

Elizabeth and Blair Ward House
1537 2nd Avenue
Fourth Ward Neighborhood
Altoona
Blair County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5832

HABS
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7-ALTO,
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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY
ELIZABETH AND BLAIR WARD HOUSE

HABS
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86-

HABS No. PA-5832

Location: 1537 2nd Avenue

Date of Erection: ca. 1925-27

Description: The Ward House makes an impressive appearance among its neighbors due to its unusual proportions and the solid feel of its multi-toned brick veneer. Many houses originally built on full 50' lots used the extra property for surrounding yard space. The Ward House, however, incorporates most of the width of its full-sized lot. If not for the lack of a surrounding yard, it would look more at home in the Llyswen survey area.

Stylistically the house is also atypical of the Fourth Ward in its gestures toward the Colonial Revival and 1920s bungalow styles.¹ Only a handful of houses in the Fourth Ward survey area have central doorways and perfectly symmetrical facades (see 1214 3rd Ave., HABS No. PA-5834). Symmetry is emphasized by the hipped roof with its wide front-facing dormer projecting beyond the rise of the exterior walls, the wide spacing of the three bays, the doubling of windows at each side of the front facade, and the projecting gabled roof of the massive brick front porch. The enclosed sun porch on the right side of the house emphasizes rather than disrupts the pattern, as it is lower and smaller in outline than the main structure. A tall chimney runs up the side wall from the sun porch and through the projecting edge of the roof.

History: Like 1515 2nd Ave. (HABS No. PA-5831), this house was built on property acquired from John Wright's heirs by S. M. Hoyer and M. L. Kring in November 1912. With their wives Clara A. Hoyer and Hortense Kring, they sold a 48' x 120' lot to Elizabeth Ward, wife of Blair Ward, for \$2,000 in September 1913. Although this value is high, there does not appear to have been a house on the property. Elizabeth Ward, a nonresident, was taxed for a vacant lot the following year. By 1916 a double house was built on the rear third of the property.

The exact building date of this house is somewhat muddled in available records. Tax books indicate a brick garage at the site in 1925, but the city directory listed Blair Ward as a fireman for the city at this address. Elizabeth Ward's 1927 tax assessment entry--"new brick/ garage" is unclear, but the associated high value of \$5,000 suggests the presence of the current house. It is the 1929 tax assessment which first mentions a "large brick house," while the property is valued at \$4,500. By 1930 Elizabeth Ward was listed as resident here as well, working as a clerk for Grace Wissinger.

In 1934 joint title to the property was vested in Elizabeth Ward and Howard German; present at that time were a brick-cased dwelling and a brick, two-car garage. Ward and German, a machinist, seem to have married. They passed on the property John H. and Mildred Megehan in September 1949. In the 1950s, the Megehans resided at 714 Bell Ave. and rented this property to Philip and Mary Scaglione. Scaglione worked first as a helper at Lafferty Trucking Company, then ran a used-fur business on 17th Street. The house was sold to its present owners in 1973.

Sources: Maps: 1909, 1932. Deed books: 121/619, 206/666, 221/26, 425/673-675, 611/341, 949/191. 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

¹ Only one bungalow, at 1201 6th Ave., was found in the survey area.

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(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.