

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name** Nelliston Multiple Resource Area (Partial Inventory)

historic Historic Resources of Nelliston, N.Y. (Partial Inventory; Historic  
and Architectural Properties)  
and/or common Nelliston

**2. Location**

street & number Parts of the incorporated village of Nelliston not for publication

city, town Nelliston vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ congressional district 31

state New York code 036 county Montgomery code 057

**3. Classification**

<b>Category</b>	<b>Ownership</b>	<b>Status</b>	<b>Present Use</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> multiple resources	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residences
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

name Multiple Ownership See Continuation Sheet

street & number \_\_\_\_\_

city, town \_\_\_\_\_ vicinity of \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. New Montgomery County Court House

street & number Route 30A

city, town Fonda state New York

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Statewide Inventory of Historic Resources has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date 1978 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Div. for Historic Preservation

city, town Albany state New York

## 7. Description

### Condition

☒ excellent  
☒ good  
☐ fair

☐ deteriorated  
☐ ruins  
☐ unexposed

### Check one

☒ unaltered  
☐ altered

### Check one

☒ original site  
☐ moved date \_\_\_\_\_

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Nelliston is a small incorporated village located very close to the center of New York State. It lies on a bow-shaped bend of the Mohawk River, which at this point flows almost directly south, placing Nelliston on the east side. The village has a smaller population than its close neighbors. Directly across the river is Fort Plain, to the south Palatine Bridge, and to the north St. Johnsville. All were functioning as communities before Nelliston.

The Historic Resources of Nelliston, N.Y. nomination is comprised of the Nelliston Historic District, located within the village of Nelliston, and five individual historic buildings. Two of the five are residences with village settings and three are farmhouses. All are within the village limits.

Both a thorough visual survey of Nelliston and its environs and a complete historical study incorporating both documentary and oral research have been made by Mrs. Ruth Lupo of Nelliston, in cooperation with the Montgomery County Department of History and Archives, Old County Courthouse, Fonda. Mrs. Lupo, the village Historian and a retired teacher, has spent years studying the historical development of the area. With the aid of the Nelliston Community Group, her efforts culminated in the 164-page book, Waymarks in Nelliston, New York, which was published in 1978.

No archeological sites are included in the Historic Resources of Nelliston nomination. A separate archeological survey is underway.

The historic district and the five individual buildings are located on rising ground east of the Mohawk River, which here is a section of New York State's Barge Canal. Highways and railroad lines run along each side of the river. The larger amount of railroad freight traffic is carried on the southwest side of the river, and the Thomas E. Dewey Thruway, an interstate toll highway, runs southwest of Fort Plain. Therefore, major traffic bypasses Nelliston, located on New York State Route 5. The village and environs on the east bank are chiefly residential today, with most commercial services and all of the local factories provided in the larger community of Fort Plain across the Mohawk. The two communities are linked directly by a bridge completed in 1931 on the site of earlier spans.

Nelliston has undergone very little twentieth-century growth and until recently was losing population. The late nineteenth century marked the period of greatest prosperity of the area. Houses in the multiple resources nomination represent periods from about 1800 to the end of the nineteenth century.

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Historic Resources of Nelliston

Continuation sheet Montgomery County

Item number 7

Page 1

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received SEP 23 1980

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The historic resources survey of the village of Nelliston took place in three stages. In the first stage, Village Historian Ruth Lupo and Doris Manley of the State Historic Preservation Officer's staff conducted a windshield survey, examining every property within the limits of the incorporated village. In the process, they identified all structures of historical and architectural interest, including all extant structures which appeared in the 1878 county atlas. In the second phase, documentation was prepared for all these properties and recorded on New York State's building-structure inventory forms. In the third phase, these properties were examined in the light of the National Register criteria and additional documentation was provided as necessary for properties which appeared to be eligible. Nomination of the properties was then initiated.

According to the land use survey prepared in 1964 by Russell D. Bailey and Associates of Utica, there were then some 230 "parcels or structures" in the village. Of these, inventory forms were prepared for 125 (54%), and 62 (27%) were included in the nomination. The total village area is 874 acres (1.36 square miles) of which 75% is vacant or farmland and 9% is water area. The nominated properties comprise approximately 75 acres, of which slightly less than half is vacant -- farmland or undeveloped land in the railroad corridor. The nominated acreage comprises only 12% of the total village area but 30% of the developed area.

Only 10 percent of the properties in Nelliston are non-residential. This is reflected in the nomination, which includes one modern public building (#24a) and a few railroad-related structures (#'s 54-56) now used for commercial purposes. Historically, Nelliston has always depended on the institutions and industries of Fort Plain just across the river. The only village church, built in 1895, was used for only 25 years, and lost its integrity when it was converted to apartments c. 1950. The village school, which served the community from 1869 to 1971, is now an upholstery company and has lost many original architectural features. The nineteenth-century commercial structures which stood on River and Main Streets burned or have been considerably altered.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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DATE ENTERED

27 1980

### Historic Resources of Nelliston

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 2

The Nelliston Historic District: *Prospect, River, Railroad and  
Berthand St.*

The Nelliston Historic District occupies about 39 acres. It encompasses three of Nelliston's residential streets developed between 1860 and 1890 and the area along the railroad tracks which contains two period freight houses and the 1902 railroad station. The road to the bridge over the Mohawk cuts through the center of the district.

