

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

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

received **JUL 15 1985**
date entered **AUG 29 1985**

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

1. Name

historic

and/or common **Mechanicsburg Multiple Resource Area** (partial: history/architecture)

2. Location

street & number _____ not for publication

city, town **Mechanicsburg** _____ vicinity of

state **Ohio** code **039** county **Champaign** code **021**

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name **See individual forms**

street & number _____

city, town _____ vicinity of _____ state _____

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. **Champaign County Courthouse**

street & number **N. Main and Court St.**

city, town **Urbana** state **Ohio**

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title **Ohio Historic Inventory** has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date **1984** federal state county local

depository for survey records **Ohio Historic Preservation Office, I-71 & 17th Ave.**

city, town **Columbus** state **Ohio**

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

Mechanicsburg is a village of approximately 1500, located in Champaign County, in west central Ohio. It is approximately 12 miles southeast of Urbana, the county seat, and 25 miles northwest of Columbus, the state capital. The village is surrounded by a fertile agricultural area, which has always been the basis of its economy. The topography in this area of the county consists of gently rolling hills. Mechanicsburg grew slowly during the first half of the nineteenth century. Its population peaked around 1890 after the railroads brought prosperity to the rural area by providing distant and accessible markets for agricultural products. Most of the existing resources date from the 1850-1910 period.

The village, which was platted in 1814, is a grid pattern with two major streets - Main (northwest-southeast) and Sandusky (northeast-southwest) Streets. The majority of the resources included in this nomination are located along these two thoroughfares. The buildings located on Main Street are situated on narrow lots and are very close to the street. Those on Sandusky tend to be set back slightly and some even have fairly sizeable yards. Development along Main Street is very dense from the railroad tracks on the south to the top of a slight hill where Main Street jogs to the west. The village reached a population of over 2,000 in 1890; and the village limits today are nearly identical to those in the 1874 atlas. There has not been any major recent development within the village limits of Mechanicsburg and with the exception of two apartment complexes, there has been little construction of housing since the 1920's.

The architectural styles of the buildings included in the nomination represent a number of styles popular during the second half of the nineteenth century. Included are: two vernacular Greek Revival buildings (photos 7, 9) which incorporate some of the features of the style - pilasters, symmetrical facades, multi-paned windows; entrance with transom and sidelights; a farm complex with a transitional Greek Revival-Italianate residence (photos 28-33); three Gothic Revival cottages (photos 17, 18, 19) that are frame construction with intersecting gable rooflines and decorative bargeboards; four late 19th century Gothic-inspired churches (photos 10-16) constructed of brick with pointed arch stained glass windows, and contrasting stone window and door surrounds; eight brick Italianate commercial and residential structures (photos 1-6, 20, 21,) which feature a variety of window shapes and decorative hoodmoulds, bracketed cornices, projecting bays and decorative brickwork; two Queen Anne residences (photos 24-27) which feature irregular massing, variety of materials, and turrets and projections; an eclectic brick residence (photo 22) with stained glass windows, recessed entry and Palladian window;

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a Colonial Revival residence (photo 23) with a symmetrical facade, Palladian window and Ionic columned front porch; and an early 20th century lodge building (photo 34) with a buff-colored brick facade and craftsman style knee-braces.

A comprehensive architectural/historical survey was undertaken in 1984 and was jointly funded by the Ohio Historic Preservation Office and the Village of Mechanicsburg. The inventory was conducted by a preservation consulting firm with research assistance provided by a local historian. Approximately 60 properties were individually recorded on Ohio Historic Inventory forms. The majority of the recorded properties are residential structures.

It is worthwhile noting that one building type - 1 1/2 story residences with intersecting gabled rooflines - appeared repeatedly throughout Mechanicsburg. There were 45 of these buildings identified in the survey. It is very unusual to find this building type at all in western Ohio and certainly not in such large numbers. It is possible that as more information is learned about these buildings, they may qualify for listing in the National Register.

