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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

OCT 16 2015

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

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 Jacob T. Miers House

other names/site number Schoharie Free Library

2. Location

street & number 103 Knowler Avenue N/A not for publication

city or town Schoharie N/A vicinity

state New York code NY county Schoharie code 095 zip code 12157

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

Ruth Purpant DBHPO 10/14/15
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

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:

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)

Jon Edison H. Beall 12.1.15
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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5. Classification

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

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

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

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

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

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

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

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

NA

0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

Current Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: Single dwelling

EDUCATION: Library

7. Description

Architectural Classification
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

Materials
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN: Second Empire

foundation: STONE

walls: WOOD + CONCRETE: Cement fiberboard

roof: ASPHALT

other:

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Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The Jacob T. Miers House, now the Schoharie Free Library, is a rectangular two-story frame building in the Second Empire style with a shingled mansard roof. It is three bays wide with the bulk of its mass expanding to the back. In addition, the building has an historic rear ell. A recent (2005) addition resembling a carriage house is connected to the rear of the original structure by a hyphen. The house faces east and occupies the corner plot formed by the intersection of Knower Avenue and Bridge Street in rural Schoharie, New York. With the exception of repairs and waterproofing efforts due to the Hurricane Irene flood (2011), the building retains its historic integrity.

Narrative Description

The Jacob T. Miers House was constructed between 1866 and 1872 and now serves Schoharie County as a library. The building is located within a residential area near Schoharie's Main Street. A driveway from Bridge Street, on the south side of the building near the rear, offers vehicular access to the property. Visitors to the library enter the building from the back (through the ell) via a ramp to the doorway in the hyphen. The front door to the east (on Knower Avenue) is no longer utilized. The house sits roughly 100 feet from Knower Avenue and 100 feet from Bridge Street. It is adjacent to a vacant lot to the west and a residential property to the north.

The property once contained a carriage house near the current site of the connected addition. The building (which also housed town offices) burned in 1994, and the architecturally-appropriate hyphen and addition were completed in 2005. A fountain (unrelated to the history of the house) was donated to the library association at the same time. A small tool shed sits adjacent to the parking lot behind the main building to the west.¹

Condition and Changes

The Jacob T. Miers House remains in very good condition, with most of its historic features extant. The original floor plan of the main house was not significantly altered in its conversion to a library, and the rear addition, while large, is clearly differentiated from the older building. An elevator has been installed to conform to the Americans with Disabilities Act, and several doorways were widened.

Due to the Miers House's proximity to the Schoharie Creek, it did sustain damage in the 2011 flood associated with Hurricane Irene. Although the building is elevated on its foundation, over 2 feet of water entered the first floor. As a result, wood clapboard and some interior plaster were removed and replaced. In particular, the decision was made to replace all of the siding with cement fiberboard to ensure the longevity of the frame and brick noggin. Hurricane Irene also caused significant interior damage to furniture, but left, for the most part, fixtures completely intact. Rescue workers were required to force open the main doors following the flood, but other repairs to doors, windows, trim, and architectural elements were minor. In spite of storm damage, all of the windows in the main building are original, as are the shutters. The original pocket doors on the first floor have been rehabilitated and reinstalled in their proper locations.

Exterior Description

¹ "Fire Hits Schoharie Town Hall," *Times-Journal*, July 13, 1994.

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The Jacob T. Miers House consists of an east-facing main block, rear ell, hyphen, and addition built to resemble a carriage house that once stood on the property. The house is clad in cement fiberboard, replacing wood clapboard on the main block and ell, which was heavily damaged during the Hurricane Irene flood in 2011. The basement of the building is constructed from blocks of locally-sourced blue granite fieldstone, and the entire structure sits on a stone foundation.

Main Block Façade (East elevation) and Roof

The east side of the house, where the front door is located, features three bays with a porch across the front. The porch, which has a relatively flat roof, is supported by four posts, each with decorative pierced ornamental woodwork (using a circular motif) to either side of its capital. The posts sit on rectangular bases, connected by a balustrade of pierced circles. The main entrance (though no longer used as such by the library) occupies the southernmost bay; the other two bays hold windows. The doorway has double-doors, surrounded by white and yellow woodwork below a shallow arch with two small windows providing light into the entry. The windows in the other two bays are roughly the same height as the doorway and feature segmental arches. This style is repeated in the first-floor windows on the south and north elevations, though those on the side elevations have additional decoration above the arch. Every window has a one-over-one sash. On the front, there are three windows across the second floor over the front door and first-floor windows; these second-floor windows also have additional decoration above the arch.

Just under the cornice line are decorative brackets. They alternate between a double and triple bracket (with two short brackets surrounding a longer one the same size as the double brackets). These brackets are present on each elevation of the original structure. The brackets support the cornice of the mansard roof, which adds nearly a full story to the building, although the space has never been utilized for anything other than storage. The mansard roof is present on the entirety of the original portion of the house, excluding the ell. It is clad in asphalt shingles and has arched dormers on each elevation. On the east elevation, there are two dormers, which are centered over the middle bay (between the windows). The north elevation has three dormers; the west one, and the south two.

Main Block South Elevation

The south elevation has three bays. In keeping with the Second Empire style, there is a three-bay tower with a mansard roof protruding from the southern façade, at what would have originally been the first bay (southwestern corner of the building). It does not extend further vertically than the Mansard roofline of the rest of the structure, and is instead even with it. The tower features a decorative pent roof supported by brackets between the first and second floors, and six windows, three per floor, with segmental arched pediments and decorative keystones. A dormer window, with an arch above it, protrudes from the mansard roof of the tower and faces roughly south. It is centered on the tower and is therefore smaller than its counterparts on the main roof. The remaining two bays hold windows, identical to those on the east façade. Those on the first floor are full-length and covered with paneled shutters. Those on the second floor are shorter; the easternmost is also shuttered. On this southern side, another dormer sits to the east on the main portion of the building and is centered between the second and third bays. These two dormers give the southern elevation an asymmetrical appearance.

Main Block North Elevation

The north side of the building has four bays across the main structure and two more across the ell, and reads as a single elevation. On the first floor, the main structure includes: a window with closed shutters, a door below a segmental arch, two arched-top windows (without additional decoration), a door with a straight lintel, and an

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arched-top (but shuttered) window. The window and door in the easternmost bays are both currently inoperable due to library bookcases on the interior. A porch shelters the center four bays. The roof for the porch falls between the first and second floors, and the second floor features six bays of arched windows, mirroring the openings below. The ell also contains a door to the basement on the first floor. The three windows in the mansard roof are spaced above the first and second bays and between the third and fourth bays.

Ell and Main Black West Elevation

As mentioned, the ell is incorporated into the north elevation. However, on the south elevation, the distinction is more visible because the two-story, two-bay elevation is slightly recessed and separated from the main block by the tower. The roof is flat; the cornice and bracket detail are simpler than on the rest of the house. The upper window in the second bay is shuttered.

