

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office

This form is for use in nominating individual properties and districts. Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented enter "N/A" for "not applicable." Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

Historic name Nagy Brothers Shoe Repair

Other name _____

2. Location

Address 1725 S. Parsons Avenue Zip Code 43207

3. Historic Preservation Officer Certification

As the designated authority under the Columbus City Code Chapter 3116 and 3117, I hereby certify that this nomination meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the Columbus Register of Historic Properties and meets the procedural requirements set forth in Columbus City Code Chapter 3117. In my opinion, the property or properties meet(s)

does not meet the Columbus Register criteria. I recommend that this property or properties be considered significant

locally nationally statewide

Historic Preservation Officer  Date 7-28-22

In our opinion, the property or properties meet(s) does not meet the Columbus Register criteria.

Historic Resources Commission Chair  Date 7/28/2022

4. Columbus City Council Certification

I hereby certify that this property or properties is/are:

- entered in the Columbus Register.
- determined not eligible for the Columbus Register.
- removed from the Columbus Register
- other, (explain) _____

Signature of the City Clerk _____ Date _____

I hereby certify that the Franklin County Recorder has been notified that this property or properties has/have been entered into the Columbus Register.

Historic Preservation Officer _____ Date _____

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check all boxes that apply)

- private
- public – local
- public – State
- public – Federal

Category of Property
(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

Number of Resources within Property
(Do not include previously listed resources in count)

<i>Contributing</i>	<i>Non-contributing</i>	
	1	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
	1	<i>Total</i>

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the Columbus Register
0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

filling station
 shoe repair shop

Current Functions

vacant

7. Description

Architectural Classification

vernacular commercial building

Materials

concrete foundation
 concrete block walls
 brick walls
 asphalt shingles/gabled roof roof
 epdm flat roof other

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets)

See Continuation Sheets

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable Columbus Register Criteria

- A. The design or style of the property's exterior and/or interior is of significance to the historical, architectural or cultural development of the city, state or nation.
- B. The property is closely and publicly identified with a person who has significantly contributed to the historical, architectural or cultural development of the city, state, or nation.
- C. The property is identified as a significant work of an architect, artisan, engineer, landscape architect or builder whose individual work has influenced the historical, architectural, or cultural development of the city, state, or nation.
- D. The property demonstrates significant craftsmanship in architectural design, detail, or use of materials.
- E. The property is closely and publicly identified with an event, or series of events, which has influenced the historical, architectural, or cultural development of the city, state, or nation.

Period or Periods of Significance

1932-2009

Significant Date or Dates

Significant Person or Persons

(Complete if Criterion 2 is marked)

Joseph and Steven Nagy

Architect/Builder

Criteria Considerations

(select box if applicable.)

Property is:

- less than 40 years of age or achieved
- significance within past 40 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheets

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheets

Primary location of additional data

- Columbus Historic Preservation Office
- State Historic Preservation Office
- University
- Other

Name of repository _____

10. Geographical DataAcreage of Property 0.10 acres

Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property, or properties or district on a continuation sheet.)

See Continuation Sheets

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

*See Continuation Sheets***11. Form Prepared By:**

Name/Title Susan Keeny
 Organization Columbus Landmarks
 Street Address 57 Jefferson Avenue Telephone 614-221-4508
 E-mail address skeeney@columbuslandmarks.org Date _____
 City Columbus State OH Zip Code 43207

12. Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Continuation Sheets

Map (A to scale sketch map for individually listed property, or properties or historic district.)

Photographs (Representative digital and 4" x 6", black and white or color prints of the property, or properties, or historic district.)

Additional items (check with the Columbus Historic Preservation Officer for any additional items.)

13. Property Owner

(Use Continuation Sheets to list additional property owners.)

Name/Title Columbus Landmarka
 Street Address 57 Jefferson Avenue Telephone 614-221-0227
 City Columbus State OH Zip Code 43035
 E-mail address bwest@columbuslandmarks.org Date _____

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office

THE CITY OF
COLUMBUS
ANDREW J. GINTHER, MAYOR

DEPARTMENT OF
DEVELOPMENT

Name of property Nagy Shoe Repair Shop

Section Number _____

Zip Code 43207

Narrative Description

(See continuation sheets for copy of narrative description)

SUBMIT

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office
Continuation Sheet

Name of property - Nagy Shoe Repair

Statement of Significance

The Nagy Brothers Shoe Repair, 1725 Parsons Avenue, is a diminutive, single-story, painted brick and concrete commercial building located on the SE corner of Parsons and Hinman avenues, considered the historic heart of the Hungarian Village neighborhood on Columbus' South Side. Its size and setback from the Parsons Avenue commercial corridor make the building go almost unnoticed but for its bold striped paint pattern in red, green, and white, the national colors of Hungary. Community members and congregants of the Hungarian Reformed Church painted the shop in 2011 to mark the importance of the building for more than six decades in the history of the neighborhood and to mark the passing of the last Nagy brother, Joseph Nagy. It calls attention to the Nagy brothers' contributions for decades of work at their leather craft, and decades of work with both the Hungarian Reformed Church and St. Ladislav Roman Catholic Church, the City and numerous service organizations to improve and aid the lives of ordinary people and the everyday life of the area. The significance of the Nagy Brothers Shoe Repair and the significance of the South Side are inexorably linked. A more complete understanding of the effects of Immigration, migration, industrialization, and labor on the city's past and future are woven together.

The building is the first investment of Columbus Landmarks' Endangered Properties Fund. The goal of the acquisition revolving fund is to find productive new uses for historic commercial buildings. For the Nagy Brothers Shoe Repair building, plans are underway for a creative/artisan adaptive reuse that will also serve as a "gateway" and interpretive site to the largely unrecognized multi-ethnic history of the South Side. This neighborhood contributed significantly to the Columbus economy and its diversity for over a century. The building is a potential story-telling crossroads, a cultural marker, and interpretive site for both the diverse South Side neighborhood, once known as Steelton (later as Hungarian Village) and a reminder of the contributions made by many families and groups through the history of one family.

Rationale for Nomination

It is easy to overlook modest buildings, especially those that served the commercial automotive needs of the early 20th century. However, such places can mark the significance of the often-forgotten ethnic contributions to the cultural, social, and economic development of a city—and by extension to the state and nation—as they are the physical reminders of the stories of ordinary people who contributed significantly to the growth of Columbus.

In addition, small buildings that embody the stories and the ethnic history of an area can most easily be repurposed in a neighborhood that has seen previous disinvestment. Small buildings with development potential and with a researched story represent more than just one family but thousands of others who arrived in Columbus c. 1880-1920 from Eastern Europe, Appalachia, Alabama, and elsewhere to build the steel, glass, iron, and railroads of Columbus's industry. They are a tangible link to a time when the area was first known as "Steelton." The area also had several other unofficial names over time—some names referred to the by-products of the industries, its location south of the downtown, or the heritage of a large portion of its diverse population. It was known as "The Poor End," "Hungarian Colony," "Smoky Row," "South End," "Little Hungary," "Magyar" Town, and finally "Hungarian Village." Research, oral histories, the historic preservation opportunities serve as an anecdote to the city's cultural amnesia that Columbus's growth has always been the built on its crossroads location for migration and immigration. Building upon one modest building can complement, spark, or identify new interests in re-investment.

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office
Continuation Sheet

Name of property - Nagy Shoe Repair

Criterion E: The property is closely and publicly identified with an event, or series of events, which has influenced the historical, architectural, or cultural development of the city, state, or nation.

In order to fully explain the historical, architectural, and cultural development of the building at 1725 Parsons Avenue, the following subsections are covered in detail:

- Significance of South Side: Immigration, Migration, Culture of Community, Industrialization and Labor
- Description of Building; History of 1725 Parsons Avenue/ Ownership, and Context of Parsons Avenue

Significance of South Side—Historical and Social Context of Hungarian Community

Four basic themes shaped the development and significance of the Southside - immigration, migration, labor and industrialization, and culture of community. All were significant to the growth of the city as the area absorbed the greatest concentration of diversity in the city's history prior to the 21st century and contributed to the post-Civil War industrialization of the city which lasted for almost a century. The property qualifies under Criteria E in terms of the diversity of the area and how it was a major cultural force in the city's history. The property also qualifies under Criteria B in how the Nagy Brothers contributed to the growth and development of Columbus' Southside.

Immigration

Between 1880 and 1920 an estimated 1,078,974 Hungarians immigrated to the United States. Cleveland's Hungarian population was second only to Budapest, and starting in the 1900s with the genesis of Columbus's new steel industries, many were sent under contract agreements to work in Columbus.¹ Ohio had a greater number of Hungarian immigrants than Pennsylvania. According to the 1920 United States Census, the total number of Hungarians in Columbus was estimated to be 1524, living predominately on the South Side. Of these, 966 were foreign born, including the parents of John and Steve Nagy and their three other children.²

Virtually all of the South Side's population was the result of immigration, migration, and industrialization—whose diversity can easily be seen by the languages noted in footnote at the bottom of the page. These themes shaped the development of the South Side, and all were significant to the growth of the city. The South Side absorbed the greatest concentration of diversity in the city's history prior to the 21st century and contributed to the industrial and economic boom of the city which lasted for more than a century.

¹ Van Tassel, David and John Grawbowski, "Hungarians," *The Encyclopedia of Cleveland History*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press, in association with Case Western Reserve University and the Western Reserve Historical Society, 2012, p. 550. Konnyu, Leslie. "Hungarians in the USA: An Immigration Study," *The American Hungarian Review*, 1967, p.22.

² Snorf, Sue. *A Sociological Study of the Hungarian Settlement in Columbus*. Columbus, Ohio: Ohio State University, Thesis Presented for the Degree of Master of Arts, 1925. In addition to secondary sources available to the author, she based her research on primary sources available at the time: U.S. Bureau of Labor Reports, Census records, published autobiographies, geographic and economic surveys, and previous work done by Rodney MacKenzie (Ohio State University, 1917) also cited in this nomination. In addition, she interviewed 30 community and instructional stakeholders in 1925, and residents, including Hungarian laborers, married women who did not work outside the home, women employed in industry, small business owners with first-hand knowledge of the early immigration.

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office
Continuation Sheet

Name of property - Nagy Shoe Repair

Though reportedly by 1910, there were 710,904 Hungarians in the U.S., and a little more than half the number (459,609) were Hungarian-born. The numbers will never be totally accurate because of the complicated and changing political boundaries and the Hungarian language.³

³ Fenyvesi, Anna, ed. *Hungarian Language Contact Outside Hungary*. Amsterdam, Netherlands: John Benjamin Publishing, p. 266. However, as Fenyvesti, Wittke (*We Who Built America: The Saga of the Immigrant*), and others are quick to point out, exact numbers are unknown and likely higher. The term "Hungarian" was often mistakenly applied to Slovaks, Roumanians, Austrians, and/or Slavs. The Austria-Hungarian Empire of the Hapsburgs and the Russian Empire of the Romanoffs were multi-ethnic, multi-lingual political constructs. And also included the "Pale," a geographical set aside of agrarian hinterlands where Jews were permitted (or forced) to reside in the Russian Empire (1772-1917), and boundaries changed with each tsar. Basically, it stretched from the Baltic states to the Crimea, Moscow to Austria (including present-day Poland). "Saxons," were counted as Hungarians because groups of their ancestors emigrated to Transylvania (considered part of Hungary until after World War I) though they were Germanic. {The South Side had cultural gathering halls—Saxon Hall, as well as Croatian and Macedonian Halls}. Slavic groups (Russian, Ukrainian, Polish, Croatian, Rumanian, Serbian, and others) are based on linguistic constructs and differed greatly from Hungarian (closest to Finnish, Estonian) which are Finno-Ugric based on the ancestral Samoyedic language of Siberia. Both Yiddish and Romani (related to Sanskrit) was often also spoken or understood by Hungarians.

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office
Continuation Sheet

Name of property - Nagy Shoe Repair

Hungarian, Slav, Bohemian, Serbian, Appalachian, Jewish, African American, Greek, Macedonian, Czech, Sicilian, and others arrived in waves in Columbus within the same four-decade period after the Germans, Welsh, Irish. But the newcomers will not arrive in the same way nor with the same expectations, visions, or circumstances. Germans, and some Irish and Welsh, had settled south of the Statehouse (Rich Street to Deshler Avenue), but German immigrations increased greatly when revolutions across Europe erupted in the 1840s.

