3629

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name **RENSSELAER SOCIETY OF ENGINEERS HOUSE**

other names/site number RSE HOUSE; RSE CLUBHOUSE

name of related multiple property listing N/A

Location

street & number 1501 SAGE AVENUE ☐ not for publication

city or town CITY OF TROY ☐ vicinity

state NEW YORK code NY county RENSSELAER code 083 zip code 12180

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this X nomination ___ request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property X meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ **national** ___ **statewide** X **local**

R. David Mackay 12/4/19
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

DSHPO
State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

X entered in the National Register

___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register

___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:) _____

Signature of the Keeper 4/5/2019
Date of Action

RENSSELAER SOCIETY OF ENGINEERS | **RENSSELAER CO., N.Y.**
Name of Property | County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

X	private
	public - Local
	public - State
	public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

X	building(s)
	district
	site
	structure
	object

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	0	**Total**

Name of related multiple property listing
(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

N/A

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION: education-related housing

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

EDUCATION: education-related housing

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19th & 20th CENTURY REVIVALS: Classical Revival

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: CONCRETE
walls: BRICK, STONE
roof: METAL
other: WOOD, GLASS, METAL

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The Rensselaer Society of Engineers House, located on the campus of the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute ("RPI") in the City of Troy, Rensselaer County, New York, was built between 1923 and 1924 to the designs of Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue (1869-1924), among the foremost American architects of his time. This large residential building, with its asymmetrical massing of simple, geometric elements, coupled with the simplification or omission of "correct" academic detail which was typical of Goodhue at his best during the latter years of his practice, characterizes the overall design. The building was conceived and built to provide living, sleeping, and dining accommodations conducive to academic pursuits for the members of the Rensselaer Society of Engineers ("RSE") while undergraduate students attending RPI. Goodhue designed the building to accommodate 32 members and realized that, as all individuals are not identical, a separation of the daily living functions of studying, sleeping, dressing, and dining would benefit both the members individually and the society as a whole. Completed in 1924, the building has changed little in the ensuing years, as the basic interior spatial concept implemented by Goodhue has ably served the needs of the membership. The exterior of the building, with its restrained and sedate classically inspired details, also remains largely unaltered and continues to reflect Goodhue's design intent for it.

Narrative Description

Location, Setting & Orientation

The RSE House is located on the north side of the RPI campus, which is located within the municipal bounds of the City of Troy, Rensselaer County, New York. It is situated immediately southeast of the intersection of Sage Avenue and Griswold Road, which partially frame its associated parcel of land, in that portion of the campus which is framed to the east by Burdett Avenue and to the west by 15th Street. The building is located directly to the south of the Theta Xi Fraternity House (NRHP listed), which is located on the opposite side of Sage Avenue on a prominent rise of land, and a short distance east of the Rensselaer Student Union building (1967), which is located on the opposite side of Griswold Road from the RSE House. An asphalt-paved parking lot, accessible from Sage Avenue and located immediately east of Sherry Road, is located to the northeast of the nominated property, across the road. Further to the north, beyond the bounds of the RPI campus, is single-family residential housing corresponding with Eaton, Sherry and McLeod roads.

The nominated edifice was built on a relatively flat but slightly undulating parcel of land, the roughly triangular shape of which is defined by the divergent alignments of Sage Avenue and Griswold Road. It is in large measure centered within the parcel with its principal elevation being the northwest one, which was oriented towards the Sage Avenue-Griswold Road intersection. Viewed from that intersection, the building

is recessed behind an expanse of manicured lawn, framed to either side by mature deciduous trees, which are also present on the adjacent streets. An uncovered terrace with corresponding brick wall laid up in Flemish bond fronts the building on this side, and a non-historic split rail fence provides visual separation between the lawn and the adjacent sidewalk.

The principal roof ridge of the RSE House is aligned on a northeast-to-southwest axis. The elevations are described in this documentation as being oriented to the northeast, northwest, southwest and southeast. The northeast elevation presents on Sage Avenue; the opposite, southwest, elevation is oriented towards Griswold Road. The southeast elevation is fronted by a sand-filled volleyball court, while the opposite northwest elevation is fronted by the brick-walled terrace and serves as the principal facade. A dedicated parking area is located off of Sage Avenue, immediately southeast of the building.

Overview & Exterior Characteristics

The large, three-story building measures 98'-0" wide by 92'-6" deep in plan, inclusive of the northwest terrace. The exterior is characterized by red Harvard brick walls laid up in Flemish bond with vitrified headers and smoothly dressed Indiana limestone trimmings. The load-bearing exterior masonry walls, coupled with the internal steel framing, sustain the steel roof trusses of the broad hipped roof. The locations and sizes of the window openings are based in large measure on internal requirements and not exterior compositional considerations. The house has both original windows and others which have been replaced with new sash with faux muntins mimicking nine-over-nine, six-over-six, and four-over-four sash. There are additionally paired out-swinging glazed doors and casements with semicircular fanlights above and a Palladian window which brings natural light onto the principal staircase. The Palladian window retains original glazing, as do the sidelights of the principal entrance and the French doors and casements; otherwise the remaining sash is of the replacement type but will nevertheless be described in terms of their muntin configuration. A small open terrace, or azotea, with corresponding wrought-iron railing is present at second-story level on the southwest elevation. Set a half story above grade, a raised brick terrace spans the entire northwest façade of the building. The formal entrance is approached from this terrace, while a simpler secondary entrance on the Sage Avenue (northeast) elevation serves as the principal point of access for day-to-day affairs. The formal front entrance is of distinctive Neoclassical conception and consists of a fielded six-panel wood door flanked by half-length sidelights and is surmounted by a semicircular leaded glass fanlight. Fluted colonettes with acanthus-leaf capitals separate the door opening from the sidelights and further serve as a spring point for a round arch with foliate enrichment which frames the fanlight and separates it from an outer wood band; this outer band is framed by a brick arch with limestone imposts. While the entrance as described to this point is

essentially of traditional Georgian-Federal style derivation, Goodhue, in his typical manner of taking historical precedent and evolving new forms from it, circumscribed a wood band above the fanlight which contains five diamond-shaped panels, these being positioned in relation to the leaded cames of the fanlight. The initials RSE are present in the fanlight and called out in gold lettering. A third point of entrance provides direct access to the basement service hall on the Sage Avenue side, this level being reached by a set of limestone steps protected by a brick retaining wall.

Described in broader terms, the principal northwest elevation—which contains the formal entrance and which is fronted by the brick-walled terrace—is eight bays wide, three bays of which are contained within a section that projects forward from the remainder of the elevation. At first-story level those three bays, which are equally spaced, are occupied by double-leaf glazed doors with round-arched transoms above; the remaining windows at first-story level, those to either side of the main door, are small, rectangular-shaped and fitted with four-over-four sash; the openings are spanned by splayed brick arches. The first and second stories are separated by a moulded limestone belt course. The eight second-story windows are identical in treatment and are fitted with nine-over-nine sash, the apertures spanned by splayed brick lintels and having cut-stone sills; third-story windows are square in shaped and fitted with six-over-six sash. Those windows are situated directly beneath a deep limestone frieze with architrave moulding; above this is a simplified cornice. There is a conspicuous informality to this elevation, conceived of as the building's façade, resulting from its restrained ornamentation, asymmetrical massing and fenestration, and by the size and placement of door and window openings.

The opposite southeast elevation is also asymmetrical in composition and it includes a projecting two-bay section and a recessed bay corresponding with the open second-story terrace. At first-story level, moving from the southwest to the northeast, there is one small window with four-over-four sash; three larger paired eight-light casements with semi-circular fanlights above; three conventional windows with nine-over-nine sash; and, corresponding with the projecting section, two smaller windows with four-over-four sash. All have splayed brick lintels, excepting the three with corresponding fanlights, which have arched brick surrounds. As with the opposite elevation, the moulded belt course is present between the first and second stories, though it is briefly terminated where it traverses the open patio area. Second-story windows include three of conventional nature with nine-over-nine sash located above the arched bays below; three smaller windows with four-over-four sash; and three windows with nine-over-nine sash, two of which are located on the projecting section towards Sage Avenue. Third-story windows, eight in total, have six-over-six sash; there is additionally a window set within the recessed wall plane above the terrace, between the second and third

stories, which brings natural light into a staircase. A large brick chimney, square in plan and with a simple corbelled top, is positioned against the southwest wall of the projecting section.

The northeast elevation faces Sage Avenue and again demonstrates the relative informality of Goodhue's exterior composition and design; as with the other elevations, a portion of it projects forward from the remaining wall plane, the projection emphasized by a Palladian window and the absence of the belt course, which is not carried across the projection. A limestone water table demarcates the transition between the foundation and the superstructure and rises in height at one point to accommodate an at-grade entrance with glazed-and-paneled door. There are four rectangular-shaped casement windows with protective metal grilles and splayed brick lintels which bring natural light into the basement, along with a sub-grade basement door which is approached by a flight of stairs shielded by a hip-roofed porch. First-story windows consist of one of conventional size with nine-over-nine sash and four of the smaller four-over-four type, all with splayed brick lintels and cut-stone sills. Between first and second-story level and corresponding with the projecting section and main staircase within is a Palladian window. The window rests above a limestone base upon which is inscribed "THY STRENGTH IS MY STRENGTH," and the impost blocks from which the brick arch above the window springs are embellished with the initials "RSE" and "RPI." The window consists of 16 panes with interlaced muntins and glazing above; it is flanked to either side by four-light windows. The window's wood detail includes fluted pilasters with foliate capitals and a wood band with fluting and keystone embellishment. Centered below it is a heraldic shield carved from limestone. The remaining windows include a tripartite unit at second-story level, along with two smaller and one of more conventional type; and five square-shaped windows at third-story level. This elevation provides access to the front terrace and formal entrance by means of a stone staircase with metal railing. It communicates with Sage Avenue by means of a dedicated sidewalk.

