

John and Emma Wright House I  
205 15th Street  
Fourth Ward Neighborhood  
Altoona  
Blair County  
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5867

HABS  
PA  
ALTO,  
91-

PHOTOGRAPHS  
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey  
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY  
JOHN AND EMMA WRIGHT HOUSE I

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Location: 205 15th Street

Date of Erection: 1884

Description: This three-bay, side-gable frame house is most remarkable for the survival of its extensive Victorian wood trim. The two-and-one-half-story structure has horizontal novelty wood siding. Six pairs of scrolled and incised brackets are spaced along the cornice and side gable returns. The curved recesses above the arched pediments of second-floor window surrounds are decorated with incising and medallions. The window surrounds have elaborate cutwork scrolls at top and bottom and rest on a projecting sill. Pediments rise to a straight projecting molding with a central keystone. Two similar first-floor windows sit next to the front left entry.

Also surviving is the original side-entry front porch consisting of four spindle-turned supports with spindled banister. The porch is joined with cutwork brackets to a projecting roof, which has a mansard-like ogee curve.

An exterior chimney rises on the left wall of the house just past the ridge line. The plan of the interior has been altered.

History: This house has survived in remarkable condition considering the number of times it has changed hands. Like the building now at 1506 2nd Ave. \*, this house sits on a lot originally laid out to face the street rather than avenue front. Both are unusual because they were built on land still owned by John Wright--they first appear in his tax assessment for 1884.

John Hart officially purchased a 30' x 100' lot and house on 15th Street from the executors of John Wright for \$1,500 in 1897. Hart, a molder, had taken up residence by 1888. Tax assessments seem to have been lagging as Hart was not taxed for property that year. In 1889, however, he was taxed for a half-lot and house worth \$1,000 with the address 205 15th St.

Hart sold the property to Calvin A. Feight in July 1906. Calvin and his wife, Maggie Blackburn Feight, sold it to Daniel T. and Jessie Pennington in January 1911. By 1912 Hart had moved to South Altoona and Pennington, a machinist, resided here.

The Penningtons sold the house to Samuel B. and Irene M. Bowser for \$4,700 in April 1924. Two years later the Bowsers sold it to Leo P. and Mildred C. Bettwy who lived here while he worked as an electrician. In 1937 the Berks County Trust Company assumed the Bowser mortgage and sold the property to minors Concetta and Pauline Gugliotta. Achille Diodata, a laborer for the PRR, was listed as head of the household here in 1939. Title was vested in Santa and Achille Diodata by September 1943. The Diodata and Gugliotta conglomerate sold the house to Joseph and Anna R. Fiore in November 1965. The current owners purchased the house in 1976 and have remodelled the interior.

Sources: Maps: 1882, 1894. Deed books: 116/313, 167/606, 200/256, 318/396, 437/586, 479/357, 841/110, 992/204. City directories. Tax assessment records. Interview with owner.

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

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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.