Hungarians did not come to be farmers nor to settle permanently like the Germans, Welsh, and Irish but They came to make money and return home to become landowners, using the advantage of a young country's growing industrialization and need for cheap labor. They came as Protestants, Jews, and Catholics to establish familiar but new institutions. Their settlement patterns, like those of the Germans and the Welsh, were concentrated because of language limitations and preference for the familiar. Assimilation takes time, and Ohio was not a "melting pot" or a "salad bowl," as has been described by previous historians. More recent thinking postulates that ethnic settlement patterns resemble a "braided river valley." The metaphor suggests parallel streams all flowing in the same valley. Different localized immigrant cultures will enter the flow at different times, keeping their distinctiveness, but "at the same time new arrivals learn Ohio customs and culture." In this way, they influence a city but will do so at their own rate.⁴

⁴ Cozen, Kathleen Neils, "Mainstream and Side Channels: The Localization of Immigrant Cultures," *Journal of American Ethnic History*, Vol. 11, (1991), p. 16.

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office
Continuation Sheet

Name of property - Nagy Shoe Repair

Hungarians arrived in two waves (a third wave will come after the 1956 Hungarian Revolution). The first wave arrived in the mid-19th century and included members of the aristocratic class, rich landowners tied to the Hapsburg throne of the Austrian-Hungarian Empire, hoping for political change and greater autonomy for the Magyar people. Hopes eventually dashed, they emigrated to the U.S. With money and excellent educations, most represented the world of Hungarian arts and culture, but would bear no resemblance to the second wave of peasant Hungarians who arrived in the 1880s except for language. Interestingly, as late as 1925, South Side Hungarians who were interviewed still referred to this class as “the Masters.”⁵ Wealthy citizens of Columbus knew Hungarian culture in the arts, music, and dance, often sponsoring private concerts featuring famous Hungarian composers or holding masquerade balls with Hungarian dancers. This too was the aristocratic world of Louis Kossuth.

On February 4, 1852, Louis Kossuth, internationally the most famously known Hungarian of the time, a revolutionary leader considered the George Washington of his country, came to Columbus. Invited initially by the U.S. Congress and then by the Ohio General Assembly to speak, Kossuth drew large crowds as he made fervent pleas to support the fight against the Hapsburg Empire’s hold over Hungary. He was welcomed by a boisterous group of German butchers on horseback who led him into the city where he spoke from the balcony of Neil House. The Germans named a street for him in the “German Colony” but little funding came from them. None came from the Ohio legislature. No Hungarians were recorded as residents of the city in 1852. But generations of Hungarians still remember his efforts and celebrate the Hungarian Revolution of 1848 even to this day at the Hungarian Reform Church on Woodrow Avenue, as others in Hungarian communities across the U.S. 194 years later.

One of the very few Hungarian-speaking immigrants to arrive in Columbus prior to the Civil War was Joseph Schoenthal, a Jewish peddler with a pushcart, who turned scrap iron collecting into a personal fortune. Retiring early, he devoted himself to philanthropy for Jewish families, establishing kindergartens, a summer camp at Magnetic Springs, literary book clubs, drama groups, and a center for youth where Jewish youngsters and non-Jewish youngsters were welcome.

The Jewish community c. 1870-1900 was located north of the German settlement but gradually moved east and south as the commercial downtown district expanded into the residential. Here German and Eastern European Jewish communities shared crossover settlements around Parsons and Livingston, and the congregation of Tifereth Israel grew largely from six Hungarian Jewish families in 1901. Originally known as the First Hungarian Hebrew Church, they were traditional but more liberal than Agudas Achim or Beth Jacob. In 1912, they purchased their first building on Parsons, a remodeled house and barbershop. However, with very limited space, special services were often held at the I.O.O.F lodge by the Hungarian Jews and at the Agudas Achim congregation to accommodate their growing numbers.⁶ A second wave of Jewish immigrants from Eastern Europe came in larger numbers to Columbus (1881-1915), and by 1927, they built their present synagogue on East Broad to be a spiritual, cultural, and social welfare facility for the “Jews of the East End.”

The second wave of Hungarians arrived from Southern Ohio, Pennsylvania, and West Virginia coal fields just as the steel and glass industries was building on the South Side.⁷ Not until 1900-1906, did most arrive directly to the city

⁵ Snorf, pp. 6-7.

⁶ “Rosh Hosanna, the Jewish New Year, Will Begin at Sunset,” *The Columbus Evening Dispatch*, September 9, 1906.

⁷ Snorf, p. 15. Men from the mining camps arrived in the 1880s, but not all new arrivals were successful. A woman

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office
Continuation Sheet

Name of property - Nagy Shoe Repair

from Hungary⁸ They were relegated to the southern edge of the German settlement, where Groveport Pike and Parsons Avenue met—the South Side—or the “Poor End.” In 1925, Hungarian residents remembered the time 10 years earlier when “The American government looked upon the Hungarians as a source of labor supply, gave them the slums, and thereafter left them alone.”⁹

One of the earliest references to the “South Side,” was in the *Columbus Gazette*, April 22, 1864, when the newspaper referred to the area as “The Poor End.”¹⁰ The term was used in a church handbill by the ladies of a German church on Rich Street, collecting proceeds to build a church for the paupers of “the Poor End.” It was not a village but a settlement of make shift hovels, and the term was used frequently and continued into the 20th century, associating the area with immigrants c. 1880s. As the glass, iron, and steel industries were organizing in 1900, the association of poverty, industry and dirt with the South “End” was well engrained in the Columbus psyche.

Groveport Pike, a 19th century former toll road into the Columbus downtown from the farms southeast of the city, was a key connector for farmers to bring produce to the Columbus’s Central Market as early as the 1850s. By 1895 the pike linked with Parsons Avenue in the city; and the name Parsons Avenue was formalized for the entire stretch. With thirty-two cross streets intersecting Parsons, from East Broad Street to the city to unincorporated Marion Township, future commercialization was assured. Parsons Avenue became the South Side’s “Main Street,” basically paralleling the existing South High Street (Route 23).¹¹ In the city blocks between South High Street and Parsons Avenue, the Southside Terrace Addition, and other additions were platted for working- and middle-class housing. The city expanded quickly to capture the German/Eastern European immigrants through annexations in 1862, 1870, 1886, 1889, and 1891, with the last two annexations rendering city ownership of a narrow strip of land on the east side of Parsons Avenue. However, Marion Township and the factories continued to resist annexation into the city until the 1950s, and industry and township both benefited by keeping taxes low.

Immigration to the U.S. from Germany, England, France slowed considerably by 1880 as larger workforces were need to meet the demands of European industry. However, the Austria Hungarian and Russian empires concentrated less on industrialization, needing to respond instead to the internal ethnic divisions within their borders. They built armies, mandating conscription for men at age 20 (required 9 to 15 years of military service). It was estimated that soldiers conscripted from the Jewish, Slavic, and Hungarian peasant classes in small farms and villages may have made up as much as two-thirds of the armies. Peasants were historically tenant farmers or herdsmen, trapped in the semi-feudal states of land ownership (a medieval agrarian system requiring payment to the government to raise certain crops and were forced to sell crops back to the government at a dictated price), They faced subsistent farming, rising debts, an inability to purchase land, overpopulation, and were, in the case of

recounted, “ I came to this country at age 16. The only relative I had was an aunt living in Congo (a mining town south of Columbus) who kept a boarding house. She brought me to Columbus where she thought I could get house work, but it was harder than working all day in the burning sun. I could not understand a word, and I did not under the gas and kerosene.”

⁸ In 1906 Hungary passed a law forbidding young males age 16-19 from emigrating to the U.S. until their compulsory military requirement was completed unless they were given special permission by the government.

⁹ Snorf, p. 12.

¹⁰ “The Poor End,” *Columbus Gazette*, April 4, 1864.

¹¹ Dunham, Tom. *Columbus’s Industrial Communities*. Bloomington, Indiana: AuthorHouse, 2010, p. 72

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office
Continuation Sheet

Name of property - Nagy Shoe Repair

Hungarian Jewish residents, vulnerable to religious persecution. Subject to autocratic and oppressive governments, Hungarians arrived, compared to previous immigrants, unskilled and often illiterate.

Many of the Hungarian immigrants to Columbus came from the Transylvanian region, a rough country southeast of the Carpathian Mountains which, following World War I became part of Romania.¹² Arrivals to Columbus came as single men, escaping forced conscription, or married men who left wives and children home, but there were also teenage girls who might have a relative in nearby coal mining town.¹³ Most fully intended to return to villages with enough money to pay off debts or buy land. Interviews conducted among South Side Hungarians in 1925, said they were often referred to as “birds of passage” for their migratory back and forth journeys—bringing money home then returning to the United States to continue working.

New arrivals tended to cluster near each other, joining others who spoke the same language and could find employment. This was especially true as the complexity of the Hungarian language tended to isolate new arrivals from English-speakers or other European speakers. However, by living frugally and journeying only once a year, laborers could save for the steamship travel because it was becoming more economical.¹⁴ The luxury classes of steamship travel were so costly, tickets in steerage were often looked upon as “loss leader items.” The average cost in 1900 was \$30 for third-class (steerage).¹⁵ Steamship tickets could be purchased in Columbus at the Foreign Grocery on Parsons Avenue, enabling Hungarian workers to return to Hungary. Serbians, Macedonians, Croatians, Bosnians, and Greeks made up almost 90% of the traveling “birds of passage.”¹⁶ To save money, South Side foreign-born men boarded in rooming houses, sometimes renting a room with one bed which two or more men shared by working separate shifts.

Industries in this concentrated area operated night and day at Buckeye Steel Castings, Federal Glass, Bonney-Floyd Steel Castings, Hercules Box Factory, Simplex Machine Tool Company, Brown Manufacturing (lamps and lights for carriages later autos), Chase (pump, brick, truck manufacturing), Seagrave (fire engine manufacturing), Brightman (nuts and bolts for railroads and farm equipment), and Buckeye Stamping Company.

From the 1890s into the first decade of the 20th century, Hungarians were not hailed as the descendants of the learned Kossuth but as illiterate, clannish, drunk, and barely civilized. Columbus newspaper headlines read, “An Angry Mob Attack Hungarians and Destroy a House,” (1901), “Undesirable Immigration,” (1902) “Huddled Like Sheep...Health Authorities After Them” (1903), and “Hungarians Go to Jail—Eleven Hungarians with Unpronounceable Names Were Arraigned in Police Court,” (1905). A newspaper article titled “Abate Nuisance:

¹² Mackenzie, Roderick Duncan. *The Neighborhood: A Study of the City of Columbus, Ohio*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1918.

¹³ Snorf, p.12.

¹⁴ Keeling, Drew. “Shipping Companies and Transatlantic Costs: Case Study of Cunard, 1880-1914,” paper presented at the European Business History Association Conference, 2008, in Bergen, Norway, pp 5-7. Permission granted for use by author.

¹⁵ The Hungarian government, looking at economic gain from “birds of passage,” entered into agreement with Holland-American steamship line to cut oversea rates (\$34.00 to \$24.50) for Hungarians and Croatians in 1904, touching off a competition with Hamburg-American, North German Lloyd, and Cunard (which lowered rates to \$9.50). “In Mediterranean,” *The Columbus Evening Dispatch*, March 25, 1904.

¹⁶ Martin, Susan, *A Nation of Immigrants*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011, p. 111.

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office
Continuation Sheet

Name of property - Nagy Shoe Repair

Foreigners Must Conform to Laws of Decency," (1905), described how Hungarians were often arrested in the "Hungarian colony" (centered from Reeb to Barthman, Fifth to Seventh Street) for disorderly conduct, disturbing the peace, and insulting women.

In a mass meeting of the neighborhood, complaints to the city expressed moral outrage at the behavior of "the foreigners" but also acknowledged some were living 15, 25, and even 50 in one dwelling. The city health inspector ordered the owners of boarding houses be called to court, saying "The Huns of the South Columbus lacked sanitary improvements." However, many previous complaints over the years were given the same cursory attention by the city ("Sixteen persons were crowded into a 4-room house...surroundings were filthy."-1903).

Even before the peak of Hungarian immigration, there were children in the city. "Ludicrous Mistake of a Party of Dirty Hungarian Children," from *The Columbus Evening Dispatch*, 1888, recounted an incident when a streetcar conductor stopped for a group of children he thought wanted to ride. Confused, but delighted to be offered to ride a streetcar, the children rode to the end of line. Bewildered by repeated requests for them to pay and speaking no English, they were chased off the car. Though a small incident in urban life, the article gives a snapshot into the realities and stereotypes of the immigrants and predates by almost two decades the institutions—religious groups, settlement houses, day cares, Buckeye Steel's programs, philanthropic outreach, YMCA classes—that would later appear.

