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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC MAEYSTOWN HISTORIC DISTRICT

AND/OR COMMON

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER

Corporate limits as of 31 December 1973, with exclusion of a small triangular section on the northeast

CITY, TOWN

Maeystown

___ VICINITY OF

___ NOT FOR PUBLICATION

CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

24

STATE

Illinois

CODE

12

COUNTY

Monroe

CODE

053

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input checked="" 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 type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC ACQUISITION	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ACCESSIBLE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME Multiple - see continuation sheets

STREET & NUMBER

CITY, TOWN

___ VICINITY OF

STATE

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.

Monroe County Courthouse

STREET & NUMBER

150 South Main Street

CITY, TOWN

Waterloo

STATE

Illinois

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE Illinois Historic Landmarks Survey

DATE

February 1974

___ FEDERAL STATE ___ COUNTY ___ LOCAL

DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS

Illinois Department of Conservation

CITY, TOWN

Springfield

STATE

Illinois

DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The Village of Maeystown (1970 population: 109) lies in southwestern Monroe County, approximately thirty miles due south of the center of St. Louis, Missouri. Situated at the confluence of three spring-fed streams just above the bluff line separating the Mississippi River flood plain -- the American Bottom -- and the interior uplands, the village is, topographically, among the most interesting places in the "Prairie" State. The surface is hilly and broken and the stream beds form what, in the context of Illinois, must be termed steep valleys, with limestone outcroppings of the St. Louis and other formations occurring at various points. The area was originally heavily timbered, having been mainly in oak/hickory forest, and is, despite past logging operations, still not extensively cleared, though hardly virgin. A long vista across Maeystown toward the southwest, for instance, appears as unbroken forest stretching to the Missouri hills west of the Mississippi (it actually is not unbroken, but the American Bottom, which intervenes and has long been under cultivation, lies at a considerably lower elevation and cannot be seen from Maeystown). Given the varied surface, the timber cover, and the fact that most of the built-up portion of the village rises on the left bank of the middle stream, thus leaving most of the incorporated area relatively untouched, Maeystown presents a picture -- even in its setting -- rarely if ever encountered elsewhere in Illinois.

The Maeystown Historic District includes the entire incorporated area of the village as of 31 December 1973, with the exception of a small triangular section on the northeast side. The rectangle thus described is identical to Survey 704-Claim 316, the original claim of James McRoberts (v. History, below). There are a number of reasons for including so seemingly large an area. First, although the built-up part of Maeystown covers only a fraction of it, this developed part of the village achieves much of its effect by dint of its natural setting -- to omit the open land around the core, then, would be to strip the district of a very real part of its significance. The specific choice of this boundary as opposed to one following contour lines at the crests of hills has considerable historical justification, since few such early American claims in Illinois as McRoberts' have survived in so relatively identifiable a form (recent accretions to the land area of the village have somewhat obscured this, which is why the 1973 corporate limit has been selected). Claim 316 also, of course, is the tract purchased in 1848 by Jacob Maey, the village's founder, and the tract upon which he laid out his town.

The disposition of structures within these limits has hardly changed since the days of the village's early development. The vast majority are still located on the 1856 plat in the southern half of the tract or along Mill Street -- now a county highway and always an important thoroughfare between the uplands and the American Bottom. Their grouping is quite loose and haphazard and approaches the concentration of a more continuous fabric only on Mill from Franklin to Main and on the north side of Main from Mill to Hanover. Even in these two blocks, though, the streetscape is emphatically rural. Most of the residences are of modest proportions. The oldest and generally most remarkable are constructed of locally quarried limestone, but frame and locally produced brick are employed to about the same degree as well. In addition to residences and the few commercial structures, Maeystown also embraces a large number of outbuildings, including smoke houses, summer kitchens, wash houses, tool sheds, and chicken houses in addition to the more usual barns and garages. Their number and placement, together with their often great age, contribute greatly to the overall picturesqueness. The most prominent structure in Maeystown, both in terms of size and situation, is St. John's Church, overlooking the entire village from its Franklin Street hill.

