



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 Mooncrest Historic District

other names/site number N/A

### 2. Location

street & number Roughly bounded by Thorn Run Road, University Boulevard, Lee Drive, Fern Hollow Road, and Old Thorn Run Road not for publication N/A  
vicinity N/A

city or town Moon Township

state Pennsylvania code PA county Allegheny code 003 zip code 15108

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this X 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 X 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   X   local

Signature of certifying official/Title Andrew McDonald Date: July 29, 2013  
Acting Deputy SHPO

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government: PA Historical and Museum Commission

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 of the Keeper Edron H. Beall Date of Action 9-18-13

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
106		buildings
2	1	sites
		structures
		objects
108	1	<b>Total</b>

**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.)

DOMESTIC/Multiple Dwelling

EDUCATION/School

RECREATION AND CULTURE/Outdoor recreation

TRANSPORTATION/Road-related (vehicular)

**Current Functions** (Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/Multiple Dwelling

VACANT/NOT IN USE

RELIGION/Religious Facility

RECREATION AND CULTURE/Outdoor recreation

SOCIAL/Civic

TRANSPORTATION/Road-related (vehicular)

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification** (Enter categories from instructions.)

Modern Movement

**Materials** (Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Concrete

walls: Brick; Wood

Stucco; Synthetics-Vinyl

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**

Mooncrest is a planned residential development built by the federal government for civilian workers essential to the United States' massive industrial mobilization during World War II. Originally consisting of 396 attached units in 106 modern red-brick buildings, Mooncrest's scale also allowed it to be built with its own community amenities, such as an elementary school, grocery store (excluded from the boundary due to a loss of integrity), and parks. Mooncrest is characterized by low-rise attached housing, curvilinear streets which afforded built-in traffic calming, separate footpaths for pedestrian circulation within the community, shared open space, a community-wide planting plan, and a self-contained site plan which effectively isolates Mooncrest from the otherwise sprawling suburban geography of Moon Township. All of these original features survive except for one residential building which was lost to fire in 2006; the community's original non-residential buildings also survive, though altered to accommodate new uses. Despite alterations to some individual buildings, Mooncrest retains integrity of its original master-planned design, which conveys the approach of the federal government to solving the crisis of housing war workers during World War II.

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### **Narrative Description**

Mooncrest is a planned residential development located on 42.5 acres in Moon Township, a suburban community in western Allegheny County, PA, approximately 15 miles northwest of downtown Pittsburgh. Mooncrest consists of low-rise (one- to two-story), attached housing units in modern red-brick buildings of two to six units each; the community's four building types are arrayed throughout a master-planned setting featuring many of the hallmarks of the Garden City-style planning that also informed the earliest public housing developments built in the United States during the late 1930s. Mooncrest is laid out as a superblock. Its multifamily residential buildings line a curvilinear system of streets, while structures which originally housed community resources, i.e. an elementary school and grocery store (excluded from the boundary due to a loss of integrity), are found at the entrance to the development. Two spacious parks are located near Mooncrest's northern and southern boundaries. One of these, Overlook Park, was until 1969 the location of a building housing Moon Township municipal services as well as community amenities, such as recreational and child care facilities. A residential building adjacent to this site was sympathetically renovated in 2005 to serve as the current Mooncrest Neighborhood Center. A 25' residential setback, consistent throughout the development, corresponds to the one-car length of the concrete pads which provided the original residents with one off-street parking space per unit. In recent years, a greater area of Mooncrest's front yards has been paved, but most yards still feature plantings of grassy lawn and mature trees dating from the community's construction. The Mooncrest Historic District contains 106 contributing buildings (104 residential buildings, the Neighborhood Center, and the former school); two contributing sites (Overlook Park and Cedar Park); and one noncontributing site (a vacant lot on Oak Drive where a residential building burned in 2006). Mooncrest's master plan and its contributing buildings hold integrity to their year of construction, 1943.

Mooncrest's site, its plan, and its housing typology set it apart from the rest of Moon Township, which developed later during the post-war boom according to a typical suburban pattern. Mooncrest was built atop a steep bluff overlooking the Ohio River with streets laid out in seven interconnected loops accessed via a single entrance road from the Township's street system. Mooncrest's hilltop site and self-contained superblock plan provide sweeping views (photo 1) as well as safety from heavy or excessively fast vehicular traffic, and they promote a strong sense of internal community among neighborhood residents. However, these features have also historically served to emphasize the physical and social isolation of Mooncrest from the more affluent, traditionally suburban township of Moon.

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Mooncrest's multi-unit residential buildings face onto its streets, with concrete walks and steps leading directly to each unit's front door and stoop (photo 5-7). The absolute consistency of the buildings' 25' setback is balanced by differences in topography, in the length, type, and sequencing of buildings on each street, and in the curvature of the streets themselves. All of these factors help to provide variation within the strong rhythm of rectilinear buildings repeated at approximately 30' intervals. The rhythm of Mooncrest's residential streetscape is broken in only two places: the entrance to Overlook Park (photo 11), on Hemlock Drive, reveals a wide swath of green lawn, playgrounds, and playing fields opening to a view of the Ohio River, and there is a vacant lot at 248-254 Oak Drive where a residential building burned in 2006. No new buildings have been built in Mooncrest since the 1950s, and none built after 1943 survives. A community center and municipal services building built in 1944 at the current entrance to Overlook Park was demolished in 1969 after the Township moved its municipal functions down the hill. A metal quonset hut, erected behind the municipal building in the 1950s as temporary classroom space for a booming population of schoolchildren, was also removed in the 1960s. No physical trace of these buildings in Mooncrest survives.

Early photographs of Mooncrest reveal streetscapes of a fairly spartan character, but today, trees planted when Mooncrest was built have matured, creating shady canopies over some streets (such as Juniper Drive) and enhancing the green buffer between house and street. Groves of trees in side and rear yards serve to screen adjacent units from one another. Stands of trees anchor the slopes between streets, preventing their erosion, while the site's steep, wooded hillsides buffer the community as a whole, functioning effectively like the greenbelts championed by Garden City planners. A traffic island (photo 6), located at the triangular intersection of Cedar, Cypress, and Hemlock Drives, is planted like a miniature lawn with grass and a tree; this feature enhances the park-like setting of the community as it defines vehicular routes through the plan's most complex intersection. The impression of Mooncrest's landscape is of both suburban cultivation and natural beauty.

The front yard of each Mooncrest unit originally contained both a small lawn and one concrete parking pad (photo 8) in the assumption that the community's working-class residents would have a maximum of one car per household. Mooncrest's planners, therefore, provided neither garages nor shared surface lots nor alleys for the storage of vehicles. In the absence of alleys, access to the rears of properties was enhanced by the provision of paved footpaths from the street (photo 10). Mooncrest's planners also incorporated public steps to provide pedestrian shortcuts between streets at different grades; an example is the staircase leading between Delaware and Juniper Drives (photo 9), which would have provided an efficient way to the community's elementary school and grocery store, both located near the entrance to the development along Mooncrest Drive.

The residential buildings of Mooncrest consist of one-, two-, and three-bedroom units arranged in duplexes, quadplexes, and occasional six-unit rows (photos 2-3). They are generally rectangular in plan and their design is simple and repetitive. Each unit has a private front and rear entrance and small front and rear yard. Most units are two-story, but a few buildings incorporate single-story end units or "bungalows" (photo 4). In all, there are 18 duplexes; 68 quadplexes; 14 four-unit "bungalow" rows (on which the two end units are single-story); and 6 six-unit bungalow rows. Each type is found more or less evenly distributed throughout the development, but concentrations sometimes occur where one type is best suited to a particular condition of the plan. For example, a series of duplexes, having the smallest footprint of all the types, can be found hugging the sharp northwest curves of Oak and Hemlock Drives, while the longest buildings, the six-unit rows, are uniformly found along straightaways, with the exception of 213-223 Juniper Drive, which is set behind the street plan's shallowest curve. Within these basic unit types, further variations and concentrations occur where buildings were adapted to the hilltop site's steep topography. 16 of the quadplexes, for instance, have split-level floorplans to accommodate differing grades in front and back, most of which are found on the steep hillsides lining the north sides of Juniper and Cedar Drives. In addition, some of the bungalow units are terraced on hillsides, with one one-story end unit a full story below its counterpart on the opposite end of the building. Examples can be seen on the eastern end of Cedar Drive, which traces the crest of a hill descending steeply into Cedar Park. In the four-unit bungalow building at 306-312 Hemlock Drive, which has been converted to

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the Mooncrest Neighborhood Center, the one-story end units are staggered one-half story above (on the western end) and below (on the eastern end) the pair of two-story units at the building's center.

The buildings of Mooncrest are modern in design and have little applied ornament. Foundations are of concrete and walls are constructed of red brick. Wood trim includes 6-over-6 double-hung sash windows, paneled wood doors with integral divided lights, and simple wooden fascia boards and box gutters. Doors and windows are set within molded wood casings. Windows have brick sills and concrete lintels. Doorways are flush with the facade and were originally sheltered by short, plain, shed-roofed canopies and preceded by simple concrete stoops. Near each front door, a single, small, four-pane, fixed-light window and paneled wood coal chute door indicate the location of the unit's furnace room. Each row is topped by a shallow-pitched gable roof pierced at intervals by red-brick chimneys, one per unit.

Most all of these original features can be seen on the duplex at 325-327 Hemlock Drive, pictured in photo 2. This is a typical duplex, with identical side-by-side units, each two bays wide, with an entrance door, parlor window, utility room window and coal chute door on the first floor and two windows indicating bedrooms on the second floor. All duplexes have 2-story ells in the rear. Further examples of duplexes can be seen in the foreground of photo 5, which also depicts Hemlock Drive. The duplex is the fundamental building module upon which Mooncrest's other residential types are based.

Quadplexes appear as a pair of duplex buildings linked together, as in 406-412 Cedar Drive (photo 3), while bungalow buildings have a duplex or quadplex as their central section, flanked by one-story, two-bay end units with the same facade features as other first floors. An example of a four-unit bungalow building is seen in 473-479 Cypress Drive (photo 4). This building also provides an example of second-floor siding, present on some quadplex and bungalow buildings. Shallow second-story projections on some units were originally clad in wavy wood siding and supported by simple carved wood brackets, providing textural relief to rows of brick facades which might otherwise become monotonous (see also quadplexes on Juniper Drive shown in photo 8). Like duplexes, quadplexes have 2-story ells on the rear (photo 10); ells are absent on bungalow and split-level buildings.

The split-level variation has the appearance of four attached one-story units on the front facade, but rear elevations display two exposed stories due to these buildings' location atop rises in the plan's topography. The rear elevations of split-level units have a door and a window on the ground floors and, on the first floors, one standard-size bedroom window and one smaller bathroom window each. Examples of split-levels include the buildings on the south side of Cedar Drive (unit numbers 422-476), where the hillside plunges downward from the street to Cedar Park.