Hungarians often shared lodgings and company with other Hungarians to save money but also those they had worked beside in Congo and Corning coal mines—Sicilian Italians (considered by U.S. immigration as non-white) or African Americans—an uncommon practice in an era of Jim Crow laws and racial segregation. Willing to make money under harsh conditions, Hungarians were sometimes referred to in newspapers as "our Chinese," to be used by the governor or mine owners as strikebreakers. Hungarians were not favored by the leadership of labor organizations. The head of the Knights of Labor in 1884 said they "were fast becoming as obnoxious in the East as the Chinese in habits," referring to their living as many as 10 in a single room.¹⁷

Even the esteemed Columbus minister of First Congregational Church and founder of the influential Social Gospel Movement, Rev. Washington Gladden had a low view of the South Side's recent immigrants. He was not alone. In the decade of 1880-1890, approximately one out of every seven Americans was foreign born; the nation's population had grown more than 25% in a decade and a third of the population increase had come from immigration.¹⁸ Gladden objected to granting Hungarians and others citizenship and the right to vote.

Starting from approximately 1910 for five decades, Hungarians lived predominately within the city limits on Reeb, Innis, Hinman, and Woodrow (formerly Wood), Avenues; many Croatians and Czechs (Bohemians) lived on Hinman and the first block of Barthman Avenues; Italians also lived on Innis, Barthman Avenues, and Fifth, and Sixth Streets (that crossed Barthman); Lithuanians and Serbs lived on Hosack, Hinman, and Morrill Avenues; and African Americans lived on Reeb and Hosack Avenues, closest to the steel mills. Others, including later Appalachian

¹⁷ "Representation of Labor Heard," *The Columbus Evening Dispatch*, February 2, 1884.

¹⁸ Muslin, David, *Washington Gladden's Church-The Man Who Made American Protestantism*. New York and London: Rowan & Littlefield, 2020, p. 148-149.

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office
Continuation Sheet

Name of property - Nagy Shoe Repair

migrants, black and white, often lived further south and east in the slum of Tin Town on Livingston or in smaller settlements within the townships where the major industries were located.¹⁹

Using one street as an example of early ethnic concentrations, the 1918 Columbus City Directory listed 43 structures on two blocks of Wood (now Woodrow) Avenue from South Seventh Street to Parsons Avenue. There were two churches, Church of Christ and the Reformed Hungarian Church, one vacancy, and 40 residences occupied by 28 families headed by males with Hungarian surnames. Their occupations included 20 laborers, a driver, a carpenter, a bricklayer, 2 foremen, foremen, a molder, and a steelworker.

The west side of Parsons Avenue within the city limits was the primary residential neighborhood. Baist maps of the residential streets between South High and South Parsons north to Woodrow Avenue show 200 building lots platted in 1899 and approximately 50% had a dwelling on each lot. In 1910, about 80% of the more than 870 building lots platted in the area contained a dwelling.

By 1920, 900 building lots were almost filled to 100%.²⁰ The housing was usually the result of two factors— developer speculation based on the perceived need for worker housing because of the factories' expansions and the extension of the street car lines to the city's southern limits on both South High Street and Parsons Avenue. In 1973, the Columbus Department of Development noted that South Side neighborhoods were made up of working-class houses typically built between 1890-1920 in a "Midwest American tradition of wooden frames on narrow lots... the style of the housing was somewhat the result of a combination of the earlier Queen Anne styles with that of the turn of the century Colonial Revival."²¹

An early resident of the Hungarian Jewish community, whose family became retail entrepreneurs and property owners, noted in his family's history that the houses were typical of homes of blue-collar workers of the day, on narrow lots, with well groomed yards, and "the typical house was two-storied with a wide front porch, topped by a portico roof...front room downstairs with a side stairway leading up to three bedrooms."²²

Columbus's Neighborhood Design Center (2003) noted that housing closest to the steel mills was "laid out like the company town that it was, with unimproved streets and unlimited pollution" from both the mills and a glue factory on Hosack. However, the commercial businesses of Parsons Avenue formed a vibrant area even into the 1950s. And streets north of Barthman Avenue were "developed as a working-class suburbia."²³ By 1903, the Southside Columbus Business Association was formed and continues today as the Parsons Avenue Merchants Association.

Migration

¹⁹ Daft, Berry, "Southside: A History," *The Columbus Sunday Dispatch*, August 26, 1979.

²⁰ Baist's Columbus Real Estate Maps for 1899, 1910, 1920, as noted by Tom Dunham, pp. 86-87

²¹ Columbus Department of Development, *The Columbus Plan, 1970-1990*. Plan No. 33: 1972, pp. 1-3.

²² Schottenstein, Morris. *The Schottensteins: A Family Biographical Essay*, Vol. 1, 1908-1930., Columbus: Orion Publication, pp. 164-165.

²³ Neighborhood Design Center (65 Parsons Avenue) "Columbus Neighborhoods: Progress & Promise," funded by The Columbus Foundation, Joseph A. Jeffrey Endowment Fund," 2003, p. 112.

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office
Continuation Sheet

Name of property - Nagy Shoe Repair

In addition to Parsons Avenue, the neighborhood streets were bordered to the west by Route 23, South High Street—often referred to locally as “Readin,’ Writin,’ and Route 23”—a major migration route for the Great African American Migration of the early 20th century, and for late 19th and early 20th century Appalachian black and white migrations. Going north on Route 23 promised the opportunity for education and a better life. Columbus is less than 90 miles from the Kentucky border. To the south of Columbus, Route 23 continues through Kentucky, Tennessee, North Carolina, Georgia, and Florida.

Between 1910-1940, of twelve Midwestern cities, Columbus’s African American population increased by more than 66% (St. Louis and Cincinnati doubled) during the Great African American Migration.²⁴ Night riders, lynchings, poll taxes, tenant farming pushed them out of the South, and letters from relatives and friends urging them North pulled them to Columbus. Here was the promise of a “modicum of funds” because “the steel mills were running day and night.”²⁵ Most came as small groups or individuals from Alabama, Mississippi, and Tennessee. However, at the same time white Southern also came to the South Side, escaping the violence of West Virginia mining strikes and lockouts and willing to accept menial jobs.²⁶

Columbus, the crossroads of Route 40 (east-west) and Route 23 (north-south) grew by immigrations and migrations. New arrivals to the South Side were the result of both Eastern European upheavals and the result of mining strikes, lockdowns, labor stalemates, violence, and meager wages in nearby Southern Ohio coal mining towns, c. 1880s-1900s. The coal mining towns of Congo and Corning are less than 50 miles from Columbus, directly connected by railroads since the 1880s. Congo was built by the Congo Mining Company (1891), a subsidiary of Columbus’ Sunday’s Creek Coal Company and had ties to Columbus’s Jeffrey Mining and Manufacturing. It was “one of the most racially and ethnically diverse workforces to be found anywhere. Irish, Hungarian, and Slavic minors worked side by side with African American.”²⁷ The company town had two housing areas-Hungarian Hill (White Hill) and Alabama Hill (Black Hill). The KKK in the 1920s attempted to gain “foothold” in the area, focusing on their hatred of Catholics and African Americans, but eventually, when mine ownerships went into receivership and a major fire happened, prospects for work were done in by the Depression. Nearby Corning residents, however, worn out from lockouts and strikes, migrated elsewhere.

²⁴ Teaford, Jon., *Cities of the Heartland: The Rise and Fall of the Industrial Midwest*. Bloomington and Indianapolis: Indiana University Press., pp.190-191. The twelve Midwest cities studied were: Chicago, Detroit, Cleveland, St.Louis, Milwaukee, Cincinnati, Indianapolis, Toledo, Columbus, Akron, Dayton, and Youngstown.

²⁵ Teaford, p.195.

²⁶ Teaford, p. 231. White Appalachian migration is rarely mentioned in Columbus history. Teaford noted that by 1970, Southern-born whites were approximately twice as numerous in population in Columbus, Akron, and Indianapolis (compared to the aforementioned Midwest cities) as African-American migrants. Between 1953-1963 Southern Baptist Church membership was the fastest-growing denomination in Ohio, and Parsons Avenue had/has a number of fundamentalist and Pentecostal churches. The blended influences of Hungarian (second/third generation) and Appalachian cultures is still evident, for instance, at Lois Manns’s South High restaurant with Hungarian cabbage rolls, kifili, and apricot rolls, and accompanied by authentic blue grass musical nights.

²⁷ Meyers, David, Elise Myers Walker, and Nyla Voller, *Carrying Coals to Columbus*. Charleston, South Carolina, The History Press, 2017, pp. 86-88. Darbee, Jeffrey and Nancy Recchie, *Little Cities of the Black Diamond*, Charleston, South Carolina, Arcadia Press, 2009, p. 43.

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office
Continuation Sheet

Name of property - Nagy Shoe Repair

Even closer to the South Side, were the numerous mining strikes and threats of lockouts in Nelsonville, Ohio in the 1890s, according the reports in *The Columbus Evening Dispatch*, where mine owners threatened to bring in African American and Chinese strike breakers but settled instead on newly arrived Hungarians brought from Youngstown and Cleveland.²⁸ Buckeye Steel Castings actively recruited African American workers from Alabama, as did other Columbus industries such as the Marble Cliff quarries. The infamous Homestead coal mining riots outside of Pittsburgh, c. 1890s, also contributed to the disillusioned Hungarian, African American, Serbian, Italian, and Slavic miners who now were seeking employment in the Steelton industries emerging at the same time.

The South End was also home to Native Americans. The Native American Indian Center of Central Ohio was founded on Innis Avenue in 1975 by the late Selma Walker.

Culture of Community

Near the middle of the first decade of the 20th century, the earlier pessimistic view of Southside foreigners slowly ameliorated. However, like the beginnings of Tifereth Israel's formation, churches, lodges, and associations were founded by what language was spoken. Hungarians, in particular, because of the difficulty of the language for non-Hungarians speakers to learn, were isolated and lost without it, and the inability to speak English determined their ability to associate with others.

Women in particular were isolated, even after their children began to learn English in schools. And unlike other immigrant women, for example, Italians who often cooked together as part of their culture in Columbus, Hungarian women did not. In studies done on immigrant women, women had opinions on pregnancy and childbirth, role of the church, domestic work, and marriage preferences.

In their home country, women in Russia, Bulgaria, Romania, and Hungary showed both the highest birth rate and highest infant death rate per 1000 of 14 European countries. Even after coming to the U.S. between 1890-1920, these numbers only shifted downward slightly, but statistics were not always accurate because political boundaries were changing. Mothers who were born in Italy, Russia, Poland, Germany, and Hungary and who emigrated to the U.S. were statistically still the most likely to die in childbirth in 1900.²⁹ Both nationally researched and substantiated by interviews with women in the South End in 1925, women preferred to choose marriage partners within their ethnic group, but both men and women preferred to delay marriage until their mid 20s. Large families of 5 or 6 children were still common in 1925, but families with 10-12 children deceased in that decade. Illegitimate births recorded in 1920 among U.S. native born mothers was three times higher (16.7 per 1000 births) than Hungarians (5.0), Poles (4.0), Russians (2.5), and Italians (2.45).³⁰

Most young women did not seek domestic work because of their inability to understand English and the hard demands and confines of the work. They preferred hard work on farms where they worked along side men in the fields because it was outdoors. Reeb School, which began as a YWCA outreach program and later became a Columbus Public School, taught domestic work for future "American" homemakers (or domestics) because "Every

²⁸ "A New Phase of the Strike: Swedes and Hungarians to be Sent to the Hocking Valley—Militia Companies to be Herld in Readiness," *The Columbus Evening Dispatch*, July 8, 1894.

²⁹ Weatherford, Doris, *Foreign and Female: Immigrant Women in America, 1840-1930.*, 1995, pp. 26-28.

³⁰ Weatherford, Doris, p. 112-114.

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office
Continuation Sheet

Name of property - Nagy Shoe Repair

woman and girl wants to know how to keep a house.” Once a week, twelve girls, aged six to eight, of five different nationalities spent a day with four miniature rooms and dolls learning to arrange furniture, set tables, make beds, cook, wash dishes, dress babies. The class was sponsored by the Daughters of the American Revolution.³¹

The change in the public’s outrage about the behavior of Hungarian men began to change, as evidenced in the newspaper accounts, with the arrival of marriageable Hungarian girls and reunification with families. One large headline read, “Three Happy Brides Come All the Way from Hungary to Marry the Men of Their Choice,” The men were able to purchase steamship tickets for them, and the triple wedding took place before the clerk of courts on the Thursday they arrived. The newspaper noted “none of them was able to speak English, only one being able to utter enough to make the clerk understand what they wanted.”³²

Domesticity was a decided factor in the change, but so was community voice. A turning point occurred in the continued fight for sanitary sewers. A South Columbus Improvement association formed to override Mayor Jeffrey’s veto of a council passed ordinance. The mayor turned down the ordinance for budgetary reasons, citing \$18,000 was too much. Citing health concerns, the Hungarian citizens demanded an example of 38 people living in an eight-room house on Reeb Avenue.³³

Complicating the ability to form social groups, was how Hungarians perceived American religious institutions. In Hungary, religion was essentially an extension of the government to provide funding for charity. Hungarians, especially men, did not understand why their pay was needed for the salary of a priest or a minister, or to build a church, or for lessons to prepare for first communion, or pay for needs of the less fortunate. Women, however, generally wished to pray in a church and be assured religious education was provided. It was not uncommon for women to attend church, send children to a different church if Sunday School was provided, and not complain if men stayed home. It was not uncommon for Hungarians to attend a number of churches for their outreach efforts, but give less regard the nuances of theology. Marriages between Protestants and Catholics did not raise concerns; but marrying outside of one’s ethnic group did.