Of the 62 major structures included in the Maeystown Historic District, the vast majority pre-date World War I and are integral in producing the cumulative effect. There are few

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

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CONTINUATION SHEET OWNER OF PROPERTY ITEM NUMBER 4 PAGE 2

Mrs. Fred Pieper

Leland Knobloch, Waterloo, Illinois 62298

Fred Pieper, Route 1, Fults, Illinois 62244

Mrs. Gloria Maeys Bundy

Philip Borkhardt Philip Burkhardt

Julia Schulz, Waterloo, Illinois 62298

Kenneth Rehn

Douglas Clements

Dale Rippelmeyer, Waterloo, Illinois 62298

Stanley Perrin, Route 1, Waterloo, Illinois 62298

Rev. Kenneth Knobloch, Red Bud, Ill. 62278

St. John Church, Maeystown, Ill. % Local Pastor

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

CONTINUATION SHEET DESCRIPTION ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 2

outstanding individual structures -- i.e., structures that would be of major architectural significance regardless of their surroundings -- but this is of little consequence, since in Maeystown it is a question of the virtual uniqueness of the totality, a vivid example of the whole being far greater than the sum of its parts. Recent structures and intrusions pose little problem, since the former are mostly sympathetic in placement, scale, and material, and the latter are limited to two house trailers and hardly constitute a major and/or permanent detraction. Being under 500 in population, Maeystown was not surveyed by the Illinois Historic Structures Survey.

Architecturally, there are few pure examples of any given style, but traces of Greek Revival, Italianate, and Queen Anne occur in highly simplified local variants in several structures. No doubt, the common origin of all of the village's early settlers -- Germany and the relative self-sufficiency it long enjoyed have left their imprint, but could only be clearly defined after thorough-going investigation. All in all, Maeystown reflects the more rural 19th Century concern for solidity and practicality than the more urban one for aesthetic purity or pretension.

EXTANT STRUCTURES IN MAEYSTOWN (EXCLUDING OUTBUILDINGS)

Numbers refer to the accompanying map. Since no street addresses are in use, lot numbers of the 1856 plat are used to identify location. Structures on lots not platted in 1856 are identified by the term "outlot". Architectural significance applies to those structures of architectural importance within the context of Maeystown, only.

1. JACOB MAEYS HOUSE

Outlot: East side of Mill, north of Stone Bridge
ca.1860-65; remodeled in 1927

For Jacob Maeys, v. History below. The present appearance of the house dates almost entirely from the 1927 remodeling.

1a. JACOB MAEYS HOMESTEAD

immediately behind the preceding
1852

The homestead includes Jacob Maeys' original cabin with attached barn, the spring which prompted him to settle here, and various outbuildings, stone retaining walls and stairs -- all in a virtually unaltered state.

CITED: ILLINOIS HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY (MO-H-90)

2. CHARLES MAEYS HOUSE

Outlot: West side of Mill, north of Stone Bridge
ca.1919

Charles was the son of Jacob Maeys.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

CONTINUATION SHEET DESCRIPTION ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 3

3. JOSEPH SCHILLING OR FRED LOSSE HOUSE

Outlot: West side of creek, south of Stone Bridge
1879

The house is now abandoned. Though Schilling and Losse both built houses on outlots (this and No.5 below), some confusion still exists as to which man built on which lot.

CITED: ILLINOIS HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY (MO-H-89)

4. BICKELHAUPT BARN (v.No.48 for HOUSE)

Outlot: East side of Mill at Stone Bridge
ca.1861

The barn was converted to a residence ca.1883 by Tom Fink and has been in use as such ever since. It is presently covered with unsuitable modern siding, but seems otherwise little changed on the exterior.

5. FRED LOSSE OR JOSEPH SCHILLING HOUSE

Outlot: West side of Mill, north of Franklin
ca.1860

See No.3 concerning Messrs. Losse and Schilling.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE AND CITED: ILLINOIS HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY (MO-H-86)

6. ANTON ZEITINGER FLOUR MILL

Old Town Lot. No.1
1859; John Coleman, contractor

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE AND CITED: ILLINOIS HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY (MO-H-85)

7. WILLIAM HOEFFT HOUSE

Old Town Lot No.7
1871

Mr.Hoefft was the town undertaker. The house, though of native limestone, is now surfaced with cement/mortar, scored in blocks to resemble stone.

