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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only

received OCT 3 1983

date entered

See instructions in How to Complete National Register Forms  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Sunbury Historic District

and/or common N/A

2. Location

*Roughly bounded by*

street & number Arch St., Market St., Chestnut St., Front St. Second St. <sup>and Fifth Sts.</sup> not for publication

city, town Sunbury N/A vicinity of

state Pennsylvania code 42 county Northumberland code 097

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
	<input type="checkbox"/> n/a being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> park
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name Multiple

street & number

city, town N/A vicinity of state Pennsylvania

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Northumberland County Courthouse

street & number Market & Second Streets

city, town Sunbury state Pennsylvania

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title Sunbury Historic Sites Survey has this property been determined eligible? \_\_\_ yes  no

date 1981 \_\_\_ federal  state \_\_\_ county \_\_\_ local

depository for survey records Pennsylvania Historical & Museum Commission

city, town Harrisburg state Pennsylvania

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		date <u>N/A</u>

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The City of Sunbury is located at the juncture of the north and west branches of the Susquehanna River and is surrounded by mountain ridges. The proposed historic district extends from Front Street eastward and includes the traditional town square and several adjacent residential blocks as well as the city's commercial corridor, Market Street. The historic district includes Chestnut Street west of Fifth Street, Arch Street west of Fourth Street and Market Street west of Fifth Street, and the streets running north/south that connect Chestnut and Arch in a grid pattern. Lot sizes are variable but tend to be either 30 or 60 feet wide and 120 or 230 feet deep. Most buildings on Market Street have commercial usage while Chestnut and Arch Streets, to the south and north respectively, are predominantly residential. A number of shops are scattered along Chestnut Street as well.

The district encompasses much of the land within the town's pre-Civil War limits. However the historic district boundaries have been drawn to include later development eastward along Market Street. This section of the historic district contains architecturally intact buildings from the late 19th century that are associated with turn of the century commercial development.

There are 264 properties within the district with 103 described as individually significant, 135 as contributing, and 26 as intrusive. Cameron Park with its trees and statuary serves as an island of greenery dividing Market Street between Second and Third Streets.

The historic district is made up of commercial, residential, and institutional buildings. The Italianate Courthouse designed by Samuel Sloan and the Gothic and Classical Revival Style churches are the most notable landmarks. The ages of the buildings vary within the district, reflecting the evolution of the city from a frontier outpost to a transportation and industrial center. Historical maps document the growth of the town from within the confines of the original townplot to its present boundaries. According to these maps, corroboration in the field and deed research, the city's oldest buildings are on or near Front Street and lower Market Street.

Within the district is a sampling of 18th and 19th century architectural styles. The most significant residential buildings are generally two or two-and-one-half stories in height, three to five bays in width and constructed of wood or brick. These buildings are usually of Federal, Italianate, Queen Anne or Colonial Revival styles. As the historical maps indicate Georgian and Federal style buildings usually constructed of brick or limestone, are most prevalent west of Second Street. Frame Italianate buildings are common between Second and Fifth Streets.

Architectural diversity is most pronounced on Market Street. Second Empire, Romanesque, Neo-Classical Revival, and Art Deco styles are also represented here. This stylistic diversity is characteristic of many Susquehanna Valley "Main Streets" where commercial, residential and institutional buildings form the town's core. Although modernizations have adversely affected the architectural integrity of first floor storefronts, for the most part, upper stories are remarkably intact, revealing the sophisticated design elements used by the nineteenth century builders. The complex interaction of diverse, yet compatible architectural styles and the abundance of historically significant buildings create for Sunbury a definite sense of its past history and growth. The buildings and structural relationships of the past remain essentially intact. Unlike many old cities, Sunbury has aged gracefully. The proposed historic district will enable the community to better protect and preserve their unique environment.

# 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)

Specific dates N/A

Builder/Architect N/A

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Located at the confluence of the north and west branches of the Susquehanna River, Sunbury was an important political, commercial, industrial and transportation center during the late eighteenth, nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. With the founding of Edison Electronic Illuminating Company in 1883 by inventor Thomas Alva Edison, Sunbury was one of the first towns in the county to have electric lights. Because of its well-preserved and architecturally significant structures, Sunbury continues to reflect a late nineteenth and early twentieth century character.