The district is primarily a showcase of the two-story Italianate style which was widely popular in the village. Three full-blown Italianate houses on Prospect Street date to the early 1860's and have been village landmarks for over one hundred years. They were purposely designed with lawns and landscaping leading down the slope to the railroad and overlooking the river. This landscaping makes them visible even today from the opposite side of the river (photo 2).

The first house on Prospect Street, the Abram Nellis Mansion, is a good example of the Italianate style. A large, two-story block of brick, it has a brick addition at the rear. Rising out of the center of the roof is a large windowed cupola or "observatory." This cupola, like the main house, has wide, overhanging eaves supported by ornamental brackets. Similar roof overhangs and brackets can be found throughout the historic district, even on modest frame homes intended for workers. The Abram Nellis Mansion, however, is of brick. Bracketed exterior cornices top tall windows placed in pairs on the first two floors. Small horizontal windows with three round-headed panes let light into the attic story. Across Prospect Street to the east is one of the Nellis Mansion's original carriage barns, a well-preserved board-and-batten structure with two large carriage doors, a full second story in which are original double-hung windows, and a roof line of low pitch which mimics the Italianate roof lines of nearby residences (photo 1).

The Vedder-Staley House, a few doors away on Prospect Street, was built two years later. It imitates the Abram Nellis Mansion with a cupola, overhanging bracketed eaves, and tall double windows. This house, also of brick, has a wide paneled frieze pierced by three-light horizontal windows in the attic. A well-preserved carriage barn with a vergeboard on a front gable dormer is located across the street (photo 6).

A third brick mansion, the Smith-Eacker House, with two remaining board-and-batten carriage barns (photos 2-5), is also on the southeast

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED **FEB 29 1980**

DATE ENTERED

**SEP 27 1980**

Historic Resources of Nelliston

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 3

end of Prospect Street, making this street the architectural high point of the district. Other houses of both brick and frame exhibit similar design components but are less pretentious. Houses on Berthoud Street, for example, display a series of Italianate facades in both materials. In the district, siding and porches have occasionally been replaced but the level of integrity is high. The district fortunately retains five barns or carriage houses associated with the period houses.

The earliest house in the historic district is the c. 1800 Fickel Stone House. Seven modern houses have been included because they are necessary for the continuity of the district, and there are also a few modest, late nineteenth century buildings with minor Gothic or Colonial Revival detail. A row of workingman's houses on Railroad Street, interesting in their Italianate styling but now disfigured by imitation siding or garage additions, has also been included in order to extend the district to the 1879 railroad freight house, to a second, earlier freight house, and to the railroad station.

The 1879 freight house, an intact one-story brick structure beside the tracks, south of the bridge over the Mohawk, has sixteen bays including five arched loading doors, a wide roof overhang, and brackets (photo 12). The earlier freight house is north of the bridge and is in two sections; the original 1868 one-story brick freight house of nine bays and a later creamery addition from 1899 of two stories with six bays. The building, now a used car outlet in deteriorated condition, is west of the tracks. Also west of the tracks, but south of the bridge, is the stone railroad station, with typical 1902 wide overhang and brackets. The station is now used as a restaurant (photo 13).

A list of the buildings within the Nelliston Historic District follows. The unique site number, if any, and the applicable numbers of the accompanying photographs are given in parenthesis.

1. Abram Nellis Mansion (One Prospect Street): 1860 Italianate, painted brick, square block, 3 bay,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  stories, cupola, rear wing, wide roof overhang with brackets. (057-48-0012, photo 1 )
2. Smith-Eacker House (Nine Prospect Street): 1860 Italianate, painted brick, 4 bay, square block with two wings, cupola, wide roof overhang with brackets,  $2\frac{1}{2}$  stories. (057-48-0011, photos 2-5)
3. Smith-Shiminski House (Prospect Street): early twentieth century, 2 story, frame. (057-48-0010)
4. Davis House (Prospect Street): 1976 A-frame, modern intrusion. (057-48-0009)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED FEB 29 1980

