

56-1244

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Miller Block and Townhouse
other names/site number N/A
name of related multiple property listing N/A

Location

street & number 226 South Main Street & 204-206 West Henry Street

N/A	not for publication
N/A	vicinity

city or town Elmira
state New York code NY county Chemung code 015 zip code 14904

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, 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 at the following level(s) of significance:

national statewide local

Michael P. Lynch Deputy SHPO 4/28/2017
Signature of certifying official Title Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

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

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

- entered in the National Register determined eligible for the National Register
- determined not eligible for the National Register removed from the National Register
- other (explain:)

[Signature] 6/26/17
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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5. Classification

Ownership of Property
 (Check as many boxes as apply.)

Category of Property
 (Check only **one** box.)

Number of Resources within Property
 (Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	private
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

Current Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE/specialty store

COMMERCE/TRADE/business

SOCIAL/meeting hall

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

DOMESTIC/multiple dwelling

7. Description

Architectural Classification
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

Materials
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

Late 19th Century: Italianate (townhouse)

foundation: stone

walls: brick, stone

roof: asphalt

other: _____

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Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

The Miller Block and Townhouse are located at the corner of West Henry and South Main Streets in Elmira, Chemung County, New York and consist of a late nineteenth century commercial block with an attached historic townhouse, both constructed at the same time and all constructed in red brick with matching architectural limestone detailing that includes incised stone lintels, stone sills and a decorative cornice. The buildings are located on the south side of the Chemung River along the main downtown commercial core that developed in the south part of the city during the late nineteenth century. The buildings were constructed between 1887 and 1888, with the main building being a large, three and one-half story building fronting on South Main Street and the other, a double townhouse facing West Henry Street. The two are attached by an infilled narrow one-bay arch that originally led to a service yard, but the two buildings are not internally connected. The townhouse is a two-story, eight-bay building with its entrances grouped in the center bays and surmounted by an ornate second story porch. The first floor of the facade of the Miller Block commercial building contains mid-twentieth century storefronts between original 1880s cast iron storefront columns, and the upper floors contain detailed stonework with one lintel in the center bay of the second floor and a simple square stone that reads, "H.O. SMITH, architect." Between the double triangular pediments that crown the building is another stone with the inscription "V. Miller's Block, 1887." An adjacent three-story commercial building to the north is not part of the Miller Block and lacks integrity due to alteration.

Narrative Description

Site and Setting:

The Miller Block and Townhouse occupy a corner lot in the Southside section of Elmira, two blocks south of the Chemung River, which runs through the center of the city. South Main Street runs north to south from a bridge over the Chemung River where it meets North Main Street, which continues through downtown Elmira and the North Main & West Water Commercial Historic District (NR listed 2016). West Henry Street runs along the south elevation of the building and townhouse and contains a number of early to mid-twentieth century residences. The southeast corner of West Henry Street has a multi-story residential apartment building and across South Main Street is a large parking lot and grocery store with the Erie Railroad property further east.

The area around the Miller Block and Townhouse along South Main Street is largely defined by vacancy and parking, largely due to the debilitating effects of a 1972 flood making the nominated buildings stand out as the

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most significant remaining architectural and historical resources along a once vibrant commercial corridor that stretched from Partridge Street (two blocks south) to the Chemung River to the north. Four remaining commercial buildings along this part of South Main Street are significantly altered, either in the storefront configuration or with the exteriors completely clad in non-historic siding. In addition to its architectural integrity, the Miller Block and Townhouse retain the strongest connection to the late nineteenth and early twentieth century commercial corridor that developed along Main Street on both sides of the river.

Main Commercial Block

Fronting on South Main Street, the main commercial section of the Miller Block includes a rectangular shaped, three and one-half story, two-part commercial block of brick with stone and wood accents. The main part of the building is seven-bays wide along South Main Street and nine-bays along on the south elevation on West Henry. A low roof is behind a pronounced parapet/cornice along the façade and south elevation. The main building has a decorative stone beltcourse separating each floor level and serving as a continuous sill for the windows. Windows have carved stone lintels that are either rounded shell designs or peaked with incised, foliate carvings. An ornate metal cornice features corbels, finials, brackets and inset panels. The façade has two steeply gabled cornice sections over triangular upper level windows. The bays are grouped in either twos or threes and are defined by slender, fluted and decorated full-height piers. The third floor triangular façade windows are difficult to see and are stained-glass in a sunrise pattern with stone trim. The elaborate cornice follows the shape of the parapets, creating a distinctive roofline.

When viewed from South Main Street, the façade (east elevation) is a symmetrical composition with a central bay flanked by three closely spaced bays on either side. At each level, the center bay and corners of the building are defined by carved stone piers. The ground floor of the building contains original cast-iron storefront columns and cornice, but the storefronts have large plate glass and aluminum windows and doors. The former center entrance is now a fixed window and a side entrance is at the north end of the façade. Designed by a local carpenter and builder, Huron O. Smith, the building is eclectic in its rich detailing. The overall commercial block has bold massing, accented by narrow fenestration, a peaked façade cornice, and solid ground-level south wall. The overall composition is both elegant and artistic, though the effect has been somewhat marred by replacement windows (double-hung aluminum sash) and brick infill. Additional research may reveal if the infill and initial replacements were part of the modifications made during the period of significance.

The south elevation has groups of windows with a stone beltcourse creating a continuous sill and indicating the division between the floor levels. At the ground floor, a recessed secondary entry door is at the west end

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that features an arched lintel with keystone. The door is recessed into a beadboard entrance and the opening has a curved wood transom with carved corner brackets. The façade storefront is at the extreme east end and the wall between the west door and storefront is continuous brick except for one infilled window and lintel near the center. In the second and third stories, the two center bays are framed with stone piers and the lintel designs are identical to those on the façade (shells in the third story and incised peaks in the second). The attic story features solid brickwork between the decorative stone beltcourse and cornice.

Both the north and west elevations are less prominent, or, rather, less visible due to their location and the attached townhouse. The north elevation has a solid brick party wall that is shared with an adjacent three-story, unrelated building. At the rear of the Miller Block, the attached townhouse building obscures a majority of the west elevation, but several partially infilled windows are visible on the second and third floors. These windows have simple stone sills and brick lintels. The infill appears more recent than the rest of the building due to a lighter shade of brick being used. The ground level of the west elevation also has an infilled door opening. The remainders have regular attenuated window openings with segmental brick arches and stone sills. No windows are visible in the north elevation and both the north and west elevations are topped with a plain aluminum coping painted to match the cast stone details on the rest of the building.