For Protestant Hungarians, an opportunity to move worship from homes to a church came in February 1906. Columbus Presbyterians conducted a service for Hungarians at the Central Presbyterian church downtown. Three months later, Hungarians agreed to help build a church at Washington and Wood (new Woodrow) Avenues with Presbyterian support. At the inaugural event, Rev. Kardos, a Hungarian-born émigré who spoke English, gave a talk on the history the Protestant Reformation in Hungary, and sixteen Hungarian men “sang psalms and ‘America’ translated into Hungarian” for the occasion.³⁴

Two years later, Rev. Kardos, now pastor of the Hungarian Presbyterian Church at Washington and Woodrow, and Bela Pukey, steamship agent for foreign emigrants who operated a Hungarian bank on Parsons, assisted in setting

³¹ “Little South Side Girls of Five Different Nationalities Are Learning to Keep House,” *The Columbus Citizen*, p.

³² “Three Happy Brides...,” *The Columbus Evening Dispatch*, April 27, 1905.

³³ “South Siders Want that Sanitary Sewer Ordinance,” *The Columbus Evening Dispatch*, April 6, 1905.

³⁴ “Hungarians Want Church,” *The Columbus Evening Dispatch*, May 28, 1906. “The Presbyterian Ministers Union...” *The Columbus Evening Dispatch*, February 2, 1906.

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office
Continuation Sheet

Name of property - Nagy Shoe Repair

up a school to teach English on Saturday evenings in the basement of the church.³⁵ However, disputes over financial arrangements arose. Though the Presbyterian Synod paid clergy and contributed the lots, Hungarians who had built the church and raised money for the bell, windows, and iron fencing wanted control. When the Hungarian congregation asked to purchase the church, the price was \$4000 in 1914. Money was raised, but the price was now \$5000. The congregation refused to pay, purchased another building, withdrew from the Presbyterian Synod, joining the Reformed Churches of the United States. Presbyterians, unable to rebuild a congregation, offered the Hungarians to come back to the original site in 1923 with no money exchanged.³⁶

St. Ladislav, the Roman Catholic Church only blocks away from the Hungarian Reform Church, was organized in 1908 originally for the Hungarians by Bishop Hartley. However, it was quickly needed to accommodate the spiritual needs of other nationalities. Nearly 500 adults enrolled in the new parish. The frame building with steeple and bell and the congregation were formed in only eight months.³⁷

In 1925, sermons were delivered in both Hungarian and English (as were services in the Hungarian Reformed Church). In 1917, a parochial school was formed at St. Ladislav with 72 children and within eight years, 160 children, or 2/3 of the Catholic children in the parish. Five Ursuline sisters taught exclusively in English. The name, Ladislav, was specifically chosen because he was a 12th century son of a Hungarian king who joined Dalmatia and Croatia into the Hungarian kingdom; drove out the Poles, Russians, and Tartars; and whose relics reportedly resulted in miracles, giving him canonization.

Across the street was Reeb School, originally started by the YMCA, that held night classes for adults who wished to learn English. Within three years of its establishment, it became part of the Columbus Public Schools system, and in the 1920s, 50% of its enrollment were Hungarian children. Hungarian business leaders, like the Gaal family, advocated for passing proposed school levies and were coal that children needed to attend school to understand democracy and become citizens.³⁸

World War I was a dramatic watershed for Hungarians, Croatians, Serbs, Lithuanians, and others from Eastern Europe, especially for those with family members on both sides of the Atlantic, now trapped on either side with slim chance for reuniting. While in the past, ethnic grudges were only occasionally seen on Labor Day, when Hungarians and Serbs chose not to march in the same parade. During the war, there was only one reported potential confrontation between Hungarians and Serbs on the Parsons viaduct roadway that ran past Buckeye Steel. It was initiated by New York Serbians who wished to speak to fellow Serbians but was opposed by the

³⁵ "To Teach English: Effort May be Made Later to Form Hungarian YMCA in Columbus," *The Columbus Evening Dispatch*, January 10, 1908. Bela Pukey's Magyar Banka (2032 Parsons), unaffiliated with other banking instructions, handled much of the Hungarians' finances and deposits, but in 1911, Pukey faced serious charges of embezzlement (over \$25,000). Taken to court, Hungarians interceded in the judgement, asking he be sentenced to work on a nearby farm to repay all money lost to each investor. They were clear it was not asked on his behalf but to get their money back. The judge agreed; years later, the debts were all resolved.

³⁶ "History of the Hungarian United Church of Christ," unpublished history, 1976.

³⁷ "Will Dedicate New Hungarian Church Sunday," *The Columbus Evening Dispatch*, November 11, 1908.

³⁸ "Hungarians Boost School Bond Issue," *Columbia Citizen*, November 2, 1911.

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office
Continuation Sheet

Name of property - Nagy Shoe Repair

Hungarians. But at the moment of impending violence, Colonel Carter of the police forced intervened, citing the U.S. Constitution's amendment giving the right of free speech. Both sides dispersed.³⁹

In 1925, a settlement house worker remembered the area as "a motley district where practically every street represented a different racial or national aggregation....in this section (Reeb to Hinman Avenues) there are nineteen nationalities with the Hungarian group in the largest number."⁴⁰

Residential conditions improved, primarily because by the second decade, the Hungarians, who were the majority ethnicity of the South Side, had formed a business association, demanded sewer and sanitation improvements from the city, advocated for public school levies, and began owning homes. Families gave boarding rights only to other family members in order for one mortgage to be paid so another house could be purchased. Languages of the emigres continued to be spoken at home, but when the first-generation children became high school age, former language difficulties were more easily navigated as parents attended school plays and events. Traditions of lace making, embroidery, handmade linens, leather and wood crafts were now evident in homes, often noted by visiting public health nurses who commented "houses fare immaculate and baseboard floors are scrubbed white...they (Hungarians) usually live to themselves and do not gather as the Italians...mothers are generally not employed outside the home and children are neat and clean.... if diseases come, they have implicit faith in the nurse and doctor."⁴¹

Merchants, like the Foreign Grocery played a major role in the history of European immigrants.⁴² Hungarian John Gaal, his uncle Alex Gaal, and William (Billy) Trautman opened the Parsons store in 1910. Though it moved in 1928 and again in 1957, the store remained on Parsons. The store stocked special foods of all the ethnic groups and was also an emporium for shoes, clothing, dry goods, hardware and steamship tickets (an agent of Cunard lines). Credit was given to regular customers, and even small loans. Goods could be delivered (which was once a job of John Nagy). Every employee had to speak at least two languages (and some good managed seven). Thirty-five employees ran the store, and in order to keep long hours and a large clientele, the store had a cook and a kitchen to serve employees meals. The store also served as a de facto post office, receiving mail from the U.S. Post Office if a letter or package came with an incomplete or no address but a foreign-sounding name. There was never a recorded case of such mail not finding its intended home.

However, letters which had been so highly anticipated changed as World War I enveloped Europe. Billy Trautman remembered his many customers who now left the store, clutching a letter and weeping. News arrived that spoke of entire villages disappearing, young men who died in battle, relatives as homeless refugees. And everyone knew

³⁹ "Carter Averts Threatened War on Parsons Avenue," *The Columbus Citizen*, January 9, 1915. Serb Theodore Demilielvich never gave his speech.

⁴⁰ Snorf, p. 17.

⁴¹ Snorf, p. 26.

⁴² Primary and secondary sources for the following information is compiled from Daft, Betty, "Steelton: A Cornucopia of Columbus Culture," *The Columbus Sunday Dispatch*; "Foreign Store on the South Side Does Record Breaking Business," *The Ohio State Journal*, June 3, 1917; Oral history of Billy Trautman, done by Doreen Uhas-Sauer, 1987; Interviews with Larry Latta, descendent of the Gaal family and member of the Hungarian Cultural Association of Central Ohio, done by Doreen Uhas Sauer, various dates in 2018, 2019, 2022.

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office
Continuation Sheet

Name of property - Nagy Shoe Repair

that the world of birds of passage bringing money home to buy land and hopes of families reuniting were now frozen and perhaps would be impossible.

From the 1920s-1940s, Parsons Avenue and the ethnic cultures, especially Croatian and Hungarian, were coming into full blossom and remembered by many older interviewees in 1987. (Also noted in the section on Parsons Avenue later in the nomination were the street fairs.) A substantial number of the first-generation were coming into their teenage and young adulthoods and invigorated interest in the traditional arts. St. Ladislas Catholic Church, the South Side Settlement House, the Hungarian Reform Church, and Croatian Hall (opening in 1940) were within blocks of each other and often took turns providing space for traditional dancers in folk dress, pastries popular in Budapest cafes, cabbage rolls, musicians, and plays by the Hungarian Dramatic Club (performed in two languages). Efforts were aided by religious and labor groups working together—the Hungarian Women’s Chapter of Columbia, Hungarian Workman’s Lodge, the Merchants Association, and the four Hungarian-only (and one which admitted Croatians) mutual aid and benefit societies assured money and death benefits in case of industrial accidents.⁴³

All immigrant groups depended on mutual aid and benefit societies in case of illness, accident, or death of the primary breadwinner, especially in industrial accidents, but Steelton might have been unusual in the number offering services. Paying into them monthly in small amounts provided insurance for catastrophic deaths or accidents, but they also provided social activities.

Yarhovay Sick Benefit Society, the oldest national organization (1886) named for a prominent Hungarian who befriended the poor, had over 25,000 members in the 1920s. Open to all with no regard to religious affiliation, it paid \$7.00 a week in case of illness and \$1000.00 at death. Reformatus Betegsegelyze, a local aid society, organized in 1905 had 200 members in the 1920s, and was open for Hungarians of any religious belief. It paid \$9.00 a week for illness and \$300.00 at death. Mundas Betegsegelyze was organized in 1915, an outgrowth of the Presbyterian church. Originally formed as a cultural association but later reorganized with a workingman’s society, becoming more socialist in its leanings, had a 400-book library confiscated from a dismissed minister, and paid \$12.00 a week for illness and \$300.00 upon death. The Reformed Federation, a national organization, paid \$10.00 in sickness and \$1000.00 at death. The fifth aid society was a more recent association in the 1920s, the Golden Heart, paying \$10.00 a week in illness and \$500.00 at death.

The Hungarian Drama Club existed from the 1920s to the 1950s. One typical performance was “The Sheepskin,” an operetta, presented on Easter Sunday evening, 1942 and was the story of a father wanting his daughter to marry a “Kutyabor,” the Hungarian counterpart of an American college man of promise who has a “sheepskin degree.” Of course, she disobeys her father and runs off a man of her choosing. The costumes were of original Hungarian dress; music was by the city’s only Gypsy orchestra. Those who performed in it included names familiar to this nomination—Mrs. Julius Varga, mother of Jim and Lou Varga who have provided photos and documentation, and Mrs. John Nagy, wife of John Nagy whose brothers, Joe and Steve, began the Nagy Shoe Repair.⁴⁴

⁴³43 “‘Little Hungary’ Likes Merry Making—Delightful Ways of Native Land Preserved by Columbus Colony of Hungarians,” *The Columbus Citizen*, January 36, 1932. “New Croatian Home Dedicated at Ceremony,” *The Columbus Sunday Dispatch*, April 1, 1940.

⁴⁴44 “Hungarian Group to Present Play,” *Columbus Evening Dispatch*, April 2, 1942.

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office
Continuation Sheet

Name of property - Nagy Shoe Repair

If special cultural events or picnics to the Heimindale Grove off Groveport Road where food was provided by Buckeye Steel Castings or special treats for children by the Steelton Merchants Association were not everyone's interest, there was always Ivanoff Hall on Parsons between Reeb and Barthman which had a dance hall upstairs and a bowling alley downstairs.

