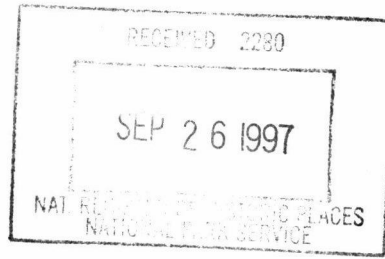


1250

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service



National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District

other names/site number Oilville; Cornplanter

2. Location

street & number generally along Seneca, Center, Elm, Sycamore, Duncomb & Main Streets not for publication N/A

city or town Oil City vicinity N/A

state Pennsylvania code PA county Venango code 121 zip code 16301

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1936, 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. I recommend that this property be considered significant nationally state-wide locally. (See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Dr. B. Glass, Ex. Dir. 9/11/97
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

PA Historical and Museum Commission
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

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:
 entered in the National Register
 See continuation sheet.

Edson H. Beall
Signature of the Keeper

10/24/97
Date of Action

determined eligible for the National Register
 See continuation sheet.

determined not eligible for the National Register

removed from the National Register

other (explain): _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply)

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

Category of Property

(Check only one box)

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

Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously-listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>51</u>	<u>9</u>	building sites
<u>2</u>	<u>0</u>	structure objects
<u>53</u>	<u>9</u>	Total

Name of related multiple property listing

Resources of the Oil Industry of Western Pennsylvania, 1859-1945

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

3

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

- COMMERCE/specialty store
- COMMERCE/business
- COMMERCE/financial institution
- INDUSTRY/manufacturing facility
- SOCIAL/meeting hall
- GOVERNMENT/post office
- RELIGION/religious facility

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

- COMMERCE/specialty store
- COMMERCE/business
- COMMERCE/financial institution
- INDUSTRY/manufacturing facility
- RECREATION & CULTURE/museum
- RELIGION/religious facility

7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

- LATE VICTORIAN/Italianate
- LATE VICTORIAN/Romanesque Revival
- LATE 19TH & 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Colonial Revival
- LATE 19th & 20TH CENTURY REVIVALS/Late Gothic Revival
- LATE VICTORIAN/Chateausque

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

- foundation STONE
- walls BRICK, STONE, TERRA COTTA
- roof ASPHALT
- other _____

Narrative Description

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

Refer to continuation sheets

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet*Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District
Venango County, PA*Section Number 7 Page 1

The Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District is a 25-acre primarily commercial district, located immediately north of the Allegheny River in Oil City, Venango County, in northwestern Pennsylvania. The district includes the core of the central business district of Oil City's north side on both the east and west side of Oil Creek, just north of the confluence of Oil Creek and the Allegheny River. The district contains commercial and industrial buildings, one church, and two bridges (one for autos and one rail-related). The topography of the district is flat, extending from the base of the "Hogback" across Oil Creek on the district's west side in an easterly direction to the foot of "Cottage Hill," which rises sharply to overlook the district. The Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District contains sixty-five individual resources; three of these (the National Transit Building and Annex [Nos. 2 and 3 in the Resource Inventory] and the former U. S. Post Office [No. 10]) were previously listed in the National Register and are not counted in the resource totals listed in Section 5. Of the remaining sixty-two, fifty-three (86%) are contributing to the character of the district and nine (14%) are non-contributing. Sixty of the resources are buildings and two--both contributing resources--are structures: the 1939-1940 Center Street Bridge and the 1892 Erie Railroad Bridge, both spanning Oil Creek in the southwestern part of the district. Contributing resources are defined as those constructed during the period of significance of the district and which, within the context of the district, retain integrity of feeling, association, workmanship, materials, and setting. Changes have occurred to virtually all buildings within the district, but these changes have not diminished the ability of the district to convey its own sense of history. Non-contributing resources are those built outside the period of significance of the district, and include a fast-food restaurant and several commercial establishments, widely dispersed throughout the district. Modifications to buildings within the Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District include storefront alterations, window replacement, artificial siding, etc. In no instance is the extent of modification so severe as to render a resource non-contributing.

The period of significance of the district begins ca. 1870 and continues to ca. 1945; the earlier date corresponds to the date of the earliest extant resource, a small brick commercial building at 279 Duncomb Street (No. 53). The latter date refers to the latest period of construction of the historic buildings within the district, such as the 1942 Art Deco-style General Telephone Company Building at 260 Seneca Street (No. 9). The closing date for the period of significance also corresponds to the end of the "Settled Phase" of the oil industry, as set forth in the Multiple Property Documentation Form, "Oil Resources of Western Pennsylvania, 1859-1945."

The district is laid out in a grid pattern of streets. Major north-south thoroughfares are Main, Seneca, and Elm Streets; major east-west streets are Sycamore, Center, and Duncomb Streets. There are no platted alleys within the district.

Buildings within the district are generally of masonry construction, including stone, brick, and terra cotta, and range in height from one to five stories. The majority are constructed on foundations of ashlar stone and most roofs are flat or slope gently from front to rear. Some historic chimneys break the rooflines, but in most cases these have been removed as heating systems were updated over the years. Typical of a

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

*Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District
Venango County, PA*

Section Number 7 Page 2

central business district, the development is dense. The majority of the buildings are constructed flush with one another, with no setback from the sidewalk; very few buildings have any rear lot setback. A number of buildings have additions to their rear elevations. Several buildings along Seneca and Main Streets extend to the banks of Oil Creek and others extend the entire depth of the lot on which they are built, giving them addresses on two streets.

The majority of the buildings contain retail or offices on the first floor, with office use above; other uses include restaurants, a fraternal lodge, a museum, and several financial institutions. A moderate degree of vacant upper-story space exists throughout the district. One church (Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church, 2 Center Street; No. 45) and one industrial complex of interconnected buildings (Oil City Boiler Works, 351-359 Seneca Street; No. 15) are found within the district.

The appearance of the district during the first twenty years of its period of significance was drastically altered by a combined flood and fire in 1892 which obliterated many of the buildings within the district. As a result, the bulk of the architecture of the district dates from the 1890s through the 1960s. The architecture of the district represents most of the popular styles prevalent during the period of significance. Among these are the Italianate, Chateausque, Neo-Classical Revival, Colonial Revival, Late Gothic Revival, and Art Deco styles. Several buildings of vernacular design exist as well. Specific examples of these styles are described in Section 8. No individual architectural style dominates in any one section of the district.

Some demolition has occurred in the district, with older buildings replaced by surface parking lots and/or new construction. Both the surface parking lots and the newer construction are dispersed throughout the district and, while not positive attributes, do not detract significantly from the character of the district as a whole. An ambitious 1927 project to enclose and pave over Oil Creek from Sycamore to Federal Street, creating what was dubbed "Oil Creek Boulevard" never materialized. The district boundaries reflect the extent of an urban renewal project between the south edge of the district and the Allegheny River; this 1960s undertaking resulted in the clearance of a number of historic buildings and their replacement with contemporary office and retail buildings and a multi-level motel. Between Seneca and Elm Streets, adjacent to but not within the district, is a concrete parking garage, built to serve the 1960s former Quaker State headquarters building located on Elm Street just outside the district. The boundaries of the district exclude both the urban renewal area and the parking garage.

Rehabilitation activity has occurred in the district, generally the result of the City's Main Street Program which began in the 1980s and of subsequent Community Development Block Grant-funded facade programs. This activity includes a mixed-use conversion of a former variety store and a number of sensitive facade rehabilitation projects. For the most part, the Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District retains a high integrity.

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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- ARCHITECTURE
- INDUSTRY
- COMMERCE
- _____
- _____
- _____
- _____

Period of Significance

ca. 1870-1945

Criteria Considerations

Mark "X" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- 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.

