the eighteenth century, significant reserves of anthracite coal were discovered at Summit Hill, [Carbon County](#), Pennsylvania. The Lehigh Coal and Navigation Company was established to develop a system for moving the coal down the unpredictable and treacherous Lehigh and Delaware Rivers to [Philadelphia](#). Early in the nineteenth century the Lehigh Navigation (commonly referred to as the Lehigh Canal), consisting of a series of locks, dams, and canals, was constructed along the Lehigh River to enable the transportation of coal from the upper Lehigh Valley to [Easton](#), on the Delaware. By 1820 the canal system was completed to navigate from the present site of [Jim Thorpe](#), (formerly Mauch Chunk) eastward to Easton. The canal was located on the opposite side of the Lehigh River from the eventual site of Slatington, passing instead through the community of Walnutport. A chain bridge upstream at the Lehigh Gap provided the only crossing of the river. It would be more than thirty years later, in 1854, that a covered bridge would be erected to cross the Lehigh River between the Kern settlement and Walnutport.

By the 1840s it was becoming evident that canaling would not meet fully the needs of the northeastern Pennsylvania anthracite fields. In 1846, the Delaware, Lehigh, Schuylkill, & Susquehanna Railroad was established. The name was changed to the Lehigh Valley Railroad in 1853, and in 1856 the line extended along the west side of the Lehigh to the future site of Slatington, which for a time during these years was known as "Liberty." A depot and hotel were erected in the settlement; these buildings were outside the district and are not extant. In addition to the Lehigh, by the turn of the twentieth century Slatington was served by the Philadelphia and Reading, the Lehigh and New England, and the Central Railroad of New Jersey.

The unincorporated settlement was known variously as Kern's Mill, Kernsport, and Liberty. The earliest post office serving the area was located at Craig's Store at the Lehigh Gap upriver from the area that would become Slatington. Increased postal volume, likely due to the discovery of slate, indicated a need for regular postal service and in 1851 the first post office was established at the settlement. Names were suggested for the post office, including "Waverly," but a post office of that name already existed in [Lackawanna County](#), and the name "Slatington" was agreed upon.

The mid-1840s and early 1850s saw the sylvan character of the area significantly changed with the discovery of rich deposits of slate nearby. The first local slate operation began in 1845 with the a quarry owned by Owen Jones and William Roberts on land leased from Jonas Kern and located north of the Kern mill, outside the nominated area. Their Tunnel Quarry produced roofing slate and was joined in 1847 by the operation which would become the Lehigh Slate Company and later Bachman Brothers, producers of slate mantels and slate slabs. In 1862, the Riverside Quarry was opened, followed in 1863 by David Williams' company which by 1884 reached an annual capacity of 1,300,000 school slates. Williams (1823-1893) contributed significantly to the growth of the settlement during the decades following the Civil War; among his holdings was an island in the Lehigh River east of the community and in addition to his

extensive manufacturing life, he also served as Burgess[4] in the late 1870s.

No fewer than twenty slate quarries developed in and around the unincorporated village. None are extant within the Slatington Historic District, but the district's close ties to the industry grew from its proximity to the quarries and natural outcroppings of slate can be seen throughout the district. Within the eventual borough boundaries were four quarries: the Washington Quarry was established in 1885 and employed from sixty to one hundred, the Cambridge Quarry (1895) had a force of forty to fifty, the Pennsylvania quarry was opened in 1895 with a force of forty to fifty, and the Valley Side Quarry (1912), with fifteen to twenty workers. The quarries are not included within the district due to their distance from the district and to the character of the resources lying between the district and the quarries. However, the homes of the quarry workers and owners alike remain in the Slatington Historic District and contribute significantly to its overall character. Notable examples of owners' homes include the residences of brothers Alvin and James Haines at First and Church Street and 722 Main Street, respectively, Arthur Kraus at 404 East Franklin Street, Henry Kuntz at 370 Main Street, David D. Roper at 120 Second Street, and Llewellyn Williams at 123 Main Street, respectively.

See also: [Slatington Borough: Beginnings](#)

A variety of local industries joined the slate industry in Slatington. These plants were located outside the Slatington Historic District but contributed significantly to the economic and institutional growth and development of the community. The homes of their workers and managers were found throughout the district. Many of these industries lay along the Lehigh Valley Railroad, east of the district. Among these were the Slatington Rolling Mill, which was established in 1890 to produce bar iron, and several textile mills which employed a significant number of workers throughout the last half-century of the Slatington Historic District's period of significance. These operations produced a variety of knitted and woven products including hosiery, hats, gloves, leg warmers, handkerchiefs, men's and boys' neckware, and filler for mattresses. Some of these factories are extant, but most have been altered significantly and all in areas remote from the district. As technology grew, the Slatington textile mills shifted from natural to synthetic fabrics.