In addition to activities, outings, and classes offered by Buckeye Steel Castings (described in the next section) for the Steelton neighborhood, six settlement houses in the city were supported by funds from Columbus's Community Fund—including South Side Settlement House and St. Stephen's in Steelton. In 1938, 2000 volunteers began to solicit pledges citywide for a goal of \$656,000 to support 56 agencies in the coming year. Their goal was achieved in ten days. On the South Side, basketball under trained leadership, and traditional sewing and craft arts were popular. In 1938, people living in houses without plumbing took a total of 67,805 showers at settlement houses.⁴⁵ Traditional lace making and embroidery were highly valued skills and in demand for religious vestments and altar cloths. In the 1960s, the Lazarus Department store hosted a week-long celebration and classes on traditional Hungarian work taught by Hungarian women of the South End. Hungarian restaurants became popular, aided by Hollywood movies where they were often the romantic backdrop, and the iconic Blue Danube on North High Street, started as a white-table cloth Hungarian restaurant where dining was accompanied by music from a baby grand piano.

The spirit of the diverse culture of the Steelton neighborhood might be shown by example. In 1938, the South Side response to the rise of fascism in Europe was proactive—creating a Citizenship Club, a Lecture Series, and Promoting the Foreign Born. Classes of over 100 people enrolled at the South Side Settlement House annually from 30 different nationalities. All who enrolled passed their naturalization exams and were celebrated at a banquet hosted in their honor.

Labor and Industry

A 1920 study revealed that the South Side neighborhood was primarily “a workingman's district, still it by no means represents a uniform standard of living...proximity to work doubtless accounts for their residence here...fully fifty-one percent of the adult male workers in a sampled group walked to the from work.”⁴⁶ Proximity to work also accounted for increased home ownership in immigrant neighborhoods. This was achieved not only by careful savings. Most households in immigrant neighborhoods took in boarders before World War I.

Among the largest industrial employers, the South Side was Buckeye Steel Castings (Buckeye Steel) which was part of a cluster factories developing c.1900. Access to the Baltimore and Hocking Valley nexus of railroads was instrumental to factory development, as land outside the city limits in Marion Franklin, avoided Columbus property taxes. Industries which had formerly been in the downtown (the original Montgomery Township and parts of Clinton Township on the North Side) began to relocate in late 19th century to take advantage of township

⁴⁵ Smith, Pauline. “Theresa Sarich, a little Croatian girl living on the South Side shares her embroidery,” *The Columbus Citizen*, part of a captioned picture, October 21, 1938.

⁴⁶ Boryczka, Raymond and Lorin Lee Cary, *No Strength Without Union*, Columbus: The Ohio Historical Society, 1982, p. 102.

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office
Continuation Sheet

Name of property - Nagy Shoe Repair

incentives. Buckeye Steel Castings, all buildings now demolished, was the largest employer of the area; by 1916, 2000 employees were on the payroll.⁴⁷

Columbus's role in steel production would become important, but it was not the same as in Youngstown. Toledo, or Cleveland where steel was created from pig iron. Northern Ohio had access to better iron ore deposits from Lake Superior. Eventually Columbus steel plants fabricated steel from northern Ohio factories into useable products.

Nevertheless, in 1895, the South Side's National Steel Company experimented with turning pig iron into steel and, inadvertently, made a lasting impression on the surrounding neighborhood—it gave the South Side a name—“Steelton.” A large blast furnace was needed to create steel, and the early promise of success encouraged the company to build a second and even larger blast furnace—a tower of a furnace that was a jaw-dropping (for the time) 80 feet high. It produced 190,000 tons of pig iron per day. On the side of the tower, the furnace's name was prominently spelled out, Steelton Furnace, and the name “Steelton” began to be branded by small shops and lunch counters. But two prominent uses stood out. Huntington Bank opened a Steelton branch office, helping to solidify the economic importance of the neighborhood in many minds. And the Steelton Lumber Company placed a large and prominent billboard on Parsons Avenue, picturing an enormous elephant moving lumber. Steelton was not a legal term but a geographical term and one of custom that generally identified the multi-ethnic neighborhood as bound by Whittier Street on the north (called Schiller Street Pre-World War I) and the factories on the south.

Another steel plant, the Columbus Iron and Steel Company, located on the west side of Parsons Avenue beside the Carnegie Steel plant in 1899, purchased the National Steel Company in 1910. Columbus Iron and Steel became the American Rolling Mill Company (ARMCO) in 1917. They too focused on fabrication not steel production.⁴⁸ Steelton was an apt nickname for the area for decades. However, one particular steel manufacturer, Buckeye, would out produce the others and shape the social and cultural dynamics of the workforce both in and out of the factory.

Despite recessions and business downturns nationwide and in Ohio in the 1890s, Buckeye Malleable Steel, originally located on the North Side (now Italian Village) on Russell Street, began to manufacture automatic car couplers with the Buckeye Automatic Car Coupler Company. The coupler greatly enhanced the safety of railroad work by preventing severe injuries and even amputations and death for workers by preventing railroad cars from hitting against each other. The automatic couplers, however, were not required for railroad cars at the time. In a stroke of good fortune or industrial brilliance, the two “Buckeye” companies succeeded with two new investors—Frank Rockefeller, brother of John D. Rockefeller of Standard Oil Company, and Thomas Goodwillie, a Rockefeller executive. Both were on the lookout for new opportunities.

⁴⁷ Prosser, Dan. “The South Side: Port of Entry for Columbus,” Columbus: Neighborhood Design Center, 1987.

⁴⁸ Hunker, Henry L., *Industrial Evolution of Columbus, Ohio*. Columbus: Bureau of Business research, College of Commerce and Administration, The Ohio State University, 1958., pp.48, 54-57, 95-98; *American Rolling Mill Company: The First Twenty Years, 1900-1922*, company printed, 1922.

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office
Continuation Sheet

Name of property - Nagy Shoe Repair

Buckeye gave the new owners corporate stock; in turn, they agreed to share all increases of future stock and secure Congressional support to mandate automatic couplers on railroad car manufacturers.⁴⁹ This was a major game changer.

Buckeye Malleable Iron and Coupler Company formed in 1894, attracting local investments from notable families who had founded the early Columbus economy (John G. Deshler, Felix Jacob, James Kilbourne) and weathering the Depressions of 1893-1897 when 800 banks had failed nationally. By 1902, the company was known as Buckeye Steel Castings, and by 1916, the company was operating “the largest steel foundry in the world.”⁵⁰

Frank Rockefeller was president of Buckeye Steel Castings from 1905-1907—a self-made man who had only a basic education before enlisting in the Civil War at age 16. By contrast, the next president of Buckeye had an extensive formal education, a degree in mechanical engineering, on-the-job technical training as an engineer, was a master mechanic, was a general superintendent of railroad motive power, and had six years experience with Buckeye. Over the next 20 years (1907-1927), Samuel Prescott Bush shaped not only the company but the nature of the immigrant and migrant community members who lived near the factories of Steelton.

S.P. Bush, grandfather and great-grandfather of two future U.S. Presidents, was an advocate and practitioner of Scientific Management, well studied in looking holistically in production to alleviate bottlenecks before they happened—whether it was a new modern design for factory architecture or a layout in the production line for an open-hearth process.

In addition, Bush was an advocate of Welfare Capitalism, a progressive idea promoted by the National Civic Federation (made up of business leaders, labor leaders, and government officials). In 1904, the group advocated workers be given “special consideration for physical comfort, wherever labor is performed; opportunities for recreation; educational advances; provision of suitable sanitary homes; and plans for saving and lending money.”⁵¹

Bush was a practitioner of these ideals. He fostered a workforce community through decent living conditions for families, education and recreation, a wage that would, in his words, “permit existence and some reasonable advance in civilization.”⁵²

It was not lost on Bush nor on other progressive Columbus business leaders, that happy workers did not seek unions and strikes. And newly-recruited African Americans from Alabama living on Reeb and Hosack Avenues in housing provided by Buckeye, taking Bible study classes provided by Buckeye, worshiping in a Baptist church on Hosack supported by Buckeye, or engaging in team sports through Buckeye sponsored industrial leagues would see there was much to lose. If a strike occurred, they would go in.

⁴⁹ Blackford, Mansel G., *A Portrait Cast in Steel: Buckeye International and Columbus, Ohio, 1881-1980*. Westport, Connecticut and London, England: Greenwood Press, 1982, pp. 11-14.

⁵⁰ Ibid., Blackford, p. 22.

⁵¹ Blackford, Mansel, “Buckeye Steel: A Photographic Documentary,” *Timeline*. Columbus: The Ohio Historical Society, February-March, 1985, p. 41.

⁵² Letter, S.P. Bush writing to R.S. Werner, John Deshler, and T.P. Lin, March 6, 1918. Buckeye Collection, The Ohio History Connection Archives.

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office
Continuation Sheet

Name of property - Nagy Shoe Repair

Three Ohio State University historians, all very familiar with Buckeye and S.P. Bush, noted the importance of Welfare Capitalism for a diverse, working-class neighborhood. They cited labor historian, Gerald Zahavi's research of the impact in a similar community where a broad array of programs for workers discouraged unionization and inspired loyalty that negotiated the hard times of the Depression despite cutbacks. However, success was because the approach was "a genuine two-way street between management and labor...and an important in the story of industrial relations in the U.S."⁵³ Oral histories conducted in 1987 for the Southside Design Center reflected similar sentiments from older residents who felt that Buckeye was a fair and caring industry, nurturing and modeling civic engagement in the community even though they themselves were not employed by Buckeye.⁵⁴

Rampant nativism, social radicalism, and violence clashes regarding labor and management was not common in Columbus though by the 1920s, the Ku Klux Klan appeared in Columbus and Buckeye Lake area to spread anti-Catholic propaganda. Columbus newspapers undercut their message by political cartoons which ridiculed their outfits, and local politicians prominently ran for office and won on the Socialist ticket. Columbus's percentage of foreigner workers was smaller compared to Cleveland, Akron, and Youngstown and more isolated from the rest of the city. African Americans and Eastern Europeans of Protestant, Catholic, or Jewish faith shared "specific kinds of experiences within the working class despite differences that separated them. A 'sense of kind'—among coal miners (from which many of the early residents came)—whatever their origin—flowed from exposure to hazardous underground conditions."⁵⁵ Most importantly many of the clashes between industrial labor and management had been fought after the panic and depression of 1877 and continued nonstop into 1886 which saw more labor unrest than any previous year in American history. Eighty-three strikes involving sixteen thousand workers took place in Ohio alone, prompting a call for a nation-wide strike for an 8-hour day.⁵⁶ Industrialization in Columbus came late to the table.

In 1925, factory workers who were interviewed often responded they had no time for recreation. "Most of the men, except those on piece work, work ten and twelve hours a day and are tired...you never heard a foreigner asking for a shorter day, because the longer the day the more money he makes." With no libraries, reading rooms, swimming pools, "the men are just automatic machines." But the Commonwealth Bank, located in the neighborhood, is where 50 percent of them saved between \$800 and \$1000 a year.⁵⁷

Even Rev. Washington Gladden of First Congregational Church who earlier expressed concerns that the new foreigners of the South Side could not handle citizenship, recognized the hard-working, almost driven work ethnic. From the pulpit, he championed higher wages and fewer required hours for men who had to work with industrial machines. Accidents at Buckeye Steel Castings and other factories were not common but always shocking. Like other steel and fabricating industries, Buckeye erected safety and danger signs throughout the facility in different languages. For Hungarian workers, 1880-1930, who could not read or write in Hungarian, the attempt at safety

⁵³ Kerr, Austin K., Amos Loveday, and Mansel G. Blackford, *Local Business: Exploring Their History*. Nashville, Tennessee: American Association of State and Local History. Vol. 5, The Nearby History Series, 1990. P. 52.

⁵⁴ Lentz, Ed and Doreen Neuhoff Uhas (Sauer). *Southsiders: An Oral History of Parsons Avenue and its People*, Columbus: Neighborhood Design Center, 1987.

⁵⁵ Boryczka, Raymond and Lorin Lee Cary, p. 120.

⁵⁶ Phalanx, Craig and Dan Ashyk, *The Unceasing Struggle*, Columbus: The Ohio Historical Society, 1982, Ohio Labor History Project,, p. 23.

⁵⁷ Snorf, p. 36

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office
Continuation Sheet

Name of property - Nagy Shoe Repair

was useless. Though most residents of Steelton (Hungarian Village) who were interviewed in 1987 had good memories of Buckeye's management efforts, one woman, Margaret Lutsch, editor of the neighborhood newspaper, said Buckeye had no regard for human life. "It just ate them up and spit them out...Then they sent to Cleveland for more Hungarians."