Mooncrest's scale allowed it to be built with community amenities such as its own parks, elementary school, community center, and grocery store (excluded from the boundary due to a loss of integrity). The development's original layout included two large parcels reserved "for public use": the current Overlook Park at the eastern end of Delaware Drive, and Cedar Park at the southeast corner of the community. Initially vacant, Overlook Park (photo 11) became, by 1944, the location of a community building which housed recreational facilities, a day care center, and the Moon Township police. Scant documentation of this building exists. A poor-quality, undated photograph shows a rambling, one-story brick building with a complex, low-pitched roofscape and eight-over-eight double-hung sash windows. There appears to be more than one entrance; a large sign over the easternmost entrance reads "POLICE." Today, the ground where this building was located has been mounded and set with boulders to prevent vehicles from driving into the park, and no trace of it survives.

Overlook Park was established after the demolition of the community building in 1969. It is an irregularly-shaped park extending from Hemlock Drive opposite the terminus of Delaware Drive to the edge of the bluff overlooking (as its name suggests) the Ohio River. Its relatively central location and its elevation, level with most of the community's homes, make it the more-intensively used of Mooncrest's two parks. Overlook Park is flat, grassy, and ringed with taller vegetation (trees and shrubbery) at its periphery. It contains a contemporary

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playground, basketball court, picnic pavilion, and wide, flat field used for ball play. Although the park was not created on this site until after the district's period of significance, Overlook Park contributes to the district because it has always maintained the public use called for in the original plan.

Cedar Park is Mooncrest's original park. It is larger than Overlook Park and has been dedicated to use as recreational open space since Mooncrest was established. It consists of a broad field below Cedar Drive and is reached by a set of public stairs descending from that street. Cedar Park does not contain any paths, picnic tables, play equipment, or other recreational features. At its northern edge, this park adjoins the sloping backyards of the split-level houses on the south side of Cedar Drive; at its southern edge, it is bordered by a steep, wooded, downhill slope. Although in consistent use as a community park since 1943, today Cedar Park is the less accessible, less well-defined, and, therefore, the less well-used of the community's two parks.

The former elementary school is a one-story, red-brick building located at the southwest corner of Mooncrest and Church Drives, at the entrance to the Mooncrest community (photo 13). It has a central entrance which faces northeast and consists of a pair of double wooden doors reached by a set of concrete stairs, surmounted by a 5-pane transom, and sheltered by a pedimented canopy supported by simple, Arts and Crafts style wooden brackets. This entrance is flanked by a pair of tall window openings on either side; these have been infilled with standard-size double-hung window sash topped by panels of obscure siding. Paired, nine-over-nine double-hung sash windows on the sides of the school building suggest the original appearance and construction of the windows on the front. The side (classroom) windows are grouped in three sets of three. The rear of the building is identical to the front, except that windows are absent on one side of the rear doorway; instead, a ventilation stack is affixed to the western side of the wall. The former school has a low-pitched hipped roof clad in asphalt shingles. Renovations to the Mooncrest School building have taken place in conjunction with its conversion to use as a church. It retains a high degree of integrity and, in its continued role as a community focal point and place of gathering, continues to contribute to the character of the district.

The four-unit bungalow building at 306-312 Hemlock Drive was sympathetically renovated to serve as Mooncrest's current community and child care center in 2004. Known as the Mooncrest Neighborhood Center, this building is located directly adjacent to the original community building site at the entrance to Overlook Park. It is otherwise distinguished from its residential counterparts only by discreet signage next to its individual doorways and additional paving for parking in front. The new parking spaces have been paved in asphalt to differentiate them from the original, concrete parking pads.

All of Mooncrest's original residential buildings are still extant except one: the split-level structure at 248-254 Oak Drive burned in 2006, leaving a vacant lot in this location. Of the remaining 104 currently residential buildings, the majority remain substantially unchanged from their construction in 1943. Over time, property owners have made alterations to many of the buildings, but the changes to individual properties have not significantly altered the unified character of the district as a whole. The most prevalent changes are: replacement of one or more original operable windows (seen on 86% of buildings); replacement of original front doors (61%); removal and/or replacement of original entrance canopies with a variety of styles, from aluminum awnings to gabled rooflets (82%); and re-cladding of second-story bump-outs with aluminum or vinyl siding (13%). Where siding of this feature has occurred, in many cases the original wooden brackets supporting the bump-outs have been retained. Another small, but near-universal change is the venting of modern gas-powered furnaces through the coal doors, but in most cases this has resulted merely in piercing the original wooden doors, not eliminating them.

While most of the units in Mooncrest have had one or more of their operable window sash replaced, nearly all retain the original fixed furnace room windows located next to the front doors. Moreover, where windows and doors have been replaced, in most cases the actual openings have not been altered, so that the facades' original design, proportions, and rhythm can still be perceived. The owners of 29 buildings (28%) have painted their brick exteriors and one developer, who purchased and remodeled 28 buildings in the 1970s, added stucco panels framed by flat wood trim for a faux half-timbered effect to the facades of nearly half of those units; most instances of this treatment occur on Cedar Drive and on one row on Juniper (house numbers 164-

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214). Sixteen units (4%) have seen the addition of a garage, carport, or storage shed to the rear or side of their property (photo 12); there have been seven additions to units (2%) for expansion of interior floor space (photo 12); and a small number of units have been combined into one larger unit on the interior while leaving the exterior unchanged. Aside from alterations to buildings themselves, the owners of eight buildings (8%) have paved additional front yard parking spaces (photo 7), since Mooncrest's original design lacks provision for the storage of more than one car per household. The obvious effects of additional paving are to alter the rhythm of the streetscapes and to reduce the amount of green space in the community's landscape.

Despite these various alterations to individual buildings, all of the remaining residential buildings, plus the former school, the Neighborhood Center, and Mooncrest's two parks, contribute to the character of the Mooncrest Historic District because each is an integral component of the overall plan which distinguishes and unifies the district. Mooncrest's site, isolated and firmly bounded by the steep slopes of its wooded hilltop, is unchanged since 1943, providing the district with absolute integrity of location and its individual buildings with strong integrity of setting. The houses of Mooncrest still bear a strong relationship to one another, and the design of the community as a whole has always been more complex, ambitious, and symbolic than that of its individual buildings. The buildings' original repetitive, utilitarian character remains essentially unchanged despite the prevalent replacement of features such as windows, doors, and awnings. Integrity of design, materials, and workmanship are present in the houses themselves, because they can still be recognized as related components of a larger whole; but it is, more importantly, that whole whose integrity most vividly conveys the community's history and purpose. Mooncrest's unchanged plan of interconnected, looping streets and simply-built, multi-family, red-brick houses, amid a landscape of grassy lawns framed by and interspersed with trees, retains not only strong integrity of design, materials, and workmanship, but integrity of feeling and association as well. The houses' arrangement in a self-contained enclave, among parkland and other community amenities, conveys the feeling of public housing at its most idealistic: master-planned and built to provide modest but comfortable accommodations and, most importantly, a strong sense of identity and community to its residents. Mooncrest retains associations, through its distinctive design, with the housing reform ideas, and ideals from before World War II that influenced permanent housing for those who contributed to its victory.

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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.)

Community Planning and Development

Social History

#### Period of Significance

1943-1963

#### Significant Dates

1943, 1958

#### Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

#### Cultural Affiliation

N/A

#### Architect/Builder

Smart & Cravotta



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**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance begins in 1943, the year Mooncrest was built, and ends in 1963, a date 50 years in the past. 1963 was five years after Mooncrest ceased to be public housing. The period of significance extends past the date of Mooncrest's sale to private investors in 1958 because of the important opportunity this sale provided to persons of moderate income, including African Americans not yet protected by fair housing laws, to own real estate in Moon Township. In the late 1950s and early 1960s, Mooncrest provided a racially integrated, affordable housing option in an area which was then developing into an affluent, predominantly white suburban community.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

N/A

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

Mooncrest is eligible for the National Register of Historic Places under Criterion A in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Social History. Its period of significance begins in the year of its construction, 1943, and extends to 1963, a date 50 years ago and five years after its buildings were sold to individual residents and investors. It is an intact example of the federal government's response to a housing crisis affecting defense workers during World War II. The government's large-scale planning and construction of war worker housing supported the rapid mobilization of U.S. industrial infrastructure for war, which was in turn critical to the Allies' victory. Unlike many other, temporary dwellings for war workers, Mooncrest was designed to become a permanent contribution to Moon Township's housing stock, and therefore displays many of the hallmarks of progressive housing design of the early-mid 20th century. Features such as low-rise, attached housing, curvilinear streets, and a self-contained site plan are intact and convey the approach of the federal government to building a high-quality living environment for working-class wage-earners during World War II. As the first housing development in Moon Township, Mooncrest was originally served by its own elementary school and grocery store and was the location of Moon Township's first municipal building. Also unlike many other war housing communities, Mooncrest was racially integrated. It thus provided important opportunities for African Americans to build wealth through access to employment and, later, home ownership and rental income, contributing to the diversity of Moon Township even as it boomed into a sprawling, mostly white and affluent suburb during the 1950s and 60s. Mooncrest was unique among Pittsburgh-area war housing projects in providing these opportunities because it was the only one to be sold to individual investors after the war. Others transitioned to low-income public housing or became cooperatives. Mooncrest has retained a high degree of integrity as a master-planned community despite the fact that its buildings have been individually owned and managed since 1958.

**Narrative Statement of Significance** (Provide at least one paragraph for each area of significance.)

Mooncrest was built by the Allegheny County Housing Authority (ACHA) in 1943 as a form of non-income-based public housing and owned by the Federal Public Housing Authority (FPHA) until 1958. It was the first housing development, public or private, in Moon Township, and its racial integration from day one meant that Moon, unlike many Pittsburgh-area suburbs, had an African American population well before federal fair housing laws prohibited discrimination in the private housing market some twenty years later. Moreover, Mooncrest's very design was entwined with the ideal of democracy. Built on an isolated bluff overlooking the Ohio River, with but a single access road, Mooncrest included 396 units of housing as well as its own grocery store, school, and parks, making it virtually a village unto itself. Its residents were expected to form a cohesive community, socializing with – and relying upon – one another in what was then a remote, largely rural area of Allegheny County. Unlike most World War II federal housing projects, Mooncrest was built to be permanent, and it was racially integrated both during the war and after its sale. As such, Mooncrest provided an important

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opportunity for moderate-income residents, including African Americans, to build wealth through access to employment and, later, home ownership.