The earliest commercial life of the community, prior to the platting of upper Slatington in the 1850s, was centered in lower Slatington. Few remnants of this era remain; the Kern barn behind the Henry Kuntz House at 370 Main Street carries a date of 1807, making it the earliest extant building in the Slatington Historic District. Jonas Kern's c.1830 tavern at 356-362 Main Street is among the Slatington Historic District's earliest commercial buildings and Benjamin Kern's American House hotel of 1869 dates from the period spanning the heyday of lower Slatington and the rise of upper Slatington. As upper Slatington began to develop immediately prior to the Civil War, commercial buildings of wood and brick rose along Main Street. Most of the earliest commercial buildings were replaced by more substantial properties, generally of brick construction and Italianate in stylistic derivation. The Neff House at 700 Main Street is one of upper Slatington's earliest commercial buildings. It was erected in 1849 as a hotel for John Remaley, who christened it the Remaley House; in 1869 it was acquired by Edward B. Neff, who renamed it. The first municipal elections of the newly-created Borough of Slatington occurred at the Remaley House in 1864.

As the last quarter of the nineteenth century progressed — concomitant with the prospering of the slate industry — substantial commercial buildings rose on both sides of

upper Main Street between the ninety degree turn and Church Street. Among the Slatington Historic District's most prominent commercial properties are the McKenna Building at 556 Main Street, the early, though altered, commercial building of Robert McDowell at 560 Main Street, along with 624-626 and 632-636 Main Street, the Haines Building at 650 Main Street, 658, 662, 647, 623 Main Street. Many of the local slate companies had their offices on the upper stories of these commercial buildings, including the J.K. Hower Slate Co. and the Meadow Brook Slate Company, with offices in the McKenna Building at 556 Main Street and the Haines family's Provident, Blue Vain, Washington, and Vendor slate companies, whose offices were in the Haines Building, 650 Main Street.

As Slatington matured and flourished with the slate industry in the last decades of the nineteenth century, a solid residential neighborhood developed on both sides of Main Street in upper Slatington. This neighborhood became home to business and community leaders, merchants, manufacturers, and workers alike. Speculative building on the part of capitalists was likely the reason for the seemingly endless repetition of the use of the duplex house type, typically appearing with a laterally-oriented gable roof, one or two gables on the facade, and a front porch.

The community had become generally self-sufficient as the nineteenth century closed. At the turn of the twentieth century Slatington claimed an optician, wallpaper hangers and painters, six physicians, photographers, several restaurants, a stationer, two telephone exchanges, five tailors, six hotels, two laundries, three meat markets, several milliners, five purveyors of "boots, shoes, and gent's furnishings," six barbers, bakers, four tobacconists, three druggists, eleven retainers of dry goods, groceries and general merchandise, six grocers, three dentists, two funeral directors, a florist, five hardware stores, and three jewelers. In addition, the following industries and manufacturers drove the local economy: hosiery manufacturers, an iron works, a lumber and planing mill, four machinists, a brass foundry, two blacksmiths, a box manufacturer, two coal suppliers, a carriage builder, a furniture maker, a purveyor of dynamite and powder, and, naturally, slate quarries and producers of school slates, blackboards, roofing slate, sink tops, electrical and structural slate, and mantles. Most of the retail concerns were likely located within the commercial areas of the district; the manufacturers and quarries were found the district.

Three banks served the community during the period of significance: the Dime Bank opened in 1868 but failed in a "panic" during the 1870s; the National Bank of Slatington was established in 1875 and the Citizen's National Bank opened in 1902. In addition to the Slatington Historic District's commercial banks, several building and loan associations operated in the district. The only extant historic bank building in the Slatington Historic District is the 1930 Citizens Bank at 502 Main Street.

The early decades of the twentieth century witnessed the replacement of various of the district's early properties with newer commercial buildings. Typical of this trend is the 1930 replacement of the 1902 Citizens National Bank building with a Neo-Classical Revival style stone building.