The 24 buildings in this nomination include the most architecturally and historically significant properties identified in the survey. The selection of properties was based upon extensive research, field survey and input of the community. Included are churches, commercial buildings, residential structures, a farm complex and lodge building. These properties were constructed between the 1830's and 1910.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1830s - 1910

Builder/Architect N/A

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Criterion A, B & C

The historic resources of Mechanicsburg, which are included in this nomination, are significant for both historic and architectural reasons. Growth and development of this small village from the 1830's to the early 20th century are well represented by the following themes: agriculture - Hunter Farm, Burnham Residence, Kimball Residence, Demand-Gest Residence; commerce - Mechanicsburg Commercial Historic District, Lawler's Tavern, Hamer's General Store, Magruder Building, Village Hobby Shop; ethnic/immigration - Levi Rathbun Residence, Second Baptist Church; industry - Cyrus Barr Residence, Culbertson Residence, Baker Residence; religion - Second Baptist Church, St. Michael Catholic Church, Mechanicsburg Baptist Church, United Methodist Church and Church of Our Savior; and society/culture - Masonic Temple. Excellent examples of the rich variety of architectural styles found in Mechanicsburg are also included.

In addition to the above mentioned themes, Mechanicsburg's development was greatly impacted by three major historical trends: its settlement by Virginians and other southerners; the introduction of the railroad in the early 1850's which established its transportation advantage over other nearby towns; and the growth of industry and commerce during the late 19th century.

Champaign County was formed in 1805 and Mechanicsburg was platted in 1814. Goshen Township, where Mechanicsburg is located, is within the Virginia Military District. Most of the early Mechanicsburg settlers came from Virginia and Kentucky. The attraction was undoubtedly what one of the 19th century county histories stated so well: "the wealth of the county exists in the productive capacity of its soil". It has always had an agriculturally based economy, and that remains true for Mechanicsburg today.

Among the early Virginia settlers were a number of abolitionists and as a result, Mechanicsburg was dubbed a "black abolition hole." It became a well known station on the

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Underground Railroad from Ripley (on the Ohio River) to Canada and was the site of the famous Addison White case of 1857. A number of Mechanicsburg citizens were actively involved in this movement. The Levi Rathbun House (photo 17) has been carefully documented as one of the houses used to hide runaway slaves. It is one of the few Underground Railroad stops surviving in the township and is significant as a reminder of this community's attitudes and activities of this period before and during the Civil War. There was never a major influx of immigrants to Mechanicsburg, however there were both Irish and blacks mentioned in census information, especially after 1850. The black population was concentrated in the East Race Street area, although census records show that it was always an integrated neighborhood. There were even two black religious congregations during the late 19th century. The Second Baptist congregation has occupied one of the churches included in this nomination since the 1890's.

Mechanicsburg achieved its greatest significance from after the Civil War to the turn of the century. It was due, in large part, to the introduction of the railroad in 1850's, which had a dramatic impact on Mechanicsburg. The railroad provided the farmers in the surrounding area with ready access to markets for their agricultural products. The Union Agricultural Society was formed in Mechanicsburg in 1868 to include Champaign, Clark, Madison and Union Counties. Fifty acres was purchased from Major John Baker in 1869 for use as a fairgrounds. During the late 19th century, this fair was comparable in importance to the state fair. The fairgrounds were later moved to Urbana, the county seat. As the farmers prospered, they built some of the finest homes in Mechanicsburg including the Hunter Farm, Burnham and Kimball residences (photos 28-33, 18, 24). They patronized Mechanicsburg banks and stores and agriculturally related industry. This prosperity resulted in the growth of the population from 1200 residents in 1870 to over 2000 in 1890. The boundaries of the village have remained the same and there are subdivisions platted in 1870 which have not been fully developed today. Mechanicsburg always had a small commercial center (Lawler's Tavern c.1830's - photo 7- is the only business building remaining from the early period), but later became a thriving commercial center for the surrounding townships. Local banks were established, hotels thrived and it was possible to purchase dry goods, clothing, drugs, shoes, jewelry, millinery and groceries in the business district. Most of the commercial buildings included in this nomination were built during the last

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quarter of the 19th century (photos 1-8). The hotel, known as the Darby House, was built in 1874 on the site of an earlier hotel that was destroyed by fire. It was followed by a handsome variety of small, 2 story commercial buildings along South Main Street.

It was also during this period that several industries were established in Mechanicsburg. They, too, related to the agricultural economic base of the county. The Mechanicsburg Machine Company was founded by Major John C. Baker to manufacture the Baker grain drill and in 1880 produced over 1600 drills. Culbertson & Barr Carriage and Wagon Manufacturers (owned by partners William Culbertson and Cyrus Barr) was another important Mechanicsburg industry. It was founded in 1854 and evolved into an automobile dealership by 1915 (Culbertson Brothers). The buildings where these products were manufactured are no longer standing. The residences of Major Baker, Mr. Culbertson and Mr. Barr (photos 25,26,27,21,19) are included in the nomination. They are significant as reminders of the industry which existed during the late 19th century.