The ell covers almost all of the west elevation of the main block but, because of the flat roof, the mansard roof with an off-center dormer window and brick chimney stack remain visible.

Hyphen

The hyphen is a gable-roofed two-bay addition that was added to the back of the ell during the early twenty-first century renovation. It houses the main entryway to the library in its easternmost bay on the south side. Adjacent to the doorway, to the west, is a rectangular window. On the north side of the hyphen there are two windows. The windows are all modern two-over-two sash.

Carriage House Addition

To the west, the hyphen connects the ell (and main block) to the addition, which was likewise constructed circa 2005 in the style of a nineteenth century carriage house that burned in 1994. The square, hipped-roof addition also has modern two-over-two windows, with four windows along its south elevation, three windows on its north elevation, and a projecting three-bay window section (with flanking windows) centered on its west elevation. Like the main house, the addition has a mansard roof. A square cupola rises above the roof and comes to a point roughly even with the roof of the original building. A ramp leads from the adjacent parking lot to the main doorway, along the southern elevation. The addition houses the library's children's wing and reception desk.

Interior Description

The original structure, completed circa 1871, is two rooms deep and two wide, with an ell at the back. On the front of the house are the entry hall and former main parlor; behind them, are the former sitting and drawing rooms. Entering through the original front door, the house has a small foyer between two sets of double doors. Beyond the second set of doors, in the main entry hall, a staircase rises to the second floor. Local legend holds that the newel post came from an unknown structure in the 1893 Columbian Exposition in Chicago.²

A set of glazed pocket doors to the right of the entranceway and staircase leads to the main parlor, today the library's reference room. Also from the front entranceway, another set of pocket doors on the back wall, parallel to the main entry doors, grants access to the former sitting room, now a reading room. From this room, there is an opening to the drawing room. All the rooms on the first floor are interconnected; one can also access the drawing room from the main parlor through original pocket doors.

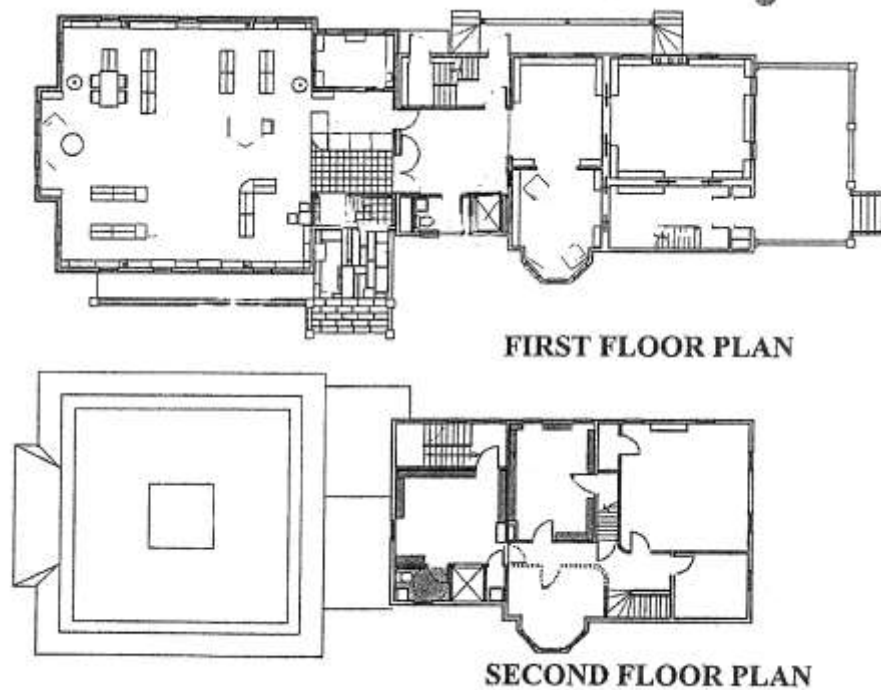
² Historic Resources Inventory Form, August 8, 2013. Prepared by Real Property Tax Services of Schoharie County.

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The drawing room is open to the relatively undivided western portion of the building, including the rear ell, hyphen, and carriage house addition. In the rear ell to the west, on the southern side of the main block, there is an entrance to a basement stairwell, adjacent to a recently installed elevator, which travels between the first and second floors. On the northern side, there is an emergency exit.

Upstairs, the main block and ell are divided into an upper stair hall and four rooms. The stair hall looks out to the rear over the entrance ramp and door on the south. There is a room directly over the main entrance to the east and two rooms adjacent to one another on the north side of the house. The fourth room spans the rear (west) elevation.



The first and second floors are fully carpeted, though the main block retains its original wood flooring under the carpeting. The first and second-story rooms in the northeast corner of the main block have original, faux marble fireplaces which have been decorated with gold leaf. Other fixtures, especially the overhead lighting throughout, are also original. Several rooms have curved walls. Each room has been recently decorated with paint stencils representative of the mid-nineteenth century Second Empire style in America.

A staircase located between the two rooms on the north elevation provides access to the attic. One exits the stairway in the center of the attic space and can walk completely around the central block housing the staircase.

The main entry to the library is through the hyphen on its south elevation. The exterior side ramp, used by all, terminates in a door opening to a mudroom in the first bay. A second door from the mudroom opens to the west (through an interior wall) into the addition, which presents as a square space with a reception area to the north and small office behind. The addition is tiled in the area of the reception desk, and the remainder is carpeted.

Integrity

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Despite changes to the property, the Jacob T. Miers House retains its overall integrity. It remains on its original site, and did not undergo a major change in floor plan in its conversion from single-family home to library. Rooms within the main block are furnished and used as reading rooms, without alteration to finishes or trims. The twenty-first century addition was designed to evoke the lost carriage house, without impinging on the design of the nineteenth-century residence. All rehabilitation after Hurricane Irene was done with the goal of preserving existing architectural detail and replacing lost or damaged elements (like the siding) with more flood-proof but compatible materials.

The Jacob T. Miers House therefore exhibits integrity in location, design, materials, association, and feeling. Coupled with the original fixtures, doors, fireplaces, windows, shutters, and attention paid to responsible decorative practices, the house exhibits great overall integrity. There is no doubt that if Jacob Miers were to return to the house today, he would recognize it immediately.

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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.
- 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.)

EDUCATION

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

circa 1870-1963

Significant Dates

circa 1870: House constructed

1963: House becomes Schoharie Free Library

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

D.B. Provoost

Period of Significance (justification)

Jacob T. Miers House was constructed circa 1870 by a local Schoharie merchant and remained in his family until 1958, when it was sold after his grandson's death. It was unoccupied for five years. In 1963, it became the new home of the Schoharie Free Library, founded in 1914 and previously housed in Lasell Hall (National Register listed, 2002).