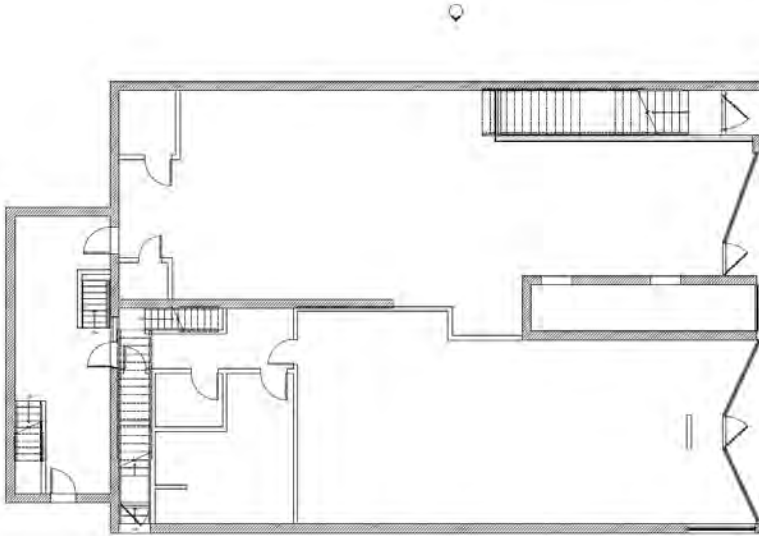
The interior of the commercial block retains integrity dating to its conversion to apartments (late 1930s/early 1940s). Later (1952) alterations include storefronts with large plate glass partitions that slant back from the corners at thirty-degree angles, leading to large open floorplates with modern finishes and drop ceilings. The rear, or south, end of the commercial block has remnants of the original 1887 construction, which include a back room with original fluted door trim and bull's eye corner blocks, bead board ceilings and walls. The only original 1887 feature in the upper two floors is the original staircase from the second to third floor at the north side of the building. The stair features a large ornately carved newel post and original rails and balusters, now painted. Fluted wood trim and bead board are visible in the portion of the building over the archway that bridges the Miller Block and the townhouse.

The upper floors also retain nearly all of the historic apartment configurations and materials, with a central corridor that winds in a rough Z-shape from the rear staircase in the southwest corner to the northeast corner. Apartments have wood doors with metal frames. A central hallway opens into a small lobby at the center of the floor before branching off to access the front four units of the building. Walls are plaster with curved corners and narrow baseboard molding painted in a contrasting color. The interiors of the apartments on both floors retain historic features, mostly in the kitchens and bathrooms. These features include smooth wood window trim, narrow baseboard molding, metal radiators, simple wooden cabinets with sleek curved stainless steel metal handles, and original pink and purple tile floors in the bathrooms with original sink fixtures as well. The

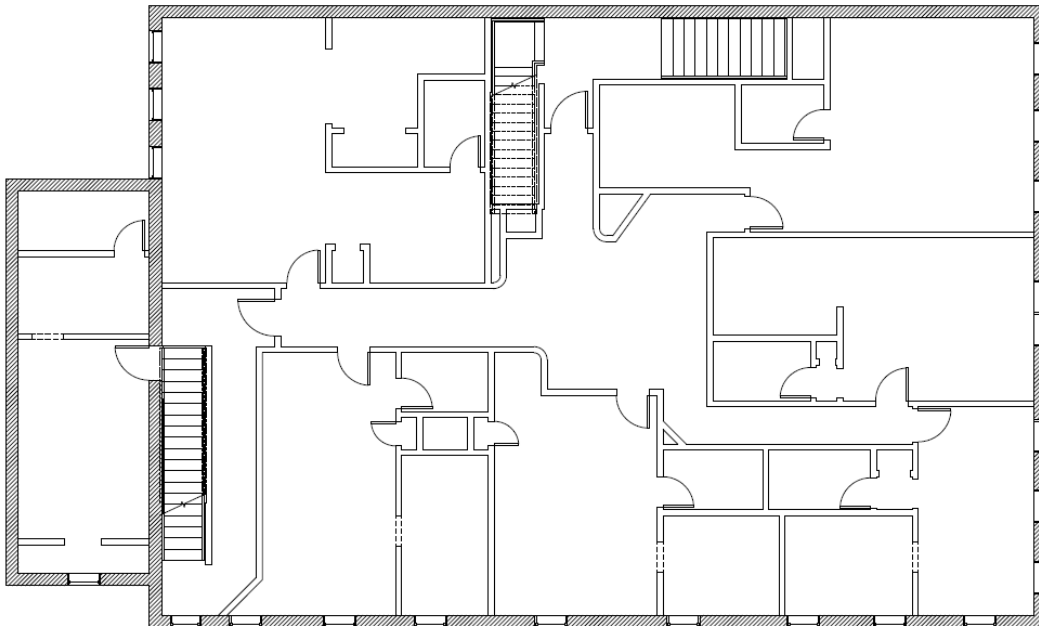
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top floor, once used as meeting space, is severely deteriorated, but still has some of its lath and plaster walls and ceilings and wood support beams.



First floor—Commercial Block



Second Floor

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Townhouse

The brick, double townhouse is at the west end of the south elevation, slightly recessed from the Miller Block. It faces onto West Henry Street and is basically a rectangular, two-story building, eight-bays wide and three-bays deep with a stone foundation, a flat roof with a wide decorative cornice. The building contains two adjacent residential units that are mirror images and are defined by projecting end bays with windows, side entrances and a shared cantilevered wood porch in the second story. The easternmost portion of the townhouse contains a bay with an infilled brick archway with a non-historic door and a window centered above. This brick archway original extended through the building and acted as a carriageway leading to a yard at the rear. The other (north) end of the archway is filled in with CMU and has a centered glass block window. The townhouse was attached to the main commercial building by the archway, but was not internally connected, nor is it at present.

Similar to the main block, an ornate cornice runs along the facade and its design matches that of the main block (corbels, inset panels, brackets, finials), unifying it with the larger Miller Block. Each window has a carved stone lintel matching those of the main building, a stone window sill, and retains the original double-hung windows. At the ground floor, concrete steps lead up to two separate entrances with slightly recessed doors that appear to be original. The door lintels are wood, carved to match the window lintels in the rest of the Miller Block. The wood floor of the second floor porch protects each door and the ends of the porch floor have fan-design end-panels and pendants defining the entrances. The doors consist of wood lower single-inset panels with a cross design and a multi-light section above. The second-story wood porch is supported by wooden fan panels and has ornate mill work between the posts and railing, ornate mill work brackets in the corners of the posts and is protected by a sloping shed roof.

