

John and Annie Fearbeck House
1323 8th Avenue
Fourth Ward Neighborhood
Altoona
Blair County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5858

HABS
PA,
7-ALTO,
47-

PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

JOHN AND ANNIE FEARBECK HOUSE

HABS
PA,
7-ALTO,
49-
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Location: 1323 8th Avenue

Date of Erection: 1908

Description: The two-and-one-half-story, brick-veneer Fearbeck House rests on the site of an earlier frame dwelling. While its gambrel-front roof shape is fairly common for the Fourth Ward, the elaborate hexagonal left-corner tower with bell-shaped cap merging into the facade, is unusually sophisticated. This stylization corresponds, however, to the location of this house on the busier and more commercial 8th Avenue.

Beyond the curved lines of the tower's cap, visual interest is added to the house through a wide wood cornice which returns at the foot of the gambrel gable, a central Palladian window within the gable, and inset stone window lintels and sills on the front facade. There is continuous stone banding above and below the tower windows. A squared-off porch with stone foundation and three columnar supports opens into the entrance door at left. An exterior chimney rises from the side of the house just behind the tower.

History: In March 1907 John Fearbeck acquired a 25' x 120' lot from Thomas A. Wiggins, a foreman in the flue shop of the PRR who had owned the lot since 1874. At that time a two-story, plank and weather-boarded dwelling house at 1323 8th Ave. was described.

In 1907, Wiggins was still taxed for the property, valued that year at \$1,800. The following year, it was added to the list under Fearbeck's name, valued at \$2,800. The year 1908, then, is the probable construction date, as the house appears outlined on the 1909 Sanborn insurance map. Fearbeck was a butcher who also owned 1322-24 8th Ave., just across the street. By 1912 he was listed as resident at this address; in 1925 his widow Annie continued to live here. She willed the property to Frederick W. Olmes.

Olmes's wife, Audrey, sold it to Vito and Rosa Ciccarella for \$3,000 in September 1939. In 1939 Emma Dodson, a widow, was renting the house. The Ciccarellas--Vito and Rose Ciccarella, and Joseph M. and Rose--moved in by 1941. By 1953, Joseph and Rose lived here, while Joseph ran Chick's Billiards at 818 12th St. The house is still owned by the Ciccarella family.

Sources: Maps: 1894, 1909. Deed books: R/317, T/274, 31/561, 172/456, 447/602, 629/73, 940/910, 1002/411, 1013/270, 1132/550. 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.