DATE ENTERED

SEP 27

Historic Resources of Nelliston

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 4

5. Vedder-Staley House (Prospect Street): 1862 Italianate, brick, 3 bay, square block with wing, 2½ stories, cupola, wide roof overhang with brackets. (057-48-0008, photo 6)
6. Flint-Breary House (Prospect Street): c. 1870 Italianate, brick, 3 bay, square block with wing, wide roof overhang with brackets. (057-48-0007)
7. Mickle-MacIntyre House (Prospect Street): 1877 Italianate, frame, 2 story, gable roof of low pitch, bracketed wide overhang, 2 story wing. (057-48-0006, photo 8)
8. Duesler-Wainright House (27 Prospect Street): 1877 Italianate, frame, 2 story, gable roof of low pitch, bracketed wide overhang, 2 story wing. (057-48-0005)
9. Reese Trailer (Prospect Street): house trailer, modern intrusion.
10. Nellis-Reese House (Prospect Street): late nineteenth century, frame, 2 story. (057-48-0004)
11. Bray-Wengenack House (Prospect Street): 1887 frame, 2 story. (057-48-0003)
12. Fickel Stone House (Prospect Street): c. 1800 stone farmhouse with nineteenth-century wooden additions, 1½ stories. (057-48-0002)
13. Wendell-Eckler Town House (Prospect Street): c. 1908 to 1916, frame, 2 story, 2 family, Italianate roof line, dormers. (057-48-0023)
14. Smith-Loftstrom House (Prospect Street): c. 1881 Italianate, frame, 2 story. (057-48-0022)
15. Frederick House (Prospect Street): 1947 shingled bungalow. (057-48-0021)
16. Guiwits-Swartz Bootshop (Prospect Street): c. 1880, remodeled, frame, 2 story. (057-48-0020)
17. Lyden-Houghton House (Prospect Street): c. 1881 Italianate, frame, 2 story, roof of low pitch, brackets. (057-48-0019)
18. Nellis-Steinhaus House (Prospect Street): 1891 Italianate, frame, 2 story, 3 bay block with 2 bay wing, low pitched roof with overhang and brackets, porch. (057-48-0018, photo 7)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED FEB 29 1980

DATE ENTERED

SEP 27

Historic Resources of Nelliston

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER

7

PAGE

5

19. Vedder-Staley Stable and Carriage Barn (Prospect Street): c. 1860's, barn for Vedder-Staley House, frame, narrow horizontal siding, verge board detail in gable dormer, decorative window lintels. (057-48-0017, photo 7)
20. Matt House (Prospect Street): 1956, ranch, intrusion. (057-48-0015)
21. Miller-Bowman House (Prospect Street): 1872, frame, 1½ story, gable to road. (057-48-0016)
22. Smith Carriage House (Prospect Street): 1861, vertical board-and-batten, originally carriage house for the Smith-Eacker House. (057-48-0014, photo 5)
23. Nellis Carriage House (Prospect Street): c. 1860, vertical board-and-batten, originally carriage house for the Abram Nellis Mansion, Italianate influence roof, two carriage doors. (057-48-0013, photo 5)
24. Nellis-Sponable House (16 River Street): c. 1870-1875, Italianate, brick, 2 story, 3 bay block with 2 bay wing, overhang, brackets, molded lintels, 2 porches. (057-48-0105)
- 24A. Nelliston Municipal Building (River Street): 1963, cinderblock, modern intrusion.
25. Jacob Nellis-Hubbard House (River Street): 1864, Italianate, frame, 2 story with 3 bay square block, cupola, brackets, Greek Revival molded frieze. (057-48-0102, photo 9)
26. J. Smith-Bell House (Nelliston Lane): 1873, Italianate, brick, 2 story with cupola, wide roof overhang with brackets, "eyebrow" windows in the frieze, bay window. (057-48-0098)
27. Neiholtz-Waufle House (6 Berthoud Street): c. 1881, Italianate, frame, 2 story with wide roof overhang, brackets, replacement siding.
28. Davi House (8 Berthoud Street): 1948, Cape Cod, intrusion
29. Snider-Clinton House (12 Berthoud Street): c. 1889, Italianate, frame, 2 story, low pitch roof with overhang and brackets, siding replaced.
30. Gray House (14 Berthoud Street): c. 1885, Italianate, frame, 2 story, with 2 story wing.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED FEB 29 1980