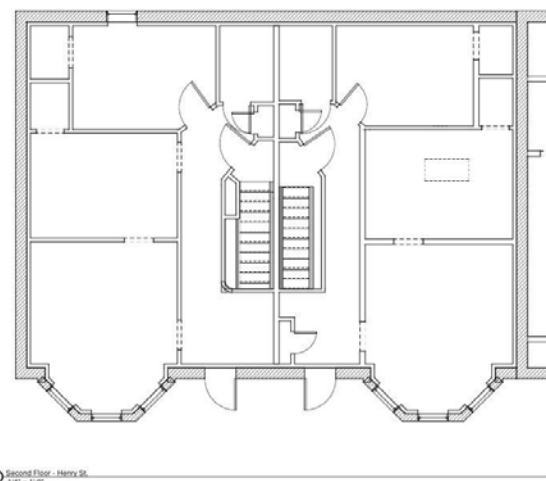
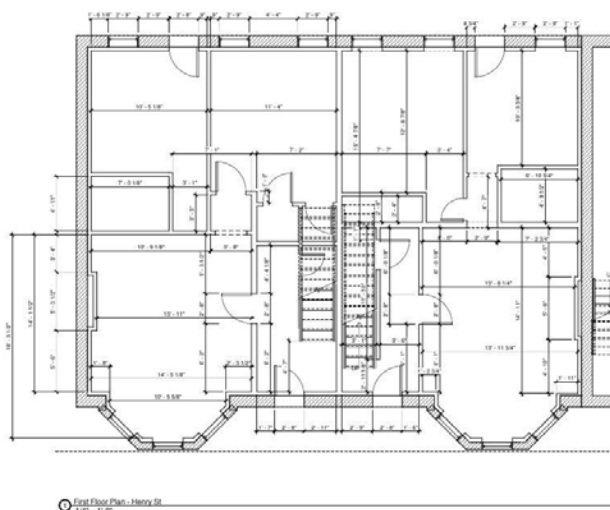
On the remaining elevations, there is a single window in the second story of the west elevation, and the north elevation has two ground level projecting single-bay sections flanked by windows. These "lean-to" projections are one-story in height on concrete foundations and are clad with vinyl siding, indicating that they were added after the period of significance. The townhouse appears to have a basement or crawlspace as evidenced by a small window in an arched opening below the west end first floor window. Five additional windows are in the second story of the townhouse. Two small chimneys are visible near the center of the roof. Windows on these elevations are double hung sash with stone sills and brick arched lintels.

The interior of the townhouse retains much of its original 1887 configuration and historic features, including the original layout, original stairs and fireplaces. The building originally contained two side-by-side units, with central staircases that accessed both floors, but the upper floors are now partitioned off at the top of the

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staircase to create two additional units (four apartments) and mirror each other (front living rooms at the southern end of the units, hallways that lead to a kitchen, bathroom, and a single bedroom). The entry staircase is the original wood with carved newel posts identical to the north end stair of the Miller Block and has carved curving handrails and balusters. The townhouse retains much of its original woodwork, such as fluted wood trim around the windows and doors with bulls-eye block corners, ornate marble mantels, and wood floors throughout. The second floor woodwork is similar to the first floor, although the mantels and fireplaces are slightly less detailed. A long central hallway runs from the front of the second floor to the rear along the stairwell in both units, with living room, kitchen, bathroom, and one bedroom running south to north along the hallway.



Townhouse first and second floors

Integrity

The Miller Block and Townhouse retain integrity of location, form, workmanship and materials. The main block retains integrity as a commercial building with both retail and residential functions that were part of an attempt to extend the Elmira Main Street shopping district to the south side of the river. Even with the division of the townhouse into four apartments from the original two, its interior exhibits a high level of integrity with regard to original materials, craftsmanship, and design. Changes to the commercial block were made during the period of significance (1887-1952), with the storefronts being the last to take place. The interior of the commercial block retains original plaster walls, moldings, doors and bathroom/kitchen fixtures. In addition to its historic form and fabric, the historic significance of the Miller Block is largely due to its connection with retail development of Elmira through the mid-twentieth-century and with the updates to the storefronts made in 1952. Exterior alterations have been limited to the replacement of original windows and partial infill of the

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openings, which are being restored as part of the building's rehabilitation. Additional updates to the storefront retained the open plan of the shops and the storefronts themselves can easily be restored to their 1952 appearance. With the final conversion of most of the building to apartments in 1952, the Miller Block retains a great deal of historic integrity to its period of significance, with many visible extant features of Huron O. Smith's original exterior design.

Smith's design for the Miller Block was an eclectic mix, rich in decorative features and details that were far more stylistically expressive than earlier commercial local block buildings. The façades of buildings, like the Miller Block, were intended to create a positive first impression on customers through use of fashionable details and welcoming storefronts. The Miller Block was used as a grocery store well into the mid-twentieth century, when it was displaced by the popularity of the supermarket. The final division of interior spaces into apartments may have added to the building's continued relevance as shopping shifted from the urban shop to the suburban mall. The Miller Block's presence represents this important chapter in Elmira's history of how a building was adapted to meet the needs of new clients and the community in general.

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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.