### Mobilization of Local Industry and the Need for Federal Defense Housing in Moon Township

Prior to World War II, Moon Township was a predominantly rural community with only a few scattered houses and farms. Although the construction of roadways and railroads – such as the Sewickley Bridge, which was originally constructed in 1911, and the Pennsylvania & Lake Erie Railroad – improved access between the township and downtown Pittsburgh, Moon would not develop as a suburban bedroom community until the post-war boom of the 1950s.

Moon's location emerged as strategic to the war effort as the United States mobilized for war in the early 1940s. The industrial infrastructure of Allegheny County converted rapidly to war production, and the massive build-up of the region's military capabilities created an acute need for civilian labor. In response, thousands of workers migrated to the area to take positions in the mills and factories. Moon Township's undeveloped acres were located in close proximity to busy steel mills in Aliquippa and Coraopolis and to the Dravo shipbuilding plant on Neville Island, making it a crucial location for war production. The provision of adequate nearby housing for defense-industry workers was considered essential to the war effort. The construction of Mooncrest therefore supported the mobilization of United States industry for World War II, an effort that ultimately contributed to the Allies' victory in that conflict.

The federal government began as early as 1940 to address the housing shortage in Allegheny County and in other locations critical to wartime production. Although the United States was, at this point, officially still neutral in the crisis expanding throughout Europe, it was taking defensive precautions to ensure national security, as well as assisting friendly nations, such as Great Britain, that were already embroiled in conflict. In June, 1940, Congress passed the National Defense Bill and amended the United States Housing Act of 1937 to waive income requirements for public housing, thus opening public housing projects to defense workers, and to redirect remaining monies to housing those workers. Also in 1940, President Franklin D. Roosevelt created the Federal Works Agency (FWA) by consolidating several Depression-era New Deal agencies, including the Public Works Administration, the Public Buildings Administration, and the United States Housing Authority, and Congress assigned the FWA responsibility for alleviating housing shortages created by industrial workers and their families seeking employment in local defense plants.

Funding for the construction of defense housing was allocated through the National Defense Housing Act of 1940. Sometimes called the Lanham Act because it was introduced by Representative Fritz G. Lanham, the Act continued to provide funding for federally-built housing for war workers after 1942, when a reorganization of federal housing agencies transferred responsibility for the defense housing program from the FWA to the newly-created National Housing Agency (NHA). John B. Blandford was named administrator of the NHA. Within this agency, war housing programs were consolidated in a subagency, the Federal Public Housing Authority (FPHA), under Commissioner Herbert Emmerich. The names of these men and agencies appear on the plans for Mooncrest, drawn in the summer of 1942.

Between 1940 and 1945, Lanham Act funds built over 546,000 family dwellings, over 94,000 dormitory rooms, and over 74,000 trailers and other types of stopgap housing for defense workers at a cost of more than \$2 billion. This massive investment in war worker housing was the United States' largest investment and experiment in public housing.<sup>1</sup>

Of these units, 62% were temporary apartment and dormitory projects, including most built between 1942 and 1945, when the combined pressures of the war effort and worker migration demanded the production of mass housing quickly and cheaply.<sup>2</sup> But approximately 197,000 units, including those in Mooncrest, were intended to be permanent. These permanent projects were designed to serve as more than mere shelter for workers

<sup>1</sup> D. Bradford Hunt, "War Housing: Its Growth and Legacy in the San Francisco Bay Area," Unpublished paper, University of California, Berkeley, 1993: 3.

<sup>2</sup> Ibid.

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during wartime. They were to serve as models for post-war housing development for working- and middle-class families.

Most of the permanent housing was built in the first year of the federal defense housing program, 1940-1941, under FWA administrator John Carmody. Carmody hired some of the era's foremost architects, including Eliel and Eero Saarinen, Louis Kahn, Richard Neutra, Walter Gropius, and Frank Lloyd Wright to design experimental prototypes for low-cost, often prefabricated housing for defense workers and their successors, post-war moderate-income wage earners. In 1942 and afterward, NHA administrator Blandford adopted a more pragmatic, businesslike approach to housing which favored minimalist temporary dwellings over permanent, master-planned communities; his approach was supported by the construction, real estate, and banking industries and their allies in Congress, who feared that the construction of high-quality federal housing would compete with the private home-building market.<sup>3</sup> Because of this change in strategy, housing constructed under Blandford between 1942 and 1945 is usually referred to as war housing to distinguish it from the more utopian defense housing built under Carmody.

### History of Mooncrest

Mooncrest, therefore, was war housing, but it was not temporary housing. Built soon after the reorganization of the federal housing program, Mooncrest may have been on the drawing boards prior to the rearrangement of priorities under Blandford, and thus built according to an earlier mandate to provide high-quality housing of lasting value. Also, FPHA administrator Herbert Emmerich had participated in the planning and design of Radburn, NJ, and other progressive housing developments of the 1920s and 30s, and appears to have continued the tradition of progressive housing design in the permanent war housing projects built under his watch.

The Mooncrest project, one of the four largest for war workers in Allegheny County, was built at a cost of \$2,081,200. The ACHA faced similar challenges in building Mooncrest and its peer defense and war housing communities. The first was site selection; tracts must be sufficiently spacious for hundreds of housing units, topographically favorable to building without excessive (and expensive) grading or drainage efforts, and clean and unpolluted. The "fair spots" that remained were often hilltop sites in areas that were not yet densely developed; many were so remote that, like Mooncrest, they required the construction of their own access roads and internal roadway systems.<sup>4</sup> Such isolation from established communities gave rise to the need for services related to health, education, and recreation in the housing projects. Some, such as visiting doctors and dentists, were provided by the County, and others were organized by the tenants themselves, who raised money by holding bake sales, bingo nights, dinners, and other social events. Recreation, in particular, was seen as improving the morale of war workers, reducing juvenile delinquency, promoting the physical well-being of tenants, and enhancing the cultural resources of the community.<sup>5</sup> When Mooncrest opened, it had its own park, Cedar Park; elementary school; and grocery store. By 1944, a community building had been constructed to house recreational facilities and a community child care center. The latter was a rarity during the 1940s, but a necessity in a community serving those employed by the defense industry; during World War II, female heads of households were much more likely to hold jobs outside the home than they had ever been before.

1750 war workers and their families moved into Mooncrest in 1943. Because Mooncrest was the first (and, for 20 years, only) housing development in Moon Township, it held the largest concentration of population in the Township during the 1940s and 50s. As a consequence, Mooncrest became the site of the Township's first municipal facilities. The Moon Township Police Station was housed in the Mooncrest community building after 1944, allowing it to move out of the living room of the police chief on Hemlock Drive; eventually, all of Moon Township's municipal services and officials came to be housed in the Mooncrest building.

<sup>3</sup> Kristin Szilvian, "The Federal Housing Program During World War II," in *From Tenements to the Taylor Homes*, ed. John F. Bauman, Roger Biles, and Kristin Szilvian (Pennsylvania State Press, 2000), 130.

<sup>4</sup> Allegheny County Housing Authority, "Construction," *Victory on the Homes Front: a Report and a Blueprint, 1938-1944*, Pittsburgh, 1945.

<sup>5</sup> Allegheny County Housing Authority, "Project Services," *Victory on the Homes Front: a Report and a Blueprint, 1938-1944*.

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With the end of World War II came the question of what would become of Mooncrest and other federal housing built for war workers. No master plan for its allocation existed; the Lanham Act contained only a "vague provision" that at the end of the war, the housing was to be disposed of "in the public interest."<sup>6</sup> To most, this meant that temporary war housing should be demolished; there was a strong concern that if it remained, it would become slum housing in the communities where it existed. For permanent defense and war projects, two main possibilities emerged: transition to low-income public housing, or sale to residents, veterans, or private investors.

Of these two options, conversion to low-income public housing was the most difficult to achieve. In order for this to take place, a local housing authority had to request title of a project, and the transfer had to be authorized by no less than an act of Congress. Since Congress frequently opposed such conversions, as did many local government officials who questioned the desirability of low-income public housing in their communities, only about 1.9 percent of permanent units were converted in this way nationwide,<sup>7</sup> and only two wartime housing projects (Groveton Village and Ohio View Acres) transitioned to low-income public housing in Allegheny County.

The federal government sold some housing projects to their residents under a scheme called a Mutual Home Ownership Plan (MHOP). Under this Plan, residents of defense housing communities formed a not-for-profit housing association to purchase their project from the government and manage it as a cooperative. Allegheny County had an especially high number of MHOPs because local officials believed that selling the federal projects to their residents offered a "substantial contribution to the greatest housing problem in Allegheny County, namely the housing of industrial workers with an income between \$1200 and \$2500 a year"<sup>8</sup> – or higher than would qualify for low-income public housing, but less than they would need to buy housing in the private market. Of the 14 permanent housing projects built between 1941 and 1944 in Allegheny County, 11 were sold to cooperative housing associations.

However, the disposition of the defense and war housing communities was often complicated and protracted, with many factions, including federal housing agencies, local governments, veterans' organizations, tenant groups, organized labor, and home-building and real estate interests, disputing the most desirable outcome.<sup>9</sup> Further complicating matters, a severe post-war housing shortage made it untenable for federal housing officials to evict the workers whose labor had contributed to victory; in fact, vacant units were made available to veterans and their families. Then, in 1950, the Korean War prompted President Truman to temporarily halt the disposition process.<sup>10</sup> Most of the defense housing projects in Allegheny County did not transition from federal ownership until the mid-1950s, a decade after the end of the World War II.

The disposition of Mooncrest had a different outcome than that of the other permanent housing projects built during the war in Allegheny County. After the end of World War II, the FPHA initially leased Mooncrest to the United States Air Force, which operated it for service families at a nearby base. In 1957, the FPHA offered the project's dwellings for sale. Unlike the county's other communities, which were transferred whole either to the Allegheny County Housing Authority or to a cooperative housing association, Mooncrest was offered for sale to individual investors on a per building basis, with veterans and their families given preference. An advertisement in the *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette* proclaimed, "This is your opportunity to buy a home for your family and, at the same time, become a landlord and earn rentals to meet or assist with your carrying charges." Purchase prices ranged from \$9450 for a two-family building to \$18,300 for a four-family unit.<sup>11</sup>

<sup>6</sup> U.S. National Housing Agency, *Fourth Annual Report* (Washington, D.C.: U.S. Government Printing Office, 1945), 196. In Szylvian, "The Federal Housing Program During World War II," 132.

<sup>7</sup> Szylvian, *ibid.*

<sup>8</sup> Allegheny County Housing Authority.

<sup>9</sup> Szylvian, "The Federal Housing Program During World War II," 133.

<sup>10</sup> Szylvian, "The Federal Housing Program During World War II," 133.

<sup>11</sup> "Mooncrest Housing Project for Sale to Vets and Others," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, April 27, 1957, 8.