DATE ENTERED

SEP 27

Historic Resources of Nelliston

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7

PAGE 6

31. Smith-Alkinburgh House (16 Berthoud Street): 1891, Italianate, brick, 2 story, 2 bay block with 1 bay wing, hooded lintels, roof of low pitch with wide overhang and brackets. (057-48-0100)
32. Wagner-Gros House (20 Berthoud Street): 1895, Italianate, frame, 2 story, roof of low pitch with brackets, original siding and porch.
33. Wick-Wagner House (30 Berthoud Street): c. 1895, frame, 2½ stories, 2 story projection with porches.
34. Gerhart-Ristau House (32 Berthoud Street): 1883, Italianate, frame, 2 story, low pitch roof with overhang and brackets, replacement siding.
35. Dahlen-Van Schaick House (34 Berthoud Street): c. 1900, frame, 2½ story.
36. Gehring House (33 Berthoud Street): 1953, ranch, modern intrusion.
37. Nellis-Bosworth House (Berthoud Street): 1881, Italianate, frame, 2 story, low pitch roof, replacement siding. (057-48-0099)
38. Klump-Wagner House (25 Berthoud Street): 1889, frame, 2 story, gable roof.
39. Leip-Gros House (21-23 Berthoud Street): 1891, Italianate, frame, 2 story, wide roof overhang with brackets, wide fascia, porch.
40. Cranker-Peck House (19 Berthoud Street): 1884, Italianate, brick, 2 story, wide roof overhang with brackets, porch trim. (057-48-0101)
41. Failing-Cronkhite House (19 Berthoud Street): 1887, frame, 2 story with polygonal corner windows.
42. Marsh-Rimkis House (11 Berthoud Street): 1884, Italianate, brick, 2 story with ell, wide roof overhang with brackets, round-headed windows.
43. Marsh-Reed House (9 Berthoud Street): 1883, Italianate, brick, 2 story with ell, low pitched roof with overhang and brackets, round-headed windows, twin of No. 42 except for roof.
44. Nellis-Dillenbeck House (7 Berthoud Street): 1881, Italianate, frame, 2 story, low pitched roof with wide fascia, brackets.



**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED FEB 29 1980

DATE ENTERED

SEP 27

Historic Resources of Nelliston

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 7

45. Nellis-Vosburgh House (5 Berthoud Street): 1881, Italianate, frame, 2 story similar to No. 43 except for roof pitch.
46. Schickler House (Railroad Street): c. 1880, frame, 2 story with additions.
47. Taylor-Kopper House (6 Railroad Street): c. 1879, frame, 2 story, Italianate roof. (057-48-0089)
48. Vosburgh House (Railroad Street): c. 1880, frame, 2 story.
49. Evans House (Railroad Street): c. 1880, frame, 2 story.
50. Etherton House (Railroad Street): c. 1890, frame, 2 story, flat roof.
51. Lisco House (Railroad Street): c. 1880, frame, 2 story, Italianate roof.
52. Dunckel-Davi Barn (Railroad Street): c. 1884 frame, (photo 11)
53. Dunckel-Howland House (11 Railroad Street): c. 1884, frame.
54. Freight House (Railroad Street): 1879, one story brick building of 16 bays, wide roof overhang with brackets, five arched door openings. (057-48-0090, photo 12)
55. Railroad Depot (River Street): 1902, stone station with wide roof overhang and brackets, quoins. (057-48-0091, photo 13)
56. Milk Factory-Freight House (River Street): c. 1868, one story brick railroad freight house of 8 bays, with 1899 two story, 6 bay addition. (057-48-0092)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

## NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED FEB 29 1980

DATE ENTERED

SEP 27

### Historic Resources of Nelliston

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 8

The individual properties in the Historic Resources of Nelliston nomination are the following:

The Peter Ehle House is located on the northeast side of East Main Street (Route 5) near the eastern limits of the village. It is a rectangular two-story block of stone with a gable roof and inside end chimneys. The house is five bays wide and two bays deep. The stone is plain coursed ashlar with plain quoins, cut in a local limestone quarry, possibly the one which was once part of the farm. Smaller stones fill the gable ends, in each of which there are two, quarter round windows in the late Federal style. The brackets under the eaves and the bracketed porch are old but probably not original to the house. A frame extension at the rear is early. The house has three fireplaces, wide plank floors, and a center staircase. It retains an impressive barn complex including a large frame barn, two carriage houses, and a small stone outbuilding, in addition to one large, part stone barn which has fallen in. For many years a prosperous dairy farm, the property is now used as a residence. It was built in 1826 on land acquired by the Ehle family in 1727. For historic reasons and to protect the farm setting, the boundaries have been set to include frontage on both Route 5 and Grof Road. (057-48-0020, photos 14-16)

The Jacob Nellis Farmhouse is also located on an early farm. It is on the south side of Nellis Street, east of the village proper. On a hillside, it has an impressive view of the village and Fort Plain. Built in the early 1830's, the house is a one and a half story, five-bay-long rectangle of stone with a three-bay, lower, one and a half story extension on the north side. A wooden kitchen extending to the rear was added before 1900. In the Greek Revival fashion, the house has a wide fascia with eyebrow windows set into it in each bay, and a moderate roof overhang, simple boxed cornice, roof returns, and a one-bay porch with four pillars. The limestone is plain coursed ashlar without quoins. There are inside end chimneys in the larger part of the house. The windows are double hung with stone lintels. The panes have been replaced except for those in the attic windows in one gable end. The rear addition has a modern kitchen but the front historic portion is intact and partially unused in winter. The farm has a small, nineteenth-century frame barn and a large, multi-level twentieth-century barn. Much of the land occupied by the village came from this farm. Since this is an operating farm, the acreage of the present farm within the village limits has been included in the boundaries of the nomination. (057-48-0097, photos 17-22)