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Jacob T. Miers House is **locally significant under Criterion A** as the second home of the Schoharie Free Library in Schoharie, NY. The Schoharie Free Library Association was founded in 1916 by members of the Schoharie Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR) and reflects a local response to the desire for public libraries throughout the United States in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. In 1963, the library moved from the DAR headquarters in Lasell Hall (National Register listed, 2002) into this building which had been the home of dry goods store owner Jacob T. Miers. A local merchant who operated a store on Main Street, Schoharie, from 1865 to 1914, Miers died one of the wealthiest men in the county. Evidence suggests that the Miers House is also significant under **Criterion C** for its representation of the Second Empire style in American architecture. It bears a strong resemblance to Design 1 in the *Supplement to Bicknell's Village Builder* (Amos Jackson Bicknell, 1871) and appears to be a representative "pattern home." Such houses were based on published designs intended to elevate the "taste" of builders and clients and became popular in the U.S. during the latter half of the nineteenth century.

Developmental history/additional historic context information

Historic Ownership

The Jacob T. Miers house was constructed around 1871. It was occupied by the first owner, Jacob T. Miers, until his death in 1914. Miers's daughter, Hattie, went on to inherit the house after her father's death. She occupied the house for some time, subsequently entering a convalescent home before her own death in 1947. Hattie's son, Livingston Miers Deyo, continued in the house for another eleven years, until it was sold to Mr. and Mrs. Matthew Brown in 1958. It was sold again in 1963 to Mr. and Mrs. Henry Geisz. The Schoharie Free Library Association acquired the house later that year and continues to own the property today.³

Village of Schoharie

The village of Schoharie was settled by Palatinate Germans in 1712 and was a primary battlefield during the French and Indian War and the American Revolution. Attacks culminated in the "Great Raid" of 1780 by Loyalist and Haudenosaunee forces under the Sir John Johnson and Captain Joseph Brant. Attackers and defenders were killed; many homes and farms burned; and neighbor pitted against neighbor. Writing 65 years after the event, Jephtha Simms described the aftermath:

That beautiful valley, on the evening after the invasion, presented a most gloomy picture. Ruin and desolation followed in the train of the foe, and many a man who had risen in the morning in comfortable, if not in affluent circumstances, found himself in the evening houseless, and almost ruined in property. His barns and barracks which the morning light had disclosed well filled with the rich reward of his season's labors, were so many heaps of smoldering ruins. His cattle, horses and swine, which had grazed "upon a thousand hills," either lay dead in the adjoining fields, or had been taken by the ravagers: while some of his fences had been burned and others demolished. Thus was revenged the destruction of the Indian possessions in the Chemung and Genesee valleys the year before by Gen. Sullivan; which had they a historian, would be found a no less gloomy picture. Scarcely a log house at that early day was to be seen in the Schoharie valley: the dwellings were mostly good framed buildings, well finished and some of them painted. But here

³ Historic Resources Inventory Form.

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and there a building, from some cause, escaped the devouring element, to render the general ruin the more obvious.⁴

However, prosperity returned to the region after the war. Individuals like Johannes Lawyer profited from the sale of Loyalist and Oneida lands by the State of New York, and families came back from Albany (where many had taken refuge after the raid) to rebuild and reinvest in their homes and farms. Most of the area that would become Schoharie County was made part of Albany County in 1788 and governed for a short time without local representation. Residents soon petitioned the legislature for self-government and, on June 1, 1795, the County of Schoharie was established by law. In 1798, the Board of Supervisors bought land on Main Street in the village of Schoharie and, in 1800, erected the first courthouse.⁵

Schoharie gained importance as county seat but never grew large. Agriculture remained the principal industry in the valley, but people were drawn to the village by the courthouse and county offices. As commercial agriculture (especially hops and dairy) developed between 1845 and 1865, more farmers began to participate in the consumer economy. In a *Sketch of Schoharie Village: Eighty Years Ago*, Dr. J.W. Marsh recalled his youth in the 1850s and 60s:

Schoharie was considered to be one of the best business villages as to industry and financial standing. Most all mechanical trades were represented and employed the best of workmen... We had at that time, three tailor shops, one tin shop, two shoe shops, one harness shop, [and] a hat factory.... There were also three churches – Reformed, Lutheran, Methodist (all well attended) and a small chapel, next to the Methodist Church, of Presbyterian denomination.

There were also two dry-good stores, three grocery stores, and a marble works, owned by Zadok and Russell Brown, where monuments and head stones were made. Three hotels – Mansion House, Schoharie Hotel and Eagle Hotel. The only Drug Store in the county was located in Schoharie and was owned and operated by O.B. Throop. All of this was in the days of the horse and buggy and stage coach, as we had no railroad at that time.⁶

The stage coaches were soon gone. The development of the Albany and Susquehanna Railroad (1865) led to the development of two shorter branch lines – the Schoharie Valley Railroad (1867) and the Middleburgh and Schoharie Railroad (1870) – which carried passengers and freight to Schoharie and beyond.⁷ The county as a whole grew from 9,808 to 32,358 between 1800 and 1840 and stayed near that figure through the end of the nineteenth century. (According to Parkerson, out-migration was actually a means of preserving wealth in stable rural economies.)⁸ The village incorporated in 1867; in the 1870 census, its population was 1200.⁹ “Fireproof” brick buildings were built and the village’s commercial district took its current physical shape in the decade

⁴ Jephtha R. Simms, *History of Schoharie County, and Border Wars of New York* (Albany: Munsell & Tanner, Printers, 1845), 419-420.

⁵ Raymond W. Smith, *Schoharie County Courthouse Complex* [National Register Nomination 95NR00839], (Albany, NY: New York State Historic Preservation Office, 1995), Section 8:1.

⁶ J.W. Marsh, “A Sketch of Schoharie Village – Eighty Years Ago,” *Schoharie Republican* 118:35 (September 2, 1937), 4.

⁷ Village of Schoharie, *Visitor Information: History*. <http://www.schoharievillage.org>

⁸ Donald H. Parkerson, *The Agricultural Transition in New York State: Markets and Migration in Mid-Nineteenth-Century America* (Ames, IA: Iowa State University Press, 1995), 148-149.

⁹ Village population declined to a stable 1000 residents around 1890. US Census Bureau, *Census of Population and Housing*. <http://www.census.gov/prod/www/decennial.html>

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between 1865 and 1875. This is the period in which Jacob T. Miers arrived in Schoharie village to settle, open a store, and build a fine new house.

Jacob T. Miers¹⁰

Jacob Miers (1835-1914) was born the fourth child of five to Harry P. Miers (1803-1840) and Elishibe Nethaway (1809-1890) in 1835. The family owned a small farm near Cobleskill, NY, which was sold in 1838. Harry passed away in 1840, leaving Elishibe alone with the children, none of whom had reached their teenage years. She remarried in 1843.¹¹ Her new husband, Halsey Bailey, seems to have been an excellent step-father; two of the three brothers became successful farmers (one naming a son after Bailey), and Jacob became a successful merchant.