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 grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Commerce

Architecture

Period of Significance

1887-1952

Significant Dates

1887, 1924, 1952

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Huron O. Smith

Period of Significance (justification)

The period 1887-1952 encompasses all major architectural changes with the Miller Block, starting with the construction of the Miller Block and attached townhouse through the final alterations in 1952. The changes represent nearly a full century of responding to the needs of the community with stores, offices, meeting space and housing.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary) N/A

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Miller Block and Townhouse are visual and commercial landmarks in the Southside neighborhood of Elmira, New York, that reflects the rapid growth of Southside during the late nineteenth century as both North and South Main Street became the heart of the city's commercial district. Divided by the Chemung River, Main Street was one of the first to join both sides of the city by crossing the river and encouraging the opening of new shops and stores. Completed in 1887, the nominated property at first served the surrounding neighborhood as a grocery store, a meeting space for one of the local chapters of the Independent Order of Odd Fellows, and as rental housing (townhouse). By the mid-twentieth century, the Miller Block became a destination, attracting shoppers from all sections of the city to shop in its stores. The Miller Block and Townhouse are locally significant under Criterion A in the area of commerce for serving as a cultural and commercial anchor for Elmira well into the twentieth century. The buildings are also significant in the area of architecture as rare extant examples of the work of local builder Huron O. Smith, who combined two functions on one property with a large, eclectic brick and stone building for stores, offices and meeting spaces facing South Main Street, while including a smaller building in the Italianate style for two residential townhouses on West Henry Street. He united the two sections through the use of a common brick exterior and details such as an elaborate cornice and incised limestone lintels. His commercial block interior was also an adaptable space. Beginning in the 1920s, the upper offices and eventually the I.O.O.F. meeting space were gradually converted to apartments as the need for housing escalated, especially during World War II. The buildings continue in their dual roles of housing and retail, and its exterior massing and detail of the Miller Block makes it even more prominent as buildings along the once vibrant South Main shopping corridor are replaced by new construction and parking lots.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Southside Elmira

Elmira is a city in the Southern Tier Region of New York State that is divided by the Chemung River. Initial village settlement focused on the north side of the river and as the village grew into a city, it looked to connect with settlements on the river's south side of the river. The first bridges across the river were built in the 1850s and 1860s, but were severely damaged by floods. After Elmira was incorporated as a city (1864), it needed viable bridges to join the north side to newly annexed lands on the south side and a metal bridge was approved and built over the river in the 1870s, joining both ends of Main Street. The Miller Block was built in 1887 on South Main Street, a street that was rapidly emerging as a commercial corridor in a neighborhood of residences, shops and businesses in an area known as Southside.

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Southside was originally part of Southport, a township that developed separately from Elmira in the early to mid-nineteenth century on the south side of the Chemung River. It became a town in 1822 and had a history independent of the larger community of Elmira through much of the nineteenth century. In 1854, part of Southport was annexed to Elmira, known as the Third District. When Elmira became a city in 1864, the Third District and additional lands in the northeast section of the town were included, becoming the city's Fifth Ward.

Prior to the annexation, Southport was a largely rural settlement where logging and farming were staples of economic activity. In the 1830s Southport experienced some of its first attempts at development. In 1839, Mordecai Ogden laid out lots that he later sold to Tracy Beadle, a druggist from Cooperstown, New York. It was on Tracy Beadle's tract of land along South Main Street that Valentine Miller later built his personal residence and the two grocery stores he operated in the late nineteenth century. Southside quickly became the location of a number of commercial ventures, including grocers, merchants, an ice dealer, a vinegar manufacturer, and hotels. Valentine Miller operated one grocery store at the corner of South Main and East Henry Streets before erecting the Miller Block on the opposite corner in 1887.¹

The growth of Southside was spurred by improvements in transportation, starting in 1848, when a plank road was laid between the Lake Street Bridge in Elmira and the Pennsylvania state line. The plank road became a significant artery through Southport, connecting it to Elmira and other local communities. In 1850, the Elmira and Jefferson Railroad was incorporated, linking Elmira and Southport to other rail lines and cities to the north. In 1854, the Elmira and Williamsport Railroad created a rail connection from Pennsylvania. By 1866 over twenty acres of Southside was devoted to rail shops and rail yards. The population of Southport began to grow as new businesses and industries took advantage of rail transportation.² The area became home to the LaFrance Manufacturing Company (1873), which later became the American LaFrance Fire Engine Company (1903). Other industries included the Payne Iron Works, Elmira Fire Brick & Stoneware Works, the F. Sheely Tannery and the Kellogg Bridge Company, which employed a large number of men in the iron industry.

Along with industry, tobacco processing was one of the most important businesses in Southside, with agriculture continuing to play an important part of the economy. By 1900, large tobacco fields were cultivated along Esty and Luce Streets, and Southside had a large tobacco drying warehouse, several cigar rolling shops

¹ "With Pad and Pencil," *Elmira Star-Gazette*, December 18, 1907, 5. Online at <http://www.fultonhistory.com/>.

² Ibid.

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and cigar box factories.³ Tobacco grown in Elmira was a major cash crop and the export of cigars and other tobacco products was a major component of the city's economy until the 1920s.⁴

Southside's industries clustered along both the Chemung River and railroad lines with residential areas locating to the south and east. Over time, South Main Street became the primary commercial corridor in Southside. For some of Elmira's wealthy citizens, Southside became an attractive place to relocate and a number of mansions and upscale homes were built in the area, particularly along Maple Avenue. In 1887, the Maple Avenue Railroad streetcar line connected this part of Southside to Elmira's central business district, which spurred the building of more upscale homes on Maple Avenue. Despite the relocation of wealth, the Southside area declined, due to loss of industry and devastation from the Flood of 1972, when the Chemung River overflowed into both sides of Main Street. As a result, several buildings close to the waterfront were demolished, some Southside industries closed or relocated elsewhere, and the surrounding residential neighborhoods struggled to recover.

Criterion A: Commerce

A number of stores and shops began to open along South Main Street in Southside from the mid to late nineteenth century. An 1887 Sanborn map depicted a variety of businesses along South Main Street that included bakeries, butcher shops, drug stores, a hardware store, tailor, and four grocery stores mostly confined to the area between the Chemung River and Mt. Zoar Street.⁵ Valentine Miller had a grocery store on the street and replaced it that same year with a larger building across from it. It was one of two large Miller grocery buildings; the other, at South Main and Hudson Street, was owned and operated by Valentine's brother, Marcus. After two fires (1903 & 1907), the Marcus Miller building was eventually sold and completely remodeled, first in the 1950s and again in the 1980s, as a large drug store.⁶

Valentine Miller's Block was built a few blocks south of Hudson Street at West Henry Street. At the time of its construction, the Miller Block was one of many of businesses located along the South Main Street commercial corridor. Valentine Miller was a German immigrant and well-known businessman who served as alderman for Elmira's Fifth Ward for a number of years. Miller commissioned his block, an imposing structure at the corner of South Main and East Henry Streets. After the block's construction, Valentine Miller relocated his grocery business to the ground floor and rented the upper floors for office and meeting space. The attached

³ Ibid.

⁴ Rachel Dworkin, "Up in Smoke: Chemung County's Tobacco Culture," *Chemung County Historical Society*, online at <http://chemungcountyhistoricalsociety.blogspot.com/2014/01/up-in-smoke-chemung-countys-tobacco.html>.