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED FEB 29 1980

DATE ENTERED

SEP 27

Historic Resources of Nelliston

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 9

The Walrath-Van Horne House of two and one-half stories faces West Main Street (Route 5) west of the village proper near the village limits. The site overlooks the tracks and the Mohawk River. The original one and a half story Greek Revival house of 1842 was built of cut stone and had a full height wooden portico with four pillars. The house had inside end chimneys and eyebrow windows. In 1895, a frame, shingled second story, topped by a mansard roof punctuated by round-headed dormers, was added to the original house, and a new porch with mansard styling was built to replace the Greek Revival portico. New double-hung windows with large panes were installed. The first floor of the house, therefore, has architrave moldings of the Greek Revival period and deep window reveals in the stone walls. On the second floor the trim is late nineteenth century, symmetrically molded trim with bull's-eye corner blocks. The setting of the Walrath-Van Horne House is enhanced by two barns, a latticed well house, and a valuable stone combination summer kitchen and smokehouse. The latter cut stone building probably pre-dates the main house and relates to prior use of the site. The small building is a rare survival with an intact interior which includes paneling, a fireplace with a crane, and a built-in iron kettle. The whole attic was used as the smokehouse and it is black with creosote. Hooks dangle from the ceiling. An adjoining frame barn may pre-date the 1842 house, as well. It has eyebrow windows and was apparently formerly a house, probably on another site, as it has no cellar. The farm has been occupied since before 1760 when it extended to the river, where early Walraths ran the ferry and a blacksmith shop. The property of the present owner, while it includes the historic buildings, comprises only a small part of the original farm, much of which has been occupied by the village of Nelliston. (057-48-0026, photos 23-37)

The Waterman-Gramps House is a small stone house located at the dead end of School Street. It is of coursed rubble with cut stone lintels and sills, and has its gable and entrance towards the street. A wooden kitchen and porch have been added on the south side, and attached to the north side is a frame house built in the 1960's. There is no interior connection between the two houses. The stone house of the mid-nineteenth century has hand-hewn beams and a stone cistern in the cellar. It is built on a simple off-center plan, with only two rooms in the half story upstairs, and an entrance hall, one large room, and two small ones on the first floor. Limestone steps lead to the recessed front door of Greek Revival inspiration. The house is located on a standard village lot, which forms the boundaries of the nomination. (057-48-0042, photos 38-41)

The Lasher-Davis House is also a small, one and a half story house with

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
HERITAGE CONSERVATION AND RECREATION SERVICE

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

FOR HCRS USE ONLY

RECEIVED FEB 29 1980

DATE ENTERED SEP 27

Historic Resources of Nelliston

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 10

its gable to the road. This house is of frame construction and has three front bays, with the entrance in the first bay. The house has narrow siding and corner boards, a simple boxed eave, and double-hung windows with an unusual wooden lintel with cut-out detail. Original six over six light windows have been retained on the second floor. The 1865 house is little altered. It boasts an attractive porch with cut-out railings and brackets under the porch eaves. A nineteenth-century addition extends from the rear. Inside, the plain trim, architrave moldings of the front rooms, and typical newel and stairway reflect the modest means of the workingmen for whom it was built. Of four similar houses on West Main Street, this is the only house which has remained in intact condition. The house is located on a standard village lot. (057-48-0062, photos 42-47)

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Historic Resources of Nelliston, N.Y. nomination includes property with both architectural and historical significance. Although the Nelliston area was settled in 1723 by Palatine farmers, the village developed much later, in the mid-nineteenth century. The village proper is located on ledges of limestone which hindered early farming but led to the first commercial industry, stone quarrying. The Palatines were Germans who had come from England to make tar in the Hudson Valley. When that scheme failed, many of them settled in the Schoharie and then the Mohawk Valleys. Surface stone, some of it shaped, was often the material used by these farmers for pre-Revolutionary houses. Deep quarrying and commercial cutting began in earnest about the time the 1825 Erie Canal was put through. Completion of the 1800 Mohawk Turnpike through the Nelliston area and the subsequent erection of a toll bridge across the river in 1829 led to a crossroads settlement. By that time the use of stone cut to a uniform size, laid in regular ashlar pattern, was the practice. The farmhouses included in this nomination illustrate this historical and architectural development. An area survey map of 1828 shows eight houses in the vicinity of later Nelliston; at least five of them are known to have been of stone.

In 1834, shortly before the first railroad was put through, a speculator, Louis Berthoud, bought farm land near the bridge. Berthoud Street is named for him. Only a few houses were built, but the station stop erected about 1836 northwest of the bridge for the new railroad, and new area roads to the station and the bridge, led to interest in developing a new community. Nelliston has been described as a "railroad town" although other growth factors also were important. After Abram Nellis, son of a local farmer, acquired from Berthoud the section now known as Prospect Street, he and others forced the construction of a free bridge to Fort Plain. The village then began a period of growth. It was incorporated in 1878. In the mid-nineteenth century, several German immigrant families attracted to the stone quarries arrived. This ethnic influx is represented in the nomination by two modest workingmen's houses. The families formed a majority of the population and German became the second language of the village. Another influx of Germans arrived later. Most were related, and many were carpenters or masons. Soon the families had prospered and were, along with businessmen speculators from Fort Plain, building the Italianate homes for which the village is notable today. The trend in building fashion seems to have been established by farmer-turned-businessman Abram Nellis, who laid out Prospect Street and built his mansion there.