8. RECENT HOUSE

Old Town Lot No.8

9. JACOB MUELLER HOUSE

Old Town Lot No.2
1893

Mr.Mueller, despite his name, was a tinner. Like many other early villagers, he kept his shop in his house.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

- | CONTINUATION SHEET | DESCRIPTION | ITEM NUMBER | PAGE |
|--------------------|---|-------------|------|
| | | 7 | 4 |
| 10. | PHILIP DOLL HOUSE
Old Town Lot No.3
1857

Philip Doll kept a store.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE AND CITED: ILLINOIS HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY (MO-H-75) | | |
| 11. | JACOB JOBB HOUSE
Old Town Lot No.4
ca.1866-70; upper floor added in 1908 by George Jobb

Jacob Jobb, a saddler, also served as Maeystown's first Village President upon incorporation in 1904. | | |
| 12. | FIRE HOUSE
Outlot: East side of Mill, south of Main
1956 | | |
| 13. | RECENT HOUSE
Outlot: East side of Mill, south of Main
ca.1955-60 | | |
| 14. | RECENT HOUSE
Outlot: East side of Mill, south of Main
ca.1955-60 | | |
| 15. | THOMAS RUCH HOUSE
Outlot: East side of Mill, south of Main
1861

Mr.Ruch was a butcher. The house is inappropriately sided, but seems otherwise little altered on the exterior. | | |
| 16. | PETER RAY HOUSE
Outlot: West side of Mill, south of Main
ca.1866

Mr.Ray was a horse trader and also kept a tavern in the house. Under an inappropriate covering, the house is of log construction. | | |
| 17. | JACOB EMPT HOUSE
Outlot: West side of Mill, south of Main
ca.1860-65

Mr.Empt had vineyards on the hill overlooking the west bank of the stream | | |

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET DESCRIPTION ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 5

17. Continued

immediately behind the house

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

18. DAVID MERKEL HOUSE

Cut Lot: West side of Mill, south of Main
1861

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE

19. HOUSE TRAILER

Outlot: West side of Mill, south of Main

INTRUSIVE

20. MARTIN FORNBAUER HOUSE

Cutlot: West side of Mill at north end of town
before 1866

Mr. Fornbauer was a stonemason and was the contractor for St. Paul's Church (v.No.53).
The house is inappropriately sided and otherwise greatly altered.

21. RECENT HOUSE

Outlot: entrance off of Baum Road

22. JACOB HOFFMANN TAVERN AND HOTEL

Old Town Lot No.9
1878

Jacob Hoffmann was one of Maeystown's leading entrepreneurs. In addition to the
tavern and hotel, he owned the local brickyard which produced the brick for this
and other buildings in the village.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE AND CITED: ILLINOIS HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY (MO-H-76)

23. MAEYSTOWN BANK BUILDING

Old Town Part Lot No.11
1919

The bank went out of business in 1933 as a result of the proprietor leaving
suddenly for Waterloo, the county seat. The rear section of the bank building,
of native limestone, was built in 1859 by Hermann Quernheim, cabinetmaker and
undertaker.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET DESCRIPTION ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 6

24. RESIDENCE
Old Town Part Lot No.11
Date uncertain, but probably last third of 19th Century
The house is now inappropriately sided but seems otherwise little altered on the exterior.
25. JACOB HOFFMANN HOUSE
Old Town Lot No.10
1857
Mr.Hoffmann kept his tavern here before relocating one door to the west (v.No.22).
ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE AND CITED: ILLINOIS HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY (MC-H-77)
26. RECENT HOUSE
Old Town Lot No.12
ca.1965
27. CHRISTOPH WIEDNER HOUSE
First Add Lot No.47
1871
The house is now covered with an older type asphalt siding.
28. RESIDENCE
Outlot: South side of Main, backlot
Date uncertain, but possibly pre-Civil War
The house is of log construction but is now covered with modern siding.
29. SEBASTIAN HOLZMEIER HOUSE
First Add Lot No.51
1873
The house is now inappropriately sided but seems otherwise little altered on the exterior.
30. PETER RAY HOUSE
First Add Part Lot No.46
1870; later remodeling
The appearance of the house above its very high foundation dates almost entirely from the remodeling of ca.1920.
31. STORE
First Add Part Lot No.46
Date uncertain, but certainly pre-World War I

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET DESCRIPTION ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 7

32. GUS DIEHL HOUSE
First Add Lot No.43
1908

Mr.Diehl was a jeweller.