⁵ Sanborn Map Company, *Elmira, Chemung County, New York*, 1887, Sheet 12.

⁶ Nancy Goblet, *Elmira, New York—A Reconnaissance Survey of the City's Southside Properties, 2010-2011* (Elmira, NY: Historic Elmira, 2011), annotated list.

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townhouse, which was completed as part of the same initial building campaign, was clearly intended to be rental housing, since Miller and his family lived west of the building at 218 West Henry Street. The main building's second floor offices were at one time rented to a chiropractor and served as the law offices of Robinson and Daggert.⁷ The building's third floor was a large open room that became the meeting hall and banquet space for the Queen City Lodge No. 592, one of the local chapters of the International Order of Odd Fellows, and its women's auxiliary, the Rebekah Lodge. A 1903 map indicated that a smokehouse for smoking meats and sausage was at one time located behind the store (no longer extant).⁸

The store was quite successful and after Valentine Miller's death, his son Frank continued the business. The grocery store's popularity and success warranted a lengthy write up in the *Elmira Star-Gazette* when the business was sold in 1913:

The passing of the Frank Miller store is an event of some historical significance to old residents of the Southside. The store was established about 30 years ago by the late Valentine Miller, one of the early settlers of "Southport"...Valentine Miller reared a large family and conducted his prosperous business until his death, which occurred several years ago. The business was continued by his son, Frank Miller (assisted in that and other enterprises by his brother, the late Police Commissioner Benjamin V. Miller and Charles Miller). That this is the "Valentine Miller" store is an established fact in "Southport"...This store was always noted for the excellence and variety of the line it carried. It was the big store of the southside.⁹

Grocers used the entire ground level of the Miller Block until 1940, when the Electric Shoe Repairing Company moved into half of the commercial space.¹⁰ In 1950, the ground floor commercial space housed John A. Beven's Cigar and Tobacco Shop and the Don Wright Incorporated Electrical Appliances.¹¹ The third floor of the building continued as meeting space for a local chapter of the International Order of Odd Fellows and its associated Rebekah Lodge until 1934, when those groups moved into a new meeting place.

Residential space was always a component of the Miller Block with the attached townhouses (two residential units) and the upper floor apartments. Starting in 1924, more rental space was available with the conversion of additional office space into two apartments; three more were added in 1932 and another five in 1935. In 1952, the third floor was divided, making a total of twelve rental units in the building, with the ground floor still occupied by storefronts.¹²

⁷ The law office of Robinson and Daggert was described in the December 20, 1892 edition of the *Elmira Star-Gazette* as the first law office in the Fifth Ward.

⁸ City of Elmira, Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, 1903.

⁹ "Buys Business on Southside," *Elmira Star-Gazette*, January 15, 1913, online at <http://fultonhistory.com/Fulton.html>.

¹⁰ *Manning's Elmira Alphabetical Directory* (Elmira: H.A. Manning Co., 1940), 501.

¹¹ *Ibid*, 641.

¹² *Manning's Elmira, Elmira Heights, West Elmira and Southport*, New York Directory (Schenectady: H.A. Manning Company, 1952), 715.

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The conversion of the second and third floors of Miller Block's reconfigured both floors with double-loaded central hallways that wound from the northeast corner staircase to the southwest corner. Some of the plaster walls had curved corners, smooth trim and detailing, new cabinets, fixtures, and tiling. In the 1950s, the main stair that separated the storefronts was rebuilt in the north end of the building, but the original 1887 rear stair was retained between the second and third floor. Many of the original 1887 carved window casings and trim were also retained. The second conversion of office space into apartments was in response to a 10 percent growth in population that Elmira experienced between 1940 and 1950, resulting in more demands for housing. Due to the need for housing, property owners realized the value of converting mixed-use commercial buildings, such as the Miller Block, into housing.

Beginning in the 1940s, the war economy spurred industrial growth and employment in the region. Elmira's position as a transportation hub factored into this growth and Elmira became a major site for defense industry manufacturing in the northeast. Elmira's war-related industries produced weapons and components such as aircraft shells, fuses, aircraft fuel, oxygen cylinders, trucks, valves, and metals.¹³ Probably the most well documented war factory in Elmira was the N-Division of Remington Rand, which produced major components for the Norden bombsight and employed 3,600 people at the height of its operation.¹⁴ Companies like Remington Rand drew workers and their families into Elmira, leading to the expansion of housing. Following the war, Remington Rand's N-Division factory in Elmira returned to its pre-war production of adding machines and typewriters. After it was acquired by the Sperry Corporation in 1955, the workforce declined as jobs were shipped overseas and the demand for its products declined. In 1972, production was consolidated in Canada.

Following the war, Elmira's population stabilized and, even as housing demands lessened, the Miller Block continued in use as retail space and apartments. It was also one of the few buildings that escaped serious damage from devastating floods in 1946 and 1972. The flood of 1972 was caused by the effects of Hurricane Agnes, which overflowed the levees and floodwalls around the Chemung River and caused \$290 million in damages. Water rose above first floor doorways, flooded basements, and 5,000 Southside residents had to evacuate their homes. Southside industries such as American LaFrance were damaged and either relocated or rebuilt elsewhere. Over 7,000 homes throughout the city were damaged. In Southside, temporary mobile home housing was set up in Brand Park for the displaced. The federal government provided funds for housing and open space development, resulting in the construction of Southport Towers, a large senior citizen housing complex across the street, south of the Miller Block. Several commercial buildings along South Main Street were also demolished or rebuilt with loans from the Small Business Administration, forever altering South Main

¹³ *Chemung County, Its History*, (Elmira, NY: Commercial Press of Elmira, 1961), 48.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*

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Street's commercial appearance. Valentine Miller's Block escaped damage, as did the townhouse on West Henry Street, making the building a rare surviving example of the late nineteenth century architecture that once lined South Main Street.

Criterion C: Architecture

In 1887, Valentine Miller contracted with local carpenter and architect Huron O. Smith (1832-1909) to build the commercial block and townhouse on his property at South Main and West Henry Streets. Smith was a craftsman-architect, who began his career as a carpenter, moving from Pennsylvania to Elmira in 1851. Once in Elmira, he studied architecture under G.W. Gardiner, another local architect. Although he designed several buildings, Smith's best known works were the rectory/convent for St. Patrick's and the Miller Block, both substantial brick buildings with elaborate detailing. Smith practiced during a period when architects and builders had access to a variety of new materials such as milled wood and cast iron and a proliferation of builders' guides and published architectural designs. Smith favored an eclectic mix of elements rather than any one particular style.