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Historic Resources of Nelliston

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 2

Because the individual houses chosen for this nomination, as well as those in the historic district, have a high level of architectural integrity, they convey a feeling of the historical periods in which they originated.

The bounty of quality stone suitable for building was particularly significant to the area's architecture. For over 150 years it affected social and cultural usage regarding housing. For example, the early eighteenth century dwellings in the nearby upper Hudson Valley were of wood or brick, but at Nelliston, according to photographs of buildings now gone, they were of coursed limestone rubble. Later, while duplicating the story and a half shapes and end chimneys of their Dutch neighbors, the Germans near Nelliston built with cut limestone instead of wood or brick. The Fickel House within the historic district is representative of this late eighteenth century period. The nineteenth-century development of quarries resulted in the houses and stone out-buildings elsewhere in this nomination.

The significance of the stone buildings becomes more obvious when it is observed that, as the village proper developed after mid-century, the stone vernacular tradition was discarded in favor of a more cosmopolitan style, popularized across the state by architectural handbooks and popular books dealing with taste in housing. Aided by post-Civil War prosperity, Nelliston expanded quickly to its maximum size. Residences built in the village then heavily favored the Italianate mode, to the exclusion of other contemporary fashions that might have been chosen. This rather surprising unanimity of taste is represented in the historic district, which presents a single cohesive character. There are only a few houses that interrupt the richly uniform period architecture of wood and brick.

The railroad, which, as it was extended from city to city across the state, became an element in Nelliston's growth, job economy, and tax base, is also represented by three structures in the nomination. After about 1895, the village ceased to grow and there has been little new construction. Several disastrous fires destroyed commercial buildings in the village. However, the notable Italianate residential sections and the earlier farmhouses which were included when the wide corporate limits of the village were set have fortunately been preserved.

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DATE ENTERED

SEP 27 1980

Historic Resources of Nelliston

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 3

### The Nelliston Historic District:

The Nelliston Historic District, in faithfully recording the residential appearance that part of the village achieved during the 1870's and 1880's, has great historical and architectural value. Many of the men who shaped the village lived within the designated historic district. When the new free bridge he had fought for was finished, Abram Nellis, a founder of the village, built the home he had planned on a knoll above the bridge and the railroad depot. Other influential citizens also capitalized on the location. Daniel Smith, a dairy farmer and cheesemaker, built a brick mansion next door, and a little farther along Joshua Vedder, who became a hatter and furrier in Fort Plain, built another. Each of the three faced the river. Landscaped grounds led to the depot. Their carriage houses, barns, and house gardens were on the other side of the private road, now Prospect Street, which gave them access to Bridge Road. Abram Nellis, always a leader, led the fight to incorporate in 1878, became the first president of the village, and spearheaded the village's attempts to collect taxes from the railroad.

The village limits, laid out to secure as much tax money as possible from the railroad, ran for two and a half miles along the tracks and included much undeveloped land and several farmhouses. After service in the Hudson River section was improved, traffic across the state increased and about 1869 the New York Central Railroad added additional tracks through Nelliston. At that time the first freight house was built north of the bridge near the early depot, now gone. In 1879 a second freight receiving building was built on the southeast side of the bridge, leading to the opening of a new street, Railroad Street. The old freight building was purchased by a condensed milk company, and later it was owned and enlarged by other milk companies because of its proximity to the tracks and the river, a source of ice. In 1902, a new station was erected on landscaped grounds south of the bridge. Unquestionably, the railroad was influential in the cultural and financial development of the village, and the artifacts of the railroad should be preserved.

While Fort Plain businessmen and second generation Germans continued to invest in Nelliston lots, houses were constructed at a rapid pace. Thirty houses were built between 1880 and 1883. Lack of a proper water supply and extensive fires in 1893 and 1899 hindered further growth. These factors, as well as competition among the railroads and other economic developments, brought the boom to an abrupt end.

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DATE ENTERED

SEP 27 1980

Historic Resources of Nelliston

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 4

The population of the village reached a high of 748 in 1895; in 1970 it was 723.

The building style chosen by a majority of owners in the present historic district can be termed Italianate. It derived from the mid-eighteenth century Italian villa style made popular by the plans of Alexander Jackson Davis as presented in A.J. Downing's books on landscape and design. The Italianate was a two- or three-story house which included some or all of the following: wide eaves, large, often paired brackets, tall first floor windows, low pitch roof, cupola, paired front doors with glass panels, round-headed windows with hood moldings, and arcaded porches. Only the earliest and most elaborate of Nelliston's homes had the cupolas and hood moldings. When the style was adapted to the more common frame houses, the elements retained were the wide eaves, large brackets, tall windows, and either gable or hip roofs of very low pitch. An occasional brick house was built, usually slightly more elaborate than its neighbors. While no two houses are exactly alike, several similar pairs were built side by side by family members. Decorative porches with brackets and railings were the rule.

