

LEHIGH SLATE COMPANY MANTEL FACTORY SLATINGTON, PA

PHYSICAL DESCRIPTION AND INTEGRITY

Directions specifically for documenting historic districts appear in italics in the following instructions.

Briefly summarize the property by describing the current physical appearance and condition of the property, including the setting, major buildings, outbuildings, and features of the landscape. Document the physical development of the entire property, describing major changes since its inception.

All properties change over time. The retention of integrity depends upon the nature and degree of alteration or change, the area(s) of significance, and period(s) of significance. The principal test to establish whether a property retains integrity is to ask whether or not the property still retains the identity or character for which it is important.

Be concise, factual and well organized. The depth and length of the description depends upon the complexity and size of the property and impact of alterations, additions and deterioration. The more extensive the alteration of a property, the more detailed the description of changes will need to be. Similarly, the more resources on a property, the longer the description will generally need to be.

Organize your narrative as follows:

1. Begin by summarizing the property. State the type of resource, such as historic building, structure, site, object, and/or historic district, explain the function, such as commercial, residential, or industrial, and describe the particular type, such as an apartment building, barn, movie theater, etc.

The Lehigh Slate Company Mantel Factory building, constructed circa 1859 in Slatington, Lehigh County, Pennsylvania, was an industrial structure erected for the manufacturing of various slate products, such as mantels, vaults, billiard table tops, counter-tops, flagging, blackboards, electrical insulators, etc. Despite some minor alterations to the building since its inception, and despite its current use as a warehouse for a fuel oil business, the building continues to exist largely intact as originally constructed.

2. Briefly describe the setting of the property by explaining the property's location, natural or landscape features such as orchards, ponds, fields, streetscape planning, etc. and manmade features such as roads, train tracks, signage, etc. Landscape features can be very important, so be sure to provide an appropriate level of detail depending on the type/significance of the property.

The building is located on what became known as Factory Street along the north bank of Trout Creek in the lower part of the borough of Slatington, south of Main Street. The site was across the creek from an earlier slate factory and the "mantel" slate quarry (a.k.a. the New York Tunnel Quarry or the Bedbug cave) of

the Lehigh Slate Company. The building was alongside the creek which served as an early water power source. Its location a few hundred feet from Main Street made transportation of quarried slate to and finished slate products from the factory relatively easy,

3. Describe the exterior of the principal building(s) on the property including general architectural characteristics and important exterior features. Include information on the style, materials, method of construction, additions to the main building, window placement, chimney(s), doors, dormers, etc.

The building is in the shape of a rectangle and oriented roughly northeast to southwest, approximately parallel to Trout creek. It is a two-story structure, constructed of slate and concrete for the foundation and walls. The exterior walls are largely covered with a stucco that conceals the slate construction of the walls and also serves to prevent moisture from penetrating to the slate. Windows currently exist on the south and north sides of the building, but those on the east and west and those on the ground floor have been bricked up with concrete blocks. There is a chimney on the exterior west wall of the building, but it is not original.

The south side of the building has a wooden staircase, not original, and no longer used. Stucco has peeled off in numerous places.

The east side of building has the current main entrance for trucks into the warehouse ground floor. One window remains intact. One blocked-up window looks as if its size might have been altered. Stucco remains intact in places

The north side of the building is more difficult to assess because of the addition of a large, two-story concrete block structure to the left (when viewed from the north). There is a storage area below, and a sporting goods store above in the addition. Sanborn Insurance maps indicate that this addition was once a boiler room. There is a porch and staircase to reach the upper floor where the office of the fuel oil business is now located. Below the staircase is another main entrance to the ground floor that is used by the fuel oil business. Some of the upper story windows are in use. Stucco is largely intact on this north side of the building.

The west side of the building shows stucco mostly intact, but there is also some water damage visible. There is an added exterior chimney for the furnace used to heat the office. There are also stairs and an added overhanging roof for a former entrance into the building.

The building currently has a tin roof instead of the original slate.

The walls, composed of scrap slate and concrete mortar, are approximate 28" thick.

Describe the general or predominant characteristics of the district. These general characteristics include the setbacks of buildings, the types of buildings (such as commercial, residential or industrial), construction materials, scale, ages, and architectural styles of buildings. Be sure to indicate which characteristics are strongly represented and which are less dominant including, for example, such statements as "The district contains early 19th century brick Georgian style residences with a few Queen Anne Style houses added in the late 19th century," or "The district contains a mixture of residential and commercial buildings, most of which were constructed in the early 20th century." For rural districts, geographical open space and topographical features that convey a sense of cohesiveness or give the district its rural character must also be described.