History of 1725 Parsons Avenue and Geographical Context of Property

The Nagy Shoe Shop is located on Lot #19 at the southwest corner of Parsons and Hinman Avenues. It is part of the Southside Terrace Addition, first noted on the 1920 Sanborn Map. An ad (included) for the Southside Terrace Addition shows how the lots were being promoted as an affordable land opportunity to the "Mechanic and Laboring Man" at the turn of century. The community has been known by many names (discussed under Significance of South Side) from 1880-1920, "South Side," "Hungarian Colony," "Smokey Row," or "Steelton," which was the name of the largest blasting furnace tower which preceded Buckeye Steel Castings. "Steelton" was most popular because it was repeated in the name of a Huntington Bank branch, a lumberyard, and a streetcar line.

Hinman and Parsons Avenue midway between the industrial places of employment (south) and the street car line on Whittier (north) was the "heart" of "Hungarian Village." This early branding concept in the 1970s was initiated by Rev. Szabo of the Hungarian Reformed Church on nearby Woodrow Avenue. He saw revitalization happening nearby "German Village," a working-class ethnic neighborhood built during a peak period of German immigration (c. 1840s) that had suffered disinvestment during the Depression and World War II. Rev. Szabo recognized that his neighborhood was also the story of diverse ethnic and racial immigration and migrations whose building stock also told the story of movement and industrialization in Columbus.⁵⁸

Building Description and Site Ownership

1920-1932

1920s—Lot #19 first appears on Sanborn map but is not developed. Residential housing on Hinman and nearby streets is developing but has empty lots as well. Lot is purchased by Herbert C. Sherman but not developed. Lot is resold in 1921 to Andrew T. Syfert who was a builder, contractor, later real estate, who lived in Columbus in Clintonville. Lot resells one month later in 1921 to Jessie G. Neil, a clerk in City Hall. Lot is not developed. In 1922, lot sold to Russell Smith, and four years later, it was in the name of his wife, Mary Smith, for six years. It transferred to William Esler, in 1932, and transferred back to Russell Smith in 1932, at which time a filling station is constructed.

In 1932, a single brick building was built on Lot #19 to be an automobile filling station and tire repair. The building is labeled as "gas station" on the 1937 Sanborn Map. (Chronology of ownership below). Strategically, the location is perfect for a gas station on the corner of a major street, Parsons Avenue, which connected the rural townships

⁵⁸ "Hungarian Village Plan is Proposed, *The Columbus Dispatch*, September 9, 1973.

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office
Continuation Sheet

Name of property - Nagy Shoe Repair
and industrial area (south) to downtown Columbus, and the intersection of Hinman Avenue, one of several streets with worker housing for diverse populations.⁵⁹

The original building is a brick structure with an asphalt-shingled gable roof. It is a small rectangular building of only 184 SF. A small, square, boarded up window is the only opening on the rear (west) façade. The front (east) façade has a single boarded up window, approximately 5'-8" in width by 3'-6" in height. The west wall has partial stucco over the brick. The other half of the wall is covered in painted OSB. The entire north wall abuts and is covered by the 1947 addition. The gable ends of this original building have painted rakes that extend out approximately 10". A retaining wall sits along the entire length of the south wall and property line.

The 387 SF addition to the north is a painted concrete block building that is nearly double the size of the original building. The flat roof is surrounded on 3 sides by a parapet with metal coping. The parapet stops at a section of the south wall which allows water to drain from the roof to the ground below. There are no downspouts. The wood entrance door and a metal window are on the east wall facing Parsons Avenue. Another wood door without window lites is on the rear (west) wall. There are 2 boarded up windows on the north and 1 boarded up window on the south elevations.

The interior walls are all exposed concrete block that have been painted. Floors are poured concrete with old vinyl floor tile over most of the sales room and the work areas. Heavy shoe repair equipment and shelving is still in place throughout the building and has been since 2009 when the building closed.

1932-1948

According to city directories and Franklin County Auditor's historic transfer sheets:

1932—first appearance of a building on lot, a filling station owned by Russell and Mary Smith; Russell, a Clintonville resident, is technically the owner of the filling station and his wife is listed as the owner of an "oil company," meaning the holder of the license to purchase fuel. The lot continues to be owned by the Smiths, but the proprietors of the lot change frequently; however, owners Woerzer, Gress, Helga, and Tesi were South Side residents.

1934—filling station owned by Gus Woerzer

1935—filling station owned by Robert C. Helga

1936—filling station owned by Gordon Gress

1939—filling station owned by Marlo Tesi who will operate the filling station until 1947

1947—Joseph and Steve Nagy purchase the building to start their shoe repair business

1948—The Nagy brothers complete building a flat-footed, cinder block addition to the east of the original building

1951—first listing in city directory of the Nagy Shoe Repair.

1950s— (Undocumented by records) a shed-roof structure (now gone) is added across as the rear of the addition (west) to be used by newspaper boys (*Columbus Citizen*) to fold and wrap newspapers before making deliveries.

Context of the Parsons Avenue Commercial Activity, 1920-1940, in Relation to the Nagy Shoe Shop

⁵⁹ Daft, Betty, "Southside: A History," *Columbus Dispatch*, August 26, 1979

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office
Continuation Sheet

Name of property - Nagy Shoe Repair

By 1920s, autos were becoming more affordable and navigated Parsons Avenue along with horse-drawn vehicles and streetcars. Auto-related retail—tires, batteries, radiators especially— began to occupy intersections or could appear between houses. Parsons Avenue bustled with urban life, but farmland and quiet respites were less than a two-mile drive in an auto, albeit one that needed gas, batteries, radiators, and tires fairly frequently.

In the 1920s, Parsons Avenue merchants, led by the Gaal and Trautman families, (located generally from Reeb to Hinman Avenues), planned and staged huge street fairs, which drew up to 5000 people. Floats, parades, beauty contests, old age contests, a parade of machines representing industrial progress from the time of King Tut to the present, the Old Guard Drum band, marathon races, and contests for best company or industry sponsored float were held. In 1923, there were 231 entries for floats. The first prize and \$100.00 went to the Hamilton Milk Company; the second prize to Moores & Ross Milk Company (now Abbott Lab); the third prize to the Commonwealth Bank. Honorable mentions went to Buckeye Steel Castings and Fred Schmidt (Schmidts Sausage House).⁶⁰

A snapshot of the Parsons's business corridor, c. 1936, shows both residential and commercial buildings, and a hybrid of both. As major streets were zoned commercial in the 1920s, Columbus owners could build out the front of a residence to create a store, tavern, tax office, grocery, or other permitted uses and keep the family residence in the rear of the store. In 1936, within five blocks on either side of 1725 Parsons, the street had 31 houses, the Foreign Grocery (previously discussed in Community Culture section), a delicatessen, 2 used auto lots, Italian spaghetti house, municipal fire station, Shell station, auto wreck lot, used clothing and used furniture stores, locksmith, 2 barbers, blacksmith, beauty shop, and a shoe repair owned and operated out of 1747 Parsons, a block from 1725, by Frank Orosz, born in Hungary in 1873.

Also, at 1747 Parsons the *Little Hungarian News*, a community/business ads paper, was published by George Warga and printed by Steelton Printing and Publishing Company with ads and information in both Hungarian and English. While foreign language newspapers for Eastern European immigrants were common in Youngstown and Cleveland, *Little Hungarian News* is the only known paper to be published in Columbus outside of the German community, and existing copies are very rare. Hungarians might receive printed news, *American Magyar Hirlap* (1911-1942) from Youngstown by mail. Croatians received their local and foreign news by way of Pittsburgh.

Oral histories of South Side residents (1987) and stories of Nagy family descendants (2021-2022) believe there was a bakery in the former gas station portion of the building (c. 1940s), there is no documented proof that a bakery existed.⁶¹ There were five commercial bakeries operating in Columbus in the 1940s but relatively few retail bakeries. However, because of sugar rationing in Prohibition, ending 1933, and war time sugar rationing, starting in 1941, "confectionaries" and candy stores proliferated because they could legally obtain sugar when alcohol manufacturers could not. In 1942, over 200 confectionary and candy stores were listed in the city directory, mostly in the German, Italian, and Eastern European populated areas. It was a home industry sometimes also associated with home brewing. Residences were sometimes modified, building out front porches or converting living rooms to

⁶⁰ "More than 5000 in Attendance at Street Reopening—Parsons Avenue Crowded with immense Throngs Thru Wed," *The Columbus Dispatch*, September 13, 1923. "Parsons Ave.Plans Street Celebration," *The Ohio State Journal*, September 9, 1926.

⁶¹ Virginia (Ginny) Nagy and J. A. Nagy, children of Joesph Nagy, interviewed in person and by phone, August, 2021, in preparation for chapter in *Forgotten Columbus*, by Doreen Uhas Sauer, co-author with Tom Betti, 2022.

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office
Continuation Sheet

Name of property - Nagy Shoe Repair

sell homemade sweets. It is possible that there was an arrangement with a neighborhood baker to sell in the gas station.

In conclusion, by the 1920s, the neighborhood was beginning to reach its fullest industrial potential, though fewer industries chose to locate there. The National Origins quota system which ended Eastern European and Mediterranean immigration in favor of Northern European immigration (the British Isles, Scandinavia, and Germany) went into effect in the 1920s, and immigration declined. "Distinct ethnic clusters began to disappear.... Buckeye Steel Castings was, unfortunately typical among area industries that experienced success, became complacent, and failed to develop new products."⁶²

Buckeye managed to survive the Depression and even had temporary growth in World War II by producing tank armor. Buckeye Steel Castings continued to operate and actively recruited workers from West Virginia, Kentucky, and from African American populations. By the 1950s, with housing opportunities rising in the suburbs, many first- and second-generation Hungarians began moving to the new developments, often taking advantage of the GI Bill for school, home and business loans (not available to African American veterans).

Others did not leave—they continued to invest in the neighborhood, like the Schottensteins. Even if they no longer lived in the neighborhood, they continued to support the cultures.⁶³ The Gaals of the Foreign Grocery; the Nagy family of the Nagy Shoe Repair; and the Tosheffs remained. The buildings associated are survivors in a neighborhood whose historic fabric is eroding.

The two sites of the Foreign Grocery remain on Parsons. The Nagy Shoe Repair holds promise of recognition and reuse. The Tosheff Hotel and restaurant, 1943 Parsons, is in the National Register of Historic Places and undergoing rehabilitation and reuse. Built and owned by George Tosheff and Thomas Marion Tosheff, both Greek immigrants, it was a white table cloth, fine dining restaurant and comfortable hotel. George helped organize the Alexander the Great, Macedonian-American Society in Columbus, to promote the sale of War Bonds in 1938; renovated and owned the neighborhood theater, the New Wonder, at Barthman and Parsons; and hosted the monthly Steelton Merchant's Association at the Little Italy Café on Barthman or his restaurant.

Criterion B: The property is closely associated and publicly identified with a person who has significantly contributed to the historical, architectural, or cultural development of the city, state, or nation.

The Nagy Brothers were first generation Hungarian-Americans, lived in Hungarian Village, and felt that Hinman and Parsons Avenue was an ideal location for their new business. As first-generation Hungarian Americans, their lives and work and commitment to the civic and economic life of the Steelton area came at a period of transition from the difficulties of the 1880s-1920s to the Depression and war years. They survived the economic down turns and recessions of the 1970s and the gradual disinvestment of the area as the industries closed and the demographics changed. As such, their stories and work become textbook of Steelton.

⁶² Prosser, Dan "The South Side" Port of Entry for Columbus," Columbus: Neighborhood Design Center, 1987.

⁶³ Schottensteins closed its iconic Parsons Avenue Store in 2005.

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office
Continuation Sheet

Name of property - Nagy Shoe Repair

For nearly 63 years the Nagy brothers repaired shoes for the firefighters at the Old Engine House 14 across the street, the workers at Buckeye Steel Castings, and the employees of Federal Glass, Bonney-Floyd, and the other industries of the South Side. Customers came from all over the city to have their shoes fixed by “Joe and Steve.” Even with all the workers who came to the shop, the majority of the shoes were repaired for the large numbers of families where 8, 12, and even 15 children were not unusual. Census records, neighborhood baptism records, and oral histories confirm this. (One German family of the St. Mary Catholic Church parish had twelve children who, in turn, had 81 children; two of the twelve were Catholic clergy and did not marry. The next generation, in turn, each had from 3-8 children, and many remained on the South End and took their shoes to the Nagy brothers)

Joseph Nagy (1923-2011) was a decorated Army Sir-Corp veteran of World War II, a radio gunner on a B17 bomber, who flew 26 missions and later was active in Am Vets, American Legion, and VFW. He walked each day from his residence a block away to the shop until his retirement in 2009. A respected member of the community and member of the merchants association, he was an active congregant of the Hungarian Reformed Church on Woodrow Avenue at the time when Rev. Szabo was advocating for the concept of a “Hungarian Village.”

