

John and Eva Wass House
Cambria City Neighborhood
813 Chestnut Street
Johnstown
Cambria County
Pennsylvania

HABS No. PA-5763

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PHOTOGRAPHS
WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY

John and Eva Wass House

HABS No. PA-5763

Location: 813 Chestnut Street, Cambria City, Johnstown, Cambria County, Pa.

Description: No. 813 Chestnut is a single-family building facing north, with single-family buildings to either side. It is a rectangular building, 18' x 52', wood-framed with wood siding and a front gable roof of asphalt shingles. The building is two-and-a-half stories tall. The foundation is constructed of cut stone. Five rectangular double-hung-sash windows and a set of bargeboards distinguish the front facade. There is a hip-roofed porch across the front, 7' x 16'.

History: No. 813 Chestnut was constructed in 1892, according to tax assessment records. The Wass family arrived in Cambria City in about 1869, when the city directory notes John Wass, senior and junior living in a boarding house on Walnut Street [Power Street]. Both Wasses were born in Germany and both men were miners. The 1880 census (which did not note street addresses) recorded John Wass, junior, and his family of five. John Wass, senior, also lived at the residence. One of the two men, probably the senior, lived at 301 Walnut in 1887, according to a city directory.

In 1891 Margaret P. McConaughy conveyed the property to Eva Wass for \$600, and the house was built soon after. The 1900 census (which did record street addresses) noted John Wass, his wife Eva, son Louis (a millhand), daughter Anna (a dressmaker), five younger children, and a boarder as residents of 813 Chestnut. The 1910 census indicated that the Wass family continued to live here. John Wass, junior, worked as a laborer in an axle plant in 1910. John Wass III (son of John Wass, junior, and Eva Wass) inherited the property from Eva Wass on April 23, 1929. The property was purchased by Andrew Migas, a Slovakian steel worker in 1938, and has remained in the Migas family since then.

With a continuous ownership by two of the dominant ethnic groups in Cambria City, this building is representative of the changing patterns of residence in the neighborhood.

Sources:

"Cambria County Historic Sites Survey, Johnstown Inventory," Redevelopment Authority of Cambria County, 1981.

Deed and Tax Assessment Records, Cambria County Courthouse, Ebensburg, Pa.

Johnstown City Directories, 1869, 1887, 1901.

United States Census, Cambria County, Pennsylvania, Cambria Borough (1880); and same, City of Johnstown, Sixteenth Ward (1900, 1910).

Project Information: This report was part of a larger project to document the city of Johnstown, Pennsylvania. The project was undertaken by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record (HABS/HAER), Robert Kapsch, chief, at the request of America's Industrial Heritage Project (AIHP). An overview of history of the city (HABS No. PA-5669) and an overview of the neighborhoods of Cambria City and Minersville (HABS No. PA-5672) provide context for these buildings as well as a comprehensive list of sources. See also additional HABS reports on buildings in the downtown and other neighborhoods.

This report was prepared by Jeffrey Hickey in August 1988 under the direction of Alison K.

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Hoagland, HABS historian, and Kim E. Wallace, the supervisory historian of the project. Hickey's and other project historians' work was published as The Character of a Steel Mill City: Four Historic Neighborhoods of Johnstown, Pennsylvania (Washington, D.C.: HABS/HAER, National Park Service, 1989), edited by Kim E. Wallace. Illustrations in the publication include large format photographs taken by HAER photographer Jet Lowe and 35 mm photographs taken by the project historians.