The northwest elevation is characterized by a projecting gable-roofed section with large exterior chimney; it is centered relative to the gable and has a corbelled top. To one side of the chimney at first-story level is an entrance, which provides access to a staircase within, and a small four-over-four window; to the other side, towards the terrace, is a paired casement window with fanlight above. The entrance has corresponding stone steps, metal railing, and a protective metal grille. A staircase positioned adjacent to the casement window provides a second point of access to the raised terrace; below that window is a small basement window and above it a single conventional window at second-story level with two small six-over-six windows above, at third-story level. The remaining fenestration includes five four-over-four windows, one offset, which are positioned at second and third-story level (the offset window lights a staircase within) on the projecting gabled section; a door which opens onto the open terrace, with a four-over-four window astride; and a six-

over-six window at third-story level. The limestone belt course on this elevation is interrupted by the chimney, which also interrupts the frieze and cornice, thereby accentuating its vertical properties.

Interior Characteristics & Features

As with the exterior of the RSE House, the interior of the building conveys the architect's desire to employ a minimum of historic or otherwise unnecessary detail. This approach was consistent with Goodhue's search for a new "American Style" of architecture which was to be evolved from, but not enslaved to, historic precedents. A small entrance vestibule leads from the principal entrance to the larger entrance hall (referred to as the trophy hall variously), which measures 54'-7" wide by 20'-2" deep with an 11'-9" high ceiling. At the northeast end of this space the principal stairway, which employs slate risers and treads and a wrought-iron railing and which is of the open-stringer type, ascends to the third floor. The hand railing is terminated at the base by a curtail step and the wrought balusters are delicate in scale and have tendril-like detail. The Palladian window brings light onto the first landing of the stair and an original brass electric chandelier is suspended within the stairwell. Embellishment of the entrance hall is limited to the articulation of the main steel columns and beams which frame this space, this being executed with simple paired pilasters at each pier that support the ceiling beams above, the ornamentation of which was executed in plaster. The brass wall-light fixtures in the entrance hall, as well as in the living room and dining room, are original to the building. A massive table, probably original to the house, is situated at the center of this space, while an oak grandfather clock, also original, stands upon the first stair landing. Ancillary to the large hall are a small reception room, a coat room, and a small office which contains a large built-in safe.

From the southeast end of the trophy hall opposite the main stair access is gained to the lecture hall, the largest of the public spaces and principal among the RSE House's interior spaces. Originally designed to accommodate the presentation of original research compiled by members and lectures offered by guest speakers, the lecture hall was often opened on such occasions to the student body of RPI and has also served as the location of an annual Christmas banquet. The lecture hall measures 29'-2" by 56'-4" and is now commonly called the living room. It contains a wood-paneled inglenook with central fireplace directly on axis with, and opposite from, the entrance leading into the trophy hall. A concealed mechanical lift hoists firewood from the cellar; it is accessed by lifting the top of the seat immediately to the right of the fireplace. French doors allow direct communication with the front terrace, while similarly arched windows balance the composition on the opposite wall. The walls are finished with smooth plaster and are bisected by a moulded architrave, located in relation to the spring point of the arched fanlights above French doors and casement windows of the front and rear walls; the ornamental ceiling has simplified geometric embellishment. As with

the trophy hall, the living room has large engaged pilasters which support plaster-encased steel support beams above, also an expression of the building's load-bearing steel framing. Walnut benches built above low radiators are among this room's character-defining features, and there are two large oak tables which are also original to that space. The living room was refurnished in the latter 1960s and prior to that ca. 1942. Ancillary to the living room is a small game or card room, discreetly located in the southwest corner of the plan.

Accessible from both the trophy hall and living room is the dining room, which measures 16'-11" by 29'-8." This room has paired double-leaf doors at its southwest end, which allows for flexibility of use for large gatherings. This feature enables either the adjacent end of the living room to be used in conjunction with the dining room, or if the function is sufficiently large, the entire living room may be used as a dining area with the dining room instead functioning as a serving room. The dining room has stained, paneled wood wainscot with smooth plaster above and twin, built-in leaded-glass china cabinets against one wall. The original unadorned ceiling has been removed and a suspended ceiling installed, this having been done to facilitate access to plumbing situated above. The pantry area separates the dining room from the kitchen. An attempt by Goodhue to isolate the noise and odors of the kitchen from the dining room is evident in this layout, which is further enhanced by the placement of the kitchen in the rear projecting mass of the building. Accessible from both the pantry and trophy hall is the rear hall. Contained within this space is a steel staircase which leads to the service hall and food storage room in the basement and to the rear hall, chef's room, and other spaces at the second floor level.

The second floor was designed by Goodhue to facilitate the academic pursuits of the members of the R.S.E. A long study hall originally ran the entire length of the house from the main stairway to the area above the living room inglenook. Each member of the society was assigned a desk within that study hall area, the concept for this practice being that the young engineering student should learn how to study and concentrate in the presence of others, as this would be a common situation faced in the work place post-graduation. However, for those desirous of more quiet conditions, Goodhue provided five smaller study rooms across the front of the house, ancillary to the larger study hall, to accommodate private and smaller group study. Adjacent to the study hall and smaller study rooms is the RSE library, which is contained within the projecting mass at the front of the building and which features wood panel finish. The library today contains many bound scientific and engineering periodicals dating from the 1860s through the early 1900s. Because of changing attitudes and an increasing difficulty in attracting new undergraduate members to the society, in 1965 the decision was made to partition the original large study hall into a series of smaller study rooms. This

represents the only major spatial change to the building's interior since it was built to Goodhue's plans. Because of the infill nature of this work, it is a change that is easily reversible should the desire to restore the study hall ever arise. The new partitions employ a basic wall surface with an acoustical tile frieze, separated by a third moulding in addition to the customary base and cornice mouldings. The frieze alludes to the older picture moulding and approximately one-foot-high space above, which all major rooms on this floor excepting the library exhibit.

Adjacent to the study hall, on the opposite side of the plan, Goodhue provided a range of rooms, including a small living room, study room and a bedroom with access to the second-floor balcony. These rooms were configured for the accommodation of visiting members and guest lecturers. An additional guest room— which could also serve variously as an infirmary— the cook's room, and a drafting room were also provided, off of the rear hall, the latter space being provided with abundant northern light by a tripartite window. Excepting the library, chef's room and rest rooms, all of the spaces on the second floor function presently as semi-private study rooms.

The third floor, which serves the dressing and sleeping needs of the membership, remains, like the first floor, in large measure as it was designed. A large dressing area, which contains the original private enclosures for each member, and a smaller dressing room in the rear ell provide for the needs of the membership. Accessible from the main dressing area is a large shower-lavatory complex and the sleeping dormitory. Possibly relating to the open-air sleeping porches popularized in the preceding decade by innovative architects in California, a locale familiar to Goodhue, the dormitory is one of the most interesting features of the house. An enclosed steel fire stair leads from this sleeping dormitory, as well as from the new hall created by the construction of the second floor study rooms, and exits directly to the outside. The third-floor dressing area has a trunk lift that once carried parcels to and from the service hall in the basement and the first and second-floor rear halls. This convenience item, because of high insurance costs, is no longer used by the RSE, although it remains operational. A small windowless linen room is also located on the third floor.

The basement contains an entrance vestibule, lavatory, service hall, boiler room, former coal storage room, food storage room, recreation room, and large storage area. The present recreation room was built ca. 1949 in what was originally a second storage room.

RENSSELAER SOCIETY OF ENGINEERS | **RENSSELAER CO., N.Y.**
Name of Property | County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria
(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- [ ] A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- [ ] B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- [X] C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- [ ] D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations
(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- [ ] A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- [ ] B removed from its original location.
- [ ] C a birthplace or grave.
- [ ] D a cemetery.
- [ ] E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- [ ] F a commemorative property.
- [ ] G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance
(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance
1923-24

Significant Dates

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Goodhue, Bertram Grosvenor

Period of Significance (justification)
The cited period of significance, 1923-24, corresponds exclusively with the building's construction to the plans of architect Bertram G. Goodhue.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)
N/A

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Rensselaer Society of Engineer's House, located on the campus of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York, is an architecturally significant resource. The RSE House is an excellent local example of 1920s-era Neoclassical style architecture and a good example of the work of Bertram G. Goodhue, a distinguished American architect of the early twentieth century period. The building was designed by Goodhue to meet the specific needs of the society and was thoughtfully conceived to satisfy the functional needs of that organization, as well as that of the larger institute. As noted at the time of its completion in 1924, "In all of these ways the Rensselaer Society of Engineers plans, with its increased facilities, to contribute what strength it can to the splendid work of R.P.I. in engineering education."[1] Goodhue's design for the RSE House embodied characteristic features of period educational housing so far as its various public-social spaces, its industrial-scale kitchen, and the ample space afforded for academic studies and drafting. The building's historic physical integrity has been largely maintained over the years, notwithstanding some changes made in more recent times, and it continues to look and function much the way it did when completed. The building is being nominated in association with Criterion C, in the area of Architecture, as an important representation of the work of Bertram G. Goodhue, and as an example of a domestic building conceived specifically to meet the needs of a college social fraternity and its civil engineering students.