33. WILHELM MAEYS HOUSE
First Add Lot No.53
1870

Wilhelm Maeys, a merchant, was the brother of Jacob Maeys.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE AND CITED: ILLINOIS HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY (MO-H-79)

34. CONRAD WIPPERMANN HOUSE
First Add Lot No.54
1904

Conrad Wippermann, like his father Heinrich (v.No.37), was a tailor. He kept his shop in the house.

35. CHARLES WILHELMI HOUSE
First Add Lot No.42
1863

Charles Wilhelmi was a doctor and practiced medicine at Maeystown from 1858.

36. WILHELM TROST HOUSE
First Add Lot No.55
1863

37. HEINRICH WIPPERMANN HOUSE
First Add Lot No.57
1857; considerably altered

Heinrich Wippermann was a merchant tailor.

38. HEINRICH WIPPERMANN BARN
First Add Lot No.58
1865

The barn has since been converted to a residence and has been considerably altered -- including the addition of aluminium siding.

39. RECENT HOUSE
First Add Lot No.35

The present structure incorporates the foundations and floor timbers of its predecessor, built in 1863 by Sebastian Hack.

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NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET DESCRIPTION ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 8

40. FRED WIEDNER HOUSE
First Add Lot No.62
Date uncertain, but probably after 1900
41. OLD STONE BRIDGE
Mill Street over Middle Fork of Maeystown Creek
1881; A.Smolkant, contractor, for John Morandy & Co.
CITED: ILLINOIS HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY (MO-H-87)
42. SAMUEL FULTS HOUSE
First Add Part Lots 40 & 37
1897
43. ALFONSE SMOLKANT HOUSE
First Add Lot No.41
1892
Mr.Smolkant was a stone mason and was in charge of the construction of Maeystown's
Old Stone Bridge (.v.No.41).
ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE AND CITED: ILLINOIS HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY (MO-H-80)
44. JACOB DIEHL HOUSE
First Add Part Lots 40 & 37
1905
Jacob Diehl was a barber.
45. LOUIS AHLHEIM HOUSE
First Add Lot No.12
1867
Louis Ahlheim was a cooper.
ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE
46. (C.H.PREISKER) HOUSE
Outlot: West side of Hanover, north of Franklin
The Preisker house is a log structure presently in the process of being moved
to Maeystown from Maey Station in order to prevent its destruction.
The oldest section of the house may have been built as early as 1805 and have
been the early school mentioned in a number of sources. The larger section was
added by Preisker before 1859.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

CONTINUATION SHEET DESCRIPTION ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 9

47. CHURCH HALL

Outlot: North side of Franklin, backlot east of Hanover
1921

The hall is now covered with asphalt siding.

48. PETER BICKELHAUPT HOUSE

Outlot: northeast corner of Franklin and Mill
1861; later remodeling

The house is of native limestone but was stuccoed and otherwise altered probably around 1920, so that its true nature is not readily apparent.

49. JACOB HOFFMANN HOUSE

First Add Lot No.4
1859

For Jacob Hoffmann, v.Nos.22 and 25. There is no record that Hoffmann actually ever lived here and it is quite probably a rental property that he leased to Anton Zeitinger (v.No.6).

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE AND CITED: ILLINOIS HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY (MO-H-84)

50. RECENT HOUSE

First Add Lot No.45

51. HENRY FROMME HOUSE

First Add Lot No.9
1893

52. EVANGELICAL PARSONAGE (NOW: PRIVATE RESIDENCE)

First Add Lot No.13
1867

CITED: ILLINOIS HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY (MO-H-83)

53. EVANGELISCHE SANKT JOHANNESKIRCHE (NOW: ST.JOHN'S UNITED CHURCH OF CHRIST)

First Add Lot No.36
1866-8

Sankt Johannes was -- and to a degree remains -- the center of community life. Built by the congregation of native limestone, services were traditionally held in German until Christmas Eve of 1945.

ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE AND CITED: ILLINOIS HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY (MO-H-81)

54. AUGUST WILHELMI HOUSE

Cutlot: North side of Franklin, east of Hanover
ca.1919

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

CONTINUATION SHEET DESCRIPTION ITEM NUMBER 7 PAGE 10

55. WILHEMI BARN

Outlot: immediately behind the preceding

The barn has been converted to a residence and exterior remodeling makes it nearly intrusive.

