

1980 HISTORICAL DISTRICT APPLICATION

ALLEGHENY COUNTY SURVEY ZONE FORM

No. OF INDIVIDUAL SITES 101 (2 enclosed)  
 No. OF NATIONAL REGISTER LISTED SITES 0  
 No. OF NATIONAL REGISTER ELIGIBLE SITES District - 101

PHOTO REFERENCES: 003-P-R331-F27-33 003-P-R305-F3-36 003-P-R306-F2-36 003-P-R307-F2-36	003-P-R308-F2-8	MAPS: 27
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DESCRIPTION:

North Oakland zone 5 (no5) is located in the north central area of the North Oakland neighborhood as designated by the 1974 Census Tracts and Neighborhood Maps, and was documented in the Pittsburgh History and Landmarks Foundation Oakland Survey of 1976. It is bounded on the north by Centre Avenue; on the east by a line behind the properties facing Bigelow Boulevard; on the south by Bigelow Boulevard as well; and on the west by Parkman Avenue and a line from Parkman north to Centre Avenue.

Zone 5, the Schenley Farms development, descends sixty feet gradually from a row of housing perched along the steep cliff southeast of Centre Avenue to the level grade of Bigelow Boulevard as it joins O'Hara and Bayard Streets. The houses have an internal orientation facing their respective streets. Only those structures along Centre Avenue are raised above the common plane, and overlook the Oakland Civic Center from their southeast elevation. A decaying stone stairwell rising east of 4231 Parkman Avenue and descending to Bigelow Boulevard north on 4040 Bigelow links a now defunct street (Fairview Lane) toward which the Centre Avenue houses are oriented. Generally the streets in residential Schenley Farms are ranged in a regular grid pattern.

The vast majority of these homes were built in the first three decades of this Century, and are 2½ story, three bay brick suburban free-standing types. Many were designed by notable local architects in turn of the century revival styles. Slight terraces set off each home. As a showcase for the talents of local architects, the district contains representations of nearly every turn of the century popular style.

Frank F. Nicola (1860-1938), the original developer of Schenley Farms, set high standards for this residential district from the first. The ever-active Nicola, lumberman, printing machine manufacturer, realtor, and the builder of the nearby Schenley Hall (no3) and the former Forbes Field, was a major force in the development of North Oakland from 1905 until his death in the late 30's. Due to his aspirations, Schenley Farms broke new ground in community planning.

Two Civic buildings are located in the Schenley Farms district: the Renaissance Revival Twentieth Century Club (003-P-no5-27L-256; R305-F3), remodeled in 1930, blends gracefully with the residential areas around it, as does the 1912 Classical Revival, Western Pennsylvania Historical Society next door (003-P-no5-27L-246; Ro05-F4).

A related area northwest of Centre Avenue is Schenley Farms Terrace. (003-P-nh; R271-F6-36).

PREPARED BY: Lu Donnelly/ gfs Pittsburgh History & Landmarks Foundation
DATE(S) 10/80

3. LOCATION  
North Oakland - Schenley Farms

HISTORICAL BACKGROUND

"In 1791, 345 acres were deeded to Edward Smith by William Penn for the price of 310 pounds sterling and one annual pepper-corn. In 1802, Smith sold 170 acres to General James O'Hara, an aide to General George Washington. The property remained with the O'Hara family until 1905 when upon the death of Mary Croghan Schenley, granddaughter of the original O'Hara, the trustees - Andrew Carnegie, Denny Brereton, and J. W. Herron - put the property up for sale.

"On April 15, 1905 Schenley Farms came into existence as The Schenley Farms Company - a land development project of F. F. Nicola. The residential area was one of the first if not the first housing development projects in the United States and had, within a few short years, made such an impact on architectural thinking and design that "The Builder" of November 1910 said of the area, "In the residential section of Schenley Farms are many of the finest homes of which Pittsburghers are wont to boast with the full knowledge that the basis of their pride is solid. Building restrictions eliminate the possibility of any but the most attractive sort of construction. Architectural triumphs are numerous in this section....No more beautiful residential district can be found in any part of the country." (see original article)

"This same 1910 article tells of the underground gas, sewage, water, electrical and now telephone services - an innovation at the time and again one of the first in the United States.

"Photocopies of letters from the original home owners of 1910 to 1914 are included in our data to give some idea of the fine maintenance and standards set by the Nicola Company during these first years.

"On July 29, 1920 the newly formed Schenley Farms Civic Association held its first meeting to consider making the original Nicola building restrictions and policies on care of trees, sidewalks, etc. into a permanent code. In 1924 the Civic Association engaged the services of a private security system. Both the code and the security patrol continue to today and on July 29, 1980 the Schenley Farms Civic Association celebrated its 40th Anniversary of endeavors to carry out Mr. Nicola's original high standards as set out in 1906."

EVALUATION

This area and the related area in Upper Hill (Schenley Farms Terrace) appear to be eligible for the National Register as an example of early Twentieth Century planned and contained suburban development.

Individual data forms will be prepared on the houses in the district when a nomination is made.

Eliza Smith 8/80

GEE SCHENLEY FARMS Historic District Nomination Form