His brother Steve (1924-2004) of the South Side Merchants Association, the Parsons Avenue Merchants Association, the 4-S Club (a Catholic Men’s group), and the William Penn Association, which was an organizational descendent of the immigrant mutual benefit and aid societies in the neighborhood. Steve Nagy was also involved in the planning process which produced the Parsons Avenue Urban Design Action Plan Stage 1 where he is listed as a contributor.

Both men were regarded highly by their business peers and seen by members of the community as “gentlemen.” They were lenient when money was tight for customers, supported the Hungarian (and other) cultural heritages and activities of the neighborhood, and kept a watchful eye on the *Columbus Citizen* paper carriers who prepared their papers for delivery behind the shop. The glowing red Coke machine in the sales room was a popular draw for the young carriers and the nostalgia and importance of the shop has been chronicled by writer Lou Varga. Both Nagy brothers financially supported (buying hats and shirts for the team) and encouraged the “industrial leagues” which promoted athletic events for youth and adults. This tradition is carried on by the Nagy children to promote softball teams at nearby Berliner Park.

The building that became the Nagy Brothers Shoe Repair purchased by Joseph and Steve Nagy on November 28, 1947, also involves a family saga of the history of the area. Their father, a Hungarian immigrant, worked many jobs in Steelton over the years—glass molder, steelworker, machine operator, assemblyman. All but one of his five sons were in the military in World War II. The fifth son, too young for the draft, died at a young age in a labor-related accident digging a ditch. Other Nagy family members, including the women, worked in various Steelton jobs.

Before World War II, in 1940, Joseph Nagy was listed as a shoe repair man at the Schiff’s Outlet Shoe Repair. He also partnered immediately after the war with Frank Orosz (mentioned above), an expert leather worker who gave up his shoe repair business to become a harness maker for race horses, and presumably helped business grow for the Nagy family, especially as Steve joined the business. In 1940, the Nagy brothers were part of the homeownership of the Steelton neighborhood, which was higher than most neighborhoods in Columbus.⁶⁴

⁶⁴ Prosser.

Columbus Register of Historic Properties Registration Form

Planning Division, Historic Preservation Office
Continuation Sheet

Name of property - Nagy Shoe Repair

Columbus had nine major shoe manufacturers, eleven shoe-related product producers (heels, insets), and eight shoe repair shops—most were in Steelton, followed by nearby German Village or Mt. Vernon (Bronzeville). Joseph's daughter, Virginia (Ginny) Nagy said her adolescent years were made a little more difficult by having a father who could expertly fix the same "ugly" pair of shoes she wore all through school.⁶⁵

Joseph and Steve Nagy's lives helped to connect the sometimes complex interrelationships of an immigrant enclave few other Columbus residents ever knew or visited. Business, personal, school, social, and cultural relationships were strengthened by this civic growth. Joseph once worked for the Foreign Grocery, directly across from 1725 Parsons, owned by the Gaal family and knew the stakeholders of the community like the Tosheffs. They knew the Vargas whose matriarch used to light the stove on Friday before Sabbath in her Jewish neighbors' homes. Each brother was active in their churches—Protestant and Catholic—at a time when both instructions also shared and planned together. Their lives and work significantly grew the South Side which fueled Columbus's growth.

⁶⁵ Virginia Nagy, March 2022, Interview at Community Grounds: Coffee and Meeting House, 1134 Parsons, by Doreen Uhas Sauer.

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Verbal Boundary Description

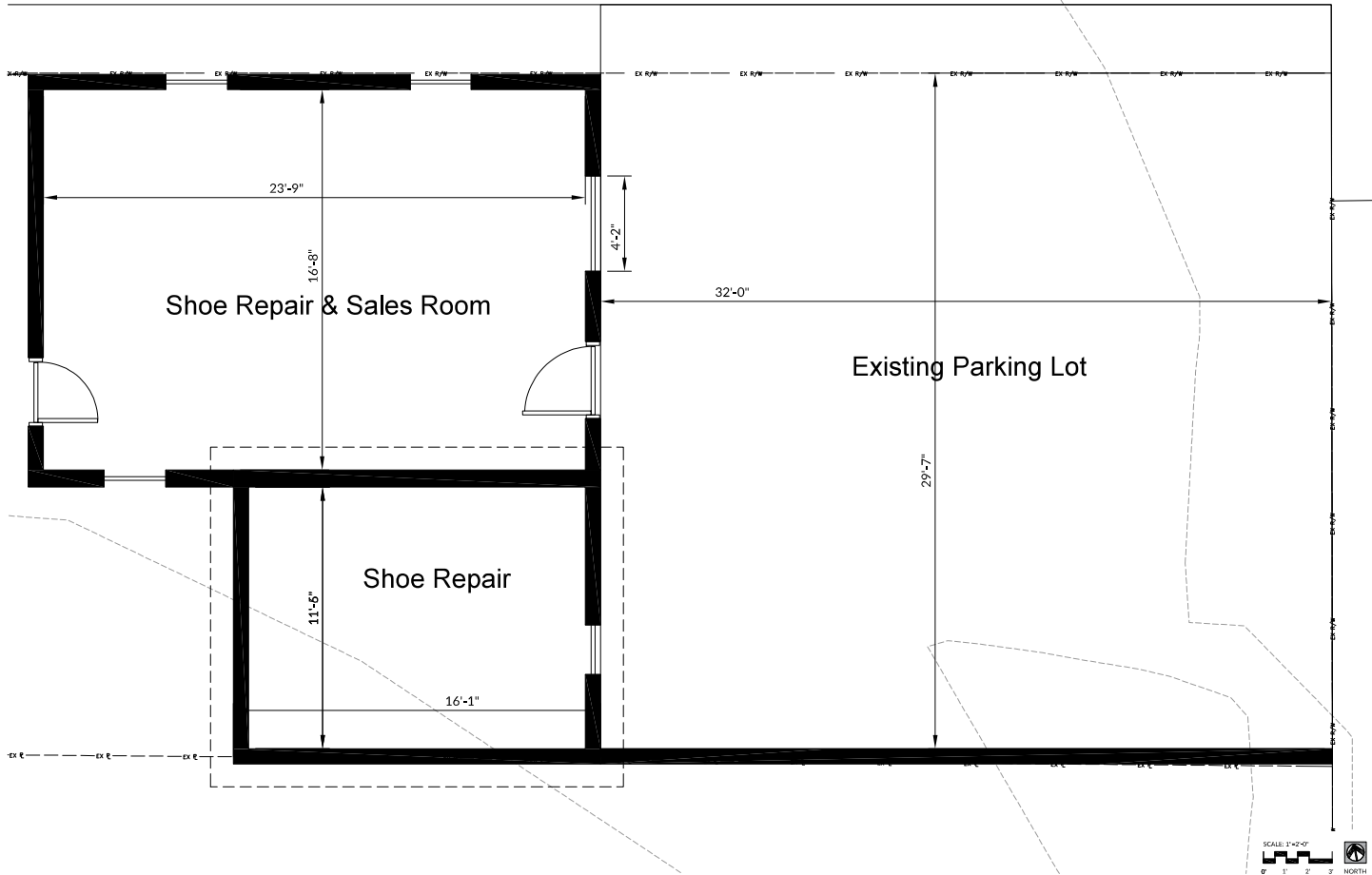
The boundary for the Nagy Brothers Shoe Repair includes the entire Parcel #194, Parcel ID: 010-057403-00.

This corner property's boundary begins at the southwest corner of Hinman and Parsons Avenues, extends west for 130 feet to the alley named Goethe Avenue, then extends south for 31 feet, then extends east for 130 feet to Parsons Avenue.

Boundary Justification

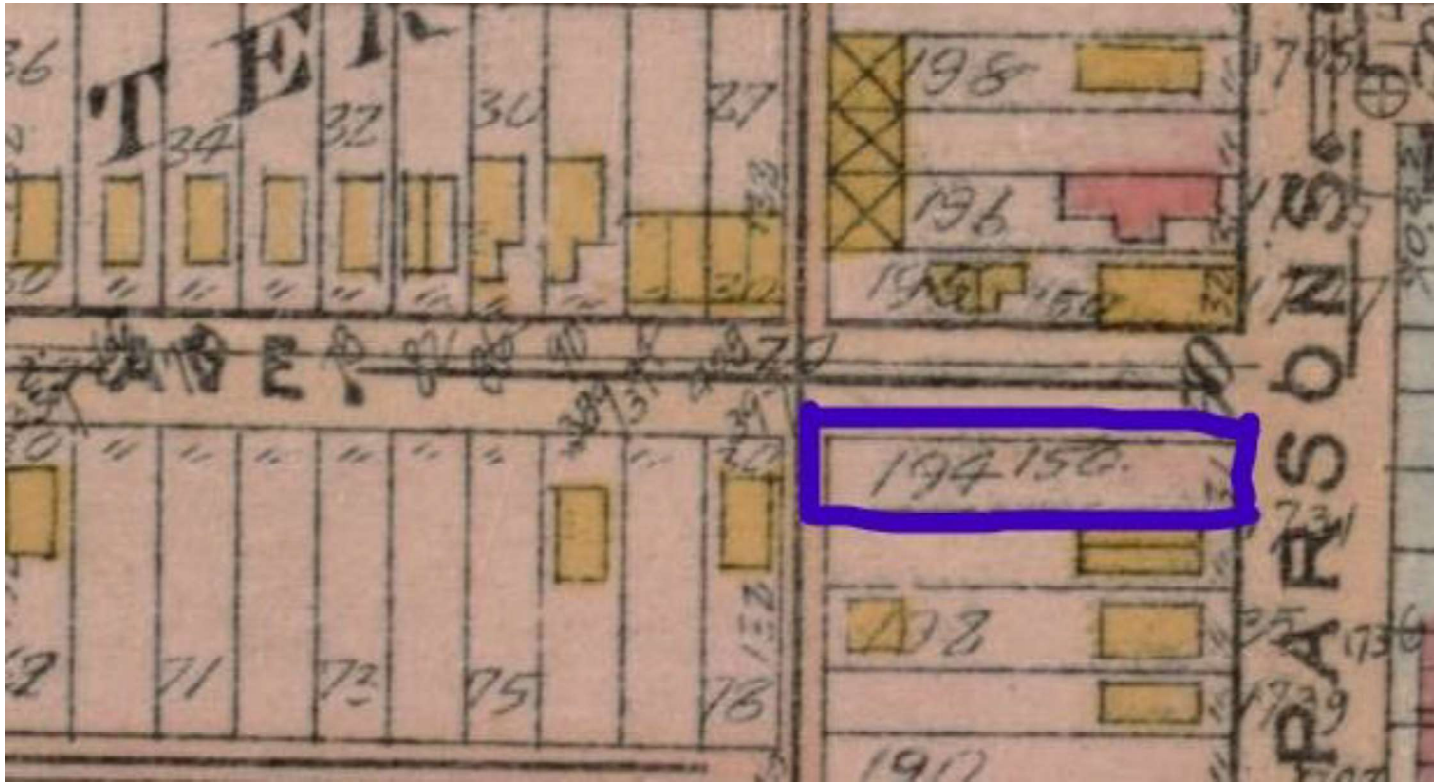
The property boundaries of Parcel #194 were established and first appeared on the 1920 Sanborn Map. They were the same boundaries when the property was acquired by the Nagy family in 1947 and did not change when they added onto the existing 1932 brick building to establish the Nagy Shoe Repair Shop in 1948. The Nagy Brothers, first generation Hungarian-Americans, lived in the Hungarian Village and felt that the Hinman and Parsons Avenue parcel was an ideal location for their new business. It was at the heart of Hungarian culture and labor. The building at the east end of the parcel contributes to the fabric and history of the Parsons Avenue business corridor. The west end of the parcel, with its mostly open green space, respects the fabric of the residential neighborhood.