Significant Dates

1892

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

- Bailey, Emmett E.
- Brenot, Joseph P.
- Crosby, W. Holmes
- Lee, W. H.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

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

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested.
- previously listed in the National Register
- previously determined eligible by the National Register
- designated a National Historic Landmark
- recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
- # _____
- recorded by Historic American Engineering

Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other state agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other
- Name of repository: _____

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 1

Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District
Venango County, PA

The Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District is significant under National Register Criteria A and C. The district meets the requirements for Criterion A in that it represents the physical embodiment of commercial--and, to a lesser degree--industrial development patterns within this northwestern Pennsylvania community. These patterns of development were tied inextricably to the city's long association with the oil industry in western Pennsylvania. Under Criterion C, the district is significant for its cohesive collection of commercial--and, to a lesser degree, industrial and institutional--buildings which represent many of the architectural styles popular during the period of significance; some of these buildings are documented as the work of locally- and regionally-important architects. The nominated resource meets the registration requirements for Property Type 1a, *commercial historic districts*, as specified in Section F of the Multiple Property Documentation Form, *Resources of the Oil Industry of Western Pennsylvania, 1859-1945*. The date of the earliest extant resource is ca. 1870. This defines the beginning of the period of significance which continues to ca. 1945, the approximate date of construction of the last buildings erected during the district's historic period and also the closing date of the "Settled Phase" of the oil industry as described in the Multiple Property Documentation Form.

The site of the Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District was one of three tracts given by the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania to the Seneca Indian chief, Cornplanter, in the 1790s for services rendered in connection with the Revolutionary War. Known as the "Gift" tract, over the next generation the land changed hands several times. The initial white settlement of the Oil Creek Valley occurred in 1796, when Nathaniel Carey settled about three miles north of the city along Oil Creek. The first recorded settlers of the site of present-day Oil City were Francis and Sarah Halyday, who established their home here in 1803. Logging on the upper Allegheny River began in 1801, and the earliest industrial activity revolved around lumbering and rafting logs down the river to Pittsburgh. About 1820 the "Gift" tract passed to two white men and soon an iron furnace was established on the land. No physical remnants of either of these early industries remain today. Development was slow during the next forty years, until Edwin L. Drake's August, 1859 drilling for oil at nearby Titusville.

In 1859, the modest settlement at the mouth of Oil Creek was known as Cornplanter and numbered only about twenty-five inhabitants. One hotel, the Moran House, stood along the Allegheny River, along with several taverns, a livery stable, and a store. With Drake's sinking of the first successful commercial oil well, the sleepy village became the gateway to the oil fields. It became known first as "Oilville," but soon impact of oil and its relationship with the community became apparent and in 1861 the post office name was changed to Oil City; the following year the borough government was organized under the same name. The population rose steadily during the first years of the new town's existence. By 1865, 6,000 made their home here. The U. S. Census records the subsequent growth as follows: 1890, 10,932; 1900, 13,264; 1910, 15,657; and 1918, 22,127 (after the adjacent areas of Siverly and West End were annexed into the City).

The initial evolution of the Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District occurred during the first thirty years of the development of the oil industry. Residential growth occurred on Cottage Hill (west of the

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet*Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District
Venango County, PA*Section Number 8 Page 2

district), in a neighborhood to the north along Oil Creek, and across the Allegheny River in the communities of Laytonia, Imperial, and Leetown, three separate settlements which were combined into Venango City, the name by which the present-day south side was known. Stores were built along Seneca, Center, Main, Sycamore, and Elm Streets and the nominated area soon became the acknowledged commercial center of the city.

Oil City's position as the heart of the oil industry was firmly established in the last quarter of the nineteenth century. Rail service, including the Oil Creek Railroad and the Atlantic and Great Western Railroad, opened the area to the outside as early as the 1860s, providing the ability to transport goods into the town, passengers in and out, and, most importantly, to move the crude oil to refineries near and far. Both the passenger and freight depots, located just east of the historic district, were demolished as part of a 1960s urban renewal program. In June, 1892, the face of the north side commercial area was altered forever. A heavy rain had swollen Oil Creek and had carried away the Spartansburg Dam upstream, above Titusville. Barrels and tanks filled with oil, distillate, and naphtha were swept into the waters and carried along on a wave created by the failure of the dam. When the deluge reached the Clapp Farm, above Oil City, an additional thirty thousand barrels of naphtha were swept into the torrent. Upon reaching the bend in Oil Creek at the head of Seneca Street (just north of the nominated area) the flood rushed ashore, inundating houses and commercial establishments to the second story. Most of the flood-prone area had been evacuated, and more than five thousand people gathered along the waterways to observe the coming devastation. A vaporous gas from the combined naphtha and oil created a yellow fog over the city. A flash was followed by a detonation and additional explosions, igniting the gas in the air, and beginning the incineration of the entire downtown area. Fifty-seven persons lost their lives and seventy-five homes were destroyed, as were more than twenty buildings in the downtown.

Despite the half-million-dollar loss, reconstruction of the area began immediately. The cultural landscape of the Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District is the result of that rebuilding and the growth which followed over the next quarter-century. One particularly ambitious construction project was the 1894 design and completion of six adjacent business buildings, fronting both on Center and Sycamore Streets between Elm Street and the railroad right-of-way. These were the Downs, Wise & Borland, Shields, Connor, Keating, and Griffiths Blocks (No. 38-42); all but the Connor Block survive, although all have been altered. The Downs Block was designed by local architect Joseph P. Brenot, who was in practice here for a generation and maintained offices in that building. Over the years, a wide variety of buildings rose from the ashes of the 1892 fire/flood.

The decade immediately following the disaster and the first quarter of the twentieth century witnessed the growth of refineries throughout the Oil City area. A variety of small-scale refining operations flourished and were eventually merged with other firms to create the three major refineries for which Oil City became known: Pennzoil, Quaker State, and Wolf's Head. Pennzoil's and Quaker State's operations were centered just north of Oil City, near Rouseville, while Wolf's Head operated at Reno, to the south. Associated

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 8 Page 3

*Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District
Venango County, PA*

industries, such as John D. Rockefeller's National Transit Company and John Eaton's Oil Well Supply Company, contributed significantly to the economy of the city, although their manufacturing facilities were not located within the historic district. The fortunes of the oil industry were reflected directly in the rise of what is now the Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District. Some buildings within the nominated area were built for the specific use of the oil industry, but the majority were commercial buildings erected to serve the citizens who derived their livelihood from oil and its ancillary industries. The National Transit Company was established in 1881 in Oil City upon the consolidation of the United Pipe Lines and the Empire Transportation Company, and in the early 1890s erected one of the historic district's finest office buildings at the corner of Seneca and Center Streets, from designs by Fredonia, New York architect Enoch Curtis. From this building, National Transit once operated ninety percent of the American petroleum pipeline capacity. The main office building, along with its Annex--Nos. 2 and 3, respectively--are listed individually in the National Register. Furniture dealer George Veach established his business in 1896 and in 1913 created a new business block by wrapping three dissimilar buildings into a new facade at 230 Seneca Street (No. 7); for years the largest furniture store in the city, the Veach Block derives additional importance from the fact that prominent Oil City architect W. Holmes Crosby maintained offices therein during the early years of his practice.

The industrial life of the region is represented within the district by three architecturally and historically significant office buildings and by one manufacturing complex. In 1928, the corporate headquarters of the Pennzoil Company were moved into the new Drake Theater Building at Seneca and Duncomb Streets (No. 17), and remained there for more than forty years (the Drake Building is discussed in more detail below). Two major regional utility companies had their offices within the Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District. Telephone service came to Oil City in 1878 with the establishment of the Old Central District and Printing Company. In 1901 the Petroleum Telephone Company was founded, also providing service to Titusville, Franklin, and Pleasantville. The two firms eventually merged and following a series of other acquisitions and mergers, the General Telephone Company of Pennsylvania became the sole supplier of telephone service within the city. In 1942 General Telephone erected a handsome Art Deco-style office building at 260 Seneca Street (No. 9).

The discovery of large deposits of natural gas came as a by-product of oil exploration in the region. Several local gas companies were organized including the Oil City Gas Company (1876), the Oil City Fuel and Supply Company (1883), and the United Natural Gas Company (1886). After acquiring or merging with its competition, by 1917 United Natural Gas had 1,800 producing gas wells and by 1919 owned or leased the gas rights to 300,000 acres. In the 1920s UNG built their headquarters office building within the district, at 308 Seneca Street (No. 13).

Within the Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District is one major industrial complex, that of the Oil City Boiler Works. The company was established in 1877 by oilmen Michael Geary, B. W. Vandergrift, and Daniel O'Day. In 1881 the present plant (Nos. 15 and 16) was built along Seneca Street

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection Number 8 Page 4*Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District*
Venango County, PA

north of Duncomb Street. By 1896 the Boiler Works was the city's largest employer, with nearly 2,000 employees producing steam boilers and tubing. The complex sustained only minor damage in the flood/fire of 1892. In *Sketches in Crude Oil* (1896), John J. McLaurin reported that "the firm led the world as tankbuilders, actually constructing one-third of the total iron tankage in the U. S." After Michael Geary's death in 1895, the business was sold to the National Tube Mills Company; it later became the Electric Weld Tube Division of the Jones & Laughlin Steel Corporation. The factory consists of a series of interconnected brick industrial buildings which dominates this section of town; it remains in industrial use at the time of writing.

The most important non-manufacturing representative of the oil industry within the district is the Art Deco-style Drake Building (No. 17), at the corner of Seneca and Duncomb Streets, the corporate headquarters of the Pennzoil Company for a half-century. The Drake was built for Vemark Realty, a partnership among George and John Veach and Michael Marks. Erected at a reported cost of \$800,000, it was announced in January, 1928 that the Pennzoil Company would move their corporate offices into the new building. The cornerstone of the building was laid by Samuel Smith of Titusville, the only surviving member of the original crew from the pioneer Drake well of August, 1859. Pennzoil remained in this building until the 1970s.

This financial life of the city was centered within the historic district, and two major buildings reflect the history of banking within the community. The First National Bank was organized in 1863. Over the years the bank conducted business in several locations, the earliest of which are no longer extant, but its most prominent office was at 203 Center Street (No. 33). The Oil City National Bank began in 1865 as the Oil City Savings Bank; in 1899 the name was changed to the Oil City National Bank and in 1900 the Lamberton Bank was absorbed into this institution. The 1926 granite Neo-Classical Revival-style Oil City National Bank Building (No. 1) is located at the corner of Center and Seneca Streets.

The middle years of the twentieth century saw Oil City and the Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District prosper. In 1927 alone, for example, thirty-five new homes were built in the city. Refineries were producing in large quantities, and thousands of jobs were tied to the petroleum industry, ranging from refinery workers to corporate leaders. Pennzoil, Wolf's Head, and Quaker State maintained their corporate headquarters in Oil City. Wolf's Head was eventually acquired by Pennzoil and Pennzoil, followed later by Quaker State, relocated their headquarters to Texas in the 1970s and 1980s, respectively. The loss of the executive offices of these industries, coupled with the 1970s development of a regional mall seven miles distant, had a major impact on the vitality of this once-vibrant Oil Region central business district.

Under Criterion C, the Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District is significant for its collection of historic architecture which dates generally from the 1890s through the 1940s. These buildings reflect many of the popular styles of architecture prevalent through the years, as well as industrial vernacular

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational Register of Historic Places
Continuation SheetSection Number 8 Page 5*Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District*
Venango County, PA

design and vernacular adaptations of the more formal styles. *Italianate*-style buildings include 257 Seneca Street (No. 20), the Jacobs Block (233 Seneca Street, No. 26), 217 Seneca Street (No. 29), 102-108 Seneca Street (No. 35), 220-222 Center Street (No. 51), and 17 Main Street (No. 59). *Romanesque Revival*-style architecture within the district includes the building at 114 Sycamore Street (No. 36), the Borland Block (208-212 Sycamore Street, No. 39), and the Salvation Army Building (229 Elm Street, No. 57). Two *Chateausque*-style buildings, the 1894 Downs Block (204 Sycamore Street, No. 38) and the ca. 1894 Cowell Block (210-212 Center Street, No. 49), are found within the district. *Colonial Revival*-style buildings include the IOOF Building (222 Seneca Street, No. 5), 228 Seneca Street (No. 6), 310 Seneca Street (No. 14), and 203 Seneca Street (No. 33). *Neo-Classical Revival*-style architecture within the district includes the 1926 Oil City National Bank Building (100 Seneca Street, No. 1) and the Trax & Parker Building (211-215 Seneca Street, No. 30). The *Late Gothic Revival* style is seen in the 1924 Trinity Methodist Church (2 Center Street; No. 45). The modern movement is represented in the *Art Deco*-style Drake Building of 1927-28 (327-347 Seneca Street, No. 17) and the 1942 General Telephone Company Building (260 Seneca Street, No. 9). Vernacular adaptations of various styles are scattered throughout the district as well, including the Italianate-derived ca. 1910 Smart and Silberberg Block (202 Center Street, No. 48) and the 1913 Veach Block (230 Seneca Street, No. 7). *Industrial vernacular* design is seen in the Oil City Boiler Works complex (351-359 Seneca Street, No. 15 and 210 Duncomb Street, No. 16) as well as in the 1914 Carnahan Transfer and Storage Company Building (211 Duncomb Street, No. 54). The district's finest example of roadside architecture is the 1928 Pennzoil Service Station at 217 Elm Street (No. 56), built at a cost of \$15,000 of yellow brick with a terra cotta exterior finish and described in the local newspaper when new as a "model station." Although the vast majority of the buildings within the district are commercial in nature, one *Late Gothic Revival*-style church, the 1924 Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church (2 Center Street, No. 45) is found within the district.

The work of several prominent architects is represented in the Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District. The earliest of these is Joseph E. Brenot, who was born in neighboring Crawford County in 1865. He embarked on a career as a builder and eventually entered the New York offices of Palliser & Co., architects known for the pattern books which they produced. After three years of service with Palliser, he entered the office of Chicago architect W. A. Otis, where he completed his architectural training. He came to Oil City from New York City after the 1892 fire/flood and became Oil City's first architect. His career was marked by a variety of design specialties, including residential, commercial, religious, and institutional projects. A 1913 article in *The Ohio Architect, Engineer, and Builder* noted that in the ten years previous to the article, Brenot had designed all of the parochial schools and convents for the Roman Catholic Erie Diocese. Among his works in the district are the Chateausque-style 1894 Downs Block (204 Sycamore Street, No. 38), wherein he maintained his own offices, the nearly identical Cowell Building (210-212 Center Street, No. 49), likely constructed at about the same time following the great flood/fire of 1892, the ca. 1910 Elks Lodge (No. 43) at 109-115 Sycamore Street, and the terra cotta-over-brick 1928 Pennzoil Service Station at 217 Elm Street, No. 56), mentioned above as the district's finest example of roadside architecture. Brenot remained in practice in Oil City well into the 1920s. Architect Emmett E. Bailey (1872-1942) entered

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District
Venango County, PA

Section Number 8 Page 3 6

practice about 1904 with Frank L. Charles, practicing as Charles & Bailey. By 1910 he was operating as the Emmett E. Bailey Company, and built a practice throughout this region of Pennsylvania, designing residences, commercial buildings and institutional facilities. W. Holmes Crosby (1888-1985) graduated from the Carnegie Institute of Technology in Pittsburgh in 1914 and became one of the first three students to receive a Master's degree from that institution. He located in Oil City in 1915, became associated with Emmett Bailey, and eventually maintained offices in the Veach Building (230 Seneca Street, No. 7).

The work of noted Philadelphia theater architect William H. Lee (1889-1971) is seen in the 1927-28 Drake Theater Building, the district's finest example of the Art Deco style of architecture. According to an *Oil City Derrick* article which announced the development of the Drake, the Chicago firm of Rapp & Rapp had been first named architect of the building. Apparently this firm was replaced by Lee, since he is noted as the architect in a full-page advertisement which appeared in the *Derrick* in June, 1928; his association with the architectural history of Oil City is of particular importance, since he was a prominent designer of theaters across Pennsylvania who was responsible for no fewer than twelve other Pennsylvania theaters in the 1920s alone. In addition to the Drake, notable examples of his work include the Astor Theater in Reading, the State Theater in Easton, and the Tourison Theater in Philadelphia.

Philadelphia architect Charles W. Bolton & Son designed the 1924 Late Gothic Revival-style Trinity Methodist Church (No. 45), located at 2 Center Street. Bolton & Son were also responsible for the Oil City Public Library, on the south side across the Allegheny River from the district.

Viewing this district within the context of the Oil Region of northwestern Pennsylvania, Oil City stands out as the center of oil-related industrial, commercial, and architectural activity during the latter years of the nineteenth and the first half of the twentieth century. Titusville, located a few miles to the northwest, and Franklin, eight miles to the south, contain downtown historic districts with a significant stock of buildings dating from earlier in the nineteenth century. The Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District, conversely, is typified by buildings from a generation later, principally due to the fire/flood of 1892. Butler, further south, features a downtown of a similar scale to that of Oil City's, but is fewer than thirty miles from Pittsburgh, creating a completely different set of development pressures. Economically, Oil City has been hit the hardest of any of these communities by the downsizing of industry and by the loss of significant jobs in the wake of the moving of the corporate offices of Quaker State and Pennzoil to Texas and the relocation of the Oil Well Supply Company's operations to Texas and Oklahoma.

To summarize, the Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District is significant under National Register Criteria A and C. Under Criterion A, the district is representative of the commercial and industrial life of this northwestern Pennsylvania community during the late nineteenth and early twentieth century. Under Criterion C, the district contains a cohesive and compact collection of architecture which exemplifies most of the styles of design which were popular in the United States from the 1870s through the 1940s, and also contains work of locally- and regionally-important architects.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 9 Page 1

*Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District
Venango County, PA*

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Number 9 Page 2

Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District
Venango County, PA

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Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District
Name of Property

Venango Co., PA
County and State

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 25 acres

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	17	607720	4587380	3	17	607980	4588060
2	17	607800	4588100	4	17	608060	4587500
				5	17	607880	4587320

N/A See continuation sheet.

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 David L. Taylor, Principal

organization Taylor & Taylor Associates, Inc. date January, 1997

street & number 9 Walnut Street telephone 814-849-4900

city or town Brookville state PA zip code 15925

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 _____

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C. 470 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including the time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

*Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District
Venango County, PA*

Section Number 10 Page 1

Verbal Boundary Description

Beginning at the north intersection of the Center Street Bridge and Main Street, then east along the north side of the Center Street Bridge ca. 195 feet to a point at the east bank of Oil Creek; then north along the bank of Oil Creek ca. 1,080 feet to the north property line of the lot containing Resource No. 14 as shown on the district map; then east along the north property line of Resource No. 14 ca. 210 feet to the east curblineline of Seneca Street; then north along the east curblineline of Seneca Street ca. 450 feet to the north property line of Resource No. 15; then east ca. 390 feet to the west boundary of the Penn Central Railroad right-of-way; then south along the western boundary of the Penn Central Railroad right-of-way ca. 570 feet to the south property line of Resource No. 55; then west ca. 230 feet along the south property line of Resource No. 55 to the west curblineline of Elm Street; then north along the west curblineline of Elm Street ca. 190 feet to the south curb line of Duncomb Street; then west ca. 240 feet along the south curblineline of Duncomb Street to the west curblineline of Seneca Street; then south ca. 420 feet along the west curblineline of Seneca Street to the north property line of Resource No. 18; then east ca. 195 feet along the north property line of Resource No. 55 to the west curblineline of Elm Street; then south ca. 300 feet along the west curblineline of Elm Street to a point opposite the north property line of Resource No. 57; then east ca. 270 feet along the north property line of Resource No. 57 to the west right-of-way of the Penn Central railroad; then south along the west boundary of the Penn Central railroad right-of-way ca. 450 to the north curblineline of Sycamore Street; then west along the north curblineline of Sycamore Street ca. 220 feet to the west curblineline of Elm Street; then south along the west curblineline of Elm Street ca. 135 feet to a point at the southwest corner of the Elks Lodge Building (Resource No. 43); then west along the southeast wall of the Elks Lodge Building 60 feet to a point; then south ca. 30 feet to the southeast corner of the Allegheny Square Building; then west along the south wall of the Allegheny Square Building ca. 85 feet to the east curblineline of Seneca Street; then north along the east curblineline of Seneca Street ca. 180 feet to the north curblineline of Sycamore Street; then west along the north curblineline of Sycamore Street ca. 300 feet to a point directly opposite the east property line of Resource No. 65; then south ca. 480 feet to a point on the south edge of the Erie Railroad Bridge; then west along the south side of the Erie Railroad Bridge and continuing in a parallel line ca. 400 feet to a point opposite the south corner of Resource No. 63; then north ca. 180 feet along the southwest wall of Resource No. 63 to the west curblineline of Main Street; then northeast along the west curblineline of Main Street ca. 585 feet to the place of beginning.

Justification

The boundaries of this historic district reflect the extent of the historic commercial development within the downtown commercial area of the north side of the City of Oil City, and exclude pockets of newer construction within this downtown area.

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Number _____ Page _____

Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District
Venango County, PA

PHOTOGRAPH LOG

All photographs:

Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District
Venango County, PA

Photographer: David L. Taylor

Date: 1996

Negatives at: Taylor & Taylor Associates, Inc.
9 Walnut Street, Brookville, PA 15825
814-849-4900

1. Main Street streetscape, looking northeast
2. Erie Railroad Bridge, looking east
3. Center Street Bridge, looking west (withdrawn from NR file)
4. Elm Street streetscape, looking north (withdrawn from NR file)
5. Seneca Street, streetscape, looking north
6. Center Street, streetscape, looking east
7. Braunschweiger Building (No. 46), facade, looking north
8. Seneca Street, streetscape, looking south
9. Center Street, streetscape, looking west with Center Street Bridge in background
10. Seneca Street, streetscape, looking north from Center Street
11. Seneca Street, west side streetscape, looking south, with Veach Block (No. 7) in foreground
12. Seneca Street, east side streetscape, looking south
13. Center Street, north side streetscape, looking east, with Smart & Silberberg Block (No. 48) in foreground
14. Seneca Street, west side streetscape, with United Natural Gas Building in background
15. Sycamore Street, north side streetscape, looking east from Elm Street, with Downs Building (No. 38) in foreground
16. Sycamore Street, north side streetscape, looking west from Elm Street
17. Duncomb Street, north side streetscape, looking east, with Drake Building (No. 17) in foreground and part of Oil City Boiler Works (No. 16) in background
18. Seneca Street, east side streetscape, looking north from Duncomb Street, with Drake Building (No. 17) in foreground and portion of Oil City Boiler Works (No. 15) in background
19. Seneca Street, streetscape, east side, looking south toward Duncomb Street, showing Oil City Boiler Works (No. 15)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Number _____ Page _____

*Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District
Venango County, PA*

**Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District:
Resource Inventory**

1. **100 Seneca Street & 21 Center Street [Oil City National Bank Building]:** Large-scale Neo-Classical Revival-style bank building of limestone construction, five stories in height, occupying the entire block; facade offset by pilasters centered thereon; cornice trimmed with dentils; windows have been modified; 4-story contemporary addition at rear generally architecturally compatible with the rest of the building (original building, 1926)
2. **206 Seneca Street [National Transit Building]:** 4-story Romanesque Revival-style office building of brick construction trimmed in terra cotta, set upon a raised foundation of rock-faced sandstone; main entrance centered on facade, articulated by a rock-faced round arch; (listed individually in the National Register, and not counted in the resource count)
3. **210-214 Seneca Street [National Transit Building Annex]:** 4-story Roman brick building of Romanesque Revival-style architecture, with 4-bay facade and high ornamented cornice of terra cotta; appended to the National Transit Building by a 3-story historic passageway (listed in the National Register individually with the National Transit Building (No. 2, above) and not counted in the resource count)
4. **216 Seneca Street:** 1-story commercial building, completely renovated outside the period of significance of the district (NC)
5. **222 Seneca Street [IOOF Building]:** 4-story Colonial Revival-style commercial building with two storefronts on the first floor (altered from the original) and a centered entryway leading to the upper stories; 5-bay facade with flat-topped windows set in pairs, some with transom sash; cornice and parapet gable cap the building, with the cornice trimmed by single and paired brackets. Served as the meeting hall for the Oil City Lodge No. 589, Independent Order of Odd Fellows, and other similar fraternal groups. Following a 1927 fire, prominent local architect W. Holmes Crosby designed the lodge hall in the building. (1920s)
6. **228 Seneca Street:** 2-story Colonial Revival-style brick commercial building with two storefronts (altered) on the first floor, and a centered entryway with stairway leading to the second floor; second story features broad segmental-arched void centered on the facade with five windows, 9/6 within the archway (1920s)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

*Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District
Venango County, PA*

Section Number _____ Page _____

7. **230 Seneca Street [George J. Veach Building]:** Large-scale 4-story commercial/office building of brick construction with two storefronts on the facade with original Luxfer-glass transom sash; 4-bay upper facade with flat-topped windows set in groups of three; parapet gable and metal cornice extend across the facade. Rear elevation shows this to be the combination of three separate buildings into one with the construction of a unifying facade. Built for George Veach, a prominent regional furniture retailer who was one of the developers of the Drake Theater Building in the 1920s. Upper stories of this building contained offices, including those of architect W. Holmes Crosby. (1913)
8. **248 Seneca Street:** 3-story commercial building of contemporary construction, built outside the period of significance of the district (NC)
9. **260 Seneca Street [General Telephone of Pennsylvania Office Building]:** 3-story Art Deco-style office building of limestone construction trimmed with polished brown marble panels; 5-bay facade with centered entryway; cornice of art-deco design with streamlined detailing including four stylized eagles (1942)
10. **270 Seneca Street [United States Post Office]:** Neo-Classical Revival-style institutional building of limestone construction with formal 5-bay facade and extended 3-bay pavilion in the center, articulated by stylized columns; parapet gable roof with limestone balustrade extends across the facade; converted for use as Venango Museum of Science and Industry. Listed individually in the National Register and not included in the resource count. (c. 1915)
11. **296 Seneca Street:** 1-story contemporary fast food restaurant, built outside the period of significance of the district (NC)
12. **302 Seneca Street:** 2-story brick commercial building with baked enamel-paneled facade, which appears to date from the 1920's; storefront located on the left side; 2-bay upper facade with four steel casement windows in each bay (c. 1920s)
13. **308 Seneca Street [United Natural Gas Office Building]:** 5-story brick commercial building with limestone trim; storefronts have been altered, but original storefront configuration is generally intact; 3-bay facade with three flat-topped windows set in each bay (c. 1920)
14. **310 Seneca Street:** 3-story commercial building of Colonial Revival-style design, built of brick construction for use as part of the United Natural Gas Company's corporate office complex. Windows are flat-topped 1/1 with keystone lintels; main entrance centered on facade through a single door shielded by a triangular pediment; brick cornice (c. 1915)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

*Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District
Venango County, PA*

Section Number _____ Page _____

-
15. **351-359 Seneca Street [Oil City Boiler Works]:** Large-scale industrial vernacular building of brick construction; Seneca Street elevation distinguished by gable-end oriented wings at either end and a gable-roofed section in the center; original windows flat-topped 15/15, some of which remain and others altered; in the pediment of the gable of each end wing is a large wheel window, one of which has the original mullion configuration intact (1881)
 16. **210 Duncomb Street [Oil City Boiler Works]:** Industrial vernacular building of brick construction with several additions of indeterminate age. Some multi-light sash remains, but most fenestration has been in-filled with brick. At the approximate center of the facade is a ca. 5-story shaft which appears to have been constructed to house an internal hoist system. (c. 1881)
 17. **327-347 Seneca Street & 106-114 Duncomb Street [Drake Building]:** Large-scale Art Deco-style commercial/office/theater building of tile construction faced with yellow brick and terra cotta, occupying the entire block; most storefronts have been altered; upper-story windows are flat-topped, generally 1/1 in configuration; a theater is located near the left side of the Seneca Street elevation, and is offset by Art-Deco-style towers. Developed by local entrepreneurs George J. and John B. Veach and Michael Marks, operating as Vemark Realty. Corporate offices of Pennzoil were located here for nearly 50 years. Designed by William H. Lee, prominent Philadelphia theater architect, and built by Philadelphia contractor Day & Zimmerman. (1927-28)
 18. **273-279 Seneca Street:** 3-story vernacular commercial building of brick construction with two storefronts (altered) and centered entryway to the second floor; upper story features five bays with windows set in groups of three and singly; facade ornamented in simple brick and limestone trim (1920s)
 19. **259 Seneca Street:** 1-story contemporary commercial building of masonry construction, built outside the period of significance of the district (NC)
 20. **257 Seneca Street:** 3-story Italianate vernacular-style commercial building with storefront altered; upper-story windows round arched, set in pairs, with windows covered over with plywood and trompe l'oeil sash painted onto the plywood covering; concrete block addition on the Elm Street side, faced with red brick and bearing the name "Schultz" along the parapet. (c. 1894; addition, 1950s)
 21. **247-255 Seneca Street & 232-242 Elm Street:** 1-story yellow brick commercial building with two storefronts on the first floor, shielded by a large stainless steel marquee canopy; built through the entire block from Seneca to Elm Street (1940s)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

*Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District
Venango County, PA*

Section Number _____ Page _____

-
22. **243 Seneca Street & 232 Elm Street [Straub & Cunningham Block]:** 2-story commercial building of brick construction, with two storefronts on first floor, somewhat altered, but with some original Luxfer-glass transom sash remaining; upper story features three bays with flat-topped windows set in pairs, brick is highlighted with some limestone trim; built through the entire block from Seneca to Elm Street (1930s)
 23. **239-241 Seneca Street & 230 Elm Street:** Modest 1-story commercial building with Carrara glass facade; built through the entire block from Seneca to Elm Street (c. 1930)
 24. **237 Seneca Street & 228 Elm Street:** 1-story 1955 commercial building of contemporary construction, built outside the period of significance of the district; built through the entire block from Seneca to Elm Street (NC)
 25. **235 Seneca Street:** 2-story cement block building, built outside the period of significance of the district (NC)
 26. **233 Seneca Street [Max Jacobs Block]:** 3-story Italianate-style building of brick construction with facade of rock-faced sandstone; storefront altered; second story features three windows with transom sash, capped with a cornice, suggesting that the third floor was perhaps added at a later date (c. 1894)
 27. **227 Seneca Street [McGuigan Block]:** 3-story commercial building of brick construction with storefront altered; 3-bay upper facade with second floor windows flat-topped and third floor windows segmental arched, set in pairs; ornamental brick cornice and parapet gable with centered pediment (1910)
 28. **219 Seneca Street:** 3-story commercial building of buff brick construction with storefront altered; upper facade features three flat-topped windows on the second floor and three flat-topped windows on the third floor; third floor windows are set in a broad segmental arch; brick cornice and ornamental brick trim (c. 1910)
 29. **217 Seneca Street:** 3-story Italianate commercial-style building with storefront altered; upper facade features three bays with second floor windows segmental arched and third floor windows flat-topped; all windows trimmed with pressed metal ornament; cornice has been removed but a dentil band and stylized capitals remain. The Moose Lodge was located in this building. (c. 1900)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Number _____ Page _____

*Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District
Venango County, PA*

-
30. **211-215 Seneca Street [Trax & Parker Building]:** 3-story Neo-Classical Revival-style commercial building of brick construction trimmed in limestone; storefront area has been altered, but original storefront cornice and rusticated pilasters remain; upper facade features 3-bay arrangement with three windows and transoms set in each bay; cornice of limestone with dentils, capped with a parapet gable (c. 1910)
31. **209 Seneca Street:** 2-story vernacular brick commercial building with storefront altered; storefront cornice remains intact; 3-bay upper facade with single-light windows and transom sash; stepped parapet gable with corbeled brick ornament (c. 1900)
32. **207 Seneca Street:** 2-story corner building of brick construction, Neo-Classical Revival-style in character, with terra cotta storefront, somewhat altered from the original; upper facade features flat-topped windows set singly and in pairs, capped with rock faced stone lintels; two upper stories were removed many years ago. (1890s)
33. **203 Seneca Street [Center Building]:** 3-story Colonial Revival-style commercial building with storefronts altered; storefront cornice of terra cotta is intact; upper story features flat-topped windows set singly and in groups, some trimmed with plain lintels and others with flared lintels and keystones; cornice has been removed, and parapet gable remains (c. 1910)
34. **39-49 Seneca Street & 101-107 Sycamore Street:** 2-story commercial building occupying a prominent corner location, built of yellow brick, with terra cotta trim; polished granite storefronts; upper story windows flat-topped, with replacement sash (c. 1930)
35. **102-108 Sycamore Street:** 3-story Italianate commercial building of brick construction, with storefront in filled completely with brick, except for one single door; second story windows round arched; third story windows segmental arched; some 2/2 sash remains but most has been replaced; cornice of corbeled brick and wood brackets (c. 1894)
36. **114 Sycamore Street-113 Center Street:** 3-story Romanesque Revival-style commercial building of brick construction, with storefront entirely in filled with brick; second floor windows feature stylized "Chicago" style windows, while third floor windows are round arched, with some original 1/1 sash remaining; cornice features an arcaded corbel table of brick. (c.1894)
37. **116 Sycamore Street & 155 Center Street:** 2-story buff brick commercial building without notable architectural ornament save the Art Moderne-style trim at the Center/Elm Street corner; built in 1948, outside the period of significance of the district. (NC)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

*Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District
Venango County, PA*

Section Number _____ Page _____

-
38. **204 Sycamore Street & 201 Center Street [Downs Building]:** 3-story Chateausque-style building of brick construction with original storefront in filled; original storefront cornice remains intact; 1-story oriel on second floor; upper story windows have been in filled with inappropriate material; corbeled brick ornament, date stone and triangular pediment bearing the name of the builder. Built through the entire block between Sycamore and Center Streets. Designed by prominent regionally-important architect. (1894; Joseph P. Brenot, architect)
39. **208-210 Sycamore Street & 207 Center Street [Borland Block]:** 3-story Romanesque Revival-style commercial building with storefronts and centered entryway in filled; upper facade features several windows styles including flat-topped and round arched; cornice has been removed. Built through the entire block between Sycamore and Center Streets (1894)
40. **212 Sycamore Street [Shields Building]:** 3-story vernacular commercial building of brick construction with storefronts altered, as well as some windows on the upper facade; original windows appear to have been 1/1 with rock-faced lintels (1894)
41. **220 Sycamore Street & 219 Center Street:** 1-story contemporary commercial building, built outside the period of significance of the district. Built through the entire block between Sycamore and Center Streets. (NC)
42. **224 Sycamore & 223 Center Street [Griffith Building]:** 3-story vernacular commercial building of brick construction, with storefront altered; some second floor windows have been altered as well but original windows appear to have been 1/1, trimmed with rock-faced stone lintels. Built through the entire block between Sycamore and Center Streets. (1894)
43. **109-115 Sycamore Street [Elks Lodge Building]:** 2-story vernacular lodge hall of buff brick construction, with arcaded centered entryway; some first floor windows have been in filled with glass block; upper story windows set in groups of three and singly, some are flat-topped with 8-light transom sash while other are round arched with 4-light transom sash; some corbeled brick ornament of contrasting color. Originally had two storefronts which flanked the entrance; these were in-filled with matching brick many years ago. Designed by Joseph P. Brenot, regionally-prominent architect from Oil City. (ca. 1910)
44. **Center Street Bridge:** Designated by the County as Venango County Bridge No. 29, this is an arched pony truss iron bridge which spans Oil Creek near the periphery of the historic district. An iron railing runs on either side of the cartway; the bridge bears a plaque noting its date of construction under the administration of Fred Gates, J. Frank Horner, Walter C. Cubbon, County Commissioners. (1939-1940; Tonawanda Engineering Corporation, builder)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

*Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District
Venango County, PA*

Section Number _____ Page _____

-
45. **2 Center Street [Trinity Methodist Episcopal Church]:** Late Gothic Revival-style church of ashlar limestone construction, irregular in plan, with offset tower on the left side of the facade; most fenestration is lancet-arched, roof line broken by crenelated parapets and turrets. Designed by Philadelphia architectural firm of Charles W. Bolton & Son, who also designed the Oil City Public Library on the south side. (1924)
46. **112 Center Street:** 3-story commercial building of brick with pressed metal facade; storefront has been altered; upper story features several window styles, some with original Luxfer-glass transom sash; third floor appears entirely intact, with metal pilasters and floral ornament; cornice has been modified (c. 1894)
47. **114 Center Street [Joe Levi Building]:** 3-story corner building of brick construction, vernacular in character, with storefronts altered; upper facade features 4-bay arrangement with flat-topped windows, some with flared lintels and keystones; some limestone trim noted at various points; between the third floor windows and the cornice is a stone bearing the name "Joe Levi"; simple cornice of corbeled brick (c. 1920)
48. **202 Center Street [Smart & Silberberg Block]:** Large 3-story corner building of brick construction, with storefronts altered; 9-bay arrangement on second and third floor, with varied fenestration patterns, some with rectangular transom sash and others with semi-circular transom sash; ornamental metal cornice extends across the facade and along the entire left side (c. 1910)
49. **210-212 Center Street:** 3-story Chateausque-style commercial building with storefronts altered; upper stories feature 3-bay arrangement, with slightly projecting pavilion in center; third floor articulated by large round arched void trimmed with a rock-faced stone arch; centered pediment, flanked by decorative parapets on the roofline. Very similar in design to the Downs Building (No. 38), which is documented as being the work of prominent local architect Joseph P. Brenot. (c. 1894)
50. **214 Center Street:** 1-story contemporary building of brick construction, built outside the period of significance of the district (NC)
51. **220-222 Center Street:** 3-story Italianate-style commercial building of brick, with segmental-arched windows, capped with 2-coarse radiating brick voussoirs; windows 1/1; metal cornice with decorative fascia panels and brackets (1890s)
52. **218 Elm Street:** 3-story brick commercial building of yellow brick construction, trimmed modestly with limestone; storefront has been altered; upper facade original and intact including 4-bay configuration with windows flat-topped 1/1; modest cornice of corbeled brick and limestone (c. 1920)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

*Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District
Venango County, PA*

Section Number _____ Page _____

-
53. **279 Duncomb Street:** Modest 1½-story vernacular brick commercial building with 3-bay facade; centered entry, flanked by segmental-arched windows; in the pediment of the gable is a 6/6 segmental-arched window; gable roof with gable end orientation to the street (c. 1870)
54. **209 Duncomb Street:** Modest 2-story commercial building of brick construction with three-bay facade including a large overhead garage door which has been inserted on the right side of the facade. Windows segmental-arched with flat-topped sash, 6/6, some of which have been infilled. (c. 1910)
55. **211 Duncomb Street [Carnahan Transfer and Storage Building]:** 3-story industrial vernacular building of brick construction with flat-topped windows, 6/6, on the upper stories and on some portions of the lower stories; loading doors at various points on the building. Built immediately adjacent to the railroad trackage. (1914)
56. **217 Elm Street:** 1-story commercial building of yellow brick construction with a picturesque terra cotta facade including display windows at either side and large recessed portion in the center; gable roof with two projecting gable end oriented sections at either side; roof of round tile; parapets of gable ends ornamented with molded terra cotta; originally built as a Pennzoil service station with service bays in the gable ends and an open section for driving through in the middle. Designed by regionally-prominent Oil City architect Joseph P. Brenot, practicing as Brenot & Hicks. The district's finest example of historic roadside architecture. (1928)
57. **229 Elm Street (Salvation Army Building):** 2-story Romanesque Revival-style commercial building of brick construction, with first floor modified for office use; second floor features five bays with round-arched windows with replacement sash; windows capped with corbeled window heads; variety of corbeled brick trim along the cornice; the exterior ends of the facade are ornamented with round turrets into which are set corbeled brick crosses (c. 1910)
58. **1-15 Main Street [Paul Block]:** 2-story vernacular mixed-use residential/commercial building, irregular in plan to correspond with Oil Creek behind and Main Street in front, built upon a raised foundation of ashlar stone. Windows flat-topped, set in segmental arches; original sash 1/1. Some original cast iron storefront material remains, although most storefronts have been altered. (c. 1910)
59. **17 Main Street:** 3-story Italianate vernacular-style commercial building of brick construction, with storefront generally intact on first story. Upper-story windows segmental-arched, with replacement sash and infilled material. Corbeled brick cornice. (c. 1895)
60. **19 Main Street:** 3-story vernacular commercial building faced with yellow brick trimmed with red mortar. Storefront generally intact on first floor. Upper story features 2-bay configuration with

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Continuation Sheet

Section Number _____ Page _____

*Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District
Venango County, PA*

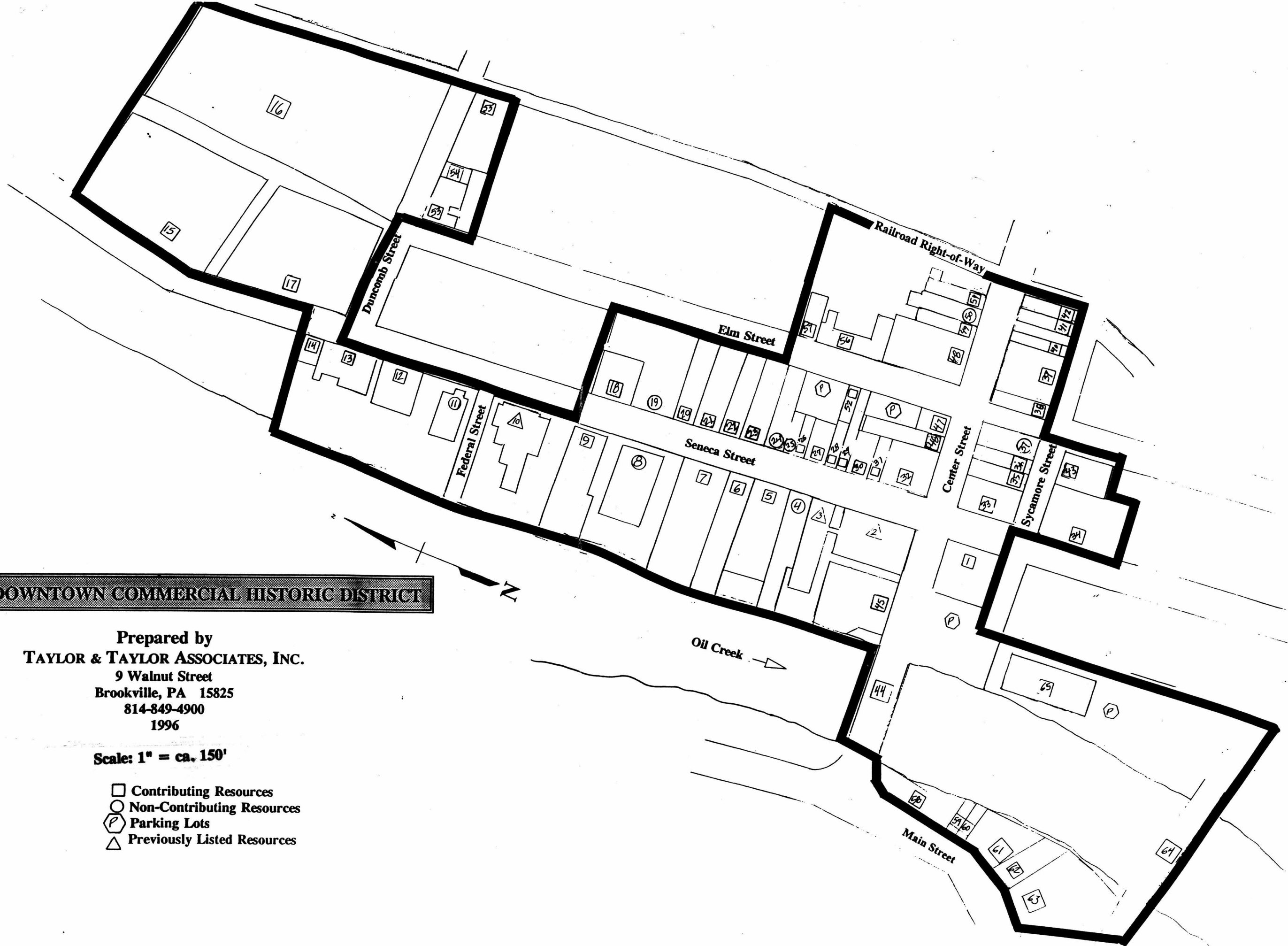
-
- segmental-arched voids; some have French doors. Simple wood cornice with modillions and large brackets. (c. 1910)
61. **31 Main Street:** Irregularly-shaped 2-story commercial building faced with yellow brick trimmed with red mortar. 8-bay upper facade with left side clad in contemporary metal, with a large truck door inserted therein. Storefront covered with corrugated aluminum. Upper story windows flat-topped with 4-light sash and 2-light transoms. Some corbeled brick ornament. Cornice with brackets. (c. 1920)
62. **41 Main Street:** 2-story commercial vernacular building of yellow brick, with storefronts altered and clad in corrugated metal and a garage door inserted therein. Upper story intact and original including steel windows and at the cornice line a stone bearing the name "Weaver," referring to its association with the C. H. Weaver Garage (see No. 63, below). Weaver was an early local automobile inventor and held the first Buick franchise; this building had a capacity for seventy-five cars. (c. 1920)
63. **99 Main Street (C. H. Weaver Building):** 3-story commercial vernacular building of brick construction with storefronts somewhat altered; recessed garage entryway in left side. Upper-story windows flat-topped featuring steel windows. Along cornice line, centered on the building, a stone bearing the name, "Weaver," is inset into the facade. According to a May 9, 1927 *Oil City Derrick* article, this building was built as an addition to the Weaver Building (No. 62), replacing an earlier wood frame building known as the Lynch Building. (1927)
64. **Erie Railroad Bridge:** 2-span Pratt truss through-truss iron bridge across Oil Creek, set upon abutments and a center pier of rock-faced stone. A wood boardwalk with pipe rail balustrade provides pedestrian access across the bridge; the *Oil City Derrick* records that the boardwalk was installed in 1927. (1892)
65. **1 Sycamore Street:** 2-story Colonial Revival-style vernacular office building of buff brick construction with corners trimmed with corbeled brick quoins. Most windows flat-topped with generally compatible replacement sash of anodized metal. Some windows on the Center Street side are set within blind arches. Large addition on south side, contemporary in design but generally compatible and in character with the rest of the building. (c. 1920)

OIL CITY DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

Prepared by
TAYLOR & TAYLOR ASSOCIATES, INC.
9 Walnut Street
Brookville, PA 15825
814-849-4900
1996

Scale: 1" = ca. 150'

- Contributing Resources
- Non-Contributing Resources
- Ⓟ Parking Lots
- △ Previously Listed Resources



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District
NAME:

MULTIPLE Oil Industry of Western Pennsylvania MPS
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: PENNSYLVANIA, Venango

DATE RECEIVED: 9/26/97 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 10/07/97
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 10/23/97 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 11/10/97
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 97001250

NOMINATOR: STATE

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 10/24/97 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in the
National Register

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N



OIL CITY DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL H. D. OIL CITY, PA (1)



OIL CITY DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL H. D. OIL CITY, PA (2)



OIL CITY DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL H. D. OIL CITY, PA (5)



OIL CITY DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL H. D., OIL CITY, PA

6



OIL CITY DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL H.B., OIL CITY, PA ⑦



OIL CITY DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL A.D., OIL CITY, PA



OIL CITY DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL A.D., OIL CITY, PA (9)



OIL CITY DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL H.D., OIL CITY, PA



OIL CITY DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL H.D. OIL CITY, PA

(11)



OIL CITY DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL H.O. OIL CITY, PA



OIL CITY DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL H. D., OIL CITY, PA (13)



OIL CITY DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL B.D., OIL CITY, PA (14)



OIL CITY DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL A.D. OIL CITY, PA (15)



OIL CITY DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL H.D., OIL CITY, PA (16)



OIL CITY DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL H.D. OIL CITY, PA



OIL CITY DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL H.D., OIL CITY, PA



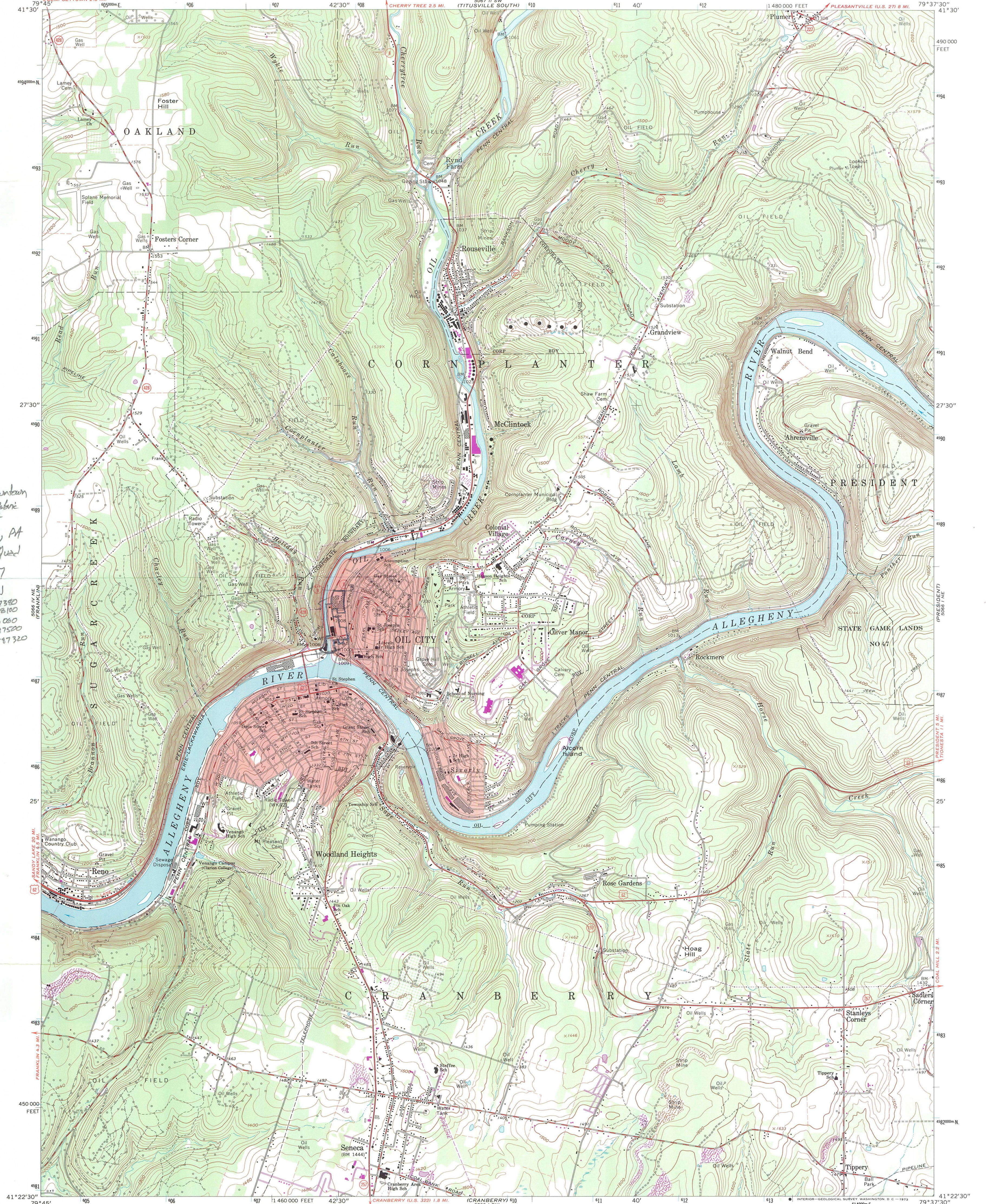
OIL CITY DOWNTOWN COMMERCIAL H. D., OIL CITY, PA

Missing Core Documentation

Property Name County, State	Multiple Property Name	Reference Number
Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District Venango County, Pennsylvania	Oil Industry Resources in Western Pennsylvania MPS	97001250

The following Core Documentation is missing from this entry:

- Nomination Form
- Photographs (missing #3-4)
- USGS Map



Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey

Control by USGS and USC&GS

Topography by photogrammetric methods from aerial photographs taken 1962. Field checked 1963

Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum

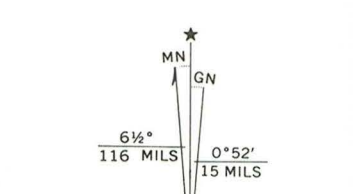
10,000-foot grid based on Pennsylvania coordinate system, north zone

1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks, zone 17, shown in blue

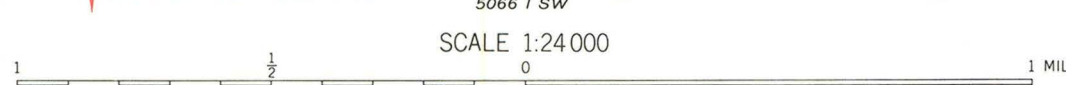
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked

Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown

Revisions shown in purple compiled in cooperation with State of Pennsylvania agencies from aerial photographs taken 1972. This information not field checked

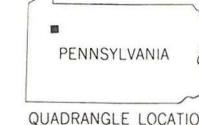


Map photoinspected 1977
No major culture or drainage changes observed



CONTOUR INTERVAL 20 FEET

DATUM IS MEAN SEA LEVEL



ROAD CLASSIFICATION	
Heavy-duty	Light-duty
Medium-duty	Unimproved dirt
U.S. Route	State Route

OIL CITY, PA.

N4122.5—W7937.5/7.5

PHOTOINSPECTED 1977

1963

PHOTOREVISED 1972

AMS 5066 I NW—SERIES V831

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS
FOR SALE BY U.S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, DENVER, COLORADO 80225
OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092

A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES PROPERTY REPORT

REFERENCE No.: 97001250

Control No.: 971006/nep

PROPERTY NAME: Oil City Downtown Commercial Historic District

OTHER NAME/
SITE No.: Oilville; Cornplanter

MULTIPLE NAME: Oil Industry of Western Pennsylvania MPS

ADDRESS/
BOUNDARY: Generally along Seneca, Center, Elm, Sycamore, Duncomb, and
Main Sts.

CITY: Oil City

COUNTY: Venango

STATE: PENNSYLVANIA

Restricted Location Information: Owner: PRIVATE Resource Type: DISTRICT

Contributing Noncontributing

Buildings	51	9
Sites	0	0
Structures	2	0
Objects	0	0

Nomination/Determination Type: MULTIPLE RESOURCE

Nominator: STATE GOVERNMENT

Nominator Name:
NOT APPLICABLEFederal
Agency: NOT APPLICABLE

NPS Park Name: NOT APPLICABLE

Certification: DATE RECEIVED/PENDING NOMINATION

Date: 09/26/97

Other
Certification: NOT APPLICABLEHistoric
Functions: COMMERCE/TRADE
INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION
SOCIAL
GOVERNMENTHistoric
Subfunctions: SPECIALTY STORE
BUSINESS
FINANCIAL INSTITUTION
MANUFACTURING FACILITY
MEETING HALL
POST OFFICECurrent
Functions: COMMERCE/TRADE
INDUSTRY/PROCESSING/EXTRACTION
RECREATION AND CULTURE
RELIGIONCurrent
Subfunctions: SPECIALTY STORE
BUSINESS
FINANCIAL INSTITUTION
MANUFACTURING FACILITY
MUSEUM
RELIGIOUS STRUCTURE

Level of Significance: STATE
Applicable Criteria: EVENT ARCHITECTURE/ENGINEERING

Significant Person's Name: NOT APPLICABLE

Criteria Considerations: NOT APPLICABLE

Area of Significance: ARCHITECTURE
INDUSTRY
COMMERCE

Periods of Significance: 1875-1899 1900-1924 Circa: Specific Sig. Years:
1925-1949 C 1870
1892

Architect/Builder/Engineer/Designer: Cultural Affiliation:
NOT APPLICABLE

Bailey, Emmett E.
Bresnot, Joseph P.

Other Documentation: NATIONAL REGISTER

HABS No. N/A HAER No. N/A

Architectural Styles: ITALIANATE
ROMANESQUE
COLONIAL REVIVAL

Describe Other Style: NOT APPLICABLE

Foundation Materials: STONE
Wall Materials: BRICK STONE
Roof Materials: ASPHALT
Other Materials: NONE LISTED

Acreage: 25.0

UTM	Zone	Easting	Northing	Zone	Easting	Northing
Coordinates:	17	/6 07 720	/45 87 380	17	/6 07 800	/45 88 100
	17	/6 07 980	/45 88 060	17	/6 08 060	/45 87 500
	17	/6 07 880	/45 87 320	/	/	/