The earliest examples of the style were the brick mansions on Prospect Street which, because they are visible from the opposite side of the river, are still architectural landmarks of the village. Emulation of these houses was undoubtedly a factor in the popularity of the style in Nelliston. Examples of the less pretentious version of the mode are the Nellis-Sponable House, a brick house with an ell and two small porches built by Abram Nellis for his daughter on River Street, and the Wagner-Gros House, a frame house with narrow clapboards, a wide frieze with brackets, simple window trim, and a three-bay front porch with railing and brackets. This rather late (1895) house exhibits the gable roof of low pitch which lends some variety to the street-scapes of the district. It is interesting that even a row of unpretentious frame houses built for speculation on Railroad Street when it opened about 1880 boasted wide eaves, brackets, and low-pitched roofs.

Why the style was so popular for thirty years is not certain. Whatever the cause, the Nelliston Historic District is remarkable and valuable for its concentration of houses in the Italianate style.



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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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DATE ENTERED SEP 27 1980

Historic Resources of Nelliston

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 5

The individual properties in the Historic Resources of Nelliston nomination are the following:

The Peter Ehle House has both historical and architectural importance. It is connected with a family which was among the earliest settlers. The farm was obtained from the Indians by the first Palatine German minister here, Rev. Johannes Ehle, and occupied in 1727. Domine Ehle is a historical figure, known for preaching to the Indians as well as to local congregations. It was his grandson, Peter Ehle, who moved the family to the part of the farm traversed by the Mohawk Turnpike and built this substantial stone house, probably with stone cut from his own farm. The Peter Ehle House was built in 1826. The quarry on the farm is first mentioned in records which exist from the 1880's when stone was provided for the bed of the West Shore Railroad, but is thought to have been in use for many years before that. The Ehle family lived on the farm continuously until 1976 and descendants live in the village today. Therefore, the house is extremely significant to the history of the area. With its barn complex it conveys an aura of the nineteenth century.

The house has architectural significance as a little-altered example of a familiar New York State form, the late Federal two-story farmhouse, carried out here in the local material, cut limestone. Since the farm population of the 1820's was not high, large houses built with stone from the early quarries are few and valuable. Most of the stone quarried by the early stone companies was used for the walls of the Erie Canal and for foundations of businesses and homes across the river. Because the Ehle House was identified on a map of 1828 as "Ehle's new stone house," it is readily dated, an important fact in studying the changes in the form and use of the cut stone, as well as other architectural details. The house is useful for comparison with other local farm houses; as a consequence of the residual German culture and the late development of the area, two-story Federal houses are rarer than the one and a half story Greek Revival houses. A full-blown late Federal house which is also made of the cut stone particular to the area is therefore a valuable benchmark.

The Jacob Nellis Farmhouse is another stone house of historical and architectural importance. The Nellis family, Palatine Germans, arrived in the area in 1723. A descendant, Jacob W. Nellis, purchased this farm in 1834. At that time he is reported to have been already living on the site in a log cabin and probably was building this house at that time. By 1864 he also owned a large two-story frame house in the village proper. His son, Abram Nellis, was instrumental in establishing the village to which the family name was given. The

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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DATE ENTERED

SEP 27 1980

Historic Resources of Nelliston

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 6

descendants of Jacob Nellis have operated the farm for over 140 years and the operating farm is still in the Nellis family. The little-changed limestone farmhouse, located among large maples on a hill overlooking the village, retains its historic appearance to a remarkable degree.

The farmhouse is a rare intact example of the Greek Revival style adapted to the vernacular farmhouse shape which did not turn its gable to the road in true Greek Revival manner. Here the example is further valuable because it is carried out in quarried limestone rather than wood. The builders of the story and a half farmhouses made certain concessions to the Greek Revival style, but retained the older orientation and plan of the ubiquitous, rectangular, story and a half house of the eighteenth century. Among the elements adopted were pillared porches, eyebrow windows set in a wide frieze, and roof returns, as seen in the Nellis Farmhouse. The interior trim and molding of this house also is period work. The stone, quarried locally, is similar to the stone used in the Peter Ehle House and in the smokehouse/kitchen of the Walrath-Van Horne House. The stones, while uniform in thickness, are not all the same length. The effect is unsophisticated and more likely to be encountered in walls and foundations than in house construction. This vernacular use became outdated quickly, giving special value to the houses that exhibit it.

