

SLATINGTON

Slatington experienced two distinct periods of growth. It was founded by Nicholas Kern in the late 1730s when he secured a land warrant to farm the fertile land along the Lehigh River. Then in the mid-19th century, slate was discovered and Slatington was born. The coming of the railroad in 1856 further nurtured the settlement and the Borough was incorporated in 1864. Business prospered... homes became more decorative... elaborate Victorian buildings with fanciful rooflines were now being constructed... the use of Slatington's signature construction material helped reflect the residents' social and economic status.

At the peak of the slate industry, just after the turn of the 20th century, slate quarries produced roofing tiles, blackboards, school slates and street curbing. With the onset of WWI, slate was assigned to a list of "nonessential" materials and both labor and resources were poured into the war effort. By the time America returned to a state of normalcy, unemployed slate workers had found different jobs, alternatives to slate emerged, and the industry declined.

A walk through Slatington and along Trout Creek provides a hint to the rest of Slatington's story. Simple homes, located next to extravagant Victorians demonstrate how quickly the slate industry swept through the area and transformed agricultural Kernsville into industrial Slatington. As you enjoy your walk, please respect private property and the privacy of our residents. Parking is available in the public lot near Slatington Borough Hall.

Lower Slatington

Located between the Lehigh River and Trout Creek is the settlement formerly known as Kernsville. Rough-hewn stone homes and some early industrial structures still stand today.

1. Slatington Borough Hall (125 S. Walnut Street)

The former Roosevelt School Building, a large and modern school-house for its time, was built in 1906. When viewed from Walnut Street, the building's symmetrical design and prominent central bell tower reveal its original use.



2. Slate Barn (Walnut Street behind mini mart)

This barn boasts slate siding, an innovative use of local building material. During the height of the industry, many buildings used slate siding over a timber frame.



3. A. F. Boyer Hardware Store (130 Main Street)

Abel Boyer established this business on lower Main Street over 100 years ago. His brother, Henry, joined him soon after. Boyer's

would open at 4 am to service local slate quarry workers. Henry's son, Abner, took over the business after serving five years as one of the youngest men in the US Navy during the Spanish-American War. In 1922, he moved the store a block and a half west on Main Street. Inside, the store maintains its original wildlife mural and displays of antique firearms.

4. Site of LVRR Train Station

In response to growing markets, the Lehigh Valley Railroad built a train depot here in 1863. The station suffered the first of two tragedies when a southbound train collided into a stationary freight train in 1878. The freighter carried forty oil cars and exploded on impact. Six people were killed and fifty injured. The station was later destroyed when a derailed train slammed into it in 1969.



5. Slate Heritage Trail

This rail-trail was once a branch line of the Lehigh Valley Railroad. It transported raw materials to regional factories and finished slate



and other products to market. Students also rode the railway (known as the "Berksie") to Slatington High School from as far away as Berks County. Along the trail lie the ruins of slate companies, mattress and carriage factories, as well as other buildings.

6. The mysterious Bedbug Cave

, named for the nearby mattress factory, is located about 1/4 mile up the trail on the left. The entrance to the cave is currently sealed, but rumors suggest the old shaft connected it to a building near Main and Church Streets. The Slate Trail continues about 1.9 miles past the cave and under the Main Street Bridge.



7. Trucker's Mill

Also known as Kern's Fort, the Mill stood on the far bank of Trout Creek, fed by a dam built directly upstream. Slatington founder Nicholas Kern built it and a gristmill in the 1740s. His third son, William, eventually took over the operation. Local Germans referred to Kern as trockener, which meant a "joker" or a person of wit. This term evolved into Trucker. In 1756, Benjamin Franklin wrote of buying lumber from Trucker's Mill to build Fort Allen in nearby Weissport. The Fort enabled troops to protect and scout the area during the French and Indian War.



Second Street

Four historic churches greet walkers turning left off of Main Street and onto Second Street.



• First Baptist Church (509 Main Street) was built in 1900. At one time gargoyles, intended to ward off danger, adorned the steeple.