The buildings for St. Patrick's and the Miller Block had different functions but similar features, showing Smith's consistency as a carpenter. St. Patrick's had decorative wood porches at the entrances and detailed embellishments in the eaves, gables and dormers. The Miller Block and Townhouse also used elaborate decoration executed in both stone and wood. A second story porch with the townhouse was similar in style and decoration to the first floor porch of the St. Patrick's residence. Both buildings had projecting bay windows and facades with highly ornate rooflines. The rectory emphasized its residential function with massing and porches, while the Miller Block used scale and decorative features to provide a sense of grandeur and permanence and to stand out among a long row of commercial buildings. The building featured a stamped metal cornice with finials, leaded-glass gable end lights, and elaborately incised limestone trim elements (sills, lintels, piers, belt courses, etc.). The townhouse had the same highly decorative stone lintels as featured in the commercial block, as well as a second story porch and two full-height bay windows. Both the commercial block and townhouse had stone foundations and a water table separating the foundation from the brick walls.

Smith's Miller Block was a good example of the use of increased ornamentation available for commercial architecture during the late-nineteenth century. The building represented the evolution of the two-part commercial block, a building of two-to-four stories, separated into two distinct sections by a horizontal division, which was introduced around 1840. Often stylistically harmonious, the two sections were typically different, indicating function, with the ground level storefront having large windows and open spaces. Office or

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residential units were relegated to the upper, more private areas behind a decorated wall with smaller windows.¹⁵ By the late nineteenth century, exteriors used a variety of decorative features, as American architecture adopted a flood of revival styles, mostly derived from European models, such as the English Gothic and the Romanesque. After the Civil War, elaborate ornamentation was made possible by changes in manufacturing technologies, such as the mechanization of stone and wood cutting, which directly led to the increased use of applied decoration on buildings across the country. These advances in technology made it easier for the builder and architect to incorporate these items into their designs.

Smith took full advantage of available fabricated elements. He separated the ground floor from the upper portion by a cast-iron storefront and cornice, made in Elmira by the Reid & Cooper foundry. Bays were divided by narrow carved stone pilasters that carried the fluting in the cast-iron storefront to the third floor. Eared carved stone lintels topped the windows of the second floor, while carved stone fans marked the window in the third floor. The entire façade was topped by an elaborate parapet and cornice with evenly spaced corbels and brackets and inset stone panels. The center panel included the inscription *V. Miller's Building, 1887*. Another plain panel was placed in the center of the second floor with a much smaller inscription stating *H.O. Smith, architect*. Smith carried a number of the stone details and the cornice along the south side of the building. The west end of the first floor contained a secondary entrance that showed his former training as a carpenter through the use of a deep-set entrance at the wall end accented by a curved wood arch with fan brackets under a stone lintel and accented with beadboard and a transom.

At the time Smith was in practice, the two-part commercial block building design used the exterior, especially the façade, to make a statement and the “desire to have the buildings themselves perceived as ornaments to the community.”¹⁶ Decoration was mostly limited to the façade; secondary elevations were often less detailed, as seen with the more restrained ornamentation on the west side (rear) of the Miller Block. Corner buildings and taller buildings often treated any highly visible portion with the same ornate detailing that most two-part blocks limited to the façade, again seen in the decorated south elevation of the Miller Block.¹⁷ During this period, ornamentation included a greater variety of decorative features (turrets, towers, oriel windows and gables, etc.) and materials, such as milled wood, brick, carved stone, and cast-iron store fronts.¹⁸ The two-part block remained popular as a commercial type up through the mid twentieth-century.

¹⁵ Richard W. Longstreth, “Compositional Types in American Commercial Architecture,” in, *Perspectives in Vernacular Architecture, Vol. 2* (1986), 6.

¹⁶ Richard W. Longstreth, *The Buildings of Main Street: A Guide to American Commercial Architecture*, (Walnut Creek: Rowman & Littlefield Publishers, 2000), 29-31.

¹⁷Ibid, 4.

¹⁸Ibid, 35.

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While the exterior of the main building remained much as Smith planned, the interior was another matter. As the interior became apartments, the layout and units were modernized. Curved walls were added; plain doors and moldings, arched room openings, new cabinets, bathrooms and kitchens were installed. The proliferation of prefabricated materials allowed a common standardization in each unit, which featured identical wooden window trim, purple and pink tiling in the bathrooms, and wooden cabinets with simple milled patterns at the top. The few hints of Smith's late-nineteenth century designs were relegated to the newell post in the second to third floor rear staircase and the interior of the townhouse, which retained its carved staircases, milled wood brackets, moldings and marble fireplace mantels.

Huron Smith was typical of the craftsman/architects commonly seen throughout the nineteenth century. By the turn-of-the-twentieth century, craftsmen/architects like Huron O. Smith were increasingly pushed to the margins as groups like the American Institute of Architects promoted professionalizing of the practice of architecture. Even though training continued in the offices of established architects, the era of the educated architect emerged as more American colleges and universities added architecture to the curriculum. Smith was primarily hired for small residential projects, but his two known large projects, the Miller Block and St. Patrick's Parochial Residence, embodied his skill at applying embellishment to what may be seen as a standard building form. The highly decorative façade of the Miller Block made a statement with its size and ornate nature, drawing attention to the building in what had been a commercially dense street.

Throughout its existence, the Miller Block served many functions: Valentine Miller's grocery, Chemung Food Market, Henry Wich's meat store, the Grand Union Company Grocers, a chiropractor, apartments, and meeting rooms. Its continued use, corner location and dominant façade made the building an important landmark for Southside. From 1898 to 1934 the Miller Block was home to the Queen City Lodge and Rebekah Lodge of the I.O.O.F, one of Elmira's most active fraternal organizations, which used meeting rooms in the building for banquets and ceremonies. After flooding devastated Elmira in 1972, the Miller Block was one of the few undamaged historic buildings in Southside, adding to its importance as part of the city's historic legacy. The building continues to portray the image of success that Valentine Miller intended to convey when he contracted Huron O. Smith to build the Miller Block and Townhouse in the 1880s. The grocery may be gone, but its apartments and townhouse are still an important part of the architectural landscape in Southside.