Slatington's commercial and industrial growth and maturity was joined by religious and secular institutional growth as the community grew. Presbyterians in upper Slatington worshiped in private homes until 1855 when a church was erected on the north end of Main Street. It was replaced in 1874 by a new building which late in the twentieth century was razed for a multi-family high-rise apartment building. Among the community's other early religious buildings was a union church (not extant) built in

1869 on Second Street south of Main Street. Several historic churches are found within the district. Slatington Baptists first worshiped in 1859 as part of the Williamstown Baptist Mission. In 1891 the congregation split from the Mission and began meeting in Slatington in Fritzinger's Hall; unfortunately five weeks after the Baptists rented the hall, the building was destroyed by fire. A new Gothic Revival style Baptist Church was built at the corner of Second and Main Streets and was dedicated in 1900. St John's Lutheran Church is an 1881 Gothic Revival style brick church also located on Church Street. The United Church of Christ is a Gothic Revival style wood church built in 1883. The Trinity Evangelical Congregational Church is a Gothic Revival style brick church located on Second Street.

A local military organization was formed in Slatington in 1875, under the leadership of Capt. David G. Rhoads. It was mustered into service as Rifles Co. H, 4th Regiment, National Guard of Pennsylvania. Company H was called into service at the time of the Reading Riot of 1877 and also traveled to western Pennsylvania in the wake of the infamous Homestead Riot of 1892. The organization was disbanded in 1896.

The public safety of the Borough was addressed by three volunteer fire companies. The earliest, Slatington Hose Co. No. 1, was organized in 1885, supplied initially by only a carriage and hose which in 1890 were augmented by a steamer and a hook-and-ladder truck. In 1903, Vigilant No. 2 company was organized with a combination wagon including a hose and chemical engine. Neither of these two companies is represented in the district. Springside Co. No. 3 was organized in 1909 with a building at 1121 Main Street in upper Slatington. In 1910, Hose Co. No. 1 erected a fountain (National Register, 1981) at the curve of Main Street in upper Slatington. A local historical publication described it as representing "the figure of a fireman with a lantern suspended from his right hand and a little child resting confidently on his left arm, which symbolizes in a most expressive manner [both] vigilance and humanity, two prominent characteristics of their protective association."

Organized public education in Slatington began at the William Kern mill (not extant) in 1820 but was of a short duration. A school was established in 1858 by the Washington Township school directors who rented the Welsh Congregational Church. In 1868 the school directors acquired a lot at the corner of Main and Second Street in upper Slatington and built the first of several school buildings on that site. The latest of these was a 1916 brick building built as Slatington High School and used as such until a new high school was erected outside the district. The 1916 building became a junior high school and was in use until its abandonment in the 1990s; it was razed shortly thereafter and its site remains vacant. No education-related properties are extant within the district boundaries; the high school presently serving Slatington is associated with a jointure and is located north of the Slatington Historic District.

The heyday of Slatington and the Slatington Historic District was between the 1880 and 1890s, when many of the district's buildings were erected, and the close of the period of significance at the end of the first half of the twentieth century. The community's textile industries remained in operation at the end of the district's period of significance but were soon supplanted by foreign importation of goods. The slate industry waned with changes in architectural taste and the introduction of synthetic materials. Slate mantles fell from fashion early in the twentieth century and were no longer used by designers and home builders. The use of slate in schools lasted considerably longer, but declined as new products were developed. Writing in 1941, Benjamin Leroy Miller noted, "Lehigh County has the distinction of being the only county in the United States where school

slates are now being manufactured...the disuse of individual school slates in the public schools has caused the contraction of the industry to its present condition." The advent of asbestos and composition shingle roofing material impacted negatively on the roofing slate industry, and while some quarries remained open at the close of the period of significance, the role of slate in Slatington was never the same.

Viewed in the context of the region, the Slatington Historic District can be compared with several nearby communities, some of which were also associated with the slate industry. The settlement of Emerald, located immediately west of Slatington, is an unincorporated working-class village of generally small-scale and unremarkable wood homes with only a few larger properties suggesting that they may have been managers' residences. A linear settlement with no business district, Emerald depended on Slatington for its commercial needs. Lehigh Furnace is a hamlet of about a dozen architecturally undistinguished properties without any commercial center. Slatedale, also a slate town, is located west of Slatington and includes some agricultural lands within its boundaries. Slatedale's domestic design incorporates a variety of architecture ranging from early stone buildings to ranch style homes, with a small concentration of historic properties within the core of the community, including one early log and stone house and others which recall the repetitive house types found in Slatington. Also within Slatedale is a large inoperative slate quarry.