• St. John's UCC Church (15 Second Street) was dedicated on Christmas Day, 1869. Reformed and Lutheran faiths worshiped together in this traditional brick building until 1881, when the Lutherans moved across the street.



• St. John's Lutheran Church (40 Second Street)—In early days, sermons were given in two languages, Welsh at First Baptist, and German at St. John's Lutheran. These churches still have dedicated congregations.

• Trinity Evangelical Church (201 Second Street)—The beautiful turquoise and lilac stained glass windows make this building especially distinctive. The church, completed in 1895, served the area's Evangelical population.

9. The Mantz Home

(66 Second Street)—Built prior to 1876 by the Seibert family, this home has a Victorian style mansard roof. George Moyer ran a barbershop and lived here at the turn of the 20th century. Sadly, his wife was struck by lightning while hanging laundry.



10. The Roper Home

(120 Second Street)—David Roper was an Irish immigrant who fought in the Civil War. He became a prominent figure when he moved here from Oil City to practice law and edit the Slatington News. He helped establish the National Bank of Slatington, the Slatington Water Works, and the Slatington



Rolling Mill. He also served as a state representative. His home has two corner octagonal towers and a mansard roof with dormer windows.

Main Street Homes

Homes of prominent citizens line Main Street. With typical Victorian luxury and flourish, residents took pride in their magnificent, romantic homes. They built on Main Street at the height of America's industrial era, ensuring the admiration of passersby.

11. The Old Reservoir/Fish Pond

Slatington's first drinking water source currently serves as a PA Fish & Boat Commission fish hatchery. In 1853 a wooden pipeline was laid to move water from here to town. Iron pipes replaced the original system by the time the Borough purchased the waterworks in 1883, only to abandon it before the turn of the century. In 1909, the spring served as inspiration for the Springside Fire Company.



12. Dr. Kern Home

(1108 Main Street)—Dr. Alvin J. Kern, a descendant of Nicholas, graduated from Ursinus College and the University of Pennsylvania. He practiced medicine here and served as the region's first Republican state representative from 1894-1898. This is a fine example of the eclectic Queen Anne style that was popular in the late 19th century.



13. Jacob Remaley Home (1010 Main Street)—This home, built by Jacob Remaley reflects the changing styles during his lifetime. Queen Anne Style windows and small-paned sashes bridge the gap between the Colonial and Victorian periods.



14. Thomas Kern Home

(908 Main Street)—Thomas Kern, son of John George Kern, was probably born in his father's home at 322 Main Street. He founded Kern's Lumber Company on Cherry Street, Slatington. His house has the popular Mansard roof dormers and cupola.



15. Sauerwine Garage

(Rear 837 Main Street)—In the early 1900s this was one of two Slatington garages that serviced the automobile. In 1897, Lewis F. Sauerwine had a bicycle business in the rear of his home on Second Street. With the advent of cars, Lewis became the local agent for Ford and Lincoln. The garage still has an elevator to the second floor, where Sauerwine performed major repairs. The Sauerwine Home at 743 Main Street is a brick home and still sports original detailed woodwork near the front door.



16. James O. Haines Home (722 Main Street)—This home dominates the street with its buff colored brick and its wraparound veranda. Its double doors and detailed balustrade contribute to making it one of the outstanding homes in the area.



Commercial Main Street

The Lehigh Canal in Walnutport and Main Street Slatington were the prime sources of income and interest for citizens of Northern Lehigh County. Amenities available on Main Street included millinery, hardware, shoes, tobacco, candy and department stores.



17. Neff House Hotel (700 Main Street)—John Remaley built this hotel in 1850

and then sold it to Edward B. Neff in 1869. He ran a livery along with the Neff Hotel for forty years, as well as a barroom in the basement.

18. Oplinger Building

(705 Main Street)—George T. Oplinger built this storefront on the southeast side of Main Street and rented two spaces to local entrepreneurs. Oplinger, who worked in surveying, civil engineering, and architectural



drawing, surveyed the Borough of Slatington in 1904. He was the president of Citizen's National Bank. Its successor, Harleysville National Bank has a drive-thru facility here today.

19. James Seibert Millinery Store (673 Main Street)

This building has a large, decorative cornice line showcasing the building's namesake. The inscribed white rectangular design above the windows makes this building stand out from among its neighbors. This was once the James Seibert Millinery Store, a local dry goods store that inventoried flowers and feathers, collars and cuffs.



competition and became known as "Slatington's Shoemaker." A close look at the building reveals detailed brickwork, a classic storefront, and ornate craftsmanship on the third floor.

22. The Haines Building (650 Main Street)

At age 17, Alvin S. Haines started his career as a weigh master for the Lehigh Coal & Navigation Company in Mauch Chunk (now Jim Thorpe). When Haines and William Kuntz established a department store in 1897, they constructed this building. After Kuntz died, brother James Haines entered the business, and the store became known as the Haines Bros. Department Store. When Alvin died in 1918, James became the sole owner. He continued until 1921, when fire damaged the business. The building later became a 5&10-Cent Store. It now houses the Slatington Public Library.



20. Fritzingers Hardware (670 Main Street)

William Fritzingers opened this shop when he moved to Slatington in 1880. This became the largest hardware business in Northern Lehigh County, and included a successful plumbing business. He installed heating systems in many of Slatington's leading residences. In 1908, he built his home just around the corner on Church Street.



21. Jones' Shoe Store (660 Main Street)

This business has been here since 1924. George Jones, who changed his name from George Mistigniotis when he opened his shoe store, originally sold and repaired footwear in a building at the corner of Main and Dowell Streets. The "Knights of Friendship," a secret society, met in the same building. A rival shoe store owner used his membership in this society to have Jones evicted. Ironically, Jones far out-lived his

23. Kuntz's Tobacco and Candy Store (623 Main Street)

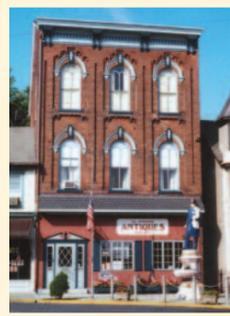
Albert Ulysses Kuntz started this business in 1892. His operation included a saloon and restaurant, and he also sold tobacco and candy. Chewing tobacco was popular with local quarry workers because it relieved their mouths of the dryness caused by quarry dust. While Prohibition ended



the bar business, Albert maintained the restaurant for a short time. The tobacco and candy outlet closed in 2002.

24. The Berlin Building (560 Main Street)

This present day antique shop was built in 1851 and housed slate company offices as well as Lyceum Hall (a social gathering place) on the third floor. Robert McDowell, an early slate pioneer who owned much of Upper Slatington, built the Berlin Building. During the 1900s, it served as a post office and library. Note the unique, round-topped windows and exceptional brickwork.



25. Fireman's Drinking Fountain and Memorial Bell

Slatington's best-known landmark is a National Historic Site. Dedicated in 1910, it provided a drinking fountain for both people and animals, while honoring volunteer firefighters of the region. The child on his left arm demonstrates the protective role of the firefighter while the lantern in his right hand portrays his vigilance. His watchfulness is further emphasized when the lantern is illuminated at night. In 1979, the zinc statue was toppled by a hit and run driver, but was lovingly restored by Slatington Hose Co. #1, who continue to maintain this proud symbol of Slatington. The nearby 1891 bell was Slatington's first fire alarm.



26. Site of Slatington High School (Second and Main Streets)

Only the flagpole remains of the beloved Slatington High School. Originally

built in 1916, the high school had a symmetrical presence with prominent clock tower at the top. The deterioration and demolition of the building awakened the community to its need to preserve the physical remains of its heritage. Citizens are currently raising funds to build a park on the site.



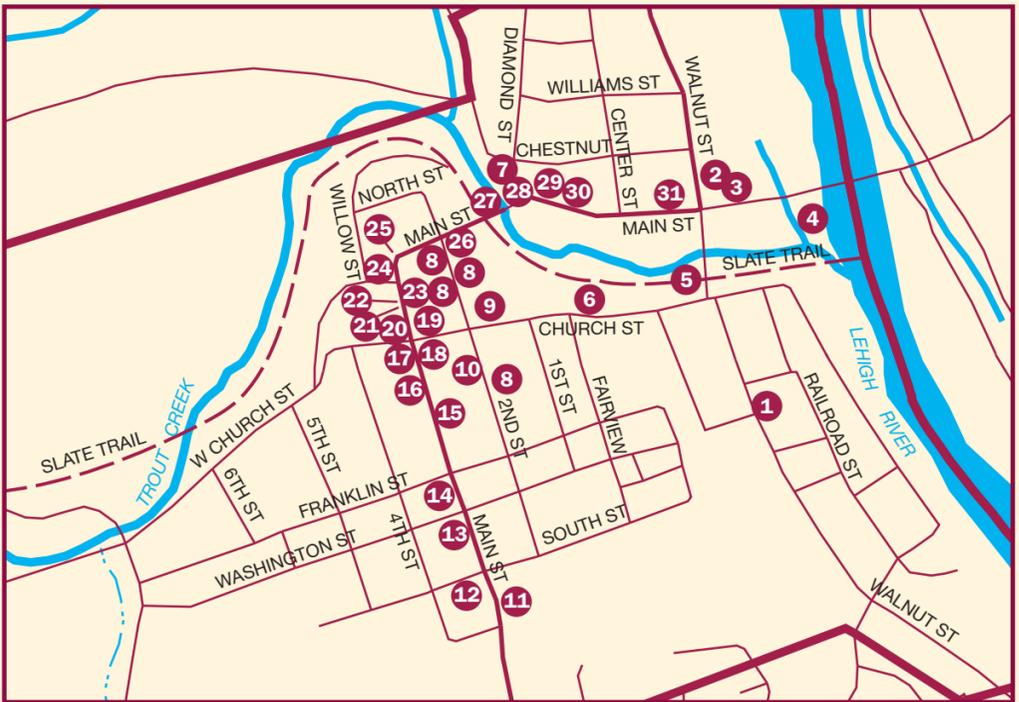
27. Alfred J Kern Home (404 Main Street)

Another descendant of Nicholas Kern, Alfred operated a gristmill that stood opposite his home at the foot of the bridge. He built this home in 1903 and ran the gristmill for fifty-seven years. This was the third gristmill built and operated by the founding Kern family.



28. Henry Kuntz Home (370 Main Street)

Henry Kuntz grew up on a nearby farm and ventured into several unsuccessful businesses. His fortunes changed when he got into the slate industry, eventually owning and operating several slate companies. In 1895, he formed the Slatington Slate Company, which soon led the industry. He served as Justice of the Peace for 26 years and was elected burgess in 1892. He married Violetta Kern, daughter of Slatington merchant and landowner Jonas Kern.



29. Jonas Kern Tavern (358 Main Street)

This row home was built in 1845 by Jonas Kern. He and his family lived in one part while the rest served as a tavern and general store. In 1896, James Mast of Walnutport moved his *Star Newspaper* here.



30. George Kern Home (322 Main Street)

John George Kern built this stone home in 1824. It is the oldest



home on lower Main Street, and the first hotel in Slatington. This home typifies the early 1800s and Kernsville.

31. David Williams Homestead (216 Main Street)

David Williams and his family came to America from North Wales in 1842. He opened several area slate quarries. The Williams Quarry was near the small strip of land along the Lehigh River known as "Williams Island." Williams also owned and operated a slate finishing mill, a slate mantle factory, a machine shop, and a company store.



Directions:

Begin walking from the Municipal Building at 125 South Walnut St. Travel north to lower Main Street and turn right. Proceed to slate walled garden. Turn right on trail. Cross Trout Creek and then turn right onto the Slate Trail. Here you'll pass factory ruins and the Bedbug Cave on the left. Continue, going under the Route 873 bridge and past the old mill building on your right. Go 50 more yards, turn left on paved street travelling uphill then bear left onto North Street and then right onto Second Street. Continue on 2nd Street to South Street, then right to Main Street and, finally north down Main Street to Lower Slatington, returning to South Walnut Street.

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SLATINGTON PENNSYLVANIA

A TOUR OF THE SLATINGTON NATIONAL REGISTER HISTORIC DISTRICT