The town of Sunbury was laid out in 1772 as the last of seven proprietary towns surveyed by General John Lukens for the heirs of William Penn. The Penns had bought this region including Sunbury and most of Northumberland County from the Indians in the 1768 Treaty of Fort Stanwix. This land at the juncture of the west and north branches of the Susquehanna River had been a strategically important Indian holding because from it, more than half the area of Pennsylvania could be reached by waterways. Indian paths radiated in all directions from this area. Sunbury served originally as a frontier outpost housing military supplies for soldiers sent to suppress Indian attacks and defend nearby Fort Augusta. The 1779-80 expedition conducted by General Sullivan ended the menace of Indian attacks and opened the area to settlement.

As the county seat of Northumberland, Sunbury was the most important town in north central Pennsylvania during the Colonial Period. At one time its governmental function included responsibility for an 18,000 square mile area that now encompasses six counties. The architecturally imposing County Courthouse (1865) and County Jail (1876) reflect Sunbury's past preeminence in government.

The proposed historic district includes the oldest and most vital area of Sunbury. There are several residences dating from the city's earliest days in the late 18th century, most notably the James Tilghman house of 1773 (Inventory #54) and the Maclay-Wolverton House of 1773-74 (Inventory #1). A number of buildings date from the early 19th century and are associated with prominent Sunbury citizens. These include several residential buildings as well as Keithan's Store (originally the Red Lion Tavern, Inventory #81), Young & Alter's Store (Inventory #190), and the Central Hotel (Inventory #74).

Transportation played a key role in the growth of Sunbury from a frontier outpost to a thriving port on the Pennsylvania Canal to a railroad center. The increased economic activity from the canal and the railroads spurred the town's development. Hotels, taverns, stores, and depots were built to serve the river and railroad traffic. The transportation system also encouraged industrial growth. Brick making was one of the city's earliest industries, consequently many early buildings are of brick construction. Distilleries, foundries, and leather working industries also were established in Sunbury during the mid and later 19th century. The founding of the Sunbury Textile Mills in 1896 contributed dramatically to the city's population growth. Many of the buildings associated with the transportation industry and its outgrowths remain prominent in the proposed Sunbury historic district. Early (Federal or Georgian style) hotels and taverns from the canal days remain, as well as the grander hotels and depots of Italianate, Romanesque, and Second Empire Styles from the railroad era. Most notable are the <sup>10</sup> Pennsylvania Railroad Passenger Depot (Inventory #19), the Aldine Hotel (Inventory #10), the Fairmont Hotel (Inventory #124), the Central Hotel (originally the Sunbury Hotel, Inventory #74), and the Edison Hotel (formerly Inventory #189).

# 9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

# 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 65

Quadrangle name Sunbury, PA

Quadrangle scale 1:24000

**UTM References**

A	1 8	3 4 8 6 3 0	4 5 2 5 0 7 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C	1 8	3 4 9 1 7 0	4 5 2 4 8 0
E	1 8	3 4 9 0 8 0	4 5 2 4 4 4 0
G	1 8	3 4 8 4 5 0	4 5 2 4 6 5 0

B	1 8	3 4 9 0 7 0	4 5 2 4 8 8 0
	Zone	Easting	Northing
D	1 8	3 4 9 1 8 0	4 5 2 4 5 8 0
F	1 8	3 4 8 9 5 0	4 5 2 4 4 4 0
H			

**Verbal boundary description and justification**

See Continuation Sheet

**List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries**

state N/A	code N/A	county N/A	code N/A
state N/A	code N/A	county N/A	code N/A

# 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Thomas R. Deans/Pamela Wolfe

organization Thomas R. Deans Associates/PHMC date 1981-1983

street & number 311 N. Front Street/ Box 1026 telephone 717 742-9323, 717 787-4363

city or town Milton/Harrisburg state Pennsylvania 17847/17120

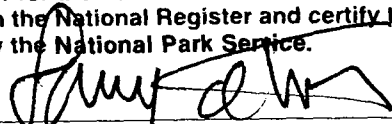
# 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national  state  local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

