



City of Easton, Pennsylvania HISTORIC DISTRICT COMMISSION

EASTON'S ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

This brochure, published by the City of Easton Historic District Commission, is intended to provide applicants for Certificates of Appropriateness with information about architectural styles within the Historic District.

EASTON'S LOCAL HISTORIC DISTRICT

A local historic district is an area which includes resources such as buildings, structures, objects, or sites, whose character conveys a unique cultural and architectural heritage. Since the enactment of the State of Pennsylvania's Historic District Act 167 in 1961, many municipalities have passed local historic district ordinances.

The unique quality of Easton's architectural heritage was recognized in 1983 when Easton was added to the National Register of Historic Places. In 2005, the City of Easton passed the Local Historic District Ordinance to preserve for future generations significant buildings and structures reflective of Easton's historic development and architectural styles.



BRIEF HISTORY OF EASTON

In 1736 Thomas Penn, son of William Penn, and Benjamin Eastburn, surveyor general, selected and surveyed the "Thousand Acre Tract" of land at the confluence of the Delaware and Lehigh Rivers. William Parsons and Nicholas Scull began their survey for a town in the 1750s at a spot called by the Indians "Lechanwitauk" or "the Place at the Forks." The new town was to be called "Easton" and was originally planned as the government seat of the new county of "Northampton." The Great Square (now known as Centre Square) was, and remains, a gathering place for residents and travelers. In fact, on July 8, 1776, the square was the site for one of only three readings of the Declaration of Independence.

The city gained importance as a transportation center. Through the first half of the 19th century, the rivers, and later the canals, played a significant role in shaping the economic and social activity of the area. With the completion of the Lehigh Canal in 1829, Easton was poised to become one of the largest industrial manufacturing centers of America during the 1830s and 1840s. After 1850, four railroad lines were built through Easton, ultimately replacing the canals as transportation links.

In addition to Easton's role as the region's transportation hub, the city was rapidly developing as a commercial center. Easton continued to prosper as a center for industry, manufacturing, commerce, and culture into the twentieth century.

EASTON'S ARCHITECTURAL TIME LINE

The area identified as the Local Historic District includes residential, commercial, institutional, and mixed use (residential/commercial) buildings, including an increasing number of single family dwellings. The wide range of architectural styles from a period of more

than 200 years help shape the city's unique identity.

EARLY 1754-1830

In the 1750s, the first houses built in Easton were small houses with stone chimneys.



The Parsons Taylor House built in 1757.

These dwellings are typically simple cube shapes with double pitched or gable roofs and dormers. Simply detailed, the buildings feature flat arched windows with understated keystones or central wedges. Entryways were the sole areas showing any ornamental decoration.



The Jacob Nicholas house built in 1807.

In 1776, downtown Easton had no less than thirteen stone taverns serving the needs of both travelers and the growing population of the city.



The Bachmann Tavern, built in 1753, is the oldest building remaining in Easton.

Federal style buildings, built typically between 1800 and 1830, featured more ornate keystones.



Library Hall, site of Easton's first library.

Characteristically larger, their entryways often included fan-shaped windows over the doors.



The Jacob Mixsell house, built in 1833.

Greek Revival buildings (1820-1840) feature pediments and columns resembling the Greek temples.



Northampton County Courthouse

EARLY COMMERCIAL 1830-1860

Commercial buildings built just before the Victorian era were larger than their colonial counterparts, but remained simple. Upper floor windows were larger and contained more panes. The ground floors were used as storefronts and as such featured large display windows. But woodwork and moldings were similar to their earlier predecessors.

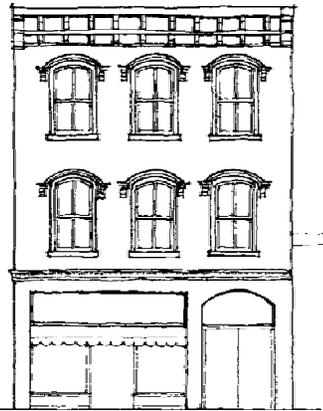


102 South Third Street

VICTORIAN ERA 1860-1920

Most of the older buildings in Easton today were built after 1850, the period of greatest growth. Victorian style architecture reflects a mix of decorative elements such as mansard roofs, window bays, gables, columns, and pediments.

Commercial buildings of this period featured taller facades, projecting cornices, and single windows regularly spaced. Windows were “hooded” by stone or wood. Storefronts often had stained or leaded glass transoms separating the ground and second floors.



235 Northampton Street

Mansard roofs, and heavily bracketed and moulded cornices, are found on buildings built during the late Victorian, Second Empire period. Brownstone or brownstone and dark brick were common building materials.



34 North Third Street

Romanesque style buildings (late Victorian 1870 - 1910) feature heavy rounded arches, towers, gables, balconies, and bays. They are typically brick or stone and vary from simple and symmetrical to highly convoluted and asymmetrical.



36 North Third Street

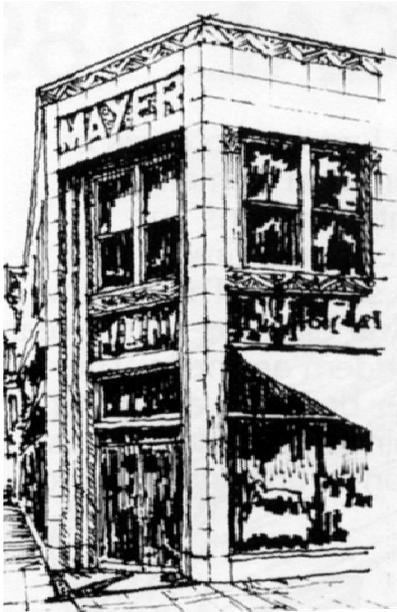
The facades of buildings built in the Beaux Arts Classical Style (1890-1920) were characteristically divided into three areas of grouped windows. Walls were embellished with pilasters, columns, and pediments borrowed from classical Greece and Rome.



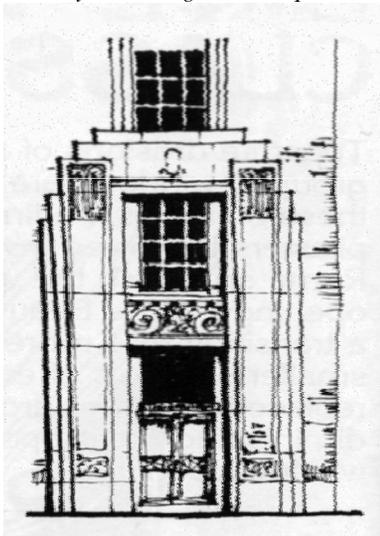
The State Theater, 453 Northampton Street

ART DECO – ART MODERNE 1920-1950

In response to the technological age of the twentieth century, building style became simpler, with a more streamlined form. Brick, tile, and glass were used in Art Deco buildings characterized by flat planes and geometric shapes. Decorative detail was limited to stylized versions of natural elements or abstract patterns outlining the building.

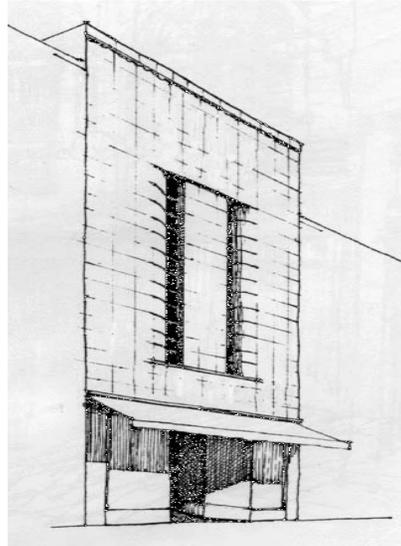


The Mayer Building, Center Square



The Verizon Building, North Fourth Street

An extension of Art Deco, buildings in the Art Moderne style were typically devoid of surface ornamentation.



345 Northampton Street

THE NEXT PHASE

The Easton Historic District has evolved over time. As the 21st century continues, the city will continue to develop, introducing new elements to the city's streetscape.

Additional Sources of Information

Contact the National Trust for Historic Preservation or visit online at www.nationaltrust.org.

Contact the US Government Bookstore or visit www.nps.gov for *Preservation Briefs*, National Park Service.

Further reading:

National Register Bulletin 39: Researching a Historic Property, U.S. Department of the Interior (Washington, DC, U.S. Government Printing Office, 1994)

The Buildings of Main Street, A guide to American Commercial Architecture. Richard Longstreth, Updated Edition (New York, Alta Mira Press, 2000)

What Style is It? A Guide to American Architecture. John C. Poppeliers, Allen Chambers, Jr., Nancy B. Schwartz (New York, John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1983)

A Field Guide to American Architecture. Carole Rifkind (New York, Penguin Books, 1980)

Respectful Rehabilitation, Answers to Your Questions About Old Buildings. National Park Service (Washington, DC, The Preservation Press, 1982)

The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties: with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Building. Kay D. Weeks and Anne E. Grimmer (National Park Service, Technical Preservation Services, 1995)

Acknowledgments

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Easton Design Guide

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