The Walrath-Van Horne House also has both historical and architectural significance. An early member of the Walrath family was operating a ferry on the river below the location as early as 1760. Later Walraths were blacksmiths near the river along the King's Highway. The Walrath-Van Horne House, however, was built in 1842 on top of the hill above the river, facing the Mohawk Turnpike. It was probably the second house on this location. The old Walrath farm, like the Nellis farm, became the site for part of the present village proper. Because of the ferry, the farm is intimately associated with the very earliest origins of the settlement. The retention of the stone smokehouse/kitchen on the hill takes the known historical use of the Walrath-Van Horne House site back to a period in the early nineteenth century. In the late 1800's, the house became the home of a hatter and furniture manufacturer in Fort Plain, and was later expensively enlarged to become the mansion of another businessman, Clark Wagner.

Architecturally, the house and its complex are important for several reasons. Because it was topped with a new style late in the nineteenth century, it is a unique, handsome dwelling. Choice of the Second

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INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

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RECEIVED FEB 29 1980

DATE ENTERED

Historic Resources of Nelliston

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 7

Empire style for the addition was very unusual in this stronghold of the Italianate fashion. The expansion of the house to two-and-a-half stories was skillfully done with high quality materials. With the change, the former farmhouse became a businessman's mansion, although it retained its farm setting. The rare intact smokehouse/kitchen also has architectural importance. Such outbuildings seldom survive when regular use ends. This one is particularly valuable because the interior has not been altered. The stone used is similar to that of the two farmhouses previously listed, and undoubtedly dates to the first third of the nineteenth century. However, the stone of the main house, dating to 1842, is much higher quality, with a smooth surface and uniform length. The date of the original part of the main house is engraved in stone over the front door. Thus the site provides useful architectural information in a number of ways. It is an architectural landmark along the road out of the village.

The Lasher-Davis House has been nominated for both historical and architectural significance to the village of Nelliston. Homes in Nelliston were not all for the affluent. As a response to the wave of immigrant workmen and others attracted by the quarries and railroad, a few sections of the village contain housing intended to be rented or sold to workmen's families. This housing should not be overlooked, especially in a village where the ethnic population had such a strong social and cultural impact. On West Main Street, four similar simple cottages were erected on small lots. The Lasher-Davis House, which was one of them, was erected on a lot purchased by Dewitt Lasher in 1865 from Abram Nellis, who owned the large mansion on Prospect Street and helped develop the village.

The Lasher-Davis House is the only one of the four not altered in unsuitable ways. Its simple but adequate plan included a kitchen at the rear, an entrance at left in the front, a narrow hall with an attractive staircase with turned balusters and a typical mid-century newel, a small formal parlor, and a dining room. Two bedrooms opened off a small upstairs hall. Stoves were used for heat and no evidence of any fireplaces exists. Small rooms, plain trim, and low ceilings, bespeak economies in building, yet all the necessary elements for comfortable shelter for a small family existed. A pretty bracketed porch was an amenity which fortunately has been retained in this pristine cottage.

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DATE ENTERED

SEP 27 1979

### Historic Resources of Nelliston

CONTINUATION SHEET

ITEM NUMBER 8 PAGE 8

The Waterman-Gramps House also has both historical and architectural importance. It was erected on School Street by the Waterman family, carpenters and builders who were responsible for later, more substantial homes in the village. This cottage was apparently intended to be rented. It is another example of a small structure intended for a workman's family and was built to produce income for its owners as apartments are constructed today. The cottage helped fill a need for housing in the 1860's as the village began to expand. Its date is similar to those of the large, better known mansions on Prospect Street.

The Waterman-Gramps House is architecturally interesting because it is the only known village example of a post-mid-century residence in stone. The stone used was not the uniform cut stone of the Walrath-Van Horne House, nor even the earlier cut stone used in local farmhouses in the first third of the nineteenth century. Neither is it similar to the hand-cut surface stone of the late eighteenth century. In the Waterman cottage the builder seems to have reverted to the simple procedure of collecting miscellaneous fieldstone and cut stone of relatively similar size which then were laid in roughly coursed fashion. The large, cut stone lintels and sills dominate the facade. The recessed doorway, reminiscent of the Greek Revival style, suggests that the house did not have a porch, another unusual detail. Thus the stone cottage is unique and adds another dimension to the study of the use of stone in the area.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Lupo, Ruth. Waymarks in Nelliston, New York. Fort Plain: The Nelliston Community Group, 1978.

## 10. Geographical Data

**UTM NOT VERIFIED**  
**ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED**  
Quadrangle scale 1:24000

Acreage of nominated property See Continuation Sheet

Quadrangle name Canajoharie

UMT References

Please see continuation sheet.

A	Zone	Easting	Northing	B	Zone	Easting	Northing
C				D			
E				F			
G				H			

### Verbal boundary description and justification

District: See attached schematic map of the district.  
Individual houses: See attached maps for each property.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Mrs. Shirley Dunn

organization Professional Consultant

street & number 612 River Road

city or town Schodack Landing, New York

Edited by Larry Gobrecht  
Historic Preservation  
Parks and Recreation  
Albany, New York 12238

telephone October 12, 1979  
(518) 474-0479

state New York

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Director, Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau  
title

date

2/26/80

For HCPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date

date

4/2/80

9/25/80