The communities of Pen Argyl and Bangor, in adjacent [Northampton County](#), are two other "slate belt" communities which bear comparison to Slatington. Pen Argyl's architectural inventory includes the center gable house type seen throughout Slatington, although not the degree seen in Slatington; Pen Argyl also features dozens of homes with retained slate roofs. The central business district of Pen Argyl is considerably smaller than is that of Slatington, does not enjoy the architectural diversity of Slatington, and exhibits a larger degree of new construction and insensitive alteration than is seen in Slatington. Bangor was established a decade after Slatington; it possesses a comparable housing stock to Slatington and retains native slate roofing of many properties. Like Slatington, downtown Bangor is architecturally similar to downtown Slatington and is also bisected by a small waterway. Unlike Slatington, some relatively recent demolition has occurred in downtown Bangor, evidenced by several vacant lots and a large "big box" drug store immediately adjacent to the downtown. Bangor's downtown includes several slate-fronted stone buildings, which Slatington cannot claim. The residential stock of Bangor includes several residential properties of larger scale than is found in Slatington, homes whose level of sophistication suggests that they were architect designed. Both Bangor and Pen Argyl have abandoned and unreclaimed slate quarries immediately outside the town.

Walnutport, located across the Lehigh River from Slatington, is considerably less densely built-up than is Slatington and its commercial area is limited to a modern strip development at the intersection of Main Street and State Route 145. Associated with the Delaware and Lehigh Canal, Walnutport's older properties are of stone and brick and lie in close proximity to the canal; some of these have been clad in non-historic siding.

Lehighton, about ten miles northwest of Slatington, is organized around a public square in the heart of the business district. Downtown Lehighton, however, has been negatively impacted by the construction of a large modern drug store in the midst of the downtown and the "slipcovering" of historic commercial buildings. Like Slatington, Lehighton has a high-rise residential building in the downtown, but because of its siting and eleven-story height, Lehighton's high-rise building is more intrusive to the character of the downtown

than is Slatington's. The residential areas of Lehighton contain repetitive house types similar to Slatington, but do not enjoy the minimally-impaired integrity possessed by Slatington's neighborhoods.

The city of [Bethlehem](#), southeast of Slatington is considerably larger than Slatington and has the [Fountain Hill Historic District](#) and the Mt. Airy Historic District; Slatington is essentially a small town district, and the various residential and commercial districts in Bethlehem are of a considerably more urban scale and character. The National Register district at [Jim Thorpe](#), in [Carbon County](#) to the northwest, is considerably smaller and more compact than is Slatington's and is more significantly defined by its topography. The commercial center within the Jim Thorpe district is densely developed and lies along a comparatively narrow Main Street, while the Slatington Historic District encompasses not only the community's central business district but also a substantial adjacent nineteenth and twentieth century residential neighborhood.

The Slatington Historic District is clearly a significant representative of the prosperity which was born of slate extraction in east-central Pennsylvania. The Slatington Historic District retains its historic architectural integrity and contains examples of many of the styles of design which were popular during its 150-year-long period of significance.

Endnotes

1. This property appears on the district map and within the Resource Inventory which accompany the nomination, but it is not included in the tabulation which appears in Section 5 of the nomination.
2. The term, "vernacular," when used in this context, conforms to the definition which appears in Ward Bucher's Dictionary of Building Preservation: a building built without being designed by an architect or someone with similar formal training; often based on traditional or regional forms."
3. The term "Trucker's" is said to be of German derivation and refers to Kern, who was known for his humor. The term is reported to have been a corruption of the work "trockener," referring to a joker or wit.
4. The equivalent of mayor of a Borough during this period of municipal government in Pennsylvania.

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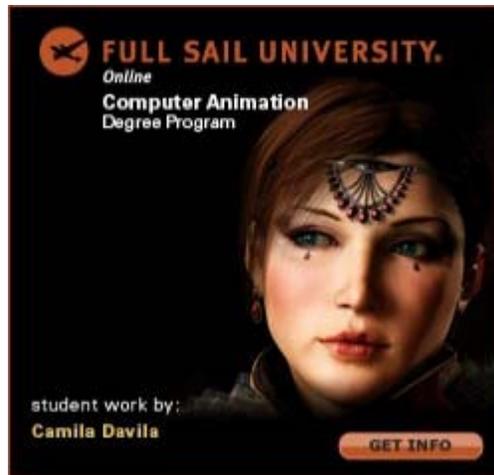
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† Taylor, David, Brookfield PA, *Slatington Historic District*, 2003, National Park Service, National Register of Historic Places, Washington, D.C.

[See Map](#)

Street Names: [Chestnut Street](#), [Dowell Street](#), [Fairview Avenue](#), [Fifth Street](#), [Hill Alley](#), [Long Alley](#), [Ridge Alley](#), [Ruch Alley](#), [Washington Street](#)



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