Developmental history/additional historic context information

Historic Context

The City of Troy, incorporated in 1789 as a village, was at one time contained within the Hudson Valley land holdings of the Vanderheyden family. Prior to European settlement, this region had formerly been inhabited by the Mohican Indians and, during the period of Dutch colonization, it fell within the domain of the seventeenth-century feudal land owner Kiliaen Van Rensselaer.[2] Troy's initial growth and prosperity was dependent on the Hudson River for sloop trade, later by the Erie and Champlain canals, and finally on the convergence of four major railroad networks, all of which contributed to its continual growth. Troy's commercial and industrial growth and ascendancy in the nineteenth century was marked. As early as 1807, a small iron mill was in operation on the banks of the Wynantskill creek, where water power was harnessed to process iron ore extracted in the Adirondacks, while early paper mills established in the 1820s drew power from the Hudson River. At the dawn of the Civil War, Troy had emerged as one of the nation's leading iron producers, with several large mills and numerous smaller ones. During the 1860s and 1870s the city's shirt

[1] "Rensselaer Society of Engineers Moving Into New Sage Avenue Home; Structure Completed After Two Years," *The Troy Times* (Troy, N.Y.), 13 September 1924.

[2] Thomas Phelan, *The Hudson Mohawk Gateway* (Northridge, CA: Windsor Publications, 1985), 78.

and collar industry evolved from a cottage industry to a large-scale manufacturing interest; at its peak, in the early twentieth century, it employed 15,000 workers, the majority of them women.[3] Troy industries also produced merchantable products, among them cast-iron stoves in considerable quantities.

The economic prosperity of the early nineteenth century was among the variables which led to the 1824 founding, by Stephen Van Rensselaer III (1764-1839) and Amos Eaton (1776-1842), of the Rensselaer School, later Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, or RPI. It was Van Rensselaer's desire that the school would assist with the dissemination of scientific knowledge, particularly with regard to the practical application of scientific principles to various occupations, with the goal of improving the common man's working conditions. The school first opened to students in January 1825, at which time it occupied space in the former Farmer's Bank building. The institution's course of instruction included chemistry, experimental philosophy and natural history, and their application to agriculture, domestic economy, and the arts. Land surveying was also an important part of the curriculum at an early date. The New York State Legislature incorporated the school in 1826, the same year it graduated its first class of students. A catalogue of officers and students from that date lists two professors, Eaton and Lewis C. Beck (1798-1853), along with 18 enrolled students. The name of the school was changed to the Rensselaer Institute in 1833, at which time it was moved to a larger and more convenient location in Troy, the former Vanderheyden mansion. That same year, a complete course in civil engineering was established, which resulted in eight members of the class of 1835 receiving the first civil engineering degrees ever conferred in an English-speaking country. The school moved to the corner of State and Sixth streets in 1844, following a short return to the Farmer's Bank building. A more rigorous curriculum and more demanding standards of scholarship from graduates were instituted under a reorganization implemented in 1849, the same year that the school's name was officially changed to the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. At that time there were only three other engineering schools established in the United States: at Harvard University in Massachusetts, at Yale University in Connecticut, and at the University of Michigan, all of which were initiated ca. 1847.

A disastrous fire in 1862—known today as Troy's "Great Fire"— destroyed a large part of the city's downtown, including buildings which had been used by RPI. The school quickly resumed instruction in rented quarters, but as a result of that event, RPI began its slow eastward "climb" up the hill. In 1864, the Main Building became the first building specifically conceived and built for the school; it was located on the Eighth Street slope. Two 1904 fires destroyed the Main Building and also damaged the Winslow laboratory

[3] The Encyclopedia Americana, entry on *Troy, NY* (The Encyclopedia American Corp., 1920), 99.

(NRHP listed); rather than rebuilding on that site, the school's president, Palmer C. Ricketts, and the board of trustees focused on building "up the hill" from Troy's downtown area. The Warren estate was purchased in 1905 and since that time, all of the school's buildings, except for the gymnasium, have been located between Eighth and Fifteenth streets on the college campus.

Student accommodation has received scant attention in the various documentary RPI histories. Board and lodging were not originally furnished by the school; instead, students lived in private homes and otherwise boarded in rooming houses. It was not until 1907 that the first student housing was established at RPI, in a large brick dwelling house on the Warren property that fronted Eighth Street; this building accommodated a total of 30 students. The first purpose-built dormitory and dining hall were erected in 1915. In as much as these first dormitories, including another built in 1923, were for first-year students only, members of the three upper classes still had to find their own housing. It was not until 1932 that a large dormitory for upper classmen was at last completed.

The Rensselaer Society of Engineers, RPI

The Rensselaer Society of Engineers was founded as the Pi Eta Scientific Society (Pantotherian Society variously) in 1866 and formally incorporated by the State of New York in 1873. Its first officers, elected in May 1867, were Pompeyo Sariol, of Cuba, president; Albert H. Millet, of France, recording secretary; Palmer H. Baerman, of Troy, New York, corresponding secretary; and Max L. Goldstein, of New York City, treasurer. The group's current name, the Rensselaer Society of Engineers, was adopted in 1883 as this was felt to be more indicative of the organization's close ties with RPI.[4] This is evidenced in the constitution of the organization which states that "the object of the Society is the encouragement of scholarship and of original scientific research and support of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute of Troy, New York." RSE remains the college's only independent fraternal organization.

Members of RSE were required to undertake original scientific research and to present papers before the society, and many of them were printed and are retained in the society's library. Several members became accomplished notables in their respective fields, foremost among them Washington A. Roebling (1837-1926), who, upon the death of his father, John A. Roebling (1806-1869), saw the Brooklyn Bridge through to completion in the 14 years of construction that still remained. George W. G. Ferris Jr. (1859-1896) also became an accomplished American civil engineer and designed the 260-foot high "Ferris Wheel" for the World's Columbian Exposition of 1892 -1893. One of the main attractions of that event, and one it was

[4] "Change of Name," *Albany Morning Express* (Albany, N.Y.), 9 June 1883.

hoped that would rival the Eiffel Tower, it had 36 gondolas the size of railroad boxcars. Henry A. Rowland (1848-1901), the noted physicist who developed the diffraction grating theory, was also a member of the Rensselaer Society of Engineers, as was civil engineer Leffert L. Buck (1837-1909) who, with Henry Hornbostel, oversaw the erection of the Williamsburg Bridge, and Edwin S. Jarrett (1862-1938), a noted expert in the field of tall building foundation design. Among the latter day members was Lombard John Pozzi (1945-2013), a noted historic preservation architect who was active in Rhode Island and who in 1998 received the Frederick C. Williamson Award for his professional leadership in the field from the Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission. It is Pozzi's work that forms much of the basis for this nomination, as it was he who first proposed designating the building for its architectural interest and direct association with Goodhue.

To foster and accommodate the member's academic studies, both for RPI assignments and for the society's original research, applicable technical books were purchased and periodicals subscribed to, the latter being bound into yearly volumes. Approximately 1,000 volumes pertaining to the Industrial Revolution from the 1860s through the early 1900s are preserved in the society's library, these including such titles as *Engineering News*, *The Manufacturer and Builder*, *Electrical World*, *Van Nostrand's Engineering Magazine*, and *The Signal Engineer*, among others. Hence, the RSE can, by its conduciveness to scholarship and original academic endeavor, take a small measure of the credit, with due respect to personal initiative and to RPI, for the eventual noteworthy success of these men and others in the fields of engineering and science. From this understanding of the history, functions, and needs of the society are related the ample provisions of the study hall, seminar rooms, lecture hall, and library.

Prior to the completion of the RSE House, members met or otherwise studied at a variety of locations, the first of which were rooms rented in 1868. For a period after 1870 the organization used space in the Hannibal Green Building on Broadway in Troy, followed by locations on 4th Street and River Street in the period ca. 1880-1908. For 12 years between 1908 and 1920, R.S.E. rented three rooms above a bank on Broadway, followed by four years on Burdett Avenue in advance of the completion of the nominated edifice, which has since served as their home. The completion of the building was noted in an extensive account offered on the front page of the *Troy Times* in September 1924, which offered the following commentary relative to its design:

> ...It can be seen by the elevation of the building that an attempt has been made to design a building which, first, would not appear too institutional; second, would look not entirely like a private house, and, third, would not depart too far from the architectural design of the Institute buildings. The architect has succeeded

> very well with a handsome, dignified building, the entrance of which is not unlike that of a private house, but the other features of which indicate its intended use for a society.[5]

The account provided a detailing overview of the new building's various spaces, among them the lecture room, which is noted as "the principal feature of the first floor plan" and one which could be used variously as a lounge, living room and lecture hall, with the fireplace adding "greatly to its cheerfulness." It also noted the dining room, which could be opened *en suite* with the adjacent lecture room for large entertainments. The large study hall of the second floor was also described, as was the concept of students working in a large open space in close proximity to others: "The idea back of these provisions for study for the undergraduate members is the necessity of the young engineer learning to concentrate in the presence of his fellows. This is extremely important, as every engineer is compelled frequently to do his work amid confusion and noise." This larger hall was augmented with smaller study rooms, the library, and a drafting room which received abundant northern light. Of considerable interest in the account was the unheated third-floor dormitory, which could accommodate 32 freestanding beds: "It will be devoted entirely to the business of sleeping. No man will go into this room at night until he has on his sleeping apparel and is ready to plunge under the covers." That room, along with the lecture hall at first-floor level, received abundant natural light and heat given their southern exposure.[6]