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The sale of Mooncrest's buildings to individual owners was unconventional in terms of the disposition of federal housing projects, especially in Allegheny County, which had tended to favor the cooperative solution. But the sale's generous terms offered important benefits to the project's moderate-income residents, including African-Americans, who took advantage of the opportunity to become property owners and real estate investors in the community.

Mooncrest's population flourished during the post-war years. A quonset hut was erected behind the municipal building to provide temporary overflow classroom space for the community's children, whose numbers had expanded dramatically after the war. Meanwhile, rapid growth in suburban Allegheny County portended changes for Mooncrest, as well. In 1952, the Greater Pittsburgh International Airport opened in Moon Township, and the next year saw the completion of the Penn Lincoln Parkway, which reduced commuting time to downtown Pittsburgh to 20 minutes. As a result of these two major developments, Moon Township boomed. Its population increased 24 percent between 1950 and 1957, and more than 1250 new homes were created in a span of ten years.

As conventional suburban housing became available in the Township and it began to grow more affluent, many of Mooncrest's owner-occupied units gradually transitioned into rental units. Their small size and limited provision for parking made them seem less desirable than the larger, detached homes, complete with driveways and garages, that had been more recently constructed nearby. Mooncrest's buildings began to show signs of age and, in the cases of those owned by less-attentive landlords, neglect. In 1966, with Mooncrest no longer the township's largest population center, Moon Township moved its municipal functions from Mooncrest to a new building more central to the newer development; the Township's original municipal facilities building in Mooncrest was razed in 1969. During this period, the school and grocery store also closed. Isolated on their hilltop, Mooncrest residents were forced to become more dependent on cars with no greater provision for parking them, causing some residents to pave the yards in front of their homes for vehicle storage.

The greatest threat to Mooncrest currently is not alteration of building fabric, but vacancy and consequent deterioration. Because Mooncrest's high vacancy rate is a relatively recent phenomenon, it has not yet resulted in a level of deterioration which could lead to widespread demolition by neglect.

Mooncrest residents formed the Mooncrest Neighborhood Association in the 1990s to address these problems and revitalize Mooncrest. Among the Association's strategies was to pursue historic preservation to stabilize Mooncrest's physical fabric and to increase pride in the community through recognition of the neighborhood's history. The Township of Moon and other agencies are also working actively to identify strategies to rehabilitate the housing of Mooncrest. In 2005, Mooncrest received local historic district designation with approval of a local preservation ordinance by both Moon Township and the Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission.

#### Significance: Community Planning and Development

Mooncrest is significant in the area of Community Planning and Development for its socially progressive planning, linked to ideals of community and democracy, and its place in the history of housing reform efforts in the Pittsburgh region during the first half of the 20th century, when the provision of affordable, high-quality housing for workers was a paramount social and civic concern.

As permanent war housing designed under the supervision of housing reform advocate Herbert Emmerich, Mooncrest embodies certain ideals about not only housing workers during wartime but how local residential communities could nurture a larger democratic society. Mooncrest was itself an expression of democracy, and as such it displays specific physical characteristics designed to engage residents in civic participation and encourage them to form communities, all hallmarks of progressively designed, permanent federal defense housing communities.

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First, it is comprised of attached, rather than detached, dwellings. This was a matter not only of economy but of social theory as articulated by the housing reformers of the 1930s, who argued that the alarmingly high foreclosure rates during the Great Depression demonstrated the perils of single-family home ownership for the rank and file of American workers. Multi-unit rental dwellings were thought to provide more flexible, and therefore suitable, housing options for working-class, and even middle-class, Americans. In this sense, Mooncrest was built to serve not only the immediate needs of war workers and their families, but of their presumed successors, the working-class families of the future. Moreover, the provision of multi-family buildings underscored Mooncrest's – and the defense housing program's – emphasis on the community over the individual.

Second, the buildings of Mooncrest were architecturally modest. Defense housing and war housing were forms of public housing, whose administrative and legislative cost restrictions dictated a no-frills building style. The Lanham Act initially set the not-to-exceed cost per unit at \$3000. (Mooncrest was ultimately built at \$5203 per unit). Unlike some defense housing projects, such as the Gropius-designed Aluminum City Terrace in New Kensington, PA, which demonstrated an overtly European-influenced Modernist aesthetic consistent with that of the early low-income public housing projects of the 1930s, Mooncrest was not utterly minimalist in the design of its buildings. Pittsburgh architects Smart and Cravotta judiciously utilized detailing that referenced the American Colonial tradition, such as overhanging second story bays, small-paned sash windows, and carved brackets. However, the degree of Mooncrest's Colonial Revival detailing is extremely modest, with the overall effect remaining one of minimally-ornamented, even Spartan, design.

Most importantly, what Mooncrest lacked in the elaboration of individual buildings, it made up for in the design of the community as a whole. Permanent defense and war housing projects featured comprehensive site plans and facilities designed to foster social interaction and, therefore, a strong sense of community and shared identity among highly mobile war workers. The curvilinear street layout; interior footpaths; community-wide planting plan; dedicated amenities such as a school, park, and store; and single connector route to and from the rest of the township all worked together to make Mooncrest a self-contained entity and encouraged the formation of strong connections within the community. As public housing, Mooncrest was invested with the American values of democracy and civic participation, held especially strongly by the federal government during wartime.

The physical features which contribute to Mooncrest's village-like atmosphere were inspired by a movement in town planning and design known as the American Garden City, which enjoyed its height of popularity in the 1920s and '30s. At its foundation, this movement was based on the idea that the design and arrangement of buildings and spaces influenced social behavior by encouraging residents to interact in ways that promoted connectedness and a shared sense of community. It was descended from the utopian theories of Englishman Ebenezer Howard, whose 1898 book, *Garden Cities of To-Morrow*, promoted the planning and construction of low-density, large-scale, lushly-planted communities to create an ideal blend of city and country.

In the United States, Howard's ideas were refined by housing reformers of the 1920s and '30s, including architect Clarence Stein, landscape architect and site planner Henry Wright, and their colleagues, including administrator Herbert Emmerich, who were all affiliated with an organization called the Regional Planning Association of America. These planners incorporated twentieth-century technological innovations, such as automobiles, telephones, and the electric power grid, into their American adaptation of Howard's Garden City ideal. They advocated for large-scale, master-planned developments featuring simple, attached dwelling units, separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic, and site planning which replaced the urban grid with an organic layout of streets and parks which responded to the natural features and contours of their sites. Architecture in these communities was modest and egalitarian – that is, no one building or type of building was to stand out as more elaborate or expensive than any other – while shared amenities, such as schools, community centers, parks, and other recreational facilities provided focal points for social interactions.

The federal government made an initial foray into building communities on this model during World War I. In 1917-1918, two federal agencies, the Emergency Fleet Corporation and the United States Housing Corporation, built temporary housing for single male laborers and permanent residential communities for

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families of workers in defense-related industries. The planners of these communities included parks and other shared social spaces to help nurture the types of daily interactions that were thought to form the foundation of community, and, by extension, democracy. These agencies were dissolved and their projects summarily cancelled after armistice in 1918.

The ideals that informed these projects, however, continued to form the basis for a growing housing reform movement during the 1920s and '30s. Stein and Wright, in particular, actively employed this model of community design in privately-funded projects such as Radburn, New Jersey (1928), and Chatham Village, Pittsburgh (1932; located about 15 miles from Mooncrest). Both of these projects were meant to exemplify a new pattern of residential real estate development which was more efficient, affordable, and livable than the traditional speculative model of single-family houses constructed on individual lots. These experiments with a new paradigm of residential community planning were influential. Beginning in 1935, American Garden City principles became incorporated into the innovative housing programs of the New Deal, finding their ultimate expression in the Greenbelt communities built by President Roosevelt's Resettlement Administration in Maryland, Ohio, and Wisconsin.

The Greenbelt Towns program was canceled before it could be completed amid conservative criticism that it advanced a socialist agenda. However, key defense housing officials, including Carmody and John Foreman, director of the FWA's Division of Defense Housing, were alumni of Roosevelt's New Deal housing initiatives and sustained their innovative spirit in the push to create public housing for defense workers during World War II. Housing scholar Kristin Szylvian contends that the FWA under Carmody considered the defense housing program to be an opportunity to continue experimenting with the low-cost architecture, construction techniques, and building materials, combined with communitarian residential planning, that had built the Greenbelt towns during the New Deal.<sup>12</sup>

Mooncrest was built after NHA administrator Blandford had changed the focus of federally-constructed housing from permanent housing developments which would guide post-war revitalization to the provision of minimalist temporary housing that would be torn down when the war ended. However, Blandford directed the FPHA to work with local government bodies to build permanent housing in communities that demonstrated an ongoing need.<sup>13</sup> Moon Township was such a community, and Mooncrest – whether designed before or after Carmody ceded his agenda to Blandford's – was built as a permanent contribution to the township's housing stock, with quality materials and a site-specific plan (unlike the cheaper, so-called "victory" building materials and standardized plans that characterized the temporary housing projects).

Significantly, the plans for Mooncrest were issued under the signature of FPHA Commissioner Herbert Emmerich, who had collaborated with Stein and Wright on the design of their first American Garden City communities: Sunnyside, New York, and Radburn, New Jersey. When Stein was working as a consultant to the federal government on defense housing, he wrote to his colleague Benton McKaye:

There are a few good things to report about [Washington, D.C.]. One of them is that Herbert Emmerich, who you may remember, is now head of the Federal Public Housing Authority. He knows something about what it's all about as a result of having worked with all of us at Radburn when he was manager of the City Housing Corporation.... The question of community facilities to be supplied must be determined on a quite different basis than that of peacetime. The conservation of the working power and the enthusiasm of the worker are essential factors to production, and luckily we have in Emmerich someone who is aware of it before it is too late.<sup>14</sup>

While Blandford may have taken a businesslike approach to administering the umbrella agency for federal housing, Emmerich brought a creative idealism, left over from the robust experimentation of the 1920s and

<sup>12</sup> Kristin Szylvian, "Bauhaus on Trial: Aluminum City Terrace and Federal Defense Housing Policy During World War II," *Planning Perspectives* 9 (1994), 230.

<sup>13</sup> Szylvian, "The Federal Housing Program During World War II," 131.

<sup>14</sup> Clarence Stein, letter to Benton McKaye, May 25, 1942. In *The Writings of Clarence Stein: Architect of the Planned Community*, ed. Kermit C. Parsons (Johns Hopkins University Press, 1998), 429.

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30s, to the federal war housing program where he could. Mooncrest's permanent nature distinguished it from most of the federal housing built during this phase of the program, while its oversight by Emmerich linked it to the socially-progressive housing conceived by the New Dealers in the program's beginning.

Due to this lineage, Mooncrest incorporates several features directly related to the Garden City-style planning advocated by early-20th century housing reformers. Its comprehensive site plan includes a street system of seven interconnected loops accessed via a single connector road, effectively causing Mooncrest to function as a self-contained enclave. The street pattern also acts as an integral traffic-calming device; accommodating automobiles while providing safety from speeding vehicles was a paramount concern of American Garden City planners. Amenities that were scarce in many working class neighborhoods, such as a local grocery store, school, park, child care facility, and recreation center, were built to serve residents within the community. Dwelling units are attached in buildings that vary in length and respond to the rugged topography of the hilltop site, but whose shallow plans allow for maximum light and ventilation. Footpaths and public steps provide avenues for pedestrian circulation through the community and an alternative to walking along vehicular roads. Together, these features of Mooncrest were intended to provide affordable comfort and to encourage the growth of democratic economic and social values, including cooperation, mutual assistance, and even working-class consciousness and collective action.<sup>15</sup>

Mooncrest's Garden City-style planning also marks its place in the history of 20th century efforts toward housing reform for the working class. In Pittsburgh, the conditions in the tenement housing occupied by mill workers first came under scrutiny as a result of the Russell Sage Foundation's Pittsburgh Survey of 1907. This ambitious social and economic study of working-class life brought the relationship between poverty, substandard housing conditions, and ill health vividly to light. By 1925, Progressive reformers in Pittsburgh were able to secure the passage of a tenement code, a standard building code, and zoning ordinances affecting housing. However, while these regulatory reforms provided minimum standards of public health and safety, many reformers remained dissatisfied with the state of worker housing. As observed by housing advocate Edith Elmer Wood, restrictive building legislation "may forbid the bad house, but it does not provide the good one."<sup>16</sup>

For the next three decades, worker housing became a focus of concentrated reform efforts on the part of philanthropic, government, and private for-profit organizations. Industrialists were well aware that workers who had good housing were more productive than those who did not; they also had an interest in workers living close to their places of employment and in controlling aspects of their workers' lives outside of the factory. For these reasons, companies such as Midland Steel and Apollo Iron and Steel built housing for their workers, serving as landlords as well as employers. The town of Vandergrift, PA, built by Apollo Iron and Steel in 1895-1896 to designs by Frederick Law Olmsted, was one of the earliest model residential communities built by area industrialists.<sup>17</sup>

Another local housing development for moderate-income workers, Chatham Village, was built in Pittsburgh in 1932 by the philanthropic Buhl Foundation. Designed by American Garden City planners Clarence Stein and Henry Wright, Chatham Village exemplified most of the community planning principles they advocated. In terms of financial structure, it was built by the Buhl Foundation as an investment, albeit one which would return limited dividends; the Foundation wanted to create a model of both physical and financial planning in order to demonstrate to the private real estate industry that it was possible to build exemplary housing for the working class and still make a profit. Although this idea failed to take hold, Chatham Village remained a powerful model for residential community design which would echo through later, publicly-funded attempts to build comfortable, affordable places for low-income and working-class people to live.

Government involvement in the private housing market was kept at bay during the Roaring Twenties by the vehement opposition of industrialists and political conservatives, but it eventually culminated in the

<sup>15</sup> Szylvian, "Bauhaus on Trial," 231.

<sup>16</sup> Edith Elmer Wood, *Recent Trends in American Housing* (New York: Macmillan, 1931). Quoted in Gail Radford, *Modern Housing for America: Policy Struggles in the New Deal Era* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press), 31.

<sup>17</sup> Kristin Szylvian Bailey, "Defense Housing in Greater Pittsburgh: 1945-1955." *Pittsburgh History*, Spring 1990, 19.



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establishment of a permanent public housing system in 1937. During the Great Depression, an exacerbated housing crisis made voters, as well as politicians, more open to an increased role for government in providing services that the private sector would or could not. By 1938, both Pittsburgh and McKeesport had municipal housing authorities that were authorized to receive loans from the United States Housing Authority to build public housing within their city limits; the Allegheny County Housing Authority (ACHA) administered public housing funds and programs in the rest of the county, which included Moon Township.

By mid-1941, both the Pittsburgh and Allegheny County Housing Authorities began to divert their attention and resources away from the construction of new low-income housing projects and toward the planning and construction of defense housing under the Lanham Act. By the end of 1945, 700,000 defense and war housing units had been built nationwide, with the most units in California, followed by Washington, Virginia, Texas, and Pennsylvania.<sup>18</sup>

In Pennsylvania, the Pittsburgh area had the greatest concentration of federal housing for war workers, much of it permanent housing built under the FWA before 1942. This was in large part because the ACHA was aggressive in pursuing Lanham Act funds as soon as they became available for the planning and construction of defense housing, securing 11 awards for projects in 1941. In all, 12 permanent defense housing projects were built by the ACHA between 1940 and 1941, and four projects which had been built before the war as low-income public housing were re-assigned to the housing of war workers and their families. Of six war housing projects built by the ACHA after the 1942 reorganization of the federal housing program, two were temporary; two were dormitories; and two, Mooncrest and Groveton Village in nearby Groveton, were intended as permanent additions to the housing stock in their respective communities.<sup>19</sup>

#### Significance: Social History

Mooncrest is significant in the area of Social History for its legacy of racial integration, both during and after World War II, and for providing access to employment and home ownership to a moderate-income population that might otherwise have struggled to attain financial and residential stability during the war and subsequent suburban boom. Especially in the years before fair housing laws prohibited discrimination in the private housing market, the federal government's provision of mixed-race worker housing in Mooncrest – and, later, the government's sale of this housing to individuals – provided important opportunities for people of moderate income, regardless of race, to invest in real estate and thereby to build wealth after the war.

The fact that the community of residents in Mooncrest was racially integrated from the beginning set it apart from most defense and war housing projects, both in western Pennsylvania and nationwide. Segregation in public housing built for the wartime workforce was a continuation of segregation in low-income public housing, which had become established before World War II. Prior to the initiation of the defense housing program in 1940, 43 of 49 public housing projects supported by the Public Works Administration and 236 of 261 projects supported by the U.S. Housing Authority were segregated by race.<sup>20</sup> The defense housing program advanced progressive design, construction techniques, and materials, but when it came to social progressivism, neither Carmody nor Blandford attempted to alter the prevailing pattern of segregation in public housing that had been established before the war. Under Blandford, the NHA increased the number of war housing units available to African American workers, but most of them were in segregated projects.<sup>21</sup> Allegheny County did better than most areas of the country in this regard: of 14 permanent projects built here, eight were for whites only, five (including Mooncrest) were designated "mixed," and one was solely for blacks.<sup>22</sup> The latter, Blair Heights, was also the only one in Allegheny County to consist entirely of apartment units and was demolished in the early 2000s.

<sup>18</sup> Szylvian Bailey, 19-20.

<sup>19</sup> Allegheny County Housing Authority, "Construction," *Victory on the Homes Front: A Report and a Blueprint, 1938-1944*.

<sup>20</sup> Modulo Coulibaly, Rodney Green, and David James, "Segregation in Federally Subsidized Low-income Housing in the United States." Westport, CT: Praeger, 1998.

<sup>21</sup> Szylvian, "The Federal Housing Program During World War II," 129-131.

<sup>22</sup> Allegheny County Housing Authority, "Construction," *Victory on the Homes Front: A Report and a Blueprint, 1938-1944*.

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Segregation in public housing (including defense and war housing) further echoed larger patterns of segregation in the American residential landscape during the early- to mid-20th century. Like the federal government, private landlords, too, restricted many units to white residents, severely limiting the housing choices available to racial minorities. In the arena of homeownership, discriminatory lending practices contributed to a rate among African Americans that was only half that of whites in 1940, while practices such as redlining and steering largely prevented African Americans who could buy homes from doing so in areas established as "white."<sup>23</sup> Beginning in 1934, the Federal Housing Administration strove to assist low-income households in achieving the goal of homeownership through loan insurance programs, but African American borrowers did not benefit from these programs in large numbers until after the enactment of civil rights legislation in the 1960s.<sup>24</sup> A gap exceeding 20 percentage points between homeownership rates among white and African American households persisted during the post-World War II period (the late 1940s and 1950s), generally viewed as the first major homeownership boom in American history, and has continued to the present.<sup>25</sup> Homeownership, then as now, was associated with financial security and individual and community stability. The fact that African American households have consistently been less likely than white households to obtain the benefits of homeownership since the earliest reporting of such statistics is therefore a troubling indicator of the persistence of racial inequality in the United States.

Thus, while the federal government offered both public rental housing and mortgage assistance in the private market during the 1940s and 50s, these programs did not offer racial minorities substantially greater opportunities to obtain housing free of discrimination. The transition of Mooncrest, an integrated war housing project, to the private market created an exception by providing a unique opportunity for the project's moderate-income residents, including African Americans, to own real estate in burgeoning, mostly white suburbia – an area where the possibility of home ownership for racial minorities was otherwise severely restricted. Until the passage of fair housing laws, Mooncrest was the only place in Moon Township where African Americans could buy a home.<sup>26</sup>

Mooncrest's sale offered further important benefits. The sale of the project's buildings, nearly at cost, provided an opportunity not only for home ownership, but for the building of wealth through property equity and the rental of unoccupied units in each building. Many of the original purchasers remained in residence in Mooncrest for their entire lives, and some are living there still, providing an important link to Mooncrest's origins as government-built rental housing. Others used the wealth they built through property ownership in Mooncrest to purchase larger, newer homes in the surrounding area while maintaining their units in Mooncrest as rental housing. Although in some cases this has resulted in absentee landlordism, in others it served to support both population growth and healthy investment in Moon Township and surrounding communities.

Of the five racially "mixed" defense and war housing projects built in Allegheny County, only Mooncrest was converted to real estate through sale to private investors; one became low-income public housing; and three were sold to cooperative associations. The sale of Allegheny County's other integrated, permanent wartime housing projects as cooperatives did not have the same benefits as Mooncrest's sale to individual investors due to the special structure of cooperative ownership. While the creation of cooperatives did allow the housing's renters to become homeowners after the war, ownership of a share in a cooperative is not the same as direct ownership of real estate. Cooperatives are owned in common among all investors, and purchase of a share entitles the owner to reside in his or her unit. Owners must abide by rules and regulations for the maintenance of the entire community which are set by the non-profit cooperative board, one of which is typically to prohibit residents from renting, and thereby profiting from, their shares. In contrast, Mooncrest was sold on a building-by-building basis. Since every building houses multiple units, this meant that every purchaser got at least one unit to rent, whether they continued to reside in Mooncrest or not. The rental

<sup>23</sup> Wilhelmina A. Leigh and Danielle Huff, "African Americans and Homeownership: Separate and Unequal, 1940-2006." Washington, D.C: Joint Center for Political and Economic Studies, November 2007, 2-3.

<sup>24</sup> Leigh and Huff, 7.

<sup>25</sup> E.M. Gramlich, "Subprime Mortgages: American's Latest Boom and Bust." Washington, D.C.: Urban Institute Press. Cited in Leigh and Huff, 1.

<sup>26</sup> "Mooncrest Always Self-Determined," *Pittsburgh Post-Gazette*, September 20, 2007, <http://www.post-gazette.com/pg/07263/818955-57.stm>, retrieved March 7, 2012.

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income provided by Mooncrest's sale in this fashion was an important instrument of wealth-building for those who purchased buildings there in a way that obtaining a share entitling one to live in a cooperative was not.

Moreover, most of the defense/war housing projects which became cooperatives were racially restricted to white residents, perpetuating existing patterns of segregation in the residential landscape. Mooncrest's sale to individual investors allowed for the persistence of racial diversity in the population of Moon Township which was not seen elsewhere in the surrounding area. Mooncrest's small row buildings were affordable enough for working-class families to buy them outright, including African American families who had migrated to Pennsylvania during the war and found work alongside their white colleagues in the Ohio Valley defense industry. Thus, Mooncrest became one of the few racially-integrated suburban communities in Western Pennsylvania during the 1950s and 1960s. Mooncrest continues to provide diversity in Moon Township by offering affordable housing to young, low-income, single, and retired households who would not otherwise be able to establish residency there.

### Comparisons

Comparisons with Mooncrest demonstrate its important role, from its inception to its post-war disposition, in the provision of idealistically master-planned, affordable and racially-integrated housing in the Pittsburgh region.

As the only other permanent war housing community built by the Allegheny County Housing Authority, Groveton Village makes an apt comparison to Mooncrest. Historic photographs of Groveton Village show that its original architecture was similar to Mooncrest's: one- to two-story, spartan, brick multifamily structures with multipane wood windows, wood doors sheltered by simple canopies, and gable ends oriented perpendicular to the street. At least some units also had paved parking pads in front. Located close to Mooncrest in nearby Robinson Township, Groveton Village also shared a manager with Mooncrest when it was first built in 1943 or 1944.

In terms of planning and development, however, Groveton Village was very different from Mooncrest. It had a much simpler site plan; it was approximately one-quarter the size, with 100 units in approximately 20 buildings; and it was considerably less remote. Groveton Village's houses were built on flat land along a single road accessed directly off of PA Route 51, a major thoroughfare which follows the Ohio River westward from Pittsburgh and through the town of Coraopolis, where it serves as the downtown's main street, just past the site of Groveton Village. Unlike Mooncrest, Groveton Village also had immediate neighbors. *Victory on the Homes Front*, an Allegheny County publication detailing its defense and war housing activities from 1938 to 1944, notes of Groveton Village that it "blend[s] into the adjacent neighborhood of small, village homes."<sup>27</sup> Groveton Village's limited size and site plan did not allow for any of the Garden City-style features that characterize Mooncrest, such as a superblock-style street plan or separation of pedestrian and vehicular traffic.

Groveton Village's social history also followed a different path from Mooncrest's. Its occupancy was all-white and it was transferred to the ACHA as low-income public housing after World War II, so it never provided the opportunities for early racial diversity, investment and homeownership that Mooncrest did. Recently, the ACHA completely rebuilt Groveton Village, replacing its original brick buildings with new, vinyl-sided ones of different sizes and designs. As a result, Groveton Village has lost integrity, leaving Mooncrest the sole intact representative of permanent war housing in Allegheny County.

More permanent war housing units were built by the Beaver County Housing Authority, northwest of Allegheny County. Of these, Van Buren Homes makes a typical comparison with Mooncrest. Built at a similar scale to Mooncrest, Van Buren Homes contains roughly the same number of buildings in a layout that could best be described as a hybrid of grid and superblock: a symmetrical, orthogonal system of streets, connected to the area's main road at three points on one long edge but enclosed by curves on the other. In contrast to Mooncrest's hilltop seclusion, Van Buren Homes is even more integrated than Groveton Village into an established area: it lies directly off of PA Route 68 on the outskirts of Beaver, the county seat, and across the

<sup>27</sup> Allegheny County Housing Authority, "Groveton Village," *Victory on the Homes Front: A Report and a Blueprint, 1938-1944*.

Mooncrest Historic District

Allegheny County, PA

Name of Property

County and State

highway from a traditional older neighborhood of homes and businesses. Architecturally, Van Buren Homes consists of more utilitarian, two-story, red-brick rowhouses, but their design, size, and arrangement are much more repetitive than at Mooncrest. Where Mooncrest has several housing types, Van Buren Homes consists almost entirely of four-unit buildings of uniform length and side-yard separation. Coupled with the development's orthogonal street plan, the result is a much more regimented appearance of identical houses marching along each street. Moreover, Van Buren's flat site does not provide the topographical variations that provide visual interest, views, and greenery, and that encourage architectural adaptation to terrain, which occur in Mooncrest. In comparison to Mooncrest, there are few trees in Van Buren Homes, and no parks or wooded areas. Instead, unenclosed yards blend together into shared lawns among the houses. The landscape at Van Buren Homes is planted mostly in grass.

Sociologically, Van Buren Homes was, like most war housing projects nationwide, built to serve an all-white population. In 1955, it became a cooperative. Therefore, its disposition after the war did not provide its residents or the larger community with the same benefits of diversity and homeownership combined with wealth-building through rental income as did the sale of Mooncrest.

Comparison with another racially "mixed" project in Allegheny County, North Braddock Heights, reveals that even in non-race-restricted federal housing projects, there were frequently degrees of segregation. North Braddock Heights consists of 200 two-story units in 36 buildings laid out in a concentric pattern along one curved through street in the borough of North Braddock, southeast of Pittsburgh. Unlike at Mooncrest, North Braddock Heights' plan does not offer direct vehicular access to every unit; many may be reached only by a pedestrian path from the project's main road. In North Braddock Heights, African American families lived in certain buildings and were allotted use of the project's recreation center two nights a week.<sup>28</sup> Mooncrest appears to have been more fully integrated, with African Americans participating fully in community life and facilities. The ACHA's publication, *Victory on the Homes Front*, features a photograph of Mooncrest children, black and white, eating a meal together in the community's child care center during the war. The degree of integration in a federal defense or war housing project may have been related to the racial attitudes of the union which represented its workers. For instance, the United Steel Workers' union, which represented the Edgar Thompson Works steel workers who lived in North Braddock Heights, struggled with racial issues, but the Industrial Union of Marine and Shipbuilding Workers of America, which represented the workers at the Dravo shipyards who lived in Mooncrest, advocated equal rights and fair wages.<sup>29</sup> After the war, North Braddock Heights became a cooperative, and the North Braddock Civic League, a social and political group organized by the project's African American residents, led efforts to end segregation there.<sup>30</sup> North Braddock Heights lost considerable physical integrity in the 1970s, when the co-op refaced all of its buildings in rustic vertical wood siding and rubble stone veneer.

Ultimately, Mooncrest is the only one of its peer defense and war housing communities in Allegheny County to have been racially integrated from the beginning, to offer its residents the opportunity for homeownership and wealth-building through transition to affordable housing on the private market, and to retain its integrity as an architecturally-modest, yet ambitiously master-planned, community influenced by the utopian ideals of New Deal-era housing reform.

<sup>28</sup> Szylvian Bailey, 22.

<sup>29</sup> Szylvian, personal communication with author, May 31, 2012.

<sup>30</sup> Szylvian Bailey, 22.

Mooncrest Historic District

Name of Property

Allegheny County, PA

County and State

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

**Bibliography** (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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- Szylvian, Kristin. "Bauhaus on Trial: Aluminum City Terrace and Federal Defense Housing Policy During World War II." *Planning Perspectives*, vol. 9, 1994.

Mooncrest Historic District  
Name of Property

Allegheny County, PA  
County and State

Szylvian, Kristin. Personal communication with author, May 31, 2012.

Szylvian Bailey, Kristin. "Defense Housing in Greater Pittsburgh: 1945-1955." *Pittsburgh History*, Spring 1990.

**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: University of Pittsburgh
- Other \_\_\_\_\_
- Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): N/A

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** 42.5

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	17	568272	4486458	3	17	569266	4485844
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2	17	569134	4486610	4	17	568423	4485734
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

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

The boundary of the district corresponds to the dashed line on the accompanying map entitled "Mooncrest Historic District – Sketch Plan" at a scale of 1"=200'.

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries encompass all of the historic residential buildings, the former school, and the two areas of open space that were originally part of the design for the Mooncrest war housing development. Only one resource historically associated with the development is excluded: the former grocery store which was altered in the 1970s and no longer retains integrity. Also excluded are adjacent properties whose construction pre- or post-dates the Mooncrest development.

Mooncrest Historic District  
Name of Property

Allegheny County, PA  
County and State

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Angelique Bamberg  
organization CLiO Consulting date January 14, 2013  
street & number 233 Amber Street telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town Pittsburgh state PA zip code 15206  
e-mail Clioconsulting@me.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:**

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: Mooncrest  
City or Vicinity: Moon Township  
County: Allegheny  
State: PA  
Photographer: Angelique Bamberg  
Date Photographed: May 16, 2012  
Location of Digital Files: CLiO Consulting  
233 Amber Street  
Pittsburgh, PA 15206

Photographs were printed on Epson Luster photo base paper on an Epson Stylus 2400 printer using archival chromogenic inks.

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

Photograph Number 1: Setting of Mooncrest: view of Ohio River from bluff  
Address: 358 Hemlock Drive  
Direction of camera: North

Photograph Number 2: Duplex with high integrity  
Address: 325-327 Hemlock Drive  
Direction of camera: South

Photograph Number 3: Quadplex  
Address: 406-412 Cedar Drive  
Direction of camera: Northeast

Mooncrest Historic District

Allegheny County, PA

Name of Property

County and State

Photograph Number 4: 4-unit "Bungalow" Building  
Address: 473-479 Cypress Drive  
Direction of camera: South

Photograph Number 5: Hemlock Drive  
Address: Corner Hemlock and Cedar Drives  
Direction of camera: East

Photograph Number 6: Island at Cedar and Cypress Drives  
Address: 353-363 Cedar Drive  
Direction of camera: Southeast

Photograph Number 7: Oak Drive  
Address: 228-230 and up Oak Drive  
Direction of camera: East

Photograph Number 8: Oak Drive  
Address: 272-291 Oak Drive  
Direction of camera: Northeast

Photograph Number 9: Public Stairs  
Address: Delaware and Juniper Drives  
Direction of camera: North

Photograph Number 10: Footpath  
Address: 478-484 Cypress Drive  
Direction of camera: East

Photograph Number 11: Overlook Park  
Address: Hemlock Drive  
Direction of camera: North

Photograph Number 12: Typical Alterations  
Address: 167 Juniper Drive  
Direction of camera: South

Photograph Number 13: Former Mooncrest Elementary School  
Address: 120 Mooncrest Drive  
Direction of camera: Southwest

**Property Owner:**





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

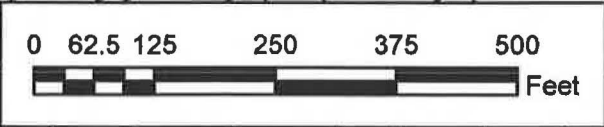
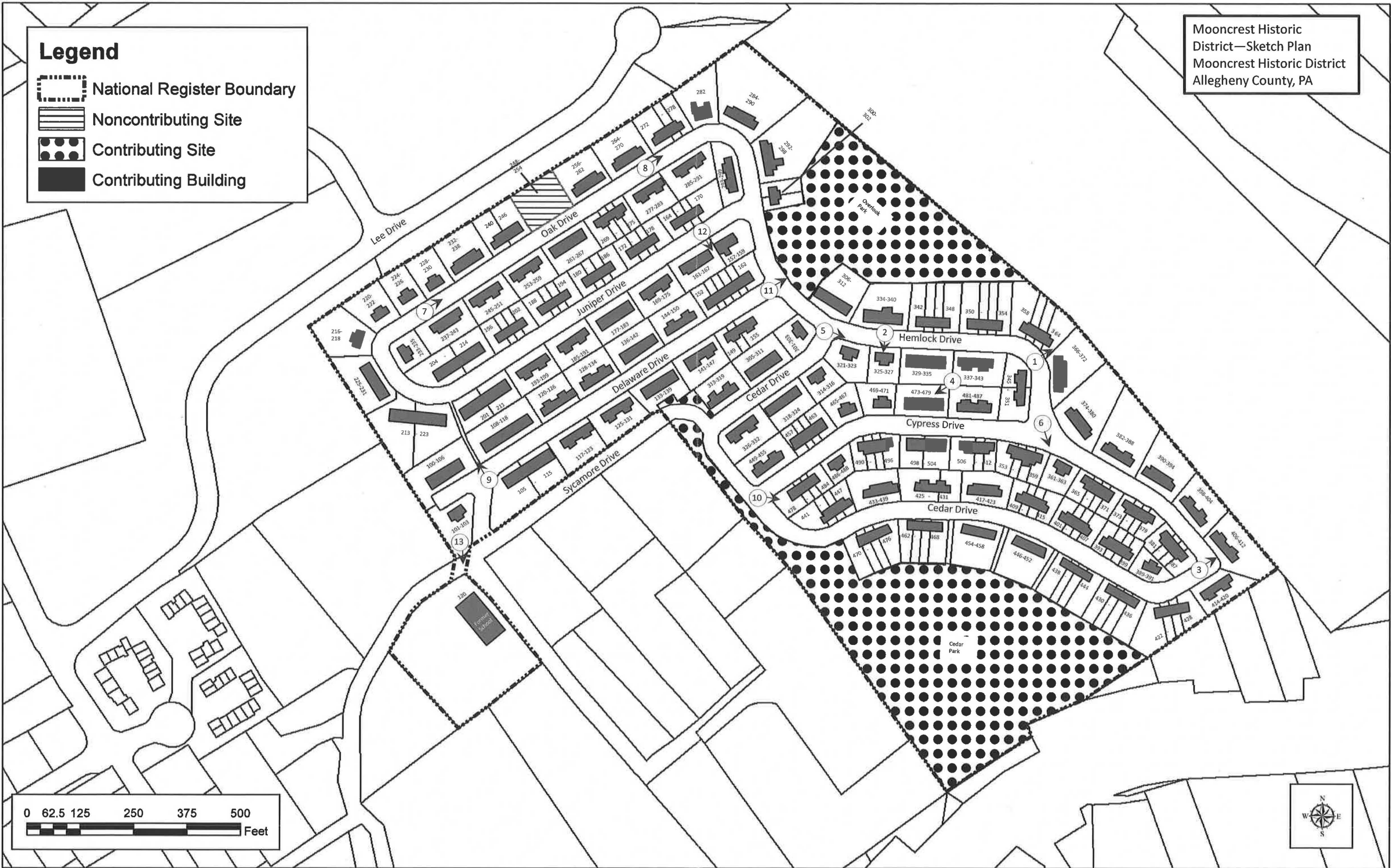
name \_\_\_\_\_  
street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_  
city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

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







**Legend**

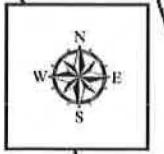
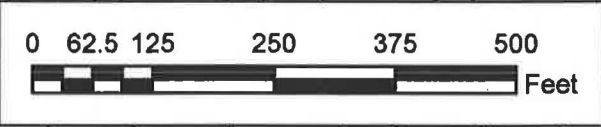
-  National Register Boundary
-  Noncontributing Site
-  Contributing Site
-  Contributing Building



# Legend

-  National Register Boundary
-  Noncontributing Site
-  Contributing Site
-  Contributing Building

Mooncrest Historic District—Sketch Plan  
Mooncrest Historic District  
Allegheny County, PA

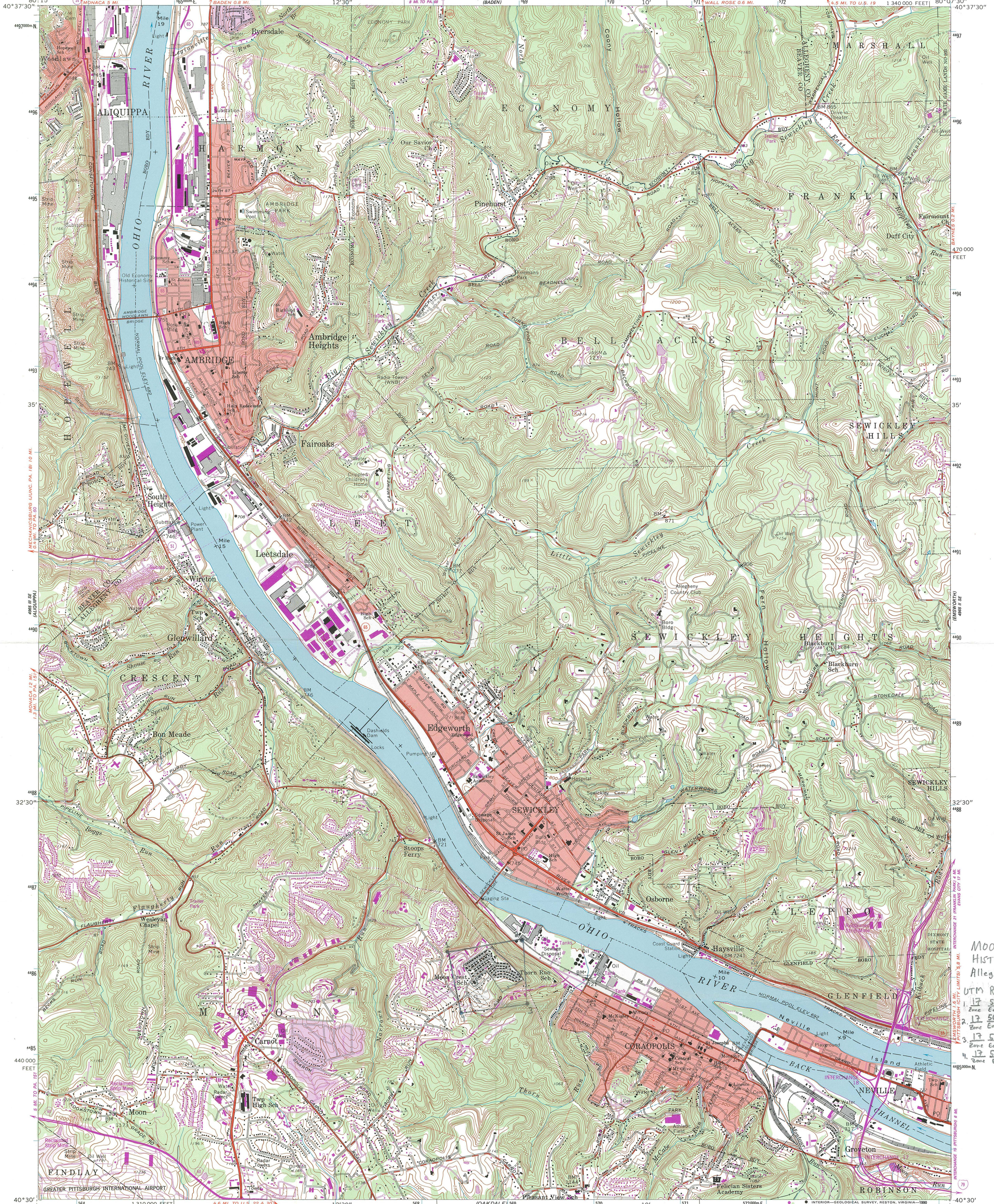


Mooncrest Historic District, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania

Resource Inventory

Table with columns: Street, Number, Tax Parcel, Historic Name, Resource Type, Building Type, Materials, Style, Date, Historic Function, Current Use, Contributing, Notes, Photo. It lists 150 individual property entries with their respective details.

Cedar Drive	433-439	505-M-5	N/A	Building	Quadplex	Brick	Modern Movement	1943	Domestic	Residential	Yes	Some original windows	
Cedar Drive	441-447	505-M-2, 3; 505-S-396, 398	N/A	Building	Quadplex	Brick	Modern Movement	1943	Domestic	Residential/Unoccupied (441, 447)	Yes		
Cedar Drive	314-316	505-L-20	N/A	Building	Duplex	Brick	Modern Movement	1943	Domestic	Residential	Yes		
Cedar Drive	318-324	505-L-17	N/A	Building	Split-level	Brick	Modern Movement	1943	Domestic	Unoccupied	Yes	Original siding and brackets; boarded	
Cedar Drive	326-332	505-L-15	N/A	Building	Quadplex	Brick	Modern Movement	1943	Domestic	Residential	Yes		
Cedar Drive	374-380	505-M-142	N/A	Building	Quadplex	Brick	Modern Movement	1943	Domestic	Residential	Yes		
Cedar Drive	382-388	505-M-149	N/A	Building	Quadplex	Brick	Modern Movement	1943	Domestic	Residential	Yes		
Cedar Drive	390-396	505-M-156	N/A	Building	Quadplex	Brick	Modern Movement	1943	Domestic	Residential	Yes		
Cedar Drive	398-404	505-M-161	N/A	Building	Quadplex	Brick	Modern Movement	1943	Domestic	Residential	Yes		
Cedar Drive	406-412	505-S-314	N/A	Building	Quadplex	Brick	Modern Movement	1943	Domestic	Residential/Unoccupied (408)	Yes		3
Cedar Drive	414-420	505-S-307	N/A	Building	Quadplex	Brick	Modern Movement	1943	Domestic	Residential	Yes		
Cedar Drive	422-428	505-S-302 thru 305	N/A	Building	Split-level	Brick	Modern Movement	1943	Domestic	Residential	Yes		
Cedar Drive	430-436	505-S-297 thru 300	N/A	Building	Split-level	Brick	Modern Movement	1943	Domestic	Residential	Yes		
Cedar Drive	438-444	505-S-290, 292-294	N/A	Building	Split-level	Brick	Modern Movement	1943	Domestic	Residential	Yes		
Cedar Drive	446-452	505-S-285	N/A	Building	Split-level	Brick	Modern Movement	1943	Domestic	Residential/Unoccupied (446)	Yes	Boarded	
Cedar Drive	454-460	505-S-285	N/A	Building	Split-level	Brick	Modern Movement	1943	Domestic	Residential/Unoccupied (450-458)	Yes	Most intact example of split level building type	
Cedar Drive	462-468	505-S-272 thru 275	N/A	Building	Split-level	Brick	Modern Movement	1943	Domestic	Residential	Yes		
Cedar Drive	470-476	505-S-264, 266, 268, 270	N/A	Building	Split-level	Brick	Modern Movement	1943	Domestic	Residential	Yes		
N/A	N/A	505-L-33	Cedar Park	Site	N/A	N/A	N/A	1943	Entertainment/Recreation	Recreational	Yes		
Mooncrest Drive	120	505-R-132	N/A	Building	Institutional	Brick	Modern Movement	1943	Education	Religious	Yes	Former Mooncrest Elementary School, sympathetically remodeled as church	13

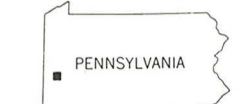
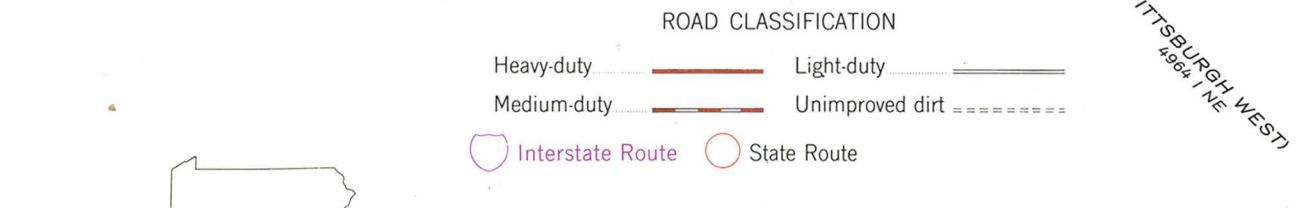
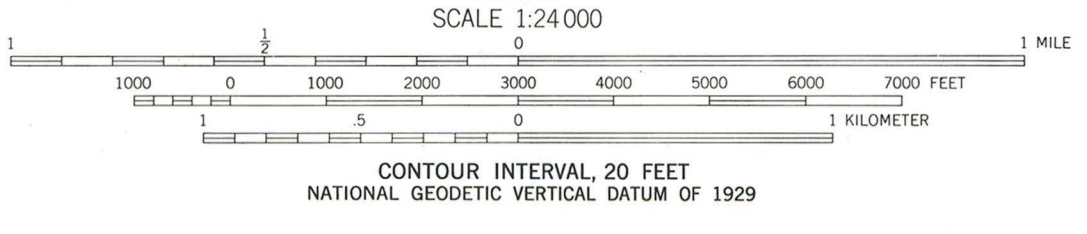
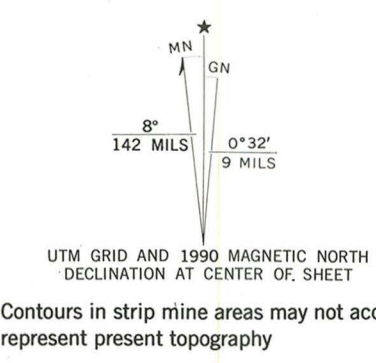


**MOONCREST HISTORIC DISTRICT**  
Allegheny County, PA

UTM References

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2	17	569134	4476610
3	17	569266	4475899
4	17	568423	4475724

Mapped, edited, and published by the Geological Survey  
Control by USGS and USC&GS  
Topography from aerial photographs by photogrammetric methods  
Aerial photographs taken 1952. Field check 1953. Revised 1960  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on Pennsylvania coordinate system, south zone  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
zone 17, shown in blue  
To place on the predicted North American Datum 1983  
move the projection lines 4 meters south and  
18 meters west as shown by dashed corner ticks  
Fine red dashed lines indicate selected fence and field lines where  
generally visible on aerial photographs. This information is unchecked  
Red tint indicates areas in which only landmark buildings are shown  
There maybe private inholdings within the boundaries of  
the National or State reservations shown on this map



THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY  
DENVER, COLORADO 80225 OR RESTON, VIRGINIA 22092  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

Revisions shown in purple and woodland compiled in cooperation  
with Commonwealth of Pennsylvania agencies from aerial  
photographs taken 1988 and other sources. This information  
not field checked. Map edited 1990  
Purple tint indicates extension of urban areas  
Light purple tint indicates reclaimed strip mine areas

AMBRIDGE, PA.  
40080-E2-TF-024  
1960  
PHOTOREVISED 1990  
DMA 4965 II SW - SERIES V831













CEDAR DR

















161



UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Mooncrest Historic District  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: PENNSYLVANIA, Allegheny

DATE RECEIVED: 8/02/13 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 8/26/13  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 9/10/13 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 9/18/13  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 13000741

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

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

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT  RETURN  REJECT 9.18.13 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

**Entered in  
The National Register  
of  
Historic Places**

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.

37TH DISTRICT  
**MATT SMITH**  
SENATE BOX 203037  
THE STATE CAPITOL  
HARRISBURG, PA 17120-3037  
717-787-5839  
FAX: 717-772-4437

319 CASTLE SHANNON BLVD.  
PITTSBURGH, PA 15234  
412-571-2169  
FAX: 412-571-2000

PETERS TWP. MUNICIPAL BUILDING  
610 EAST MCMURRAY ROAD  
MCMURRAY, PA 15317  
724-942-7210  
FAX: 724-942-7211  
TUESDAY AND THURSDAY

EMAIL: SenatorSmith@pasenate.com  
WEBSITE: www.SenatorMattSmith.com

**COMMITTEES**

STATE GOVERNMENT, DEMOCRATIC CHAIR  
COMMUNITY, ECONOMIC  
& RECREATIONAL DEVELOPMENT  
CONSUMER PROTECTION  
& PROFESSIONAL LICENSURE  
FINANCE  
GAME & FISHERIES



*Senate of Pennsylvania*

June 4, 2013

Pennsylvania Historical and Museum Commission  
Bureau for Historic Preservation  
Commonwealth Keystone Building, Second Floor  
400 North Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0093

To Whom It May Concern:

I write to express my full support for the nomination of Mooncrest Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places.

Mooncrest Neighborhood, developed in 1943 as a housing development for workers who contributed to war production efforts during World War II, is a significant example of war production housing and residential planning design. Many of the original features of the neighborhood remain intact despite alterations to some individual buildings. Mooncrest retains the integrity of its original master-planned design, which conveys the approach of the federal government to solving the crisis of housing war workers during World War II.

The historic treasures provided by the various buildings in the Mooncrest Neighborhood contribute to the character of Mooncrest Historic District because of its distinguishable features and utilitarian character. Therefore, it is with great enthusiasm that I personally support Mooncrest Historic District to the National Register of Historic Places.

Thank you,

**MATT SMITH**  
State Senator  
37<sup>th</sup> Senate District  
www.SenatorMattSmith.com

# 6

# TOWNSHIP OF MOON

## Municipal Center

1000 Beaver Grade Road • Moon Township, PA 15108-2984  
Telephone: 412-262-1700 • Fax: 412-262-5344 • moontwp@moontwp.com



April 15, 2013

Pennsylvania Historic Preservation Board  
PHMC Bureau for Historic Preservation  
Commonwealth Keystone Building, 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor  
400 North Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0093

Re: Mooncrest Historic District, Moon Township, Allegheny County, Key #125935

Dear Board Members,

As a Certified Local Government, the Township of Moon has the opportunity to submit comments as part of the review and consideration of the nomination of the Mooncrest Historic District to National Register. Please find the official comments addressing specific questions outlined in the letter from Keith Heinrich dated March 27, 2013.

1. In the opinion of the Township of Moon, the referenced property meets Criterion A in the areas of Community Planning and Development and Social History. No other properties in the municipality reflect the same themes or patterns as the Mooncrest neighborhood.
2. Mooncrest retains excellent integrity as defined by the National Register of Historic Places aspects of integrity. The neighborhood conveys its significance through its historic streetscape, building design, materials and use.
3. The Mooncrest neighborhood is a locally designated historic district established by Ordinance No. 579 on October 6, 2004. It was designated a historic district in order to maintain, preserve and protect the historic residential character of the neighborhood and raise awareness as to the historic significance of Mooncrest.
4. The Mooncrest Historic District has been discussed over the past year and was made an integral part of the current Township Comprehensive Plan update. The Comp Plan supports the Mooncrest nomination to the National Register and promotes redevelopment consistent with the Moon Township Historic Architectural Review Board Design Guidelines. In addition to the Comp Plan, Moon Township is in the process of developing a township-wide preservation plan with the assistance of a PHMC Keystone Historic Preservation Project Grant and confident that the Mooncrest neighborhood will be identified in that plan as a priority for preservation best practices.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,  
TOWNSHIP OF MOON  
Board of Supervisors

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Lora Dombrowski".

Lora Dombrowski  
Assistant Planning Director/Code Administrator



Pennsylvania  
Historical & Museum  
Commission



July 29, 2013

Carol Shull, Acting Keeper  
National Register of Historic Places  
U.S. Department of Interior  
National Park Service  
1201 "I" (Eye) Street, NW, 8th floor  
Washington D.C. 20005

Re: NR nomination forms

Dear Ms Shull:

The following nomination forms are being submitted for your review:

Universalist Meeting House of Sheshequin, Bradford County  
Allegheny Commons, Allegheny County  
Mooncrest Historic District, Allegheny County  
Eagles Mere Historic District (Boundary Increase and Additional Documentation),  
Sullivan County  
Blackwell Church, Tioga County  
McDowell Memorial Presbyterian Church, Philadelphia  
Palmerton Historic District, Carbon County

The proposed action is listing in the National Register.

If you have any questions regarding the nominations please contact Keith Heinrich at 717-783-9919.

Sincerely,

Keith T. Heinrich  
National Register and Survey

Historic Preservation Services  
Commonwealth Keystone Building  
400 North Street  
Harrisburg, PA 17120-0093  
www.phmc.state.pa.us  
*The Commonwealth's Official History Agency*