

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 POTSDAM CIVIC CENTER COMPLEX

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number 2 PARK STREET

<input type="checkbox"/>	not for publication
<input type="checkbox"/>	vicinity

city or town POTSDAM

state NEW YORK code NY county ST. LAWRENCE code 089 zip code 13667

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,
I hereby certify that this 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 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 local

Ruth A. Purport DISTRO 3/11/16
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 Elson G. Beall 5-3-16
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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ST. LAWRENCE CO., NEW YORK
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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.)

<input type="checkbox"/>	private
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	public - Local
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - State
<input type="checkbox"/>	public - Federal

<input checked="" type="checkbox"/>	building(s)
<input type="checkbox"/>	district
<input type="checkbox"/>	site
<input type="checkbox"/>	structure
<input type="checkbox"/>	object

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

N/A

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

Current Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

GOVERNMENT: government office
 EDUCATION: library
 RECREATION & CULTURE: auditorium

GOVERNMENT: government office
 EDUCATION: library
 RECREATION & CULTURE: auditorium, museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

Materials
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE 19th & 20th CENTURY REVIVALS: Classical
 Revival

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

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Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The Potsdam Civic Center, located in the Village of Potsdam, St. Lawrence County, New York, is a highly intact two-story, three-block, L-plan public building. The Civic Center was built from 1934 to 1935 to serve as a community center for the village and town of Potsdam, and within it was incorporated the former Universalist Church, erected 1876-77, which was modified to serve as the complex's north block. It is a Neoclassical-style building constructed with walls of rough-hewn Potsdam sandstone ashlar. It consists of, moving south to north, the Potsdam Public Library, the Village of Potsdam Municipal Offices, and the Potsdam Museum. Salvaged Potsdam sandstone from the municipal building that formerly occupied the site was used to build the new south and center blocks of the Civic Center; the north block was originally the Gothic Revival Universalist Church. The walls of the newer south and center units were constructed of Potsdam sandstone with brick backing, while the walls of the right unit were built entirely of rough-hewn ashlar Potsdam Sandstone. The roof line is asymmetrical; the south block has a hipped roof, while the center and right blocks both have side-gable roofs, that of the north block being more steeply pitched than the center block. Of distinctive Neoclassical inspiration are the three monumental Tuscan-order porticos that front the principal elevation and serve as a unifying stylistic feature linking the three components. The interior of the Civic Center remains substantially intact, as expressed in the retention of most all of the original layout; the large open volumes for the auditorium and library still exist regardless of changes in function. The Civic Center remains in good condition with minimal alteration. There has been one addition, an emergency services building, which is attached to the west elevation; it does not substantially detract from the overall physical integrity of the Civic Center and is largely screened from view excepting when the building is observed from the north and west.

Narrative Description

Location and Setting

The Potsdam Civic Center is located in the Village of Potsdam, St. Lawrence County, New York, near the eastern edge of the Market Street Historic District (NRHP-listed 1979). The Civic Center property is bounded on the north by Elm Street and residential properties; on the east by Park Street, across from which is a landscaped park and Snell Hall, once part of Potsdam's normal school facility (NRHP-listed 2015); to the south by Main Street and the Potsdam Fire Station; and on the west by a parking lot and a later building used by the Potsdam Police Department and the Potsdam Rescue Squad. The complex occupies a rectangular lot with limited landscaping, save for some ornamental plantings present on the east side and a small landscaped area on the north side. A flagpole is conspicuously located in front of the facility, between the sidewalk and the municipal office block of the facility. The Civic Center's location is prominent within the village, being that it is situated on Park Street between the two principal east-west routes in the village, Main and Elm streets; there Route 56 comes into the village from the southeast, becoming Park Street, while Lawrence Avenue (U.S. Route 11) comes in from the northeast to intersect with Elm Street. Both Route 56 and U.S. Route 11 are major regional transportation arteries that connect Potsdam with distant points.

Exterior

There are three entrances into the Potsdam Civic Center from the principal elevation, the east façade, one each (moving south to north) into the library, the municipal offices, and the museum. The south and north blocks (the library and museum, respectively) have sandstone steps that lead from grade level to the floors of their corresponding porticos. Both of these porticos are similarly conceived, being of Tuscan order derivation and having four columns that sustain an entablature and pediment. The center block (the municipal offices) has a narrow flight of sandstone steps that lead to a full-width portico that is sustained by six Tuscan columns which support an entablature; however, this portico is not fully pedimented like the other two, but instead employs a small intersecting gable at its center. The friezes of all three units have descriptive titles, rendered in black upper case lettering against a white background, signifying the function of each. The frieze of the south block is

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labeled "POTSDAM LIBRARY," that on the center block reads "MUNICIPAL OFFICES," while that on the north block bears the name "MUSEUM."

The south block, the Potsdam Library, is cast in distinctive Palladian terms. It consists of a hipped-roof block the front of which is partially fronted by a freestanding order; it is five-bays wide, the fenestration being symmetrical, with the three innermost bays corresponding with the portico's width. The portico shelters two sets of double-leaf doors which are arranged so as to correspond with the spaces between the portico columns. Both doors have a single glazed panel in the upper portion and two wood panels in the lower half. There is a round-arched fanlight above each of these bays, which is headed by a stone arch with keystone. Between the two sets of doors is the center bay, which is fitted with an enclosed bulletin board case. At one time this was another doorway, like the two flanking entrances; this door was closed-up during renovations undertaken ca. 1976. The bay corresponding with the bulletin board follows the design of the outer two doors as it has a fanlight above it and a rounded arch with keystone. On either side of the porch are one-over-one single-hung windows with corresponding fanlights. The raised basement is punctuated by two windows, one to either side of the portico, each of which is fitted with 12-pane sash.

The center block, the Municipal Offices, is five-bays wide and has a central double-leaf door that matches the design of the doors on the library. On either side of the door there are two eight-over-eight single-hung windows. Directly above these windows are eight-pane transoms. The windows have a flat arch with keystone motif surmounting each. At second-story level there are five evenly spaced eight-over-eight windows that correspond in the vertical plane with those below. Punctuating the wall of the raised basement are two windows, one on either side of the central stairs. These basement windows follow the design of the basement windows on the left unit.

The north block, which houses the Potsdam Public Museum, was bound in many regards to the existing architecture of the former Universalist Church. It is five-bays-wide with a central entrance that follows the design of the other doors in the center and left blocks. On either side of the door are two large Gothic arched windows, these four windows being representative of the earlier building's fenestration; they are fitted with 16-over-16 sash, above which, corresponding with the area within the Gothic arch, are windows divided into six panes with an outward radiating muntin pattern. These windows have protective plexi-glass covering the wood sash. There are two basement windows that follow the design of the other basement windows on the left and center blocks. At cornice level is a narrow wood frieze that employs a running decorative motif, another vestige of the earlier building prior to its incorporation into the Civic Center.

The south elevation corresponds with the south block, or library, and faces the adjacent Potsdam Fire Department. Fenestration on this elevation is asymmetrical. Three doors are present along the raised basement level; one is located at the southwest corner and provides maintenance access, and immediately to the right (east) of it is a door that leads into the back of the library. There is additionally a door near the center point of the elevation, located in a small gabled projection. The basement level is also punctuated by five windows; two are paired windows with six-over-six sash, two are paired windows with four-over-four sash, while the last is a one-over-one sash window. On the upper level six windows are present. Four of these are tall, narrow, multi-paned replacement windows, and above them are blank wood panels indicating the alteration of the original configuration. To the right (east) of these four windows is an old entrance that has been made into a recessed casement window, adjacent to which is a small window hung with six-over-six sash. At the southeast corner of this elevation is a two-faceted date stone. The south facet reads "TOWN HALL ERECTED 1875" in raised lettering against a vermiculated background and corresponds with the municipal building that formerly occupied the site; the east facet reads "REBUILT 1934."

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The west elevation of the Potsdam Civic Center is utilitarian in concept and presents as the west elevation of the south block. There are two windows at basement level which are fitted with one-over-one single-hung sash. Below cornice level are four single-pane windows which have smaller paired rectangular-shaped windows below. A large sandstone chimney rises from the roofline of the south block, as do two prominent metal vents. The rear of this block engages the modern addition, constructed for emergency services, and which houses the Potsdam police station and the rescue squad. The addition is constructed of cement block and wood, and in essence screens the remainder of the west elevation addition of the Civic Center from view.

Behind the addition is the west elevation, or rear, of the north block (museum), as well as a portion of the municipal offices, the remainder of which is engaged by the addition. The west elevation of the museum has three sets of one-over-one single hung windows at basement level, in addition to a door, which is shielded beneath a small porch sustained by Tuscan columns. This doorway provides access to the small landscaped area and prior to ca. 1976 was the principal access to the museum. Corresponding with the upper level of the museum are four Gothic arched windows that echo those on the opposite east elevation. The north wall of the center block, the municipal offices, forms the southern boundary for the small landscaped area, and there a rear entrance into that section is situated. This entrance has a small porch sustained by three Tuscan columns, the frieze of which carries the name "MUNICIPAL OFFICES." The door there is a modern replacement and to its right is a window fitted with six-over-six sash. There are two more windows of this type to the left of the porch, in addition to three at basement level hung with six-over-six sash.

The north elevation of the museum, which fronts on Elm Street, has three Gothic arched windows that match those on the east and west elevations. In the center of this elevation is a narrow projecting pavilion in which the central window is placed. This central window, which is slightly wider than the other windows, corresponds with the original Elm Street entrance of what was formerly the Universalist Church. In addition, the basement level has two windows that match the windows employed on the east façade at that level.

Interior

The south unit of the Potsdam Civic Center, now the village library, originally functioned as an auditorium and assembly space. In the 1970s it was remodeled for use as a circulating library. The principal entrances from Park Street lead into a lobby area. From there double-leaf doors provide access into the main portion of the library, a large open volume with removable stacks and fluorescent lighting fixtures arranged in rows along the dropped ceiling. Towards the back of the main room at second-floor level is a balcony. There is also a rear door against the far wall, which leads out to the parking lot behind the facility. On the right side (north) of the main library room is a door that leads directly into the municipal offices of the central block. Moving from the library into the municipal office section, there is a passage that provides communication with the police station, located at first-floor level, and with meeting rooms located on the second floor; to the right of this space is a hallway providing access to the offices of local officials. The main entrance from the east facade leads into an open space with offices on either side. Directly in front of this entrance are stairs that lead to meeting rooms on the second floor in addition to the village court. Adjacent to these stairs is the door into a large meeting room, which is typically used for board meetings. To the right of this meeting room is a hallway leading to more offices and also to the Potsdam museum in the north block.

The museum served at one time as the village library before this function was relocated to the south block. The principal entrance into the museum leads into a small lobby from which the main space is accessed. These doors, of a double leaf type, have glazed upper panels. The main room of the museum is a single open volume that is well suited for rotating exhibition space. In the southwest corner is a sandstone fireplace of simple geometric design. A stained glass window is present in the fourth lancet window from the right. Against the rear (west) wall is a mezzanine, representative of the earlier library function; stairs, centrally located and characterized by newel posts and handrails of wood and iron balusters, provide access to this upper level of

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space. A wall is positioned below the mezzanine and is embellished with engaged pilasters and an associated entablature. A portion of this wall is open and within the opened are placed octagonal-profiled columns, this treatment dating to the 1934-35 renovation. Wood and iron railing aligns the open side of the mezzanine; the wood newel posts of this railing are embellished with urns, which were also used on the newel posts of the staircase. The open space below the mezzanine accommodates an area now used as a research library, in addition to the staircase, while a portion to its north serves as a kitchen. Directly below the staircase that leads up to the mezzanine is a staircase that provides communication with basement level.

The basement, situated beneath all three of the interconnected blocks, is used for a variety of functions and by any number of local organizations. It has floors of poured concrete and stone. The basement area beneath the library and municipal offices consist of a multitude of rooms used for office space, teaching, and a bookstore for the library. There is a large lobby space that the offices and rooms are clustered around. A hallway from the lobby area leads left to the storage rooms situated below the museum, where the museum's collection is in part housed. This area consists of a main work room in addition to smaller storage rooms one of which has a built-in vault in it. Additional storage rooms and vaults are located beneath the municipal offices.

Alterations

Since the time of its completion the Potsdam Civic Center has seen multiple renovations and one addition that do not substantially detract from the overall integrity of the resource. The mid-1930s configuration stayed the same from the time of the facility's opening, in February 1935, until 1974. At that time it was decided to renovate the auditorium because it was used the least; the proposed renovations changed the auditorium into a new space for the library. The museum, which had been located in the basement area of the library, could thus be moved upstairs into the library's original space. These renovations were finished in 1976 in time for the nation's bicentennial. The emergency service's building was attached to the Potsdam Civic Center on the west elevation and was built between 1998 and 2002. Other changes have included those related to regular maintenance activities and the updating of electrical, plumbing, and heating systems, in addition to asbestos removal (2010) and the installation of some replacement windows.

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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.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMUNITY PLANNING & DEVELOPMENT

POLITICS/GOVERNMENT

SOCIAL HISTORY

Period of Significance

1934-1965

Significant Dates

1934-35

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Lansing, Green & Bisnett, architects (Watertown, N.Y.)

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.

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance for the Potsdam Civic Center spans the years from 1934 to 1965. This period is initiated with the construction of the Potsdam Civic Center; the terminal date reflects the 50-year cutoff, given the building's continued civic and public use.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

N/A

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Narrative Statement of Significance

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Potsdam Civic Center is locally significant under NRHP Criterion A in the areas of Community Planning and Development, Politics/Government, and Social History, and is additionally significant under Criterion C, in the area of Architecture. The Potsdam Civic Center shares salient associations with Depression-era New Deal programs and politics, particularly as manifested in the process that led to its construction. It is representative of local community planning efforts by those who endeavored to build it, and remains an important social history document given its use for a wide range of social gatherings since its completion in the mid-1930s. The building is additionally significant as an example of Neoclassical-style civic design, and one which incorporated an existing religious building into its construction. Plans for the building were executed by the office of Lansing, Green & Bisnett of Watertown, New York. The civic center was built to fulfill two needs for the people of the Village of Potsdam. Firstly, it satisfied the need for a community center that could offer space for both village and town offices, a place for local civic organizations to meet, and a new location for the Potsdam Reading Room and Library Association. Secondly, at the time of its construction, there was a great need for relief efforts for the unemployed in and around the surrounding area of Potsdam, and as such its construction provided employment for area building tradesmen. From 1934 to 1935, when the Civic Center was constructed, local workers were employed by the village, using funds from New Deal programs, notably the Civil Works Administration (C.W.A.), in addition to New York's Temporary Emergency Relief Administration (T.E.R.A.), an important precursor of the federal relief programs. The Potsdam Civic Center was built using recycled Potsdam Sandstone from the demolished municipal building which had occupied a portion of the site previously. Along with that stone, the plans for the civic center also utilized the Universalist Church, which had been donated to the Village for use as a library; this building was reworked and incorporated into the new scheme. Given its continued use, the defined period of significance spans the period from 1934 to 1965. The Potsdam Civic Center today continues to for the purposes originally conceived, as home to the village library and the municipal offices of the village and as a meeting place for various community groups; additionally, since 1940, it has housed the Potsdam Public Museum. It is a highly visible building in Potsdam with manifold significance to the community.

Historic Context

This region of St. Lawrence County was settled in the early years of the nineteenth century. Benjamin Raymond, who hosted Potsdam's first town meeting at his house in 1806, was a land agent tasked with promoting settlement there; he was among a group that traveled in 1803 to this vicinity and one of the first permanent settlers in the town. Satisfied with its location on the Racquette River, which afforded abundant water power for mill enterprises, Raymond oversaw the surveying of roads and opened a land office. A grist mill, made operational ca. 1805, was among the first improvements Raymond oversaw. The first post office was established in 1807. Until 1809 a ferry provided for communication with the opposite side of the river, at which time a bridge was constructed. Settlement of these lands continued to increase and by 1810 the town had a population approaching 1,000. While the War of 1812 raised anxieties among the region's citizens it also stimulated development, given military necessities and the need for the improvement of overland transportation routes. About 1821 a building of locally quarried Potsdam sandstone was built for Liberty Knowles, Sewali Raymond and Charles Partridge, in part to ascertain whether this local material was suitable for architectural purposes. Knowles shortly thereafter commissioned the construction of a sandstone tannery and a distillery, among the early landmarks of manufacturing in Potsdam. Between 1823 and 1824 Partridge had a three-story stone structure known as the "Aqueduct Building" built, in which water was raised to supply the tannery and distillery; hollowed logs were laid to various parts of the village and the citizens were thereby supplied with water at five dollars per annum. In 1849 Dr. Henry Hewitt, convinced that improvements to the Racquette River would allow for a thriving lumber trade, successfully petitioned for an appropriation to see to this work

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and thus helped establish lumbering as a principal local industry. Lumbering and the quarrying of local sandstone emerged as the principal industries during the nineteenth century. The Village of Potsdam was incorporated in March 1831.¹

The Potsdam Civic Center represents an important episode in the development of Potsdam in the years between the First and Second World Wars. It was specifically conceived as a centralized civic center to provide a range of important functions central to village life. The term “civic center” was introduced in the early twentieth century and is associated with the City Beautiful Movement, which had begun as a response to and critique of individualism, and in order to promote moral and civic virtue in city communities.² The City Beautiful Movement had broad aims focusing on urban order, creating open space in cities, encouraging architectural development, and giving citizens a reason to have civic pride in their communities.³ The movement inspired the construction of many public and civic buildings in the Beaux-Arts and Neoclassical styles including government buildings, libraries, and museums, in the belief that the power of public works could influence morals and behavior.⁴

The Potsdam Civic Center was constructed from 1934 to 1935, at a time when public morale was at an all-time low because of the Great Depression. The Potsdam Civic Center was partially funded through both Federal and State programs aimed at offering relief work. Initially, work on the Civic Center began through the Civil Works Administration (C.W.A.).⁵ The C.W.A. was created through Executive Order No. 6420B by President Franklin D. Roosevelt on November 9, 1933.⁶ It was headed by Harry Lloyd Hopkins and, at its height, employed four million people on public works projects. Even though the C.W.A. was a popular program, President Roosevelt ended the program at the end of March 1934. At that time, any remaining projects from the C.W.A. were moved to the Works Division of the Federal Emergency Relief Administration (F.E.R.A.).⁷

The Potsdam Civic Center’s construction continued through funding from the Temporary Emergency Relief Administration (T.E.R.A.), a New York State relief program. This program had been written into effect by Roosevelt, when he was governor of New York State in 1931. Harry Lloyd Hopkins had been in charge of T.E.R.A. until 1933, when Roosevelt—by then president—called him to Washington to head federal relief programs. T.E.R.A. continued in New York State until 1935; it reimbursed municipalities 75% of approved relief costs including work relief and any materials associated with work relief projects.⁸

Potsdam Civic Center History, 1934-1965

In November 1933, Park Street had two buildings located on it, the decrepit Potsdam Town Hall, which had been prohibited by the state for any type of use because it was a fire hazard, and the Universalist Church.⁹ Local officials were considering the remodeling of the unused town hall for use as a community building because of the availability

¹ Information in the first two paragraphs gleaned from Gates Curtis, ed., *Our Country and its People: A Memorial Record of St. Lawrence County, New York* (Syracuse: D. Mason & Co., 1894), 462-470.

² Jonathan Ritter, “The American Civic Center: Urban Ideals and Compromise on the Ground” (Ph.D. diss., Institute of Fine Arts, New York University, 2007), 1, 14.

³ Mark Gelernter, *A History of American Architecture* (Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999), 204; Ritter, 9.

⁴ *Ibid.*, 204; Ritter, 14.

⁵ “Talk New Civic Center Project,” *Courier and Freeman*, November 29, 1933.

⁶ Franklin D. Roosevelt, “Executive Order No. 6420B,” November 9, 1933. Online by Gerhard Peters and John T. Woolley, *The American Presidency Project* (<http://www.presidency.ucsb.edu/ws/?pid=14548>; accessed March, 16-2015).

⁷ T.H. Watkins, *The Hungry Years: A Narrative History of the Great Depression in America* (New York: Henry Holt & Company LLC, 1999), 180.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 182; The Temporary Emergency Relief Administration, *Emergency Relief in the State of New York* (Albany, NY: J. B. Lyon Company, Printers, 1934), 12.

⁹ “Talk New Civic Center Project,” *Courier and Freeman*, November 29, 1933.

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of new federal funds through the C.W.A. At the same time the Universalist Church congregation decided to help with the project by donating their building for use as a library. The Village of Potsdam decided to hold a vote on this proposal, which would include remodeling both the town hall and church, along with building a hyphen to link the two, a “memorial hall” providing room for village and town offices, space for various civic organizations to meet, and an auditorium. The architectural firm of Lansing, Greene & Bisnett of Watertown, New York, was hired to provide rough sketches of what the new civic center would look like.¹⁰

On December 23, 1933, a special town meeting was conducted to vote on this new project. Local papers extensively covered the upcoming vote on the proposal. To gain support for the proposal, in the week of the vote, local officials and community members highlighted their reasoning for why the public should vote in favor of the proposal in the local newspaper, Potsdam’s *Courier and Freeman*. Reasons included a new modern fireproof library, a World War One memorial, an auditorium, and immediate employment. Support for the project also came from various civic organizations including the Boy Scouts, Girl Scouts, the village board, the trustees of the library, the D.A.R., the American Legion, and the 20th Century Club.¹¹ The Civic Center project was approved by a vote of four to one, allowing the project to move forward into 1934.

Shortly after the vote, Mayor Ira Kendall and village trustee H. E. Flack traveled to New York City and Albany to speak with representatives from the Public Works Administration (P.W.A.) and the C.W.A. The men hoped that these talks would help speed the process of getting the civic center project approved and funded in order to get locally unemployed men working in Potsdam. The *Courier and Freeman* reported the following: “It has been suggested that some of the work might be done, and started at once as a civil works project, thereby relieving the local employment situation, whereas, if it were done wholly as a public works proposition some time might elapse before the necessary plans could be completed.”¹²

The process of getting the Potsdam Civic Center project funded and approved continued into the spring, when both the village and town approved a bond for \$38,000 for the project, in March. Mayor Kendall felt strongly about the project and its overall benefits to the community by stating, “We shall construct this community center with three major objects in view: maximum Potsdam labor, lowest possible cost and the production of a community center in which citizens will take great pride.”¹³ By April 1934 construction had been initiated.

In the initial stages of remodeling the town hall it was discovered that the walls and foundation were in poor condition, so much so that they were beyond repair. At this time it was decided to demolish the building and reuse the Potsdam sandstone from its walls.¹⁴ Remodeling work had already begun on the former Universalist Church to turn it into a library as the Potsdam Reading Room and Library Association used its own funds to advance that part of the project. Remodeling of the church included removing the pews, removing the Elm Street steeple, and moving the entrance from its location from Elm Street to Park Street. The layout of the library was based on that of the library in Mamaroneck, New York; to make the library more inviting, a Potsdam sandstone fireplace was constructed in its main room.¹⁵

The construction process was, as might be expected, extensively covered in both the *Courier and Freeman* and the *Potsdam Herald-Recorder*. In May 1934 it was reported that the contracts for the structural steel, roof, heating,

¹⁰“Revive Plan to Remodel Town Hall,” *ibid*, November 15, 1933; “Talk New Civic Center Project,” *ibid*, November 29, 1933.

¹¹“Would Give Halls to Villages,” *ibid*, December 20, 1933.

¹²“Confer on Civic Center,” *ibid*, January 17, 1934.

¹³“Prepositions are Carried,” *Potsdam Herald-Recorder*, March 23, 1934.

¹⁴“Begin Work on Civic Center,” *ibid*, March 30, 1934. “Town Hall Stands No More,” *Courier and Freeman*, May 9, 1934.

¹⁵“Conversion: Operation Church,” *The Pioneer*, July-August 1947, 4-5.

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plumbing and the reinforced steel work were ready. It was also reported that the foundation work was being funded through T.E.R.A., with a weekly payroll of \$1,500.¹⁶ This news conveyed the fact that C.W.A programming had ended in March and as such the village had to look for new ways to pay the workers.

The construction of the Potsdam Civic Center continued until January 1935. On February 2 the Town of Potsdam board meeting, led by William E. Flanders, was held at the newly completed facility.¹⁷ Shortly thereafter the library also officially moved into its part of the facility and the building began to be booked for various events, including an auto show and a better housing show, both conducted in 1935.¹⁸ Costs associated with the civic center's construction totaled \$133,303; yet various funds, including those from T.E.R.A, the sale of the old library, the bond of \$38,000, and materials that were sold off, brought the net cost of the Civic Center down to \$107,733. The building was immediately insured at a value of \$225,000.¹⁹ The Potsdam Civic Center was officially dedicated on May 23, 1935. The event was attended by, among others, Mayor Kendall, William E. Flanders, Julius Frank of the T.E.R.A. office in Ogdensburg, Union College president Dixon Ryan Fox, and various local officials and community members.²⁰

Once the Potsdam Civic Center was opened for use, space was reserved in the basement for various organizations including the American Legion, the Boy Scouts, and the Girl Scouts. The auditorium had a 1,000-person capacity and was used for theatre events and concerts.²¹ In 1940, the Potsdam Public Museum was formed and took up residence in one of the stack rooms of the library, located in the facility's basement.²² Public use continued until February 1942, when *The Raquette* and the *Courier and Freeman* newspapers both reported that the Potsdam Civic Center had been taken over by the Army and closed indefinitely to social functions and lectures.²³ Right before the takeover in February, the facility had served as a Red Cross Headquarters and there local citizens could donate their time to sewing and knitting along with other wartime relief efforts.²⁴ By November of 1942, the Army had left the Civic Center, allowing social functions to resume just as they had before.

Throughout the rest of the 1940s to 1965, the Potsdam Civic Center was utilized by many different organizations from the surrounding Potsdam community. The various spaces were used for dances, theatre, concerts, science fairs, public meetings, municipal business, cooking demonstrations, and for graduation commencement for both Clarkson University and the Potsdam Normal School.²⁵

In 1945 Clarkson University celebrated its fiftieth anniversary. The event occurred on October 8, 1945 and had many notable guests, including former president Herbert Hoover, Fleet Admiral Ernest King, and Joseph E. Davies. King was the second most senior officer of the U.S. Navy during the Second World War, while Davis was a former U.S. Ambassador to Russia. The three men were all given honorary degrees from Clarkson. The ceremony was broadcast over a nationwide, 90-station hook-up made possible by the National Broadcasting Company. There was a parade through the Village of Potsdam, the guests of honor all watching from the steps of the civic center.²⁶

¹⁶“Civic Center Contracts Let,” *Potsdam Herald-Recorder*, May 18, 1934.

¹⁷“An Informal Dedication,” *ibid*, March 3, 1935.

¹⁸“Library Moves to Civic Center,” *Courier and Freeman*, March 13, 1935.

¹⁹“Statement on Civic Center,” *Potsdam Herald-Recorder*, March 8, 1935.

²⁰“The Old and New in the Civic Center,” *Courier and Freeman*, May 29, 1935.

²¹Archives Potsdam Public Museum, Civic Center II A. Box 1.

²²Marguerite Chapman, “Every Community Needs and Wants a Museum...Here’s How Potsdam Got Hers,” *The Quarterly* 6 no. 2 (1961): 5.

²³“Civic Center Closes Doors to Social Life,” *The Raquette*, February 20, 1942; “Potsdam Civic Center Taken Over By Army,” *Courier and Freeman*, February 11, 1942.

²⁴“Big Response to Red Cross Plea,” *Potsdam Herald-Recorder*, January 23, 1942.

²⁵Archives Potsdam Public Museum, Civic Center II A. Box 1.

²⁶“College Aiding as Clarkson Plans 50th Anniversary,” *The Raquette*, October 5, 1945.

POTSDAM CIVIC CENTER COMPLEX

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One last interesting use of the Civic Center was in 1965, when students from local colleges and the newly formed Potsdam Human Rights Committee used space there to hold a “Selma Sympathy Rally,” in March of that year. The Rally included fundraising for the Civil Rights Movement, a “hootenanny,” and a showing of a documentary film on the movement. Along with these events the Rally also included a talk by the Reverend John H. Teeter, an Episcopal priest, who was active in the Civil Rights Movement and had participated in the demonstrations in Selma.²⁷ These events, along with its usage from 1935 to 1965 by various community groups, sustain the building’s history as it relates to the theme of Potsdam’s social history.

Architectural Context

In addition to its historical relevance to Potsdam and the development of its municipal infrastructure and community life, the nominated building is also an important local manifestation of the Neoclassical idiom as applied to civic constructs. However, unlike an architectural scheme conceived of and executed as a new construct, Lansing, Green & Bisnett were compelled to work with both the existing church and town hall as they developed their plans, though of these two the latter had to be razed as it was found to be structurally unsound; stone from its walls was nevertheless incorporated into the fabric of the new building. Thus the original footprint of the former Universalist Church was maintained, as were many of its original character-defining features, among them its distinctive Gothic-arched fenestration, steeply pitched roof, and decorative cornice treatment. Modifications were nevertheless necessary, among them the removal of the steeple and the relocation of the principal entrance to the Park Street elevation. For the new south block, a hipped-roof design was developed with a façade invoking long-established Neoclassical-Palladian prototypes, whereby the central three entrance bays were fronted by a monumental Tuscan order portico. This classical order was additionally employed for the porch on the recessed center block—the position of the porch matching the wall plane of the north and south blocks, thereby providing cohesion to the design—and also on the new freestanding portico added to the front of the former church, again serving as an overarching motif to unify the facade composition. Economy was undoubtedly a foremost consideration, given the resources available for the project, and one critical to gaining the support of the community at the outset of the project. The completed design forms an interesting episode in Potsdam’s architectural history, given the incorporation of the Universalist church into the scheme and the reuse of the stone from the former town hall, and one in which need and economy converged—and from which a viable and important local building emerged.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

N/A

²⁷“Students Co-ordinate Efforts with Community in Civil Rights,” *ibid*, March 19, 1965. “Selma Eye-Witness to Address Rally Sunday; Village Drive Set,” *Courier and Freeman*, March 18, 1965.

POTSDAM CIVIC CENTER COMPLEX

Name of Property

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9. Major Bibliographical References

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

“An Informal Dedication,” *Potsdam Herald-Recorder*, March 3, 1935.

“Begin Work on Civic Center,” *Potsdam Herald-Recorder*, March 30, 1934.

“Big Response to Red Cross Plea,” *Potsdam Herald-Recorder*, January 23, 1942.

Chapman, Marguerite. “Every Community Needs and Wants a Museum...Here’s How Potsdam Got Hers.” *The Quarterly* 6 no. 2 (1961): 5.

“Civic Center Closes Doors to Social Life,” *The Raquette*, February 20, 1942.

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“College Aiding as Clarkson Plans 50th Anniversary,” *The Raquette*, October 5, 1945.

“Confer on Civic Center,” *Courier and Freeman*, January 17, 1934.

“Conversion: Operation Church,” *The Pioneer* 10 (July-August 1947): 4-5, 7.

Gelernter, Mark. *A History of American Architecture*. Hanover: University Press of New England, 1999.

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“Town Hall Stands No More,” *Courier and Freeman*, May 9, 1934.

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“Would Give Halls to Villages,” *Courier and Freeman*, December 20, 1933.

POTSDAM CIVIC CENTER COMPLEX
Name of Property

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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	<u>18</u> Zone	<u>501341</u> Easting	<u>4946227</u> Northing	3	_____	_____	_____
2	_____	_____	_____	4	_____	_____	_____

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

The boundary for this NRHP nomination is shown on the four enclosed maps, all of which are entitled "Potsdam Civic Center Complex, Potsdam, St. Lawrence Co., NY." These maps were drawn at a scale of 1:24,000, 1:12,000, 1:4,000 and 1:3,000.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary for this NRHP nomination corresponds with the property at the time the Civic Center Complex was developed in the 1930s and includes no additional or "buffer" land. All of the land included within the boundary, 1.22 acres in total, corresponds with the historic period and the cited period of significance, 1934-1965.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Courtney Doyle, principal author/researcher; William E. Krattinger, editor/contact

organization NYS Division for Historic Preservation date September 2015

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

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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:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Photographs by Courtney Doyle, March 2015, TIFF format; digital files at NYS Division for Historic Preservation, Waterford.

- 0001 EXTERIOR, perspective view looking to northwest, Park Street in foreground
- 0002 EXTERIOR, perspective view looking to south on Park Street
- 0003 EXTERIOR, south block façade (present Potsdam Library)
- 0004 EXTERIOR, center block façade (present Potsdam municipal offices)
- 0005 EXTERIOR, north block façade (present Potsdam Museum)
- 0006 EXTERIOR, view showing south and west elevations of Potsdam Library
- 0007 EXTERIOR, view showing junction between rear elevation of Civic Center Complex and emergency services building
- 0008 INTERIOR, vestibule, library
- 0009 INTERIOR, library, view showing now-enclosed balcony
- 0010 INTERIOR, courtroom
- 0011 INTERIOR, museum
- 0012 INTERIOR, museum, view showing pointed arch windows and decorative ceiling
- 0013 INTERIOR, commemorative plaque, 1934

Property Owner:

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

name Village of Potsdam
street & number _____ telephone _____
city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

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.).

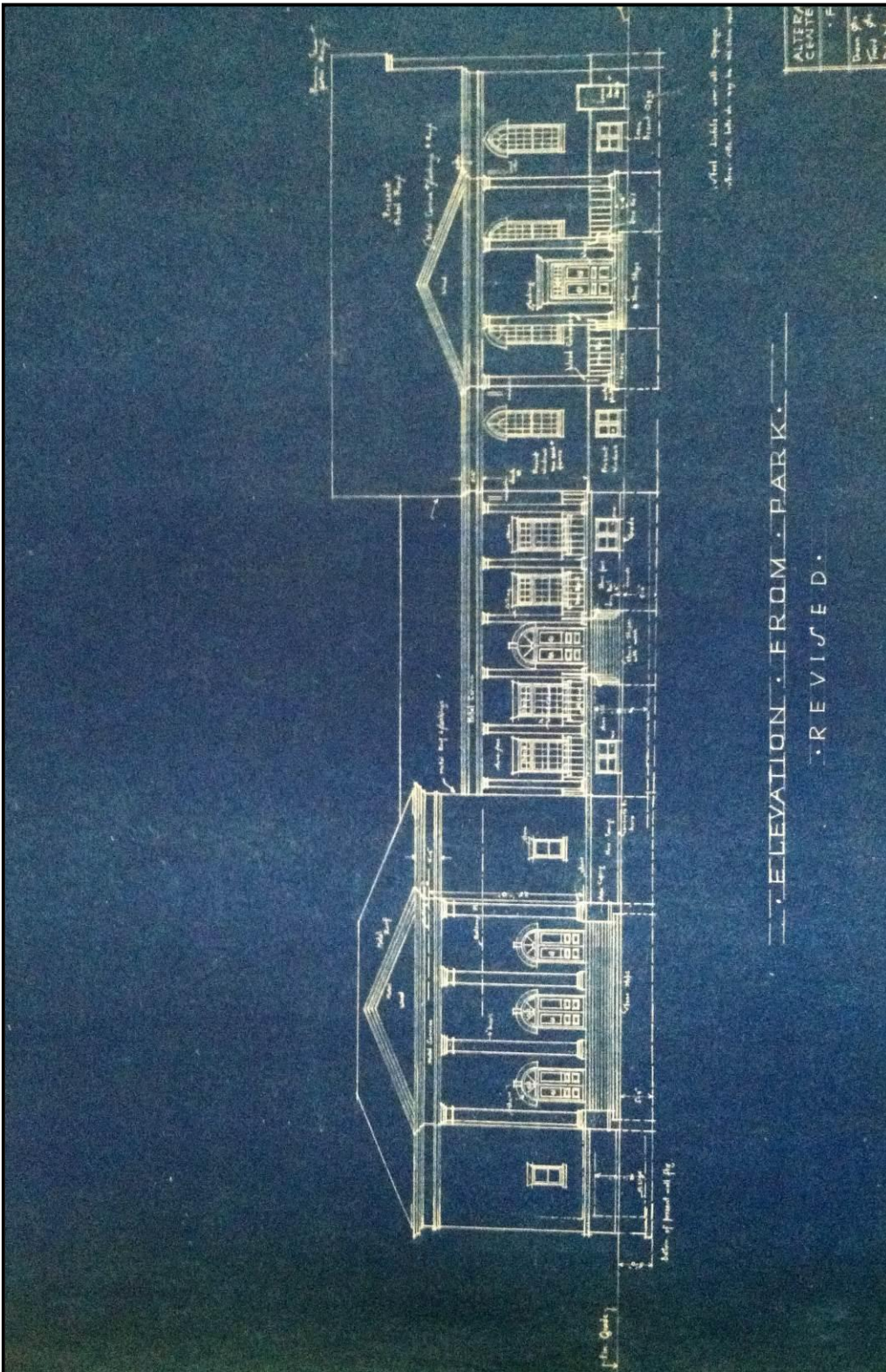
Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to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

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ABOVE, principal elevation (revised) as depicted in blue print, Lansing, Green & Bisnett.

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ABOVE & BELOW: undated historic views



POTSDAM CIVIC CENTER COMPLEX

Name of Property

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