Professional people were attracted to this growing community and at one time there were several practicing physicians in this small village. They were among the most prosperous citizens as illustrated by the fine homes they built along North Main Street. The Dr. Clark at 21 N. Main (photo 20), Dr. Ninchelser at 28 N. Main (photo 22), and Dr. Demand at 37 N. Main (photo 23) residences are included in the nomination.

Churches were frequently the among the earliest permanent structures erected in a community. In Mechanicsburg, the Methodist Congregation built its first church in 1819. By the 1860's Mechanicsburg's diverse religious heritage was evident as there were 2 Methodist, a Baptist and Catholic congregations. The five churches included in this nomination represent religious history of Mechanicsburg (photos 9-16). The Second Baptist Church (built as a Methodist Church in 1858), is the oldest surviving church building in the village (photo 9). It is also significant because it has been the home of Mechanicsburg's Black Baptist congregation since the 1890's. St. Michael's Catholic Parish was organized in 1865 by Irish and the present church was built c. 1888 (photo 10). The 1890's were a period of church building, with three of the five churches built during

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that 10-year period. The Methodist Protestant Church (formed when the Methodist Church split over the issue of slavery in 1852) built their church in 1890 (photos 11,12,13). The Church of Our Savior Episcopal congregation formed in 1892 and completed their church in 1893 (photo 16). The Methodist Episcopal Church built their new church in 1893-94 (photos 14,15) and sold the old church to the African Baptist congregation.

Fraternal organizations achieved popularity in Mechanicsburg, during the nineteenth century. The Masonic Lodge was the first to form in 1843. It was later followed by the Odd Fellows, who built their own building c. 1870; the Independent Order of Red Men, organized in 1874; the Knights of Pythias, organized in 1891 and the Lodge of the Modern Woodmen. The Masonic Temple built in 1909 and included in this nomination (photo 34), is the only surviving example of a building constructed for the purposes of these organizations, which were so prevalent during Mechanicsburg's period of greatest development. Several others - Odd Fellows and Knights of Pythias - had built their own buildings at one time, however both were destroyed by fire.

Little has changed since the early 20th century. The industries that existed at the turn of the century are no longer here. The major business, however, is still agriculturally related - Ohio Grain Co. The Hunter & Son Grain Co. was established in 1884 and was purchased by the Ohio Grain Elevators Co., in 1918. Mr. Neil Gest, who managed the Mechanicsburg branch and became president of the company, lived in the house built by Dr. Demand at 37 N. Main St. (photo 23) for many years.

The historical development of Mechanicsburg is well represented in its architecture and this nomination incorporates a cross section of building types and architectural styles found in Mechanicsburg. Lawler's Tavern and the Methodist Episcopal Church are good examples of the Greek Revival style (photos 9,7), which was never very common here; Norval Hunter's farmhouse is transitional Greek Revival/Italianate (photos 28-33) and is an outstanding farm complex; Levi Rathbun's, Cyrus Barr's and Henry Burnham's residences (NW and NE corners of Sandusky and Locust, SE corner of Main and High,) are excellent examples of Gothic Revival cottages (photos 17-19); the hotel and commercial

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buildings (photos 1-6,8), as well as Dr. Clark's (21 N. Main) and William Culbertson's (NE corner Race and Locust) residences (photos 20,21) are Italianate in style and demonstrate how well this style was adapted for both residential and commercial structures; Dr. Ninchelser's (28 N. Main), Jeff Kimball's (115 N. Main) and Major Baker's (202 W. Main) residences are large Queen Anne homes (photos 22, 24, 25-27); and Dr. Demand's residence (37 N. Main) is Colonial Revival (photo 23).

In addition, the churches represent the finest collection of architectural resources in the community (photos 9-16). They are the most visible, monumental buildings remaining in Mechanicsburg and they have been little altered. They draw upon Gothic Revival elements and combine them with the decorative detail and eclecticism which was popular during the 1890 period when most of them were built. They are scattered throughout the community and contribute significantly to the architectural character of this small village.