56. BLACKSMITH SHOP

Outlot: West side of Mill at Old Stone Bridge
Date uncertain, but after 1900

CITED: ILLINOIS HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY (MO-H-88)

57. OLD EVANGELICAL CHURCH

First Add Lot No.57
1858

Upon completion of the present church structure (v.No.53), the old church was used as a parochial school. The only school ever located within the limits of Maeystown, the language of instruction was German until 1921, when the school was closed. A log structure faced with clapboard, it is now used as a church meeting hall.

CITED: ILLINOIS HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY (MO-H-82)

58. TOM RUCH TAVERN AND HOTEL

Old Town Lot No.5
1898

CITED: ILLINOIS HISTORIC LANDMARKS SURVEY (MO-H-74)

59. WESSEL HOUSE

Outlot: East side of Mill, near north end of town
ca.1889; since somewhat altered

60. HOUSE TRAILER

Outlot: South side of Main, west of Mill
INTRUSIVE

61. RECENT HOUSE

Outlot: East side of Mill, near north end of town

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 (rural)	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY) ethnic history rural Americana
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES

BUILDER/ARCHITECT

STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

Nothing great has ever happened in Maeystown. As a town, it is not a particularly early foundation. There are no known important archaeological sites within its limits. Few, if any examples of great architecture can be found there. And yet Maeystown is a place of major and perhaps unique significance within the context of Illinois.

This significance begins with the natural landscape and the manner in which the village has been integrated with it. Situated in a hilly region just above the bluffs marking the eastern edge of the American Bottom, Maeystown was laid out on a single slope on the left bank of the middle stream of three: a setting abounding in near spectacular views of both the village and the Mississippi River Valley and a splendid example of the harmony in which man and nature can sometimes exist. Located only 30 miles from the center of St. Louis, it is nonetheless a study in peace and seclusion.

As a man-made environment, Maeystown preserves a large number of early structures, and, even where structures are more recent, almost every parcel represents original development. The individual structures, albeit rarely of special architectural distinction, are generally of quality and relate to one another spatially and stylistically so well that their sum total is almost without parallel in so small a community in Illinois.

Although always within easy reach of a major city (St. Louis), Maeystown was once a nearly self-contained community, and one whose settlers shared a common nativity: Germany. That is not particularly unusual in the light of the heavily German Middle Mississippi Valley, but that Maeystown was exclusively German, remained so for decades, and retains strong reminders of its origin is. Isolation and common origin combined to lend Maeystown, again, a certain uniqueness.

There is perhaps no single feature of Maeystown to which one can point and exclaim, "SIGNIFICANCE!" Several, of which those outlined above seem to be the most important, interact in producing a place that, with but minimal imagination as a catalyst, could be miles and decades removed in place and time from where it actually is. And there is always the matter of sheer picturesque beauty.

HISTORY

Although Maeystown is located in a part of Illinois rich in pre-history and well known as a center of early French activity -- Cahokia Mounds, Emerald Mound and Village Site, the Lunsford-Pulcher Archaeological Site, Kolmer Site, Fort de Chartres, and the French Colonial Historic District are all nearby (and on the National Register) -- nothing is known of its immediate vicinity until the beginnings of American settlement in the late 18th Century. In 1781, James Moore and his party wintered at Kaskaskia, moving north the following spring to establish the first permanent American settlement in the Illinois Territory, then a County of Virginia, at La Belle Fontaine, about seven miles north of Maeystown and recently annexed to the City of Waterloo. Bellefontaine and New Design, established in 1786 about four miles to its south, became the centers of American

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM

FOR NPS USE ONLY

RECEIVED

DATE ENTERED

CONTINUATION SHEET SIGNIFICANCE

ITEM NUMBER 8

PAGE 2

population in Illinois in the waning 18th Century and it was to the former that James McRoberts, a veteran of the Revolutionary War, came and then staked a 100-acre improvement claim on Survey 704, Claim 316 (the present site of Maeystown), probably in 1786. Leaving this claim and spending time in Tennessee and at Kaskaskia, he returned to the area in 1797 and received a militia donation (Survey 704, Claim 315) about a mile north of his original claim. He settled on this second claim and the first, which remained unimproved though still in his possession, became known as McRoberts' Meadow.