Jacob started at age 18 as a clerk at a store in Cobleskill, marrying Lucy Ann Livingston while working in East Cobleskill in January 1861. Sometime in the next 4 years, he relocated first to Rome and then to the village of Schoharie. Late in 1865, he began a business relationship with Thomas Borst (1840-1907) as Miers & Borst. The *Schoharie Union* commented:

We are pleased to observe in our village the many indications of a lively business this winter. Our merchants are waxing warm with their work, and all of them seem to be inspired with fresh enterprise, so that instead of the superannuated dealers of late, we have in our midst a set of real, live men of business. One store has changed hands, another new store has opened while still another will be in operation in a short time.... Miers and Borst, just across the way, are driving a good business, and we are glad of it, as both are young men whose integrity and enterprise merit success. They are selling piles of goods, and we believe their prices are as favorable as could be expected.¹²

Amongst the “piles,” Miers and Borst advertised that they sold dry goods and groceries – “all NEW and FRESH, and none but the LATEST STYLES...”¹³ Six months later, their stock included dress goods, silks, linen and white goods, kid gloves, underwear, hoop skirts, cloth, “cassimeres,” boots and shoes, crockery, wooden and glassware, wall paper, and groceries.¹⁴

The business (“second door south of the bank”) was apparently located in one of a cluster of three buildings (the Schoharie County Bank and 2 stores) shown on the west side of Main Street in an 1866 Beers map of Schoharie village. Miers seems to have owned the structure personally (though another newspaper reference suggests that the partnership owned an adjoining brick building.) At least, Jacob was paid insurance on “the store” – while Miers & Borst were paid insurance for the stock – after a blaze devastated the village and at least

¹⁰ Much of this section is drawn from an article on Miers written by a descendent: Bruce W. and Barbara J. Miers, “Jacob T. Miers: 1835-1914,” *Schoharie County Historical Review*, 74:2 (2010), 29-35.

¹¹ Historic Resources Inventory Form.

¹² “Full Trade,” *Schoharie Union* (date uncertain but apparently winter 1865). [Fulton News: Schoharie NY Union 1865 - 0191.pdf]

¹³ “Cash Store! New Firm and New Goods,” *Ibid.*

¹⁴ “Miers and Borst” [Advertisement], *Schoharie Union* (possibly May 1865). [Fulton News: Schoharie NY Union 1866 - 0096.pdf]

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the roof of his “fire-proof building” in mid July 1868.¹⁵ A mid-twentieth century article in the *Schenectady Daily Gazette* attributes construction of “the Dietz Block” in 1870 in the same location to Miers.¹⁶

Although Miers & Borst are listed in the 1872 *Schoharie County Directory*, an article on “Schoharie Court House Items” in the *Albany Evening Times* notes that the partnership dissolved in April 1871 with Borst buying the store and residence of a Mr. Warner.¹⁷ Six years later, Borst “who years ago was engaged in trade here” bought stock and a store from two different (and separate) Schoharie merchants, apparently going into competition with Miers.¹⁸ In 1880, the newspaper identifies him as “merchant, farmer, speculator, etc.”¹⁹

Jacob continued running his own dry goods store until his death in 1914, becoming one of the richest men (and oldest active merchants) in Schoharie County. Later business cards note that the store stocked clothing, “gents’ furnishings,” window shades, lace, curtains, boots and shoes, carpeting, and other goods.²⁰



¹⁵ William E. Roscoe, *History of Schoharie County, New York, 1713-1882* (Syracuse, NY: D. Mason & Co., 1882), 376.

This same fire destroyed the Court House which was replaced by the current National-Register listed structure. See also, “Losses by the Fire,” *Schoharie Union* (July 23, 1868). [Fulton News: Schoharie NY Union 1868 - 0123.pdf]

¹⁶ “Wohl Buys Dietz Block in Schoharie,” *Schenectady Daily Gazette* (August 19, 1950), 2.

¹⁷ “Schoharie Court House Items,” *Albany Evening Times* (April 20, 1871). [Fulton News: Albany NY Evening Times 1870 Jul-May 1871 - 1013.pdf]

¹⁸ “Business Changes,” *Schoharie Union* (April 6, 1877). [Fulton News: Schoharie NY Union 1877 - 0058.pdf]

¹⁹ *Schoharie Union* (March 4, 1888). [Fulton News: Schoharie NY Union 1880 - 0044.pdf]

²⁰ Historic Resources Inventory Form.

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In 1882, Roscoe's *History of Schoharie County* noted that Miers was currently serving as a member of the Schoharie Academy board. An obituary in the *Cobleskill Index* summarized Miers' career:

Fifty-five years ago he located at Schoharie and engaged in the dry goods business. He was a prominent businessman and one of the wealthiest residents of Schoharie village.

Schoharie Free Library

At the time that Jacob Miers was building his business in Schoharie, other social developments were changing the community life of cities, towns, and villages throughout New York State and the country. The development of "free" libraries, increased public philanthropy, professionalization of librarianship, and the rise of women's associations all came together toward the turn of the century in a process of "civic betterment" that led local women to form the Schoharie Free Library Association in 1916.

The origin of the Association, which eventually came to own and care for the J.T. Miers House, connects to a larger story in the United States – the free public library movement, which began as a democratic ideal after the American Revolution. Such libraries were rare before 1850. Before then, almost all libraries were dues-paying associations available only to urban middle-class members.²¹ In 1849, New Hampshire passed the first state law enabling the levying of taxes to support public libraries. Other New England states followed shortly thereafter, with Massachusetts in 1851 and Maine in 1854. The City of Boston obtained its own free public library in the late 1850s, following a long legal case involving the right to tax for such an organization. New York City finally started its own Free Circulating Library in 1880 with an initial 500 donated books. (Several philanthropists, including John Jacob Astor and James Lenox, had opened their personal collections for public use as early as 1854, but these were aimed at bibliophiles and required tickets of admission.) No other central library association existed in the city until 1895 when the New York Public Library Association was founded. It merged with the New York Free Circulating Library in 1901; Andrew Carnegie donated over \$5 million for 39 branches in the boroughs later that year; and the city finally opened the central New York Public Library in 1911. In cities and small towns throughout the United States, momentum for free, publicly-funded, and publicly-accessible libraries was on the rise in the first decade of the twentieth century, and philanthropists (most notably, Carnegie) willingly donated buildings and funds for collections.²²

Simultaneously, libraries were professionalizing. The American Library Association was created in 1876 at the centennial celebration in Philadelphia. Over one hundred librarians attended a "Convention of Librarians" at the Historical Society of Pennsylvania to discuss ways to "enable librarians to do their present work more easily and at less expense." Although nearly half of the 209 libraries in the country were in Massachusetts or New York, the ALA was interested in expanding throughout the country to small towns and big cities alike. Orchestrated by Melvin Dewey (designer of the Dewey Decimal System) and other interested parties, the ALA brought library founders together to discuss future directions of the public library. In 1884, a year after Dewey became librarian of Columbia University, the first School of Library Economy was organized in the United

²¹ Elmer T Johnson, *A History of Libraries in the Western World* (New York, NY: TheScarecrow Press, Inc., 1965.) Notable exceptions were the Caleb Bingham Library for Youth in Salisbury, Connecticut (1803), the Peterborough Public Library in Peterborough, New Hampshire (1833), and the town of Orange, Massachusetts, which established its own town library in 1846.

