

Jack and Pauline Neher House  
1325 First Avenue  
Fourth Ward Neighborhood  
Altoona  
Blair County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5821

HABS  
PA,  
7-ALTO,  
66-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
National Park Service  
Department of the Interior  
Washington, D.C. 20013-7127

HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

JACOB AND PAULINE NEHER HOUSE

HABS No. PA-5821

HABS  
PA.  
7-ALTO.  
66-

Location: 1325 1st Avenue

Date of Erection: 1897

Description: The unusual shape of this frame house is probably original, as it resembles the outline on the 1909 Sanborn map. A two-story side-gable house is intersected by a narrower two-and-a-half story gambrel-front pavilion: the two forms share the house's northern exterior wall. The entrance door to the house is in that part of the two-story house exposed on the front facade, set back slightly at the right front edge of the house. An unusual two-story projecting bay starts at the center of the front facade, projecting diagonally outward to the left (thus catching a southern exposure) and leveling off parallel to the front; it has no diagonal return to the corner of the house.

The Neher house is sided in narrow horizontal novelty wood, except for the front facade below window level, where, below a molding, the wood siding is vertical. Flat window surrounds are capped with a squared pediment of molding above a single sawtooth strip; first-floor windows are extra tall. A cornice molding runs along the projecting bay at two-story height to the base of the gable of the gambrel roof. The gable front has a triple window, and is decorated with alternating sets of rows of plain and hexagonal shingles. The porch and its foundation have been altered.

History: Following a Fourth Ward pattern of long-term ownership, the Neher house has belonged to only two families during its history. John Wright's heirs sold the 25' x 120' lot on which this house rests in 1897 to Jacob Neher of Altoona, a stonemason who lived here with his wife Pauline. According to tax records, he first owned this half-lot with "small house" at 1325 1st Ave. in 1897, when it was rated at \$600. By 1904, Frieda Neher, a daughter, also appeared in city directories, working as a clerk at Kline Brothers. Emma Neher appeared as a weaver at the Altoona Silk Mills in 1912. Jacob Neher died on February 4, 1914, and in that year Frieda, then also a silk worker, was the only family member resident in Altoona. In 1919, Emil Neher, a laborer, was the only family member listed.

Jacob Neher's heirs--Emil C. Neher, Mrs. Emma T. Files and Orville Files and Frieda Pauline Files-- sold the property to Calvin R. Knisely on January 22, 1923, for \$2,100. By 1925, Knisely, a sheet-metal worker, and his wife, Frieda P., lived at the house. They continued to live here through 1960, when he was listed as an employee of the PRR. Calvin Knisely died intestate in December 1963; title was transferred to Frieda, who died in 1977, and then to her two children who still own the property.

Sources: Maps: 1882, 1909. Deeds books: 116/158, 305/172. City directories. Tax assessment records.

Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Altoona, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP), Randy Cooley, director. Overviews of the history of the city (HABS No. PA-5784) and the fourth ward neighborhood (HABS No. PA-5786) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also additional HABS reports on buildings in the city and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Susan Garfinkel in the summer of 1989 under the supervision of HABS senior historian Alison K. Hoagland and Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian. Garfinkel's and other project historians' work was published as Railroad City: Four Historic Neighborhoods in Altoona, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1990), edited by Kim E. Wallace, supervisory historian, and Sara Amy Leach, HABS historian.