By the turn of the twentieth century, the mantel factory building was located in a modest industrial area in the borough. To the west of the factory were located the Peter MacConochie foundry and machine shop, Palmer Semmel's carriage/wagon works and the Slatington roller/grist mill. To the immediate east of the mantel factory was the E. F. Snyder Slate Sink Top workshop. Across Trout Creek were enterprises such as the American Slate Co. and Bachman Slate Products. These are all gone now with, in some cases, only concrete foundations remaining. The residential houses along Main Street, to the immediate north of the mantel factory, remain today as they were circa 1900.

4. Describe significant interior features of the principal building(s) including the floor plan, stairways, functions of rooms, spatial relationships and so on.

The bottom (ground) floor is the same shape as the building, a large rectangle, oriented mainly from northeast to southwest. There are no individual rooms, and there is no visible stairway from the ground floor to the first floor, just open space. Current access to this space is from large doors in the north and east walls. Formerly, there was also a large opening on the south side, and a door on the west side, both now blocked up. Windows on the ground floor are blocked up, and some have been turned into small storage closet spaces. As a typical slate manufacturing facility, heavy sawing, planing and cutting equipment would have been installed in this space directly on the earthen floor. Block and tackle and a small set of rails would have been used to move the slate around. There is no immediate visible evidence that any rails still exist. Because of continuing use of the ground floor, it was not possible to excavate to ascertain the former location of specific heavy equipment.

The first floor is also in the shape of a rectangle conforming to the shape of the building. An office with walls made of typical drywall construction has been built into the northwest corner of the second floor, and the northeast corner also has had defined storage space (drywall) built in. Currently the second floor is being used as miscellaneous storage. Some windows on the west and east ends have been blocked up. It is estimated that previously the upper level was used for lumber storage and lighter slate/wood operations. Currently steps and a landing lead to a door on the north side of the building for access to the this level.

The addition on the north side of the building, once used as a boiler room, has storage space below with the upstairs occupied by a sporting goods store.

Massive timbers (chestnut or oak) support both the upper floor and the roof. Most of the cross-beam joists, estimated at 10"x14", span the width of the building, almost 50 feet. The heavy timbers were necessary to support the slate roof and factory equipment. The joists were also most likely used to support block/tackle to move heavy slate pieces around in the factory.

5. If there are other buildings, sites, structures, or objects on the property, briefly describe them in this section and you may also choose to document them on the Building Complex Form.

The site contains some now empty storage bins that were used at one time to hold quarried slate pieces and later as coal bins.

6. Provide a boundary justification and verbal boundary description. The boundary justification must explain whether all resources historically associated with the property have been included in the boundary and why any have been excluded.

The Lehigh Slate Company Mantel Factory building and site is bounded on the north and east by Factory Street in lower Slatington, on the south by Trout Creek, and on the west by Trout Creek and residential property. This site is indicated on an 1864 proposed map of the borough of Slatington that was presented to the Court of Quarter Sessions of Lehigh County as part of the petition presented to the court for the incorporation of the borough. The same site also appears on an 1876 plat map of the town. A deed search has indicated stable site boundaries dating back to the 1870s. All historical resources associated with the property have been included in this narrative.

7. End the narrative with a discussion of integrity. You must assess how changes (both exterior and interior) and/or additions affect the resource's ability to reflect its historic or architectural significance. Summarize the alterations to the individual building or district being proposed. How much has changed in the appearance, materials, and setting of the resource?

This building remains substantially intact and unchanged more than one hundred and fifty years after its construction. The foundation, slate/masonry walls, timber structure, and floors are intact. The original slate roof has been replaced with tin, and the cupola which was once centered on top of the roof is gone. The later addition of a wooden storage shed (constructed 1904) on the east side of the building is no longer present. Windows on the ground floor have been blocked up, as have some windows on the upper sides of the east and west walls. The later addition on the north side remains intact. Grade on the west side of building has been built up. The main entrance to the building on the south side is also closed now.

The building survives largely because of its solid slate/masonry construction which allowed it to survive numerous floods along Trout Creel and prevented it from falling victim to fire, which destroyed many of the slate factories in the slate

region. The surviving building reflects an industrial slate manufacturing facility of the mid-nineteenth century and an important survivor of the slate industry which was exceptionally important to the economy of northern Lehigh and Northampton counties through the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Minor changes and additions to the structure do not distract from its historic significance.

Note: For project review under the NHPA and the PA History Code, if there is a potential historic district, identify an approximate number of contributing and non-contributing resources, or clearly state which resources would/wouldn't contribute. In addition, recommend eligibility or non-eligibility for the district.