²² Dee Garrison, *Apostles of Culture: The Public Librarian and American Society, 1876-1920* (New York: Macmillan Information, 1979.)

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States. (Dewey's insistence on the inclusion of women students led to some conflict with the university trustees, and the school almost closed in 1888.)

Dewey's reforms helped New York State lead the nation. Along with education and advocacy of women librarians, he reorganized the state library and instituted picture collection and traveling libraries to small communities while state librarian. However, his legacy is not unblemished. His open desire to limit access to public libraries and social clubs to whites and Christians brought him censure from the New York Board of Regents.²³ Protestors had raised questions about pamphlets circulated by the New York State Library decrying Jewish influence in New York politics. Dewey resigned his state position in October, 1905.²⁴

Thus, by the beginning of the twentieth century, the notion of free libraries – built with public philanthropy and administered by professional librarians – had made its way to small towns throughout New York. The founders of the library in Schoharie were probably aware of the momentum the movement was gaining and the importance of a library to their town.²⁵ The last ingredient required was the involvement of the community and, more particularly, community women. Women were the catalyst for the vast majority of public libraries established in small-town America.²⁶ It fell to one of the most prominent women's associations in Schoharie to make this library a reality.

The Schoharie Free Library opened in 1916 in Lasell Hall (National Register listed, 2002), the headquarters of the local chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution (DAR). The chapter formed in 1910 and was given the vacant building – a former tavern famous for its role in the Great Raid – by the heirs of the Lasell family in 1913. The first DAR meeting in the renovated structure took place in 1914 and, two years later, DAR members established the library in then-unused second floor of the building. Furniture and books were donated; heat came from a small wood stove. According to an article on the library association's 50th birthday, Mrs. W.S. Lawyer was the first president, Miss Florence K. Snyder the first librarian, and Mrs. Grace Thomas assistant librarian:

The first annual report of the trustees showed the library had 732 adult books and 207 juvenile books and circulation was 1,320. Receipts were: State grant, \$100; gifts, \$116.51; fines, \$2.37, and entertainments, \$94. Disbursements were: Payment for books, \$200; improvements, \$32, and expenses, \$49.82. There were 230 registered borrowers. At the trustees' meeting Nov. 7, 1916, it was proposed to have a bee to sew carpet for the library floor and to place an article in the Schoharie newspaper asking the citizens to leave donations with the librarian at the library or at her home.²⁷

The library grew through donations, card parties, and food sales. In 1923, it moved into additional rooms in Lasall Hall. During the Depression, a WPA project redecorated the space. Three branches opened in stores in Gallupville, Central Bridge, and Sloansville (though wartime gas rationing soon closed them.) A men's auxiliary was founded in 1942 and surplus books were sent to the Merchant Marine library. After the war, the rooms were redecorated again and programs started for children and teens.²⁸

²³ The Lake Placid Club, which Dewey founded with his wife in 1895, openly discriminated against Jews.

²⁴ Garrison.

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ P.D. Watson, *Founding Mothers: The Contribution of Women's Organizations to Public Library Development in the United States. The Library Quarterly*, 64(3), 233-269.

²⁷ "Schoharie Library has 50th Birthday," *Schenectady Gazette* (Jan 21, 1966), 32.

²⁸ "Schoharie Library 50 Years Old: Library Once Held Parties to Buy Books," *Schenectady Gazette* (Feb 17, 1966), 7.

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The library operated in this way on this site for forty seven years but, by the late 1950s and early 1960s, was increasingly hampered by a lack of space. Local tradition holds that the DAR requested that the library group find a new space when the bookshelves began to strain the floor of Lasell Hall and cause it to bow. The local Kiwanis Club, which aided in the search for a new home for the library, cited the following concerns in regards to the Lasell Hall accommodations:

*Insufficient strength of second floor supports for the increasing load of books; also lack of proper facilities for children's programs, lack of proper heat and sanitation facilities, lack of emergency exits and the fact that the second and third floor location is unsuitable for functional use.*²⁹

The Kiwanis raised funds in a door-to-door campaign and, when the president of the Schoharie Stone Corporation heard that the Miers House had been selected, he donated the purchase price in honor of his late wife, Mary Beatrice Cushing. The local Boy Scout troop volunteered to clean, paint, and perform other assorted minor services to the property. Librarian Mildred Vrooman repaired the almost century-old wallpaper "paint brush in hand," while association secretary Mrs. Harold Warner "brushed cyclamen pink" blossoms on the carpet to match.³⁰

Amidst a splash of fall color, the library was dedicated on Oct. 13, 1963. Mr. [James] Cushing, the man who had done so much toward making the moment possible, paid his first visit.

"Schoharie has always shown its friendship and helpful interest in our operation here," an area newspaper quoted the benefactor as saying, "When the opportunity was presented to do something for Schoharie in some measure of return for all that Schoharie people have done for us, we grabbed at the opportunity."³¹

In 1916, when the library first opened, there were 958 books in its collection. In 1963, the association moved over 10,000.³²

Architectural Importance

The Jacob T. Miers House was built on a plot of land at the corner of Bridge and Knower Streets sometime between 1866 and 1871, apparently after Jacob began his partnership with Thomas Borst.

²⁹ "Mansion is Schoharie Library's First Real Home," *Schenectady Union-Star*, October 12, 1963, 16.

³⁰ Mary Ann Vibbard, "'Victorian Mansion in Schoharie Valley Provides Unique Location for Cushing Memorial Library,'" *Schenectady Gazette* (November 18, 1964), 25.

³¹ *Ibid.*

³² "Mansion."

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Fig. 1: Undated image of Jacob T. Miers (<http://schoharielibrary.info>)

It is a prime example of the Second Empire style. This construction style, with its characteristic mansard roof, became popular during the 1860s and 70s and took its name from the reign of Napoleon III of France. During his reign (from 1852 to 1870) Paris was transformed into a city of long vistas down scenic boulevards. The Louvre was expanded as well, using the seventeenth-century roof style proposed by French architect Francois Mansart. These roofs almost always feature dormers. Second Empire buildings also feature surfaces which create a “rippling” effect; projections from multiple elevations included towers, and roof porches. Often, American homeowners looking to modernize their homes would construct a mansard roof, leading to sometimes clashing combinations of architectural styles.³³ However, this is not the case at the Miers House. The house was clearly constructed completely within the Second Empire style. Interior bracing of the roof indicates that the house always had the mansard roof. In addition, the interior features include arched openings between rooms, marble mantels, and other elements that clearly identify the house as a Second Empire style building.

According to local lore and several architectural historians, the house was constructed from a design in a pattern book written by Amos Bicknell, a New York City architect. Pattern books were widely used during the Victorian period (and prior) in the United States. These sources provided easy-to-follow instructions for building a particular type of house and were intended to give local builders architectural guidance. Equally often, an owner would select the design and present the plans to a builder. In either case, this was a quick, cost-effective method of construction for the general public, who may have possessed little or no experience with architecture, and it enhanced the public “taste.”³⁴

Money was apparently not an object. Jacob Miers is quoted as once saying, “There are two things I will spend money on, my daughter and my house.”³⁵ The Miers house closely resembles several patterns in *Bicknell’s Village Builder*. Sources, including Daniel Rieff’s *Houses from Books: Treatises, Pattern Books, and Catalogs in American Architecture; 1738-1950* describe the house’s resemblance to Bicknell’s Design 1. Similarities also exist between the Miers House and Designs 13 and 14.

³³ John C. Poppeliers, S. Allen Chambers, and Nancy B. Schwartz. *What Style Is It?: A Guide to American Architecture*. (Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 2003.)

³⁴ Historic Resources Inventory Form. Services of Schoharie County; Dell Upton, “Pattern Books and Professionalism,” *Winterthur Portfolio* 19:2/3 (Summer/Autumn, 1984), 107-150 *passim*.

³⁵ Vibbert, “Victorian Mansion.”

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Reduced Elevation of Suburban House, design 1, "Supplement to Bicknell's Village Builder." Large quarto volume, 20 plates. Price \$4.00.

Fig. 2: *Specimen Book of One Hundred Architectural Designs* (New York, Bicknell & Comstock, 1880), 9. [Google Books]



Fig 3: Amos Jackson Bicknell, *Bicknell's Village Builder (including Supplement)* (New York: A.J. Bicknell & Co., 1872), Supplement (unpaged): Plate 2. [Archive.org]

The house's builder, D.B. Provoost, expanded the building by just over two feet in length and four feet in width from what was proposed. However, the decorative elements and interior floorplan are precise matches to the Bicknell book. In particular, the details of the cornice are unique:

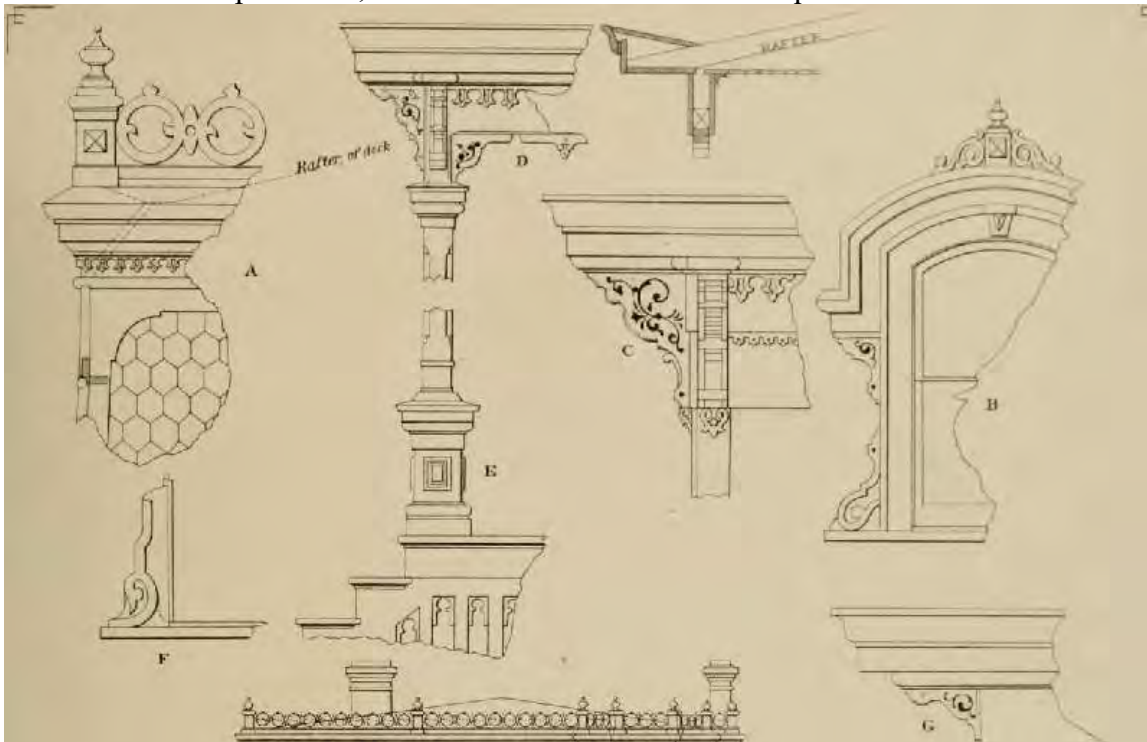


Fig 4: Amos Jackson Bicknell, *Bicknell's Village Builder (including Supplement)* (New York: A.J. Bicknell & Co., 1872), Supplement (unpaged): Plate 2. [Archive.org]

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Because the first edition of the supplement was published in 1871, this suggests a construction date later than the traditional date for the Miers House given by Hal vonLinden, a reporter for the *Knickerbocker News*, who suggested in 1963 that it was built “around 1866.”³⁶

Changes Associated with the Library

Overall, the library has maintained the Jacob T. Miers House in excellent condition and chosen to use the main block in ways that maintain the original design and décor. Most of the spaces in the main block and ell have been turned into reading rooms, furnished with period furniture, and decorated with paint and stenciling appropriate to the mid to late-19th century. One room on the second floor is a conference room. The most active library functions (children’s books, programs, and reception) are housed in the hyphen and carriage house addition. These parts of the structure were built to replace an original carriage house that was included in the purchase of the house in 1963. It stood just behind the main house to the west and was used as a separate Children’s Room. Unfortunately, it burned to the ground in 1994. Otherwise, the only other threat to integrity of the Miers House has come from Hurricane Irene in August 2011 and, as mentioned previously, the Library Association worked hard to preserve as much original fabric as possible and to replace losses with more flood-proof but compatible materials.

³⁶ Von Linden, Hal. "Schoharie Landmark to Become New Library Home." *Knickerbocker News* (Albany, NY), February 6, 1963.

Jacob T. Miers House (Schoharie Free Library)
Name of Property

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9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

Books

Garrison, Dee. *Apostles of Culture: The Public Librarian and American Society, 1876-1920*. New York: Macmillan Information, 1979.

Johnson, Elmer T. *A History of Libraries in the Western World*. New York, NY: The Scarecrow Press, Inc., 1965.

Mathews, Virginia H. *Libraries for Today and Tomorrow: How Do We Pay for Them? Who Uses Them? Who Staffs Them? What Are Their Services?* Garden City, N.Y.: Doubleday, 1976.. Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1976.