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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"With Pad and Pencil." *Elmira Star-Gazette*, December 18, 1907. Online at <http://www.fultonhistory.com/>.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

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

Primary location of additional data:

State Historic Preservation Office
 Other State agency
 Federal agency
 Local government
 University
 Other
Name of repository: Preservation Studios, Inc.

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Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	<u>18N</u> Zone	<u>350681</u> Easting	<u>4660514</u> Northing	3	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing
2	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing	4	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary is the same as for the period of significance.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Derek R. King & Matt Schoen (edited by Virginia L. Bartos, Ph.D., NYS OPRHP)
organization Preservation Studios, Inc. date March 2017
street & number 60 Hedley Place telephone 716-725-6410
city or town Buffalo state NY zip code 14208
e-mail dereking@preservationstudios.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Miller Block & Townhouse
Name of Property

Chemung County, NY
County and State

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Miller Block and Townhouse

City or Vicinity: Elmira

County: Chemung State: New York

Photographer: numbers 0001 through 0012--Virginia L. Bartos, 28 October 2015
numbers 0013 through 0018-- Preservation Studios 10 September 2015

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

- 0001 of 0018: South and east elevations of Miller Block, viewed looking northwest.
- 0002 of 0018: Detail view of southeast portion of Miller Block.
- 0003 of 0018: South elevation of Miller Block and south and west elevations of Townhouse, viewed looking northeast.
- 0004 of 0018: Detail view of façade of Townhouse, view looking north.
- 0005 of 0018: East elevation of Miller Block and north elevation of Townhouse, viewed looking southeast.
- 0006 of 0018: Detail view of cast iron storefront, Miller Block.
- 0007 of 0018: Detail view of second floor rear stair, Miller Block.
- 0008 of 0018: Second floor hallway, Miller Block.
- 0009 of 0018: Detail view of second floor apartment (bathroom), Miller Block.
- 0010 of 0018: Detail view of kitchen, second floor apartment, Miller Block.
- 0011 of 0018: Overview of Miller Block, second floor apartment.
- 0012 of 0018: View of 1952 stair, view of second floor to ground floor entrance.
- 0013 of 0018: Overview of northside storefront interior, Miller Block.
- 0014 of 0018: Interior staircase, Townhouse (206 West Henry).
- 0015 of 0018: Townhouse hallway (upper unit), 206 West Henry.
- 0016 of 0018: Detail of Townhouse interior (upper unit), 206 West Henry.
- 0017 of 0018: Detail of Townhouse kitchen interior (lower unit), 204 West Henry.
- 0018 of 0018: Door details/molding details, 204 West Henry (Townhouse upper unit).

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

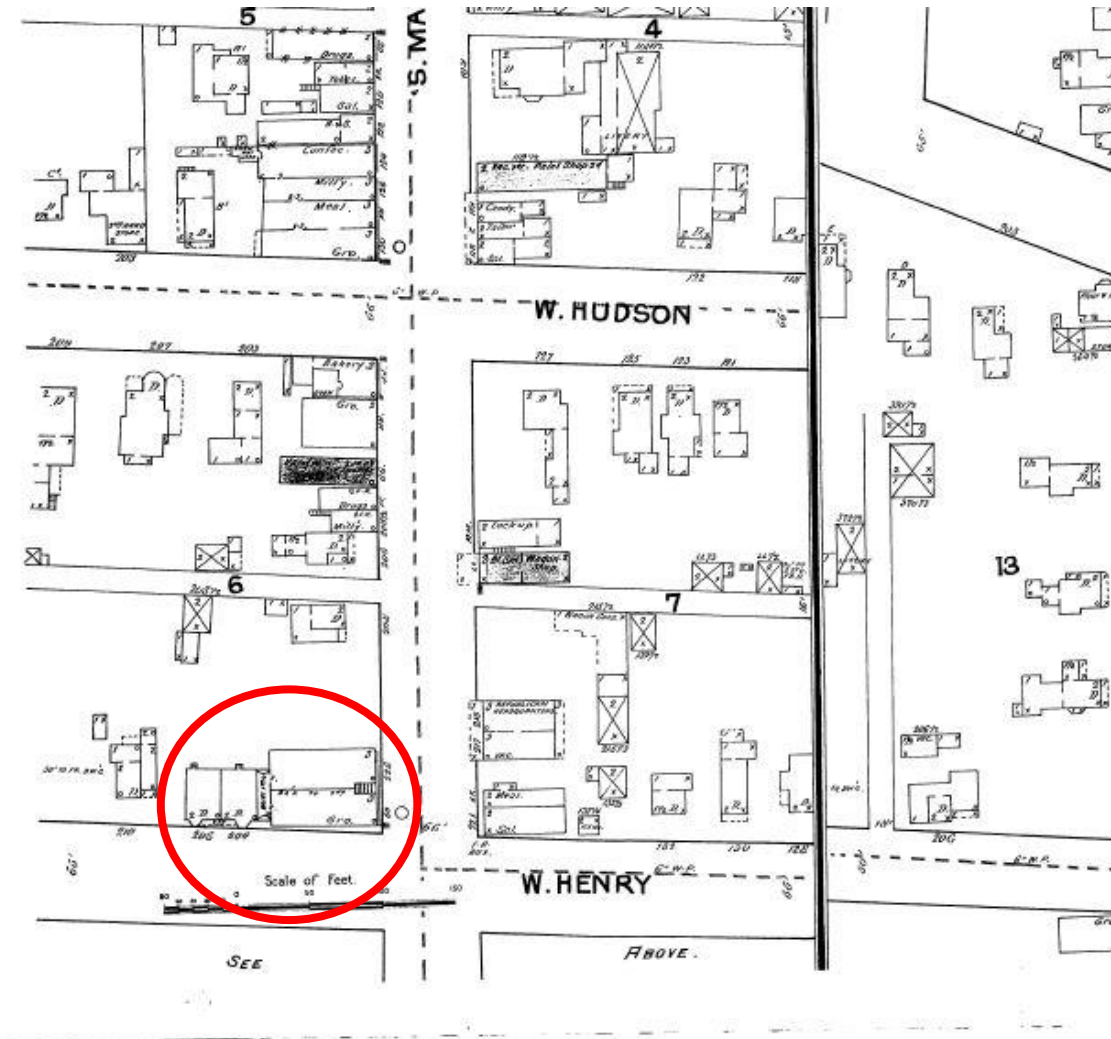
name Elmira Real Properties Inc.
street & number 111 North Main Street telephone N/A
city or town Elmira state NY zip code 14901