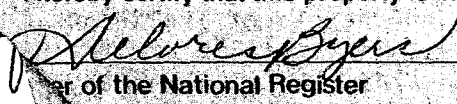


title Larry E. Tise, State Historic Preservation Officer

date 9/26/83

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register



Entered in the National Register

date 11/3/83

Special Agent in Charge of the National Register

date

Administration

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Northumberland County

Continuation sheet Sunbury Historic District Item number 8

Page 2

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Six railroad lines operated in Sunbury before 20th century consolidations reduced their number and scope of operation. They were the Danville & Pottsville (1835), Philadelphia & Erie (1856), Northcentral (1858), Sunbury, Hazelton, & Wilkes-Barre (1869), Sunbury & Lewistown (1871), and the Philadelphia & Reading (1883). The railroads were used to ship anthracite coal from the coal regions near Shamokin to Sunbury where it was loaded on canal packets for delivery to various parts of the state. A steam ferry & tug boat company also operated out of Sunbury taking advantage of the Susquehanna's navigability.

Sunbury's importance in the development and use of incandescent lighting must also be mentioned. Sunbury became the headquarters for Thomas A. Edison's Edison Electric Illumination Company in 1883. Edison installed electricity in the City Hotel, the Central Hotel, the Philadelphia & Reading Railroad Station, the Presbyterian Church, and the Dewart House. Four of these buildings remain within the historic district boundaries.

The social and cultural traditions of the community are reflected in the architectural character of downtown Sunbury. The Masonic Temple (Inventory #67), an impressive Romanesque structure, was built in 1907 and is prominently located on Market Square. The Chestnut Street Opera House (Inventory #269) of 1901 has lost much of its exterior architectural elements, yet remains intact on the interior. The former YMCA building (Inventory #206) also adds to the district's character. The Sunbury Market of 1901 (Inventory #95) reflects the town's continuing role as a regional market place for the past 175 years.

The proposed historic district has relatively few intrusive elements to disturb the community's architectural continuity. Most buildings compliment one another in terms of size, scale, construction materials, and style. At the boundaries of the district a noticeable change in the visual environment is present. Buildings outside the district are of later construction, more modern style, and of different building materials. Within the district Sunbury's commercial core retains much of its turn of the century character. The design of the town square and layout of the streets mirror those of other Susquehanna Valley towns founded in the late 18th century. The town square of Harrisburg, laid out by Sunbury native William Maclay, was once the exact duplicate of Sunbury's except for its north/south orientation. Unlike Harrisburg and many other towns, Sunbury's town square remains a visible link to the past. With few intrusions and only superficial alterations Sunbury's historic district clearly attests to the town's development and history.

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

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Sunbury Historic District, Northumberland County  
Continuation sheet