Poppeliers, John C., S. Allen Chambers, and Nancy B. Schwartz. *What Style Is It?: A Guide to American Architecture*. Washington, D.C.: Preservation Press, 2003.

Shera, Jesse Hauk. *Foundations of the Public Library; The Origins of the Public Library Movement in New England, 1629-1855*. Chicago: Univ. of Chicago Press, 1949.

Articles

"Assn. Receives Donations for New Library." February 6, 1963. Newspaper Clippings, Name of Paper Unknown.

"Gifts Received By Free Library." February 6, 1963. Newspaper Clippings, Name of Paper Unknown.

"More Help for Library." February 13, 1963. Newspaper Clippings, Name of Paper Unknown.

"Fire Hits Schoharie Town Hall." *Times-Journal*, July 13, 1994.

"Mansion is Schoharie Library's First Real Home." *Schenectady Union-Star*, October 12, 1963, 16.

"The New Look." *Knickerbocker News* (Albany, NY), July 29, 1963, 3B.

"New Schoharie Library Will Be Dedicated October 13." *Schenectady Gazette*, September 9, 1963.

"Proposed Library Site." *The County Seater* (Schoharie, NY), August 22, 1962, 1.

"Schoharie Library Dedication Date Set." *Times-Journal*, September 11, 1963.

"Schoharie Library to Celebrate 30th Anniversary." *Schoharie County Journal*, April 23, 1946.

"Schoharie to Dedicate New Library Oct. 13." *Schenectady Union-Star*, September 5, 1963, 22.

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"Schoharie Will Have \$ Left After Fire Settlement." *Times-Journal*, August 17, 1994.

Von Linden, Hal. "Schoharie Landmark to Become New Library Home." *Knickerbocker News* (Albany, NY), February 6, 1963.

Von Linden, Hal. "Schoharie Library Moves." May 7, 1963. Newspaper Clippings, Name of Paper Unknown.

Von Linden, Hal. "Signpost." n.d. Newspaper Clippings, Name of Paper Unknown.

Other sources

Historic Resources Inventory Form, August 8, 2013. Prepared by Real Property Tax Services of Schoharie County.

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): _____

Jacob T. Miers House (Schoharie Free Library)
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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.90 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

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

1	<u>18N</u> Zone	<u>555921E</u> Easting	<u>4723500N</u> Northing	3	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing
2	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing	4	<u> </u> Zone	<u> </u> Easting	<u> </u> Northing

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

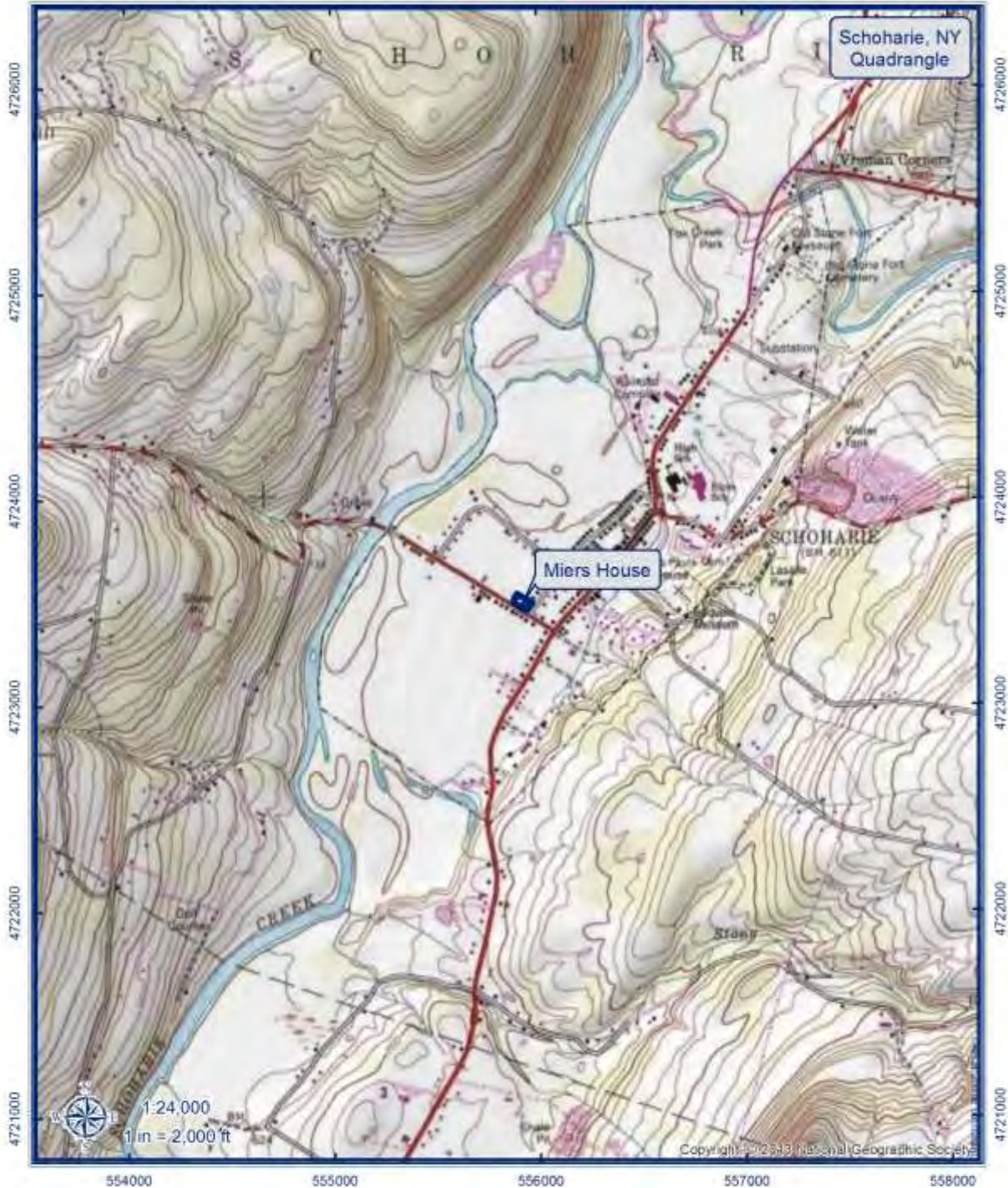
The property lines are those originally associated with the house and original carriage house. As such, the boundaries of the nomination coincide with the property lines.

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Name of Property

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County and State

Jacob T. Miers House
Schoharie, Schoharie Co., NY

103 Knowler Avenue
Schoharie, NY 12157



Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter



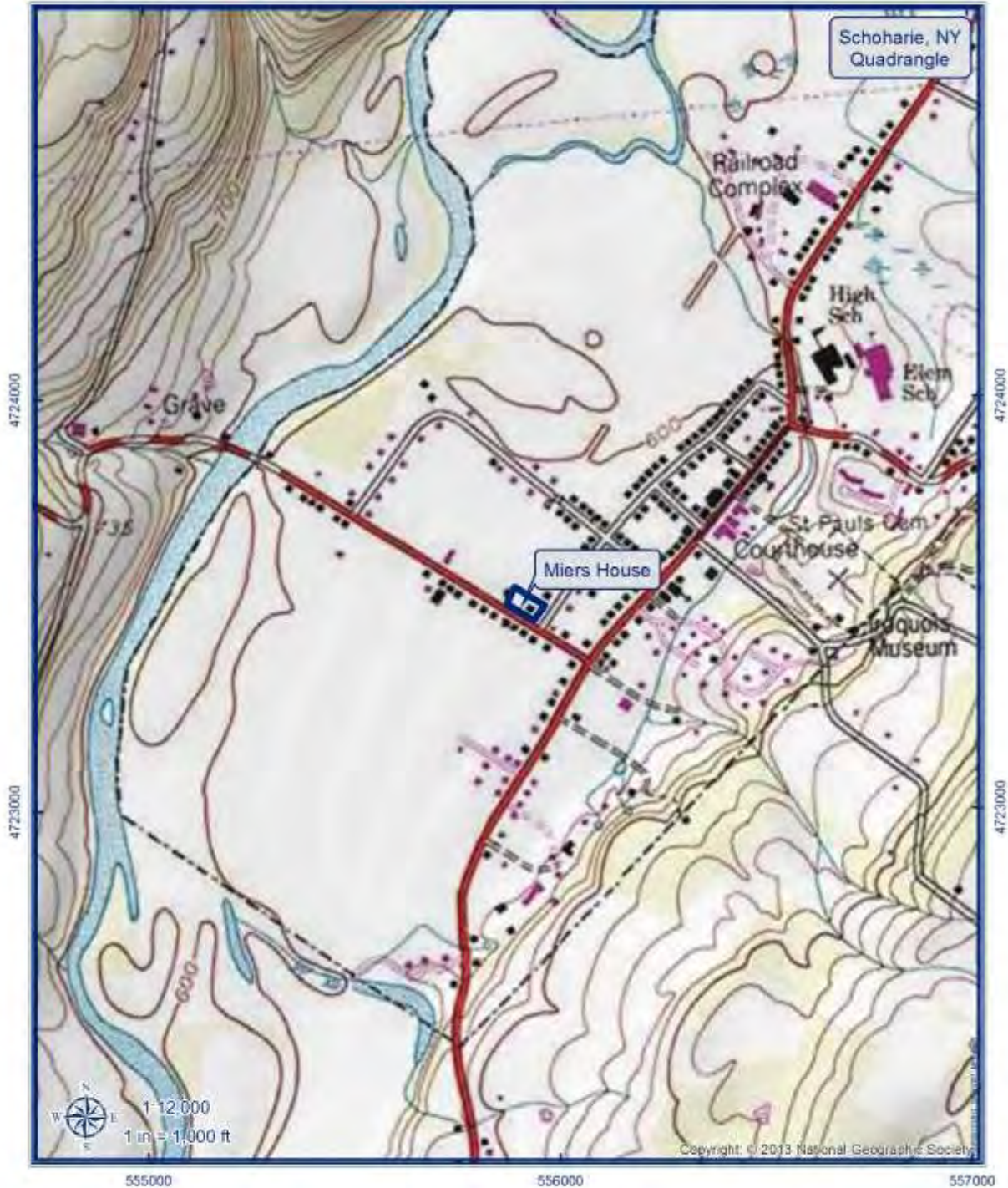
Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

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Schoharie, NY 12157



556000

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter



 Miers House
 RR removed

 NEW YORK STATE OF OPPORTUNITY
Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

Jacob T. Miers House (Schoharie Free Library)
Name of Property

Schoharie, NY
County and State

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Drew Radtke
organization Cooperstown Graduate Program date May 11, 2015
street & number 5838 State Route 80 telephone (804) 677-9180
city or town Cooperstown state NY zip code 13326
e-mail radtke.drew@gmail.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

Photographs:

Name of Property: Jacob T. Miers House

City or Vicinity: Town of Schoharie

County: Schoharie County (095) State: NY

Photographer: Drew Radtke

Date Photographed: April 2015

- | | |
|----------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| NY_Schoharie County_Jacob T Miers House_0001 | View of the main entryway for the house facing northwest. Note mansard roof, alternating double and triple brackets, and pierced decorative woodwork on front porch. |
| NY_Schoharie County_Jacob T Miers House_0002 | View of the southeast oblique, facing west. Note rear ell, hyphen, and side porch. |
| NY_Schoharie County_Jacob T Miers House_0003 | View of carriage house addition and northwest oblique, facing east. The addition was completed in 2005 and sits partially on the footprint of an original carriage house, which burned in 1994. Note the ramp, which serves as the main entry to the building today. |
| NY_Schoharie County_Jacob T Miers House_0004 | View of southwest oblique, facing north. Note the tower and mansard roof, which are characteristic of the Second Empire Style. |
| NY_Schoharie County_Jacob T Miers House_0005 | Detail view of tower, facing north. |
| NY_Schoharie County_Jacob T Miers House_0006 | View from original main entrance to the house. Note the original sets of double doors; the interior doors are glazed. |
| NY_Schoharie County_Jacob T Miers House_0007 | First floor reading room. |

Jacob T. Miers House (Schoharie Free Library)
Name of Property

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County and State

Property Owner:

name Ms. Laura Rosenthal, President, Board of Trustees, The Schoharie Free Association Library
street & number PO Box 519, 103 Knower Avenue telephone (518) 295-7127
city or town Schoharie state NY zip code 12157

Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



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CAUTION!
WATCH
YOUR STEP











UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Miers, Jacob T., House

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, Schoharie

DATE RECEIVED: 10/16/15 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 11/06/15
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 11/23/15 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 12/01/15
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 15000857

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

APPEAL: N DATA PROBLEM: N LANDSCAPE: N LESS THAN 50 YEARS: N
OTHER: N PDIL: N PERIOD: N PROGRAM UNAPPROVED: N
REQUEST: N SAMPLE: N SLR DRAFT: N NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT RETURN REJECT 12/1/15 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

RECOM./CRITERIA _____

REVIEWER _____ DISCIPLINE _____

TELEPHONE _____ DATE _____

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR Y/N

If a nomination is returned to the nominating authority, the nomination is no longer under consideration by the NPS.



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**

ANDREW M. CUOMO
Governor

ROSE HARVEY
Commissioner

RECEIVED 2280

OCT 16 2015

Nat. Register of Historic Places
National Park Service

14 October 2015

Alexis Abernathy
National Park Service
National Register of Historic Places
1201 Eye St. NW, 8th Floor
Washington, D.C. 20005

Re: National Register Nomination

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to submit the following two nominations, both on disc, to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register:

Jacob T. Miers House, Schoharie County
Beaver Falls Grange Hall #554, Lewis County

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

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank
National Register Coordinator
New York State Historic Preservation Office