In summation, the correspondent provided an overall flattering view of the society's new building, and the manner in which it would serve the organization and the larger needs of RPI:

> The building has been constructed of substantial permanent materials and fittings with no expense for decorations or for beautification. It is felt that a building of this kind for engineering students will get its true dignity and its expression of fitness from the strict relation established between its purpose and the structure unadorned...
>
> It is the aim and the primary object of the Rensselaer Society of Engineers to further the efforts of the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute to turn out high grade engineers. This is the principal reason for its existence. In its new building it will supply the needs of its undergraduate members exactly as those needs, including facilities for study, are supplied by the Institute in its dormitories and dining hall, and to the extent to which it functions in this way it will relieve the Institute of that part of its burden. The lectures before the society in its new house, which will be open to the whole student body, will be of great benefit to all. In all of these ways the Rensselaer Society of Engineers plans, with its increased facilities, to contribute what strength it can to the splendid work of R.P.I. in engineering education.[7]

[5] "Rensselaer Society of Engineers Moving Into New Sage Avenue Home..."
[6] "Rensselaer Society of Engineers Moving Into New Sage Avenue Home..."
[7] "Rensselaer Society of Engineers Moving Into New Sage Avenue Home..."

The RSE House cost a quarter of a million dollars to design and build in 1924, in part resulting from its fireproof construction and considerable scale. The Pittsburgh industrialist and philanthropist John M. Lockhart, who donated sizable amounts of money to RPI during his lifetime, provided $100,000 for the project, which proved sufficient to initiate construction. The Ernest F. Carlson Company of Springfield, Massachusetts, with RPI graduate C.E. Carlson serving as on-site manager, oversaw the implementation of Goodhue's design.

The society's first lecture in the house was delivered in October 1924. As noted at the time, the idea was to hold lectures at regular intervals; these were not to be of a strictly scientific nature, but were instead "expected to bridge that gap from a strict technical education to the problems of the business world."[8] The first lecture, delivered by Herman Uehlinger of the Hilo Varnish Corporation of Brooklyn, was entitled "A Business Enterprise," the title of a work on the fundamentals of sound bookkeeping; following the presentation those in attendance received a complimentary copy of the book.[9] The second lecture was delivered by Dr. Charles Holmes Herty and entitled "The Young Engineer Goes Out Into the World," and the third by foundation and soil engineer Edwin S. Jarrett, entitled "It Pays to Know."[10] These guest lectures, of considerable practical value given the professional experience of the speakers which delivered them, continued into the 1930s. The sixth annual series, conducted in 1930, was kicked off by Frank A. Sheary, who delivered a lecture on "Banking and Business Trends."[11] Among the slate of lecturers for the 1934 series was Dr. Emma Grant Meader, who delivered a presentation entitled "Psychology," in which she "distinguished between character and personality, pointing out that an individual may possess a preponderance of one and lack the other."[12]

Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue & The RSE House

Born in 1869 in Pomfret, Connecticut, Bertram Grosvenor Goodhue lacked formal training in architecture and instead gained practical experience as an apprentice in the noteworthy New York City ecclesiastical firm of Renwick, Aspinwall & Russell, where he distinguished himself and rose to the position of head draftsman. After moving to Boston, Massachusetts, Goodhue formed a new professional alliance with architect Ralph Adams Cram (1863-1942), eventually becoming the second partner in the well-known firm of Cram, Goodhue & Wentworth in 1892. Between 1899 and 1914, the firm was known as Cram, Goodhue, &

[8] "Lecture at R.S.E. House," *Troy Times*, 18 October 1924.
[9] "Lecture at R.S.E. House."
[10] "Addressed R.S.E. Men," *Troy Times*, 8 November 1924; "Address at R.S.E. House," Troy Times, 6 December 1924.
[11] "Series of Lectures," *Troy Times*, 22 October 1930.
[12] "Dr. Emma Grant Meader Addresses Engineers," *Troy Times*, 19 February 1934.

Ferguson; after that Bertram Goodhue ventured out on his own in independent practice. As someone sympathetic to the Gothic mode of building, which to Goodhue's mind was freer in expression than the Neoclassical idiom. James Renwick and Ralph Cram nurtured this enthusiasm during Goodhue's early years in New York and Boston. Upon winning the architectural competition for the complex at West Point in 1903, Cram & Goodhue established a New York office under Goodhue's auspices to supervise the work, while Cram remained in the principal office in Boston. During the ensuing decade and until the outbreak of the First World War, a rivalry between Cram and Goodhue gradually developed for leadership in design; Cram professed a more scholarly approach, while his partner became more liberal in his Neo-Gothic and other stylistic interpretations. The competing philosophies of the two offices gradually became so divergent that, upon Goodhue's request, the notable relationship was amicably severed.

Bertram Goodhue served as the supervising architect of the Panama-Pacific Exposition of 1915 in San Diego, California, the buildings of which were executed in the Churrigueresque, or Spanish Baroque idiom, which Goodhue then felt was appropriate to California. Design work was initiated about 1911, while Goodhue was still associated with Cram; the exposition was Goodhue's last major work to closely follow archaeological precedents.

In 1920, Bertram Goodhue oversaw the remodeling an old adobe house in Montecito, California, which became his residence, known as *La Cabana*. This small, modest house, informal in its asymmetry and extreme simplicity, perhaps best mirrored the feelings of the architect during this stage of his career. The house boasted no significant exterior embellishments, roof cornices, or door or window cornices. Relief was achieved only by the natural unevenness of the plain adobe wall surfaces. Windows were placed only where needed, were of different sizes, and were set at varying heights. The front entrance porch was likewise executed in an extremely simple and forthright manner. The massing of the house was its dominant feature and assumed a picturesque quality of its own. Although Goodhue designed several houses, both in California and in the Northeast, it is his own home which seemed to most successfully combine a romantic picturesqueness and a simplicity of massing. Goodhue's major works during this period, as compared to his houses, are much more monumental in scale and, thus, by their sheer size, lose some of that quaint picturesqueness. To help compensate for that the architect employed large elements of simple geometric mass and composed these to balance and contrast with one another.

Goodhue entered a number of architectural design competitions during this period, including the 1922 competition for the Tribune Tower in Chicago, Illinois. Ultimately won by John Mead Howells and

Raymond Hood, the Tribune competition received 260 entries, including proposals designed by Goodhue, as well as by European-trained architectural luminaries such as Walter Gropius, Eliel Saarinen, Bruno Taut and Adolf Loos. In 1920 Goodhue won the competition for the Nebraska State Capitol at Lincoln; the design mandate called for a "practical working home for the machinery of state" and an "inspiring monument." Erected between 1922 and 1932, this project was the crowning achievement of Goodhue's career. The basic form of the capitol, that of a Greek cross superimposed within a larger open-centered square with a vertical tower rising from the central crossing, exemplifies that interplay of large masses that typified Goodhue's latter works. Other structures dating from this period built to Goodhue's design include the National Academy of Sciences in Washington, D.C., dedicated one week after his death, and the Los Angeles Central Library in California. After his death in April 1924, Goodhue's office, with longtime associate Carleton Winslow figuring prominently, followed through on the completion— in a manner consistent with Goodhue's design intent— of the Los Angeles Central Library, which opened in 1929, and the Nebraska State Capitol.

Conclusion

The 30 years following the burning of the main building of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1904 witnessed the growth of the new campus under the presidency and leadership of Palmer C. Ricketts (1856-1934). With the sole exception of the wood-frame student union building erected in 1908, all of the new college buildings executed during this period were of load-bearing brick and limestone masonry construction and typically with roofs of battened copper construction. Bertram Goodhue executed the RSE House in a manner compatible with the other existing RPI buildings; however, the eschewing of robust Neoclassical-style ornamentation, the seemingly haphazard disposition of exterior windows, doors and other features, and the building's overall asymmetrical massing are somewhat in contrast to the many collegiate structures situated to the west of Fifteenth Street. Functionally, the RSE House was designed rationally from the inside out, in what might be termed Beaux-Arts fashion, though it lacks the balanced elevations and Neoclassical "envelope" that was characteristic of Beaux-Arts architectural design. Goodhue's RSE House was designed to suit the needs of the society, a consideration that is apparent in its internal arrangements and placement of exterior fenestration, with aesthetic and exterior considerations being of secondary concern. This notable work of architecture, by a major American architectural practitioner, ranks foremost among RPI's historic buildings.

RENSSELAER SOCIETY OF ENGINEERS **RENSSELAER CO., N.Y.**
Name of Property County and State

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

"Minutes of the Meetings of the Rensselaer Society of Engineers." 1866 to Present. Unpublished, handwritten proceedings of the Rensselaer Society of Engineers.

Pozzi, Lombard John. "Bertam Grosvenor Goodhue." 1974. Unpublished paper at Avery Library, Columbia University, New York, N. Y.

"Rensselaer Society of Engineers Moving into New Sage Avenue Home; Structure Completed After Two Years." *Troy Times*, 13 September 1924.

The Transit. Troy, N.Y.: Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, 1866 to Present. Collection of Yearbooks of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute at the Library of the Rensselaer Society of Engineers, Troy, N.Y.

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

____preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)
____previously listed in the National Register
____previously determined eligible by the National Register
____designated a National Historic Landmark
____recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey #_____
____recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # _____
____recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

____State Historic Preservation Office
____Other State agency
____Federal agency
____Local government
____University
____Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property **1.22 acres**
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	**18**	**608454**	**47316555**	3			
	Zone	**Easting**	**Northing**		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)
The boundary for this NRHP nomination is depicted on the enclosed mapping, which was drawn at a scale of 1: 24,000, 1: 12,000, 1: 4,000 and 1: 3,000; all maps are entitled "Rensselaer Society of Engineers House, City of Troy, Rensselaer Co., NY."

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)
The boundary was drawn to reflect the cited period of significance, 1923-24, and reflects the original extent of RSE's property; no additional or "buffer" land has been included within the nomination boundary.

RENSSELAER SOCIETY OF ENGINEERS Name of Property

RENSSELAER CO., N.Y. County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lombard John Pozzi and William E. Krattinger, NYS Division for Historic Preservation

organization Division for Historic Preservation, Peebles Island State Park date September 2018

street & number PO Box 189 telephone (518) 268-2167

city or town Waterford state NY zip code 12188

e-mail William.Krattinger@parks.ny.gov

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

  A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs:

Photographs by William E. Krattinger, NYS Division for Historic Preservation, October 2017.
TIFF file format, original digital files at NYS DHP, Waterford, NY 12188.

001 EXTERIOR, view of principal northwest elevation
002 EXTERIOR, view of northeast elevation
003 EXTERIOR, view of southeast elevation
004 EXTERIOR, view of southwest and southeast elevations
005 EXTERIOR, view of southwest elevation
006 EXTERIOR, view of northwest elevation
007 EXTERIOR, detail view of Palladian window and heraldic shield, northeast elevation
008 EXTERIOR, detail view of principal entrance, northwest elevation
009 EXTERIOR, date stone, northwest elevation
010 INTERIOR, view of principal staircase
011 INTERIOR, view from lecture room back towards entrance hall and principal staircase
012 INTERIOR, view of lecture room, south wall, showing wall paneling and fireplace
013 INTERIOR, view of lecture room
014 INTERIOR, view looking into dining room from lecture hall
015 INTERIOR, view of dining room looking towards kitchen
016 INTERIOR, second story passage

Property Owner:

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

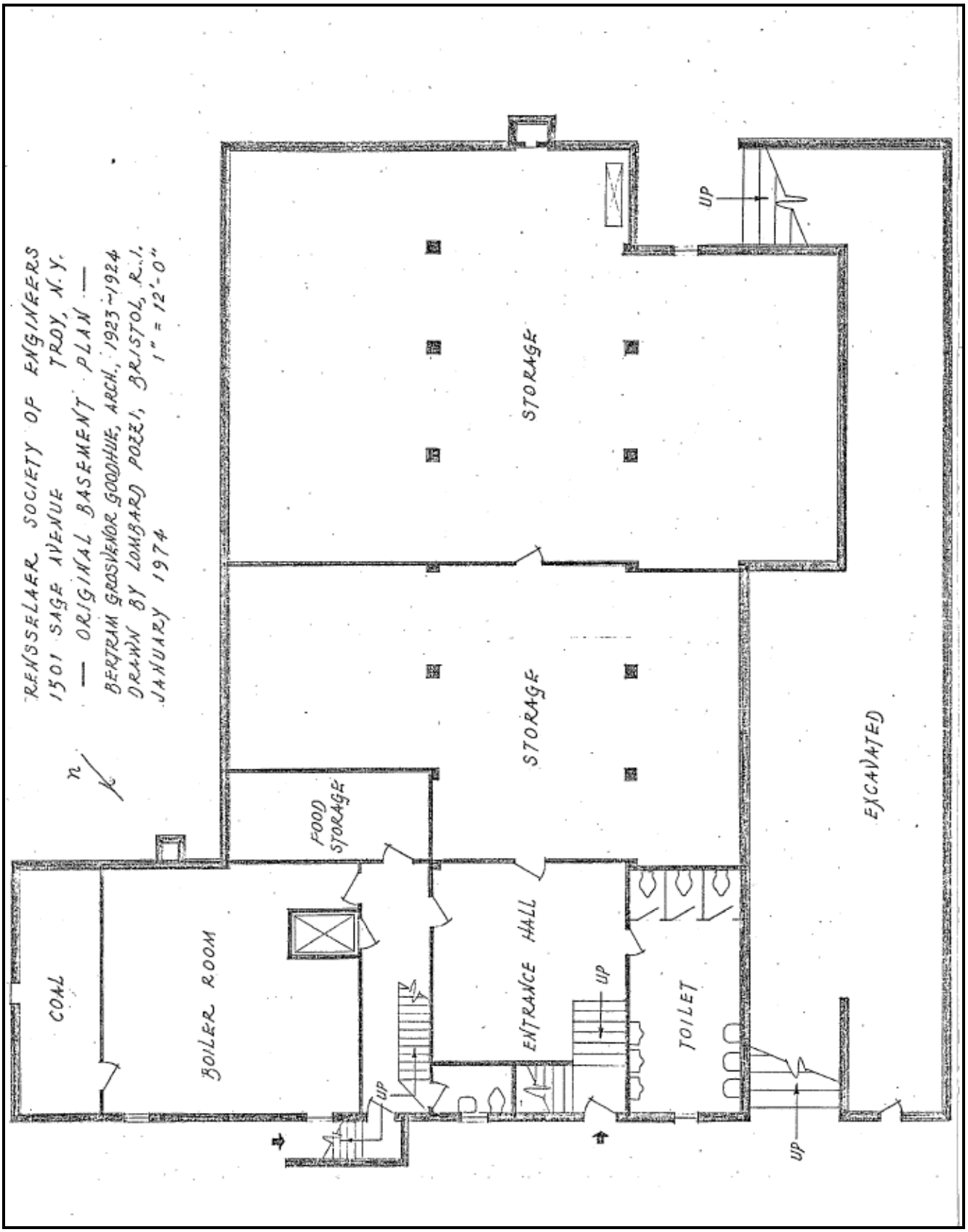
name

street & number telephone

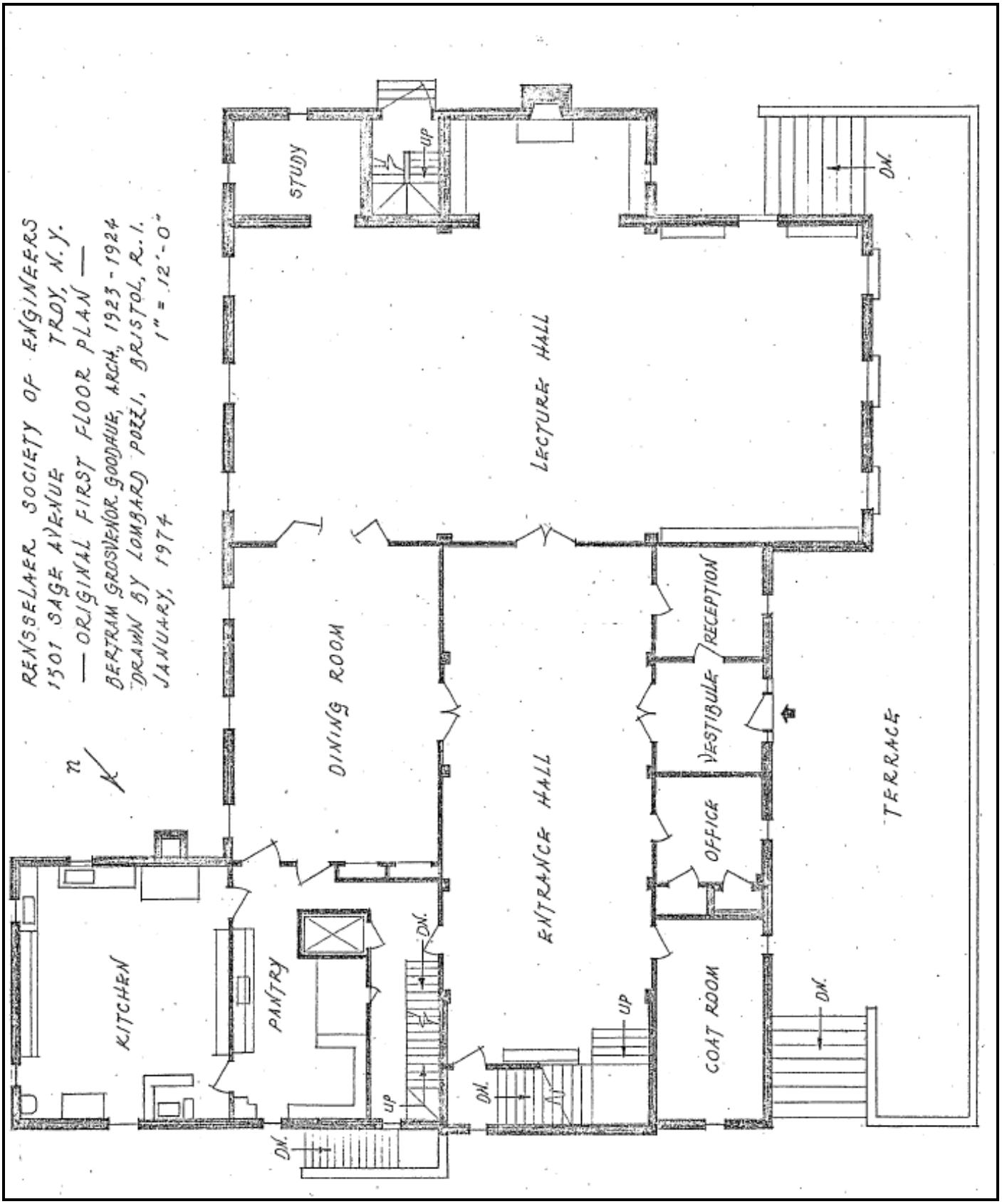
city or town state zip code

ABOVE, aerial view showing building's orientation and relationship with Sage Avenue, to right, and Griswold Road, to the left. The principal roof ridge is aligned on a northeast to southwest axis. The northeast elevation fronts on Sage Avenue, and the southwest elevation is oriented towards Griswold Road. The southeast elevation is fronted by a sand-filled volleyball court, while the opposite northwest elevation is fronted by an open patio area with corresponding brick wall. A dedicated parking area is located off of Sage Avenue, immediately southeast of the building.

RENSSELAER SOCIETY OF ENGINEERS **RENSSELAER CO., N.Y.**
Name of Property County and State



RENSSELAER SOCIETY OF ENGINEERS **RENSSELAER CO., N.Y.**
Name of Property County and State



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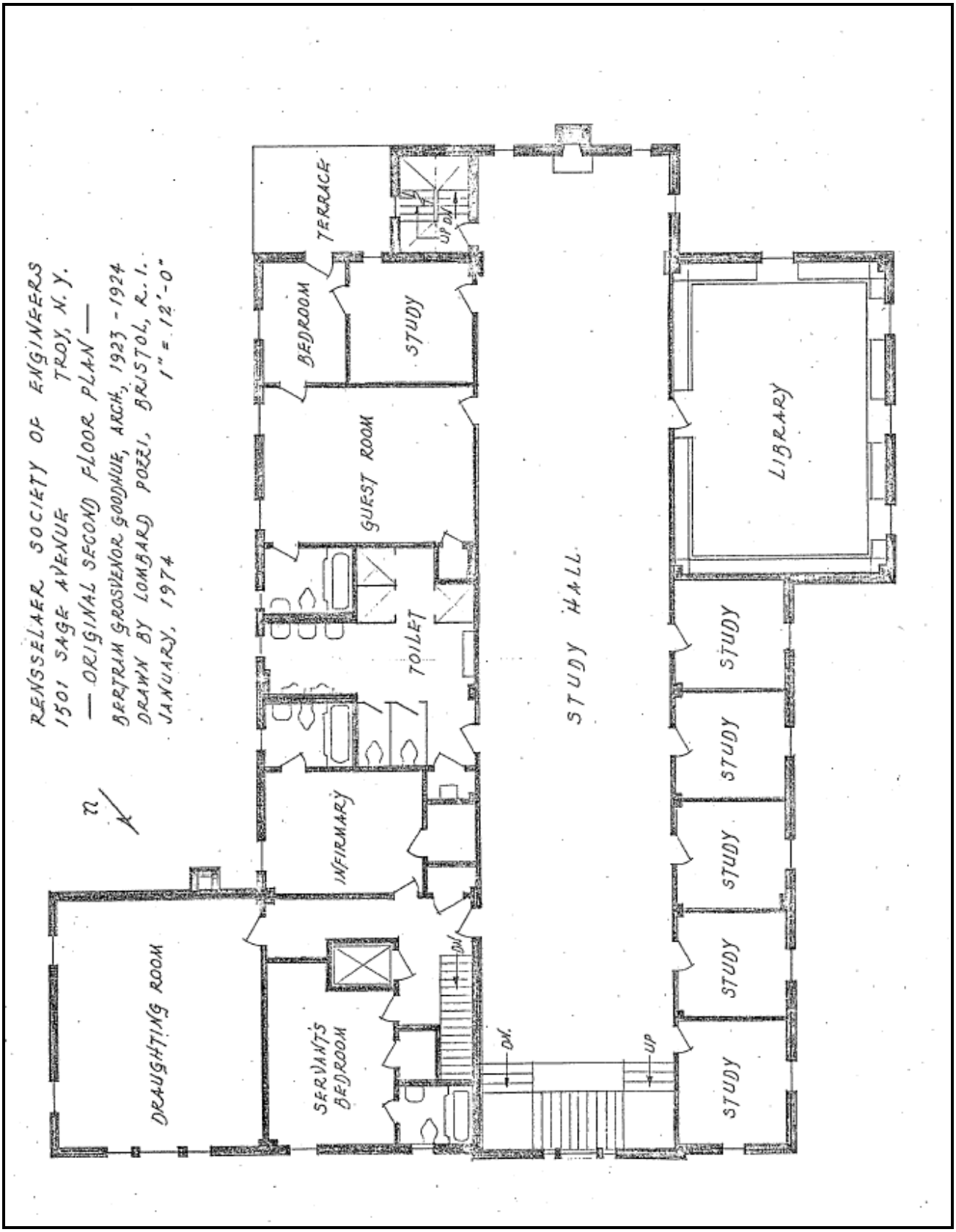
Name of Property County and State