The year of McRoberts' death -- 1844 -- is also the year of the major flood that ravaged the American Bottom and led, at least indirectly, to the foundation of Maeystown. As a result of the devastation, George Maeys, who had been farming the Bottom near Columbia since 1841, removed his family to an upland farm and in 1848 his son, Jacob, purchased the nearby McRoberts' Meadow. Jacob Maeys apparently had no intention of farming the "meadow," but was instead attracted by the spring on the property and the, as it turned out, vain hope its would prove sufficient to power a saw mill. The mill was erected in 1852 but was not put into operation until the following year, when steam engines were installed.

Despite the modest success of this enterprise, Maeys divested himself of it, correctly surmising that the increasing tide of German immigration affecting the Middle Mississippi Valley would make the establishment of a town on his acreage a yet more beneficial venture. Although only one plat was filed for record -- on 15 September 1856 -- the town seems to have been laid out in two stages, an Old Town of 12 lots and a First Addition of 65. The original survey was made for Maeys by William C. Starkey on 29-30 August and 11-12 September those date quite possibly indicating the two stages. Maeystown was incorporated as a village in 1904.

Initially known as Maeysville -- the name was changed when the post office was opened in 1860 -- the village proved attractive, and within six years about two dozen families had purchased lots (12 structures still survive from 1861 or before). 1858 is symptomatic of the relatively quick stability that was achieved: the erection of the first church, the arrival of the first doctor, and the opening of the first store all fall in that year. Maeystown was entirely settled by German immigrants, mainly -- and at first almost exclusively -- refugees from the revolutions of 1848. A hardy and independent lot who preserved their language, customs and identity for generations, their number early included most of the trades and professions needed to support a relatively self-sufficient rural community: doctor, tailor, vintner, blacksmith, cooper, brickmason, stonemason, miller, cobbler, tavern keeper, merchant, butcher, saddler, cabinetmaker, and undertaker. Adding to this self-sufficiency, houses were built virtually flush to the street line, allowing most of the lot to be developed as a microscopic, yet nonetheless complete farmstead.

Maeystown's history is, to a very great extent, nothing more than the record of those who settled and remained there. There have been no extraordinary events to chronicle, and no "great" men or women have claimed it as their place of birth. It started as and remained a German community, with German the language of home, shop, street, church (until World War II), and school (until 1921). A railroad was built through the American Bottom in 1901-03, but being three miles away this had little pronounced effect. Industry was never a factor, although logging was carried out for about twenty years beginning in 1925. Business activity and population both expanded modestly, though never in a manner even remotely resembling urban growth, and both peaked shortly before the Great Depression and

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have been slowly declining ever since.

The character of Maeystown -- German, independent, self-contained -- was thoroughly established within a few years after the Civil War. With nearly 40% of the village's extant structures having been built before 1870 and most of those of later date springing from the same pattern, that character has changed surprisingly little since. There have, of course, been modifications -- German language and customs are no longer all-pervasive, some older structures have been razed or replaced by newer ones, and the St. Louis metropolitan area may be beginning to encroach -- but Maeystown is still, in essence, an 1870 rural Illinois community of German parentage.

SITES AND STRUCTURES OF SPECIAL SIGNIFICANCE

See DESCRIPTION: EXTANT STRUCTURES IN MAEYSTCWN

MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- Combined History of Randolph, Monroe and Perry Counties, Illinois, Philadelphia 1883.
 Bundy, Gloria Maeys, Significance of the Village of Maecystown, unpublished.
 General Planning and Resource Consultants, A Comprehensive Community Plan. Maecystown, Illinois, St. Louis 1967.

GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 100

UTM REFERENCES

A	15	741740	4234600	B	15	742080	4234090
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING
C	15	742560	4234090	D	15	742100	4233840
	ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING		ZONE	EASTING	NORTHING

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary of the Maecystown Historic District coincides with the corporate limit of the Village of Maecystown as of 31 December 1973, with exclusion of a small triangular section on the northeast, the area thus being identical to Survey 704, Claim 316.

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES:

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Robert Wagner

ORGANIZATION

Illinois Department of Conservation

STREET & NUMBER

9640 South Longwood Drive

CITY OR TOWN

Chicago

22 January 1978

DATE

(312) 779-2109

TELEPHONE

STATE

Illinois

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

David Kenney

TITLE

Director, Ill. Dept. of Conservation

DATE

3/27/78

FOR NPS USE ONLY

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE

DIRECTOR, OFFICE OF ARCHEOLOGY AND HISTORIC PRESERVATION

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER