

Chapter 1:

INTRODUCTION

This documentation project, undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER) in cooperation with the America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), both entities of the National Park Service, is part of a multi-year effort to record the architectural resources in a nine-county region of southwestern Pennsylvania related to the railroad, canal, and affiliated industrial development.

This assessment of the architectural and historical significance of two towns located along the route of the Pennsylvania Main Line Canal during the nineteenth century was completed during summer 1988. Dozens of modest commercial centers were historically located along the 395-mile waterway that linked Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, but few can boast tangible remains from their heyday. Saltsburg, on the Kiskiminetas River, and Alexandria, on the Juniata River, were selected for study according to several criteria: for geographic location on flanking sides of the Allegheny Divide, for containing a building stock composed of a significant number of intact period buildings that date from the mid- to late-nineteenth century, and for the existence of a group of standing structures specifically associated with the canal as well as the visibly extant canal bed itself. The individual buildings for which HABS reports were prepared were selected from previously conducted surveys of the municipalities based on construction date, architectural and historical merit, and retention of architectural integrity (ie., original form and exterior siding with minor additions). One structure threatened by demolition was measured, and all buildings were recorded using large-format photography.

Primary and secondary resources, as well as public records, were used to document these canal towns. Several nineteenth-century publications offer contemporary depictions of life, such as J. Simpson Africa's History of Huntingdon and Blair Counties, Pennsylvania, Arms and White's 1745-1880: History of Indiana County, Pennsylvania, and the 1913 Indiana County, Pennsylvania by J.T. Stewart. These were augmented by many articles, periodicals and books published in recent years by local historical groups promoting an interest in canal heritage, such as Canal Currents, Indiana County Heritage, 1838-1988: Canal Days Sesquicentennial, and Hartslog Heritage. Publications devoted to chronicling the history of the canal itself are provided by Robert McCullough and Walter Leuba's The Pennsylvania Main Line Canal and Peter Wallner's doctoral thesis, "Politics and Public Works: A Study of the Pennsylvania Canal System." Public documents provided information on historical township and borough tax assessment, deeds and probate activities. Additional information was gleaned from historic maps and atlases, and forms produced as part of the Pennsylvania Historical Resources Survey.

Recorded under the direction of Robert J. Kapsch, chief of HABS/HAER, project leader was Alison K. Hoagland, senior HABS historian. Dorothy Burlingame of the University of Vermont was project supervisor; Karen Genskow of Sangamon State University researched Alexandria; and Kristin Belz of the University of Virginia investigated Saltsburg. Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian, compiled and edited the final document. David Ames took all the

large-format photographs. Thanks also go to Nancy Shedd of the Huntingdon County Historical Society, and many individuals at Historic Saltsburg, including Gloria Berringer, Ann Palmer, and George Johnson.

This report is organized into three primary chapters: a general investigation of the region and historical events surrounding canal-town development in southwestern Pennsylvania; and individual overviews on Alexandria and Saltsburg, with respective appendices containing the HABS reports on forty-four buildings. Because the building reports contained in the appendices lack a general bibliography, sources consulted are found in the bibliography of the respective chapter; individual HABS building reports transmitted to the Library of Congress, however, contain a full list of sources consulted.