Hinman Avenue



PROJECT NUMBER L003	PROJECT TITLE SITE PLAN	PROJECT NUMBER NAGY SHOE SHOP COLUMBUS LANDMARKS COMMERCIAL DISTRICT	PROJECT NAME NAGY SHOE SHOP	PROJECT DATE BASE MAPS 1/20/2017 12:28
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Nagy Shoe Repair – Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps

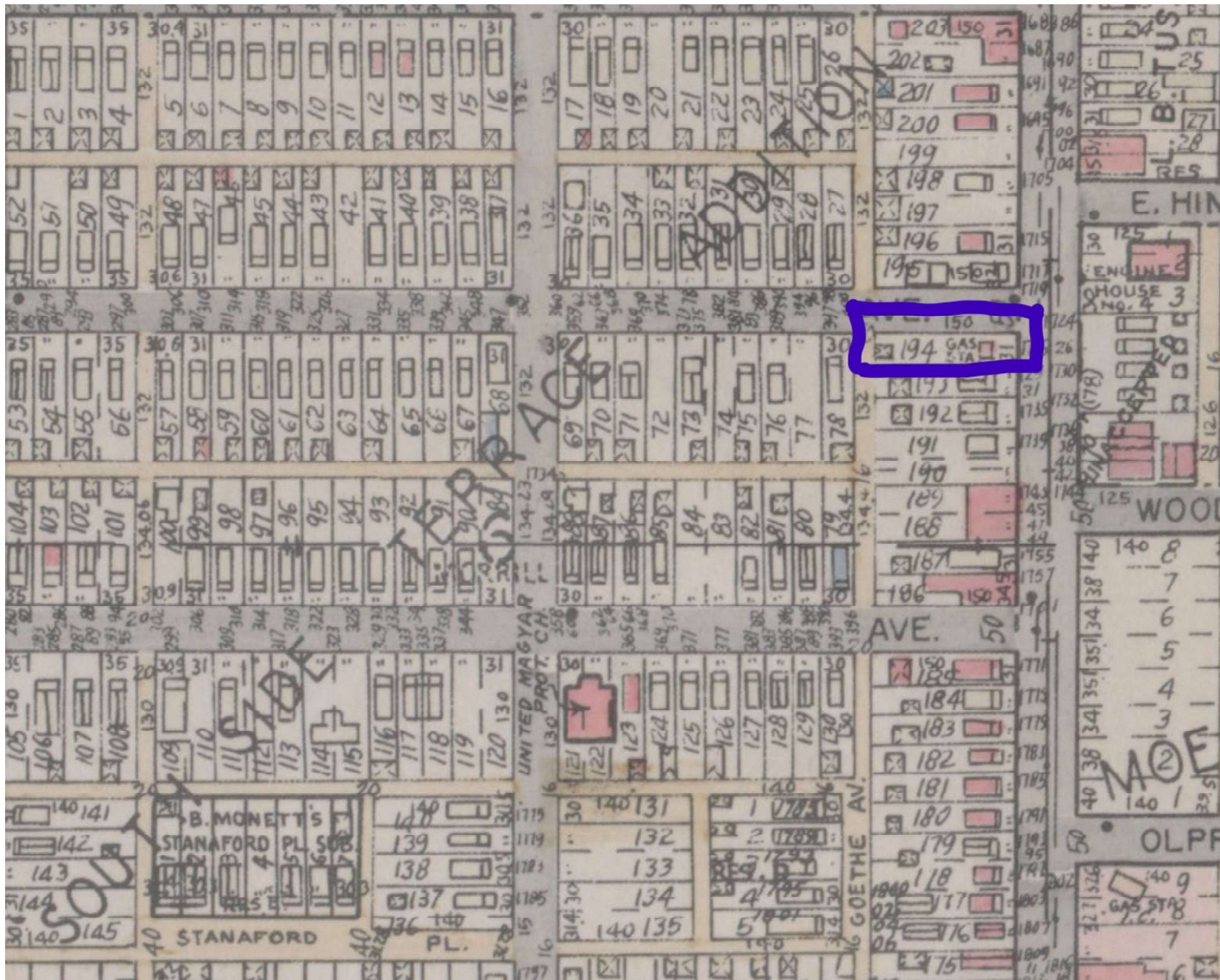


1920 Sanborn Map – no buildings on Lot #194

North



Nagy Shoe Repair – Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps



1937 Sanborn Map – Original Gas Station building Drawn and Labeled; Lot #194

North

Nagy Shoe Repair Shop – Early Photos



Early Photo of Nagy Shoe Repair Shop



Joseph Nagy in Shoe Repair Shop - 1998

Nagy Shoe Repair – Exterior Photos



View Facing Northeast Corner of Building



East Elevation, Facing Parsons Avenue with Parking Lot in Front

Nagy Shoe Repair – Exterior Photos



West (Rear) Elevation – Original Building with Gabled Roof on Right; Flat-Roofed Addition on Left



View Facing Southeast Elevation – Original Brick Building with Gabled Roof in Foreground

Nagy Shoe Repair – Interior Photos & Existing Equipment



Original Shoe Equipment - Sewing Machine?

Nagy Shoe Repair – Interior Photos & Existing Equipment



Original Shoe Equipment in Front Sales Room



Workspace & Equipment Behind Sales Desk

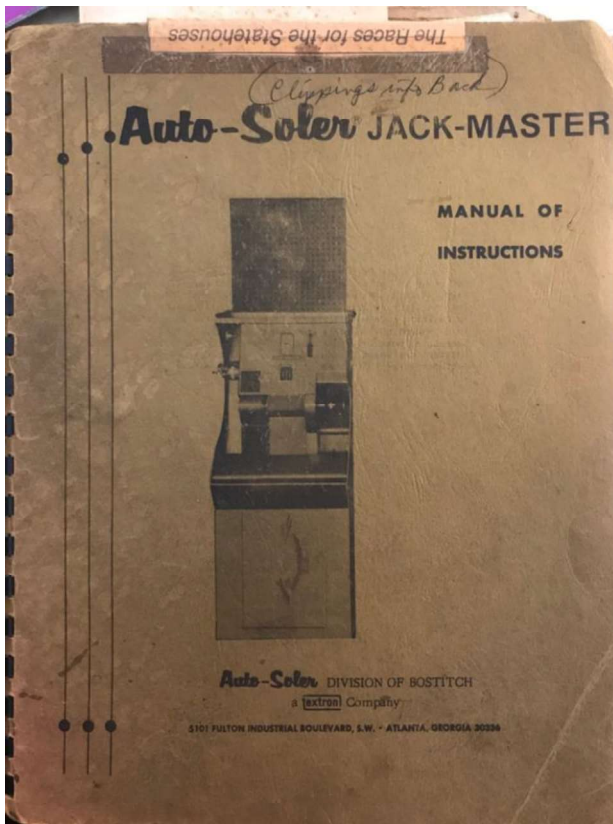
Nagy Shoe Repair – Original Equipment and Manuals



Auto Soler

Comet-10 Auto Soler

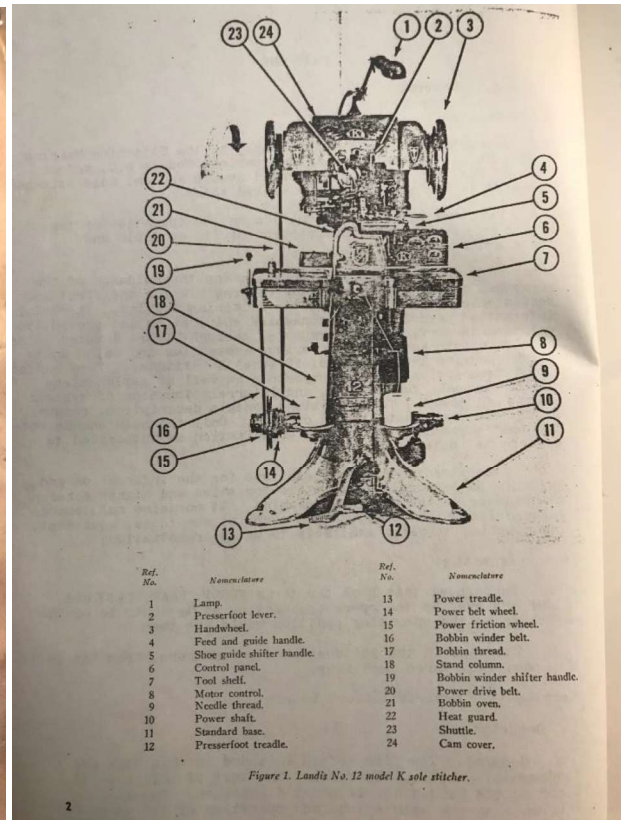
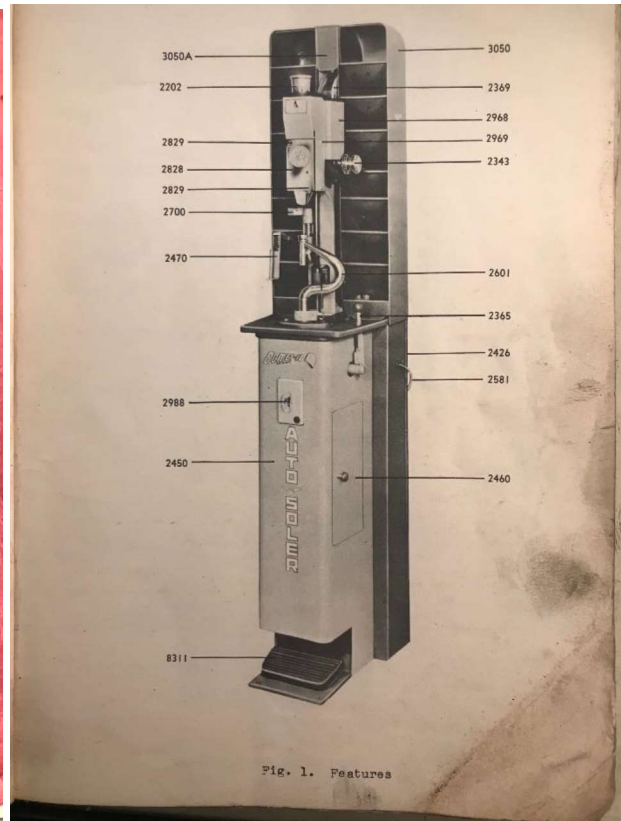
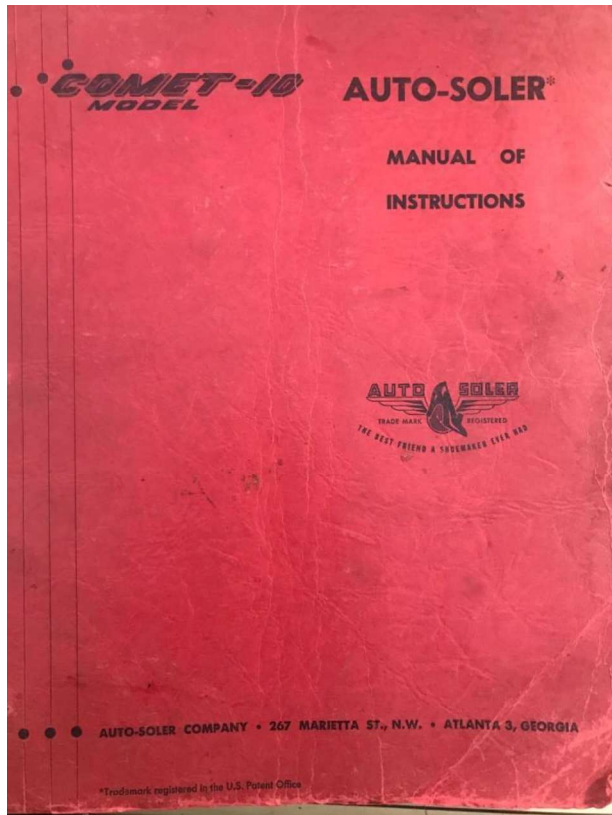
Champion "50" Stitcher



YOU FILL IN	DATE PAID	NOTE	BALANCE	DATE PAID	DUPLICATE	AMOUNT DUE
DATE PAID	DUPLICATE	AMOUNT DUE	BALANCE	DATE PAID	DUPLICATE	AMOUNT DUE
			1,088.00			
JAN 11 74		45.00	1,043.00			
FEB 11 74		45.00	998.00			
AUG 11 74		45.00	953.00			
SEP 11 74		45.00	908.00			
OCT 11 74		45.00	863.00			
NOV 11 74		45.00	818.00			
DEC 11 74		45.00	773.00			
JAN 11 75		45.00	728.00			
FEB 11 75		45.00	683.00			
MAR 11 75		45.00	638.00			
APR 11 75		45.00	593.00			
MAY 11 75		45.00	548.00			
JUN 11 75		45.00	503.00			
JUL 11 75		45.00	458.00			
AUG 11 75		45.00	413.00			
SEP 11 75		45.00	368.00			
OCT 11 75		45.00	323.00			
NOV 11 75		45.00	278.00			
DEC 11 75		45.00	233.00			
JAN 11 76		45.00	188.00			
FEB 11 76		45.00	143.00			
MAR 11 76		45.00	98.00			
APR 11 76		45.00	53.00			
MAY 11 76		53.00	.00			

Auto-Soler Manual and Payment Record Book

Nagy Shoe Repair – Original Equipment and Manuals



Nagy Shoe Repair – Nagy Family Photos



Nagy Siblings



Mom, Siblings, Sister-in-law