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

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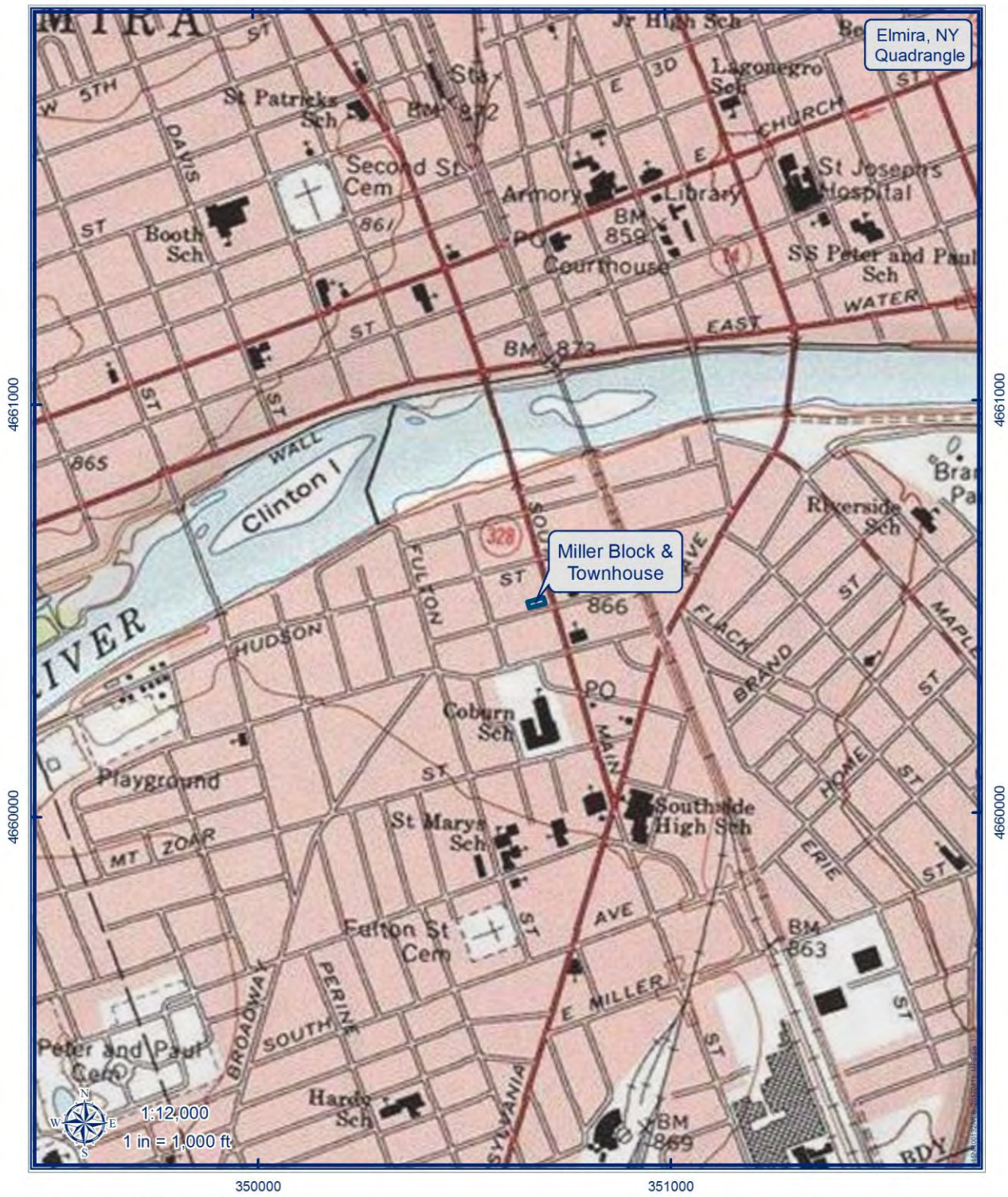
1892 Sanborn Map
showing V. Miller Block
and Townhouse

Miller Block & Townhouse
Name of Property

Chemung County, NY
County and State

Miller Block and Townhouse
City of Elmira, Chemung Co., NY

226 S. Main St. & 204-206 W. Henry St.
Elmira, NY 14904



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter



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Miller Block & Townhouse
Name of Property

Chemung County, NY
County and State

Miller Block and Townhouse
City of Elmira, Chemung Co., NY

226 S. Main St. & 204-206 W. Henry St.
Elmira, NY 14904



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
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Miller Block



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Calendar and papers on the left door.

I know that you believe you understand
what you think I said, but I'm not sure you
realize that what you heard is not what I meant.

BIG LOTS

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received: 5/12/2017 Date of Pending List: Date of 16th Day: Date of 45th Day: 6/26/2017 Date of Weekly List: 6/30/2017

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

- | | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Appeal | <input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PDIL | <input type="checkbox"/> Text/Data Issue |
| <input type="checkbox"/> SHPO Request | <input type="checkbox"/> Landscape | <input type="checkbox"/> Photo |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Waiver | <input type="checkbox"/> National | <input type="checkbox"/> Map/Boundary |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Resubmission | <input type="checkbox"/> Mobile Resource | <input type="checkbox"/> Period |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Other | <input type="checkbox"/> TCP | <input type="checkbox"/> Less than 50 years |
| | <input type="checkbox"/> CLG | |

Accept Return Reject 6/26/2017 Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria

Reviewer Alexis Abernathy Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2236 Date _____

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

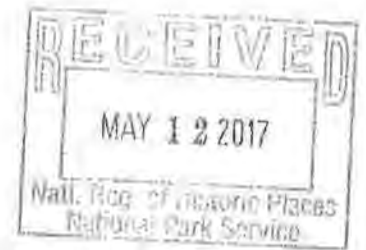
If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ROSE HARVEY
Commissioner



5 May 2017

Alexis Abernathy
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1849 C Street NW
Washington DC 20240

Re: National Register Nomination

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to submit the following five nominations, all on disc, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

Miller Block and Townhouse, Chemung County
Biggs Memorial Hospital Complex, Tompkins County
Cash-Draper House, Orange County
Heintzelman Library, Warren County
Rest Haven, Orange County

Please feel free to call me at 518.268.2165 if you any questions.

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank
National Register Coordinator
New York State Historic Preservation Office