This nomination is the result of a comprehensive survey project, undertaken by the community and which is being submitted as the same time as this nomination. A Resource Planning Protection Process has also been prepared to explain the results of the survey; to identify known threats to significant resources; and to recommend actions which will encourage their preservation. This nomination is one of those recommendations.

The multiple resource approach is appropriate for Mechanicsburg because it covers a geographic area of manageable size; and the resources are scattered and do not occur in a concentration great enough to qualify as a single historic district. In addition, the resources reflect the themes important in the development of the community and this comprehensive approach will assist Mechanicsburg residents in better understanding the variety of historic resources they have.

9. Major Bibliographical References

see continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreeage of nominated property ^{see ind. OHI forms} see individual OHI forms

Quadrangle name Mechanicsburg

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

see individual OHI forms

A

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Zone Easting Northing

B

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Zone Easting Northing

C

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D

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E

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F

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G

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H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

see individual OHI forms

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

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Nancy Recchie/Preservation Consultant

organization Benjamin D. Rickey & Co.

date 12/84

street & number 391 Library Park South

telephone (614) 221-0358

city or town Columbus

state Ohio

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

W. Ray Luce

title SHPO

date 4/10/85

For NPS use only

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

See Continuation sheet for listing

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

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National Park Service

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Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Mechanicsburg Multiple Resource Area
State Champaign County, OHIO

Cover Accept Patrick Andrews 8/29/85

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

1. Baker, Major John C.,
House

Entered in the
National Register for Keeper

Delores Byrum 8/29/85

Attest

2. Barr House

Entered in the
National Register for Keeper

Delores Byrum 8/29/85

Attest

3. Burnham, Henry, House

Entered in the
National Register for Keeper

Delores Byrum 8/29/85

Attest

4. Church of Our Savior

Entered in the
National Register for Keeper

Delores Byrum 8/29/85

Attest

5. Clark, Dr., House

Entered in the
National Register for Keeper

Delores Byrum 8/29/85

Attest

6. Culbertson, William, House

Entered in the
National Register for Keeper

Delores Byrum 8/29/85

Attest

7. Demand-Gest House

Entered in the
National Register for Keeper

Delores Byrum 8/29/85

Attest

8. Hamer's General Store

Entered in the
National Register for Keeper

Delores Byrum 8/29/85

Attest

9. Hunter, Norvall, Farm

Substantive Review for Keeper

Accept Patrick Andrews 8/29/85

Attest

10. Kimball House

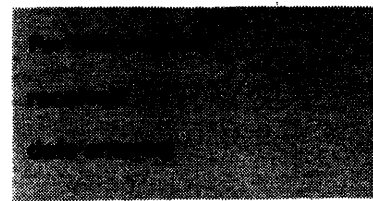
Entered in the
National Register for Keeper

Delores Byrum 8/29/85

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Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

Name Mechanicsburg Multiple Resource Area
State Champaign County, OHIO

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

11. Lowler's Tavern

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper

Melrose Byers 8/29/85

Attest

12. Magruder Building

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper

Melrose Byers 8/29/85

Attest

13. Masonic Temple

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper

Melrose Byers 8/29/85

Attest

14. Mechanicsburg Baptist
Church

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper

Melrose Byers 8/29/85

Attest

15. Mechanicsburg Commercial
Historic District

Substantive Review

for Keeper

Patrick Andrews - Accept 8/29/85

Attest

16. Ninchelser, Dr., House

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper

Melrose Byers 8/29/85

Attest

17. Rathburn, Levi, House

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper

Melrose Byers 8/29/85

Attest

18. Second Baptist Church

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper

Melrose Byers 8/29/85

Attest

19. St. Michael Catholic Church

Entered in the
National Register

for Keeper

Melrose Byers 8/29/85

Attest

20. United Methodist Church

Entered in the
National Register

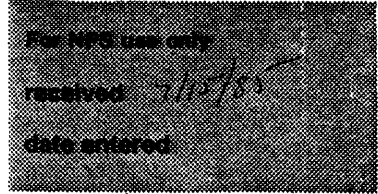
for Keeper

Melrose Byers 8/29/85

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Multiple Resource Area
Thematic Group

Name Mechanicsburg Multiple Resource Area
State Champaign County, OHIO

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

21. Village Hobby Shop

Submitted To: ~~NPS~~
Director, NPS

for Keeper

Melvin Byers 8/29/85

Attest

22.

Keeper

Attest

23.

Keeper

Attest

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Keeper

Attest