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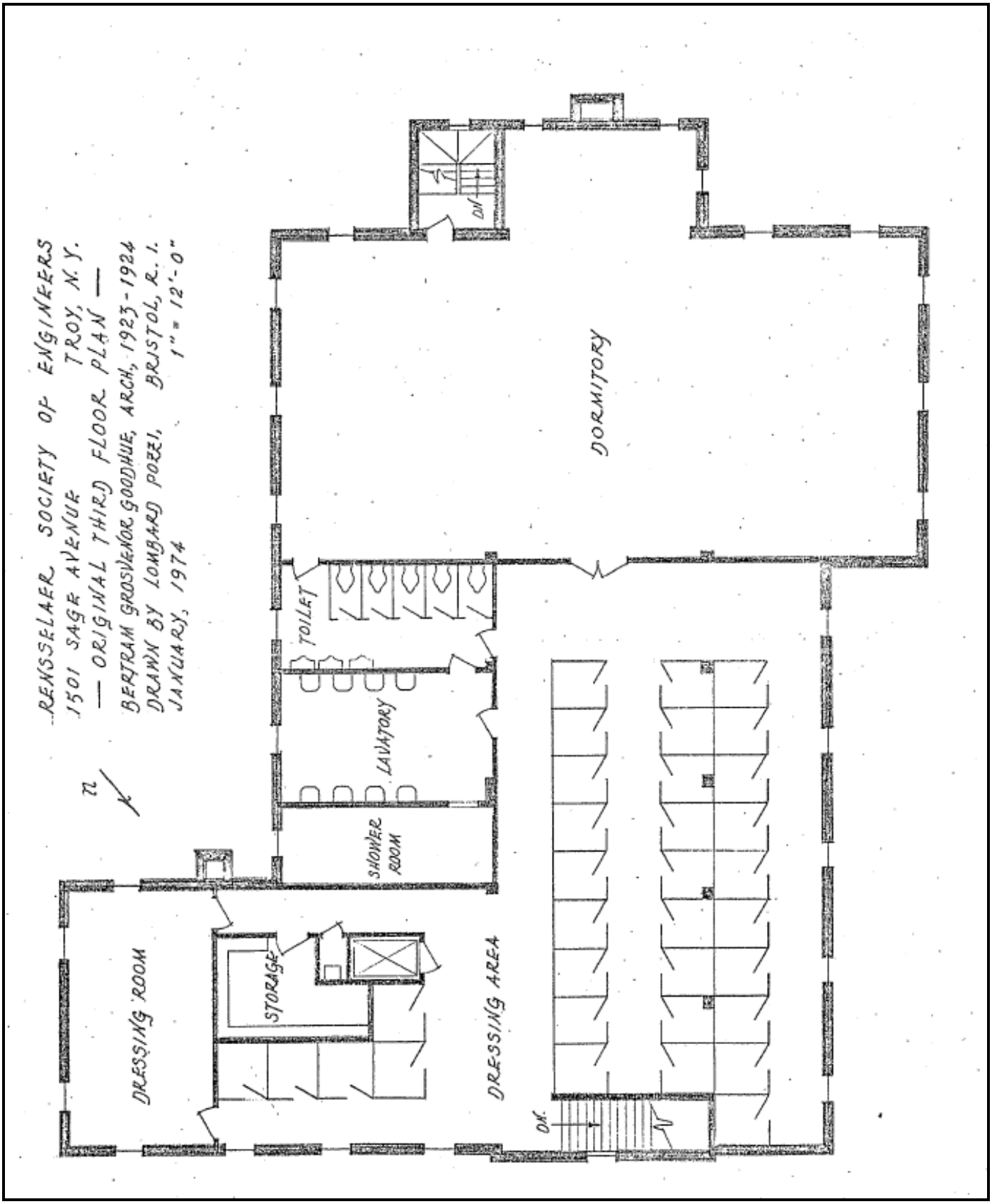
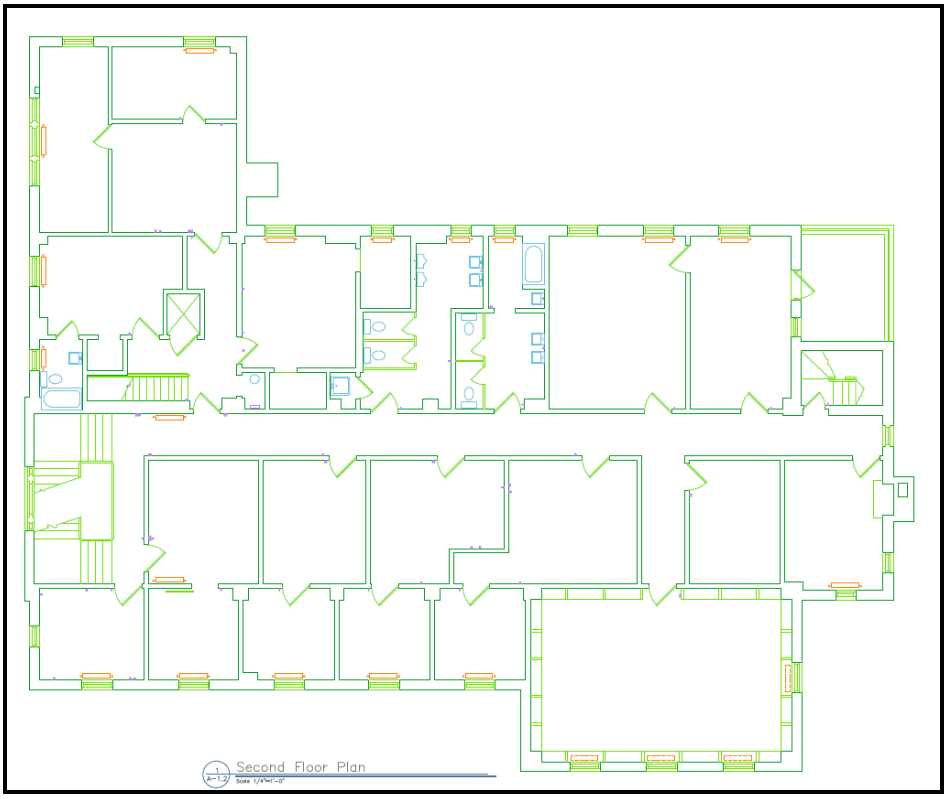
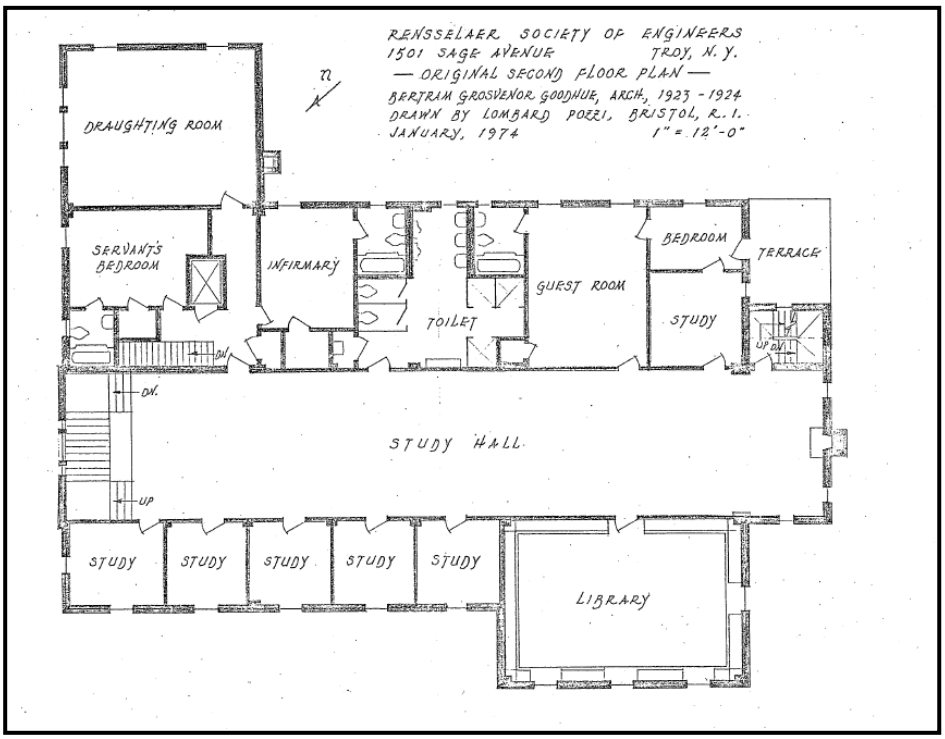
Name of Property County and State





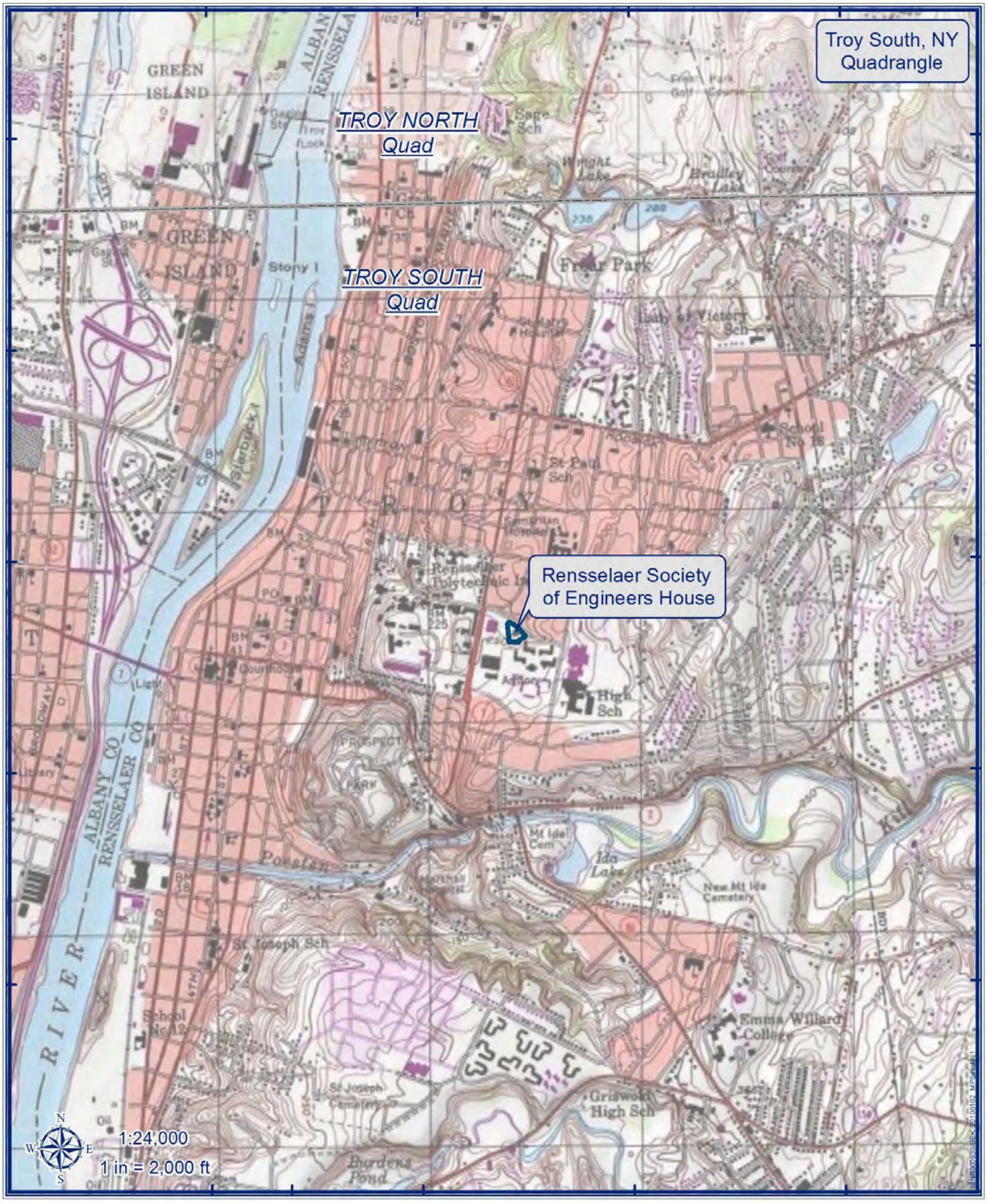
ABOVE & BELOW, original second-floor plan (below) contrasted with existing configuration



Mature works by Bertram G. Goodhue. ABOVE, Los Angeles Public Library; BELOW, Nebraska State Capitol

Rensselaer Society of Engineers House
City of Troy, Rensselaer Co., NY

1501 Sage Avenue
Troy, NY 12180



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Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter

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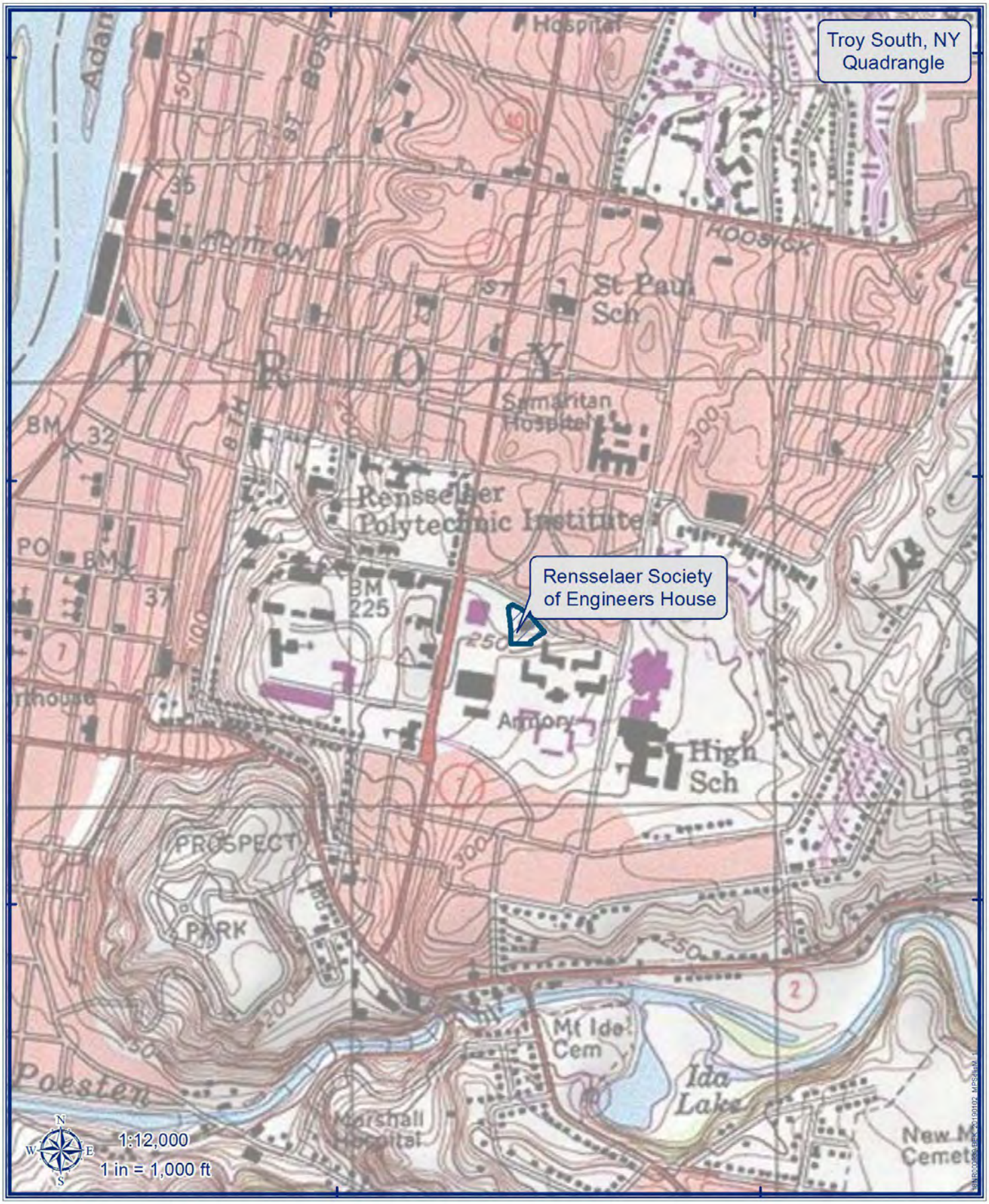
Rensselaer Society of Engineers House

NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY. Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Rensselaer Society of Engineers House
City of Troy, Rensselaer Co., NY

1501 Sage Avenue
Troy, NY 12180



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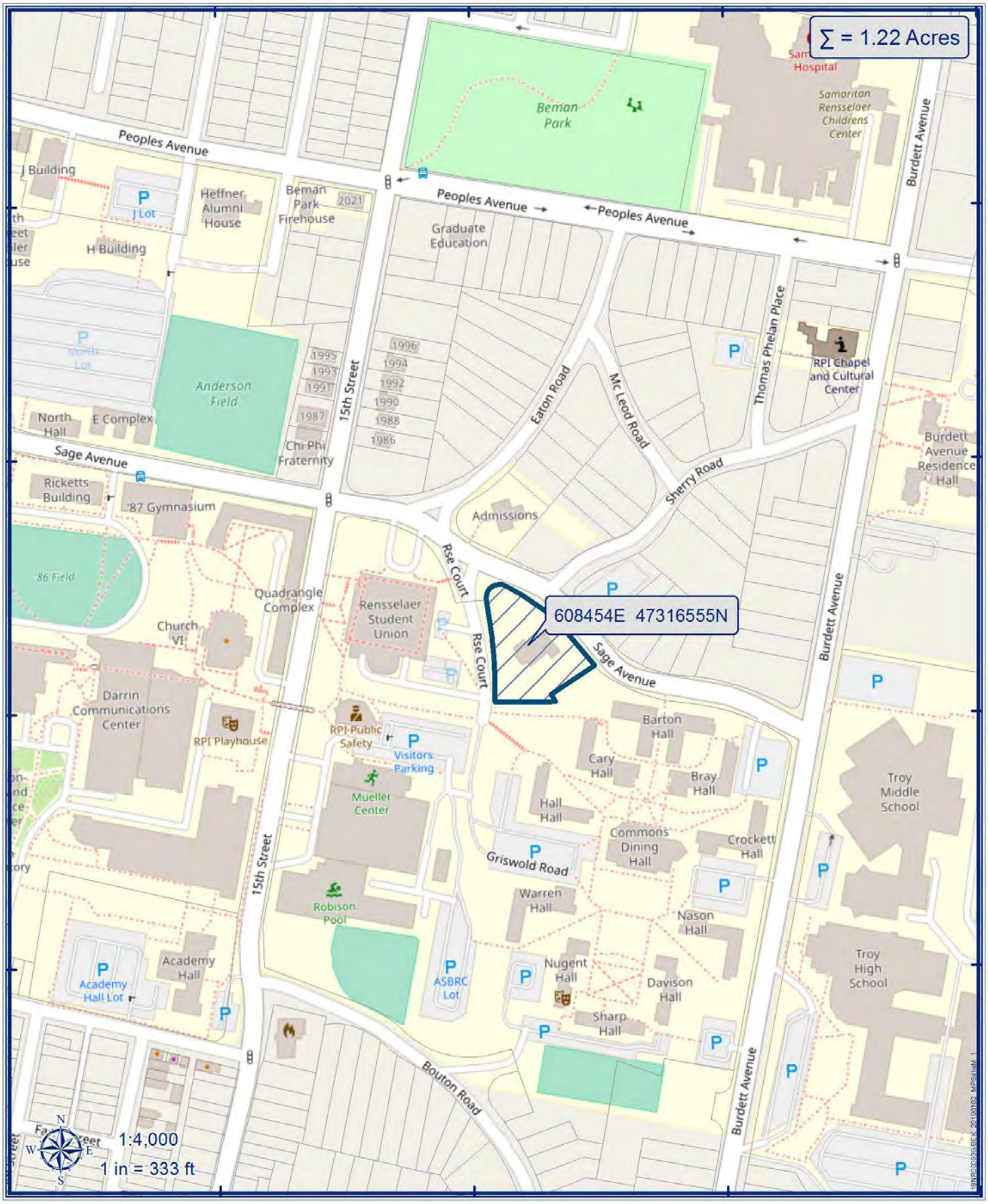

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Rensselaer Society of Engineers House

NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY. Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

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1501 Sage Avenue
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Rensselaer Society of Engineers House

NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY. Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation


RSE


1501


RENSSELAER
SOCIETY OF ENGINEERS


RSE
SOCIETY OF ENGINEERS


RSE

THY STRENGTH IS MY STRENGTH

1501


RSF

BERTRAM
GROSVENOR
GOODHUE
ARCHITECT


EXIT
EXIT


EXIT

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:	Nomination
Property Name:	Rensselaer Society of Engineers House
Multiple Name:	
State & County:	NEW YORK, Rensselaer

Date Received:	Date of Pending List:	Date of 16th Day:	Date of 45th Day:	Date of Weekly List:
3/8/2019	3/21/2019	4/5/2019	4/22/2019	4/5/2019

Reference number:	SG100003629
Nominator:	SHPO

Reason For Review:

X Accept _____ Return _____ Reject **4/5/2019** Date

Abstract/Summary Comments:

Recommendation/ Criteria

Reviewer Alexis Abernathy Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2236 Date

DOCUMENTATION: see attached comments : No see attached SLR : No

If a nomination is returned to the nomination authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the National Park Service.

NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY. | Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ROSE HARVEY
Commissioner

30 January 2019

Alexis Abernathy
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places

Mail Stop 7228

1849 C Street NW
Washington DC 20240

Re: National Register Nominations

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

First of all, welcome back! I am pleased to submit the following seven nominations, all on disc, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

Robinwood Historic District, Westchester County (22 owners, 0 objections)
Rensselaer Society of Engineers House, Rensselaer County
Dresden District School No 2, Washington County
Hazard Willcox Jr. Farm, Chenango County (1 owner, no objection)
Hotel Saranac, Franklin County
St. Johnsville Historic District, Montgomery County (776 owners, 0 objections)
Peter Vrooman House, Schoharie County

Please feel free to call me at 518.268.2165 if you have any questions.

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank

Kathleen LaFrank
National Register Coordinator
New York State Historic Preservation Office