Item number 10

Page 1

Verbal Boundary Description

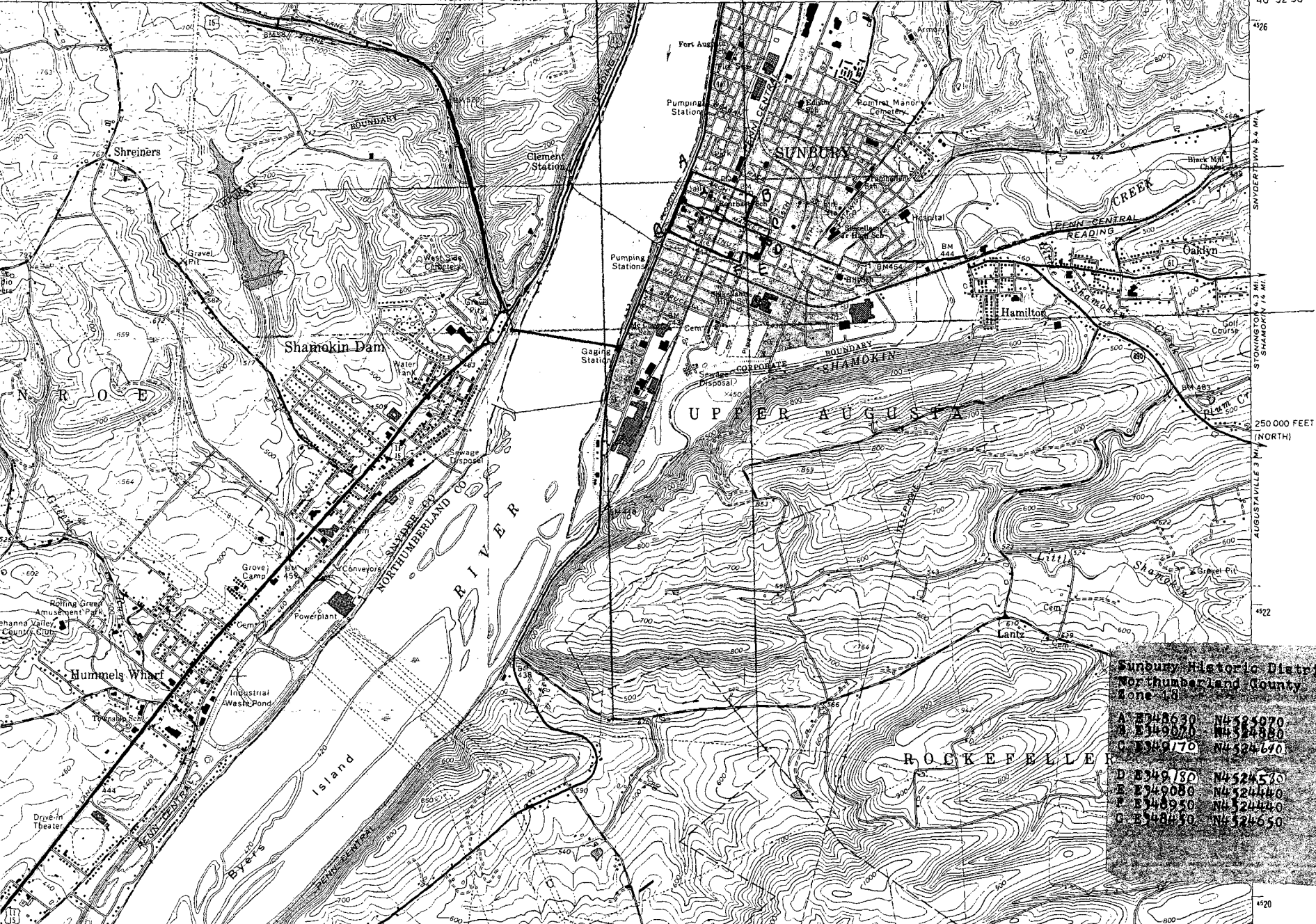
Starting at a point on the south corner of Front Street, and the rear of lot #1-1-19 (106 Arch St.) moving southeast along the rear of lots facing south on Arch St. for 1781.25 ft.; then southwest along the westside of North Fourth St. for 546.875 ft.; then southeast along rear of lots facing south on Market St. for 562.5 ft., to the west side of North Fifth St.; then south along the westside of North Fifth St. crossing Market St for 171.875 ft. to the south west corner of North Fifth and Market Sts.; then east crossing North Fifth St. and along the southside of Market St. For 125 ft. to the east side of #2-2-35 (Fifth & Market Sts.); then south along the east side of #2-2-35 (Fifth & Market Sts.) for 125 ft.; then west for 125 ft. crossing to the west side of South Fifth St.; then south along the west side of South Fifth St. for 437.5 ft. to the north west corner of South Fifth and Chestnut Sts.; then west along the north side of of Chestnut St. for 328.125 ft.; then south for 156.25 ft.; then west along the rear of lots facing north on to Chestnut St., to intersection with Front St. for 2000 ft.; then north along the east side of Front St. for 1437.5 ft. to starting point.

COMMONWEALTH OF PENNSYLVANIA  
DEPARTMENT OF ENVIRONMENTAL RESOURCES  
TOPOGRAPHIC AND GEOLOGIC SURVEY

SUNBURY QUADRANGLE  
PENNSYLVANIA  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)  
SE/4 SUNBURY 15' QUADRANGLE

5665 NW  
(SNYDER TOWN)

000 FEET (SOUTH) LEWISBURG 7 MI WINFIELD 2 8 MI 50' 346 5665 14 NE (NORTHUMBERLAND) 348 DANVILLE 12 MI NORTHUMBERLAND 1 MI 47'30" 150 12 270 000 FEET (NORTH) 352 76°45' 40°52'30"



Sunbury Historic District  
Northumberland County  
Zone 48

A	B348630	N4525070
B	B349070	N4524980
C	B349170	N4524670
D	B349180	N4524570
E	B349080	N4524480
F	B348950	N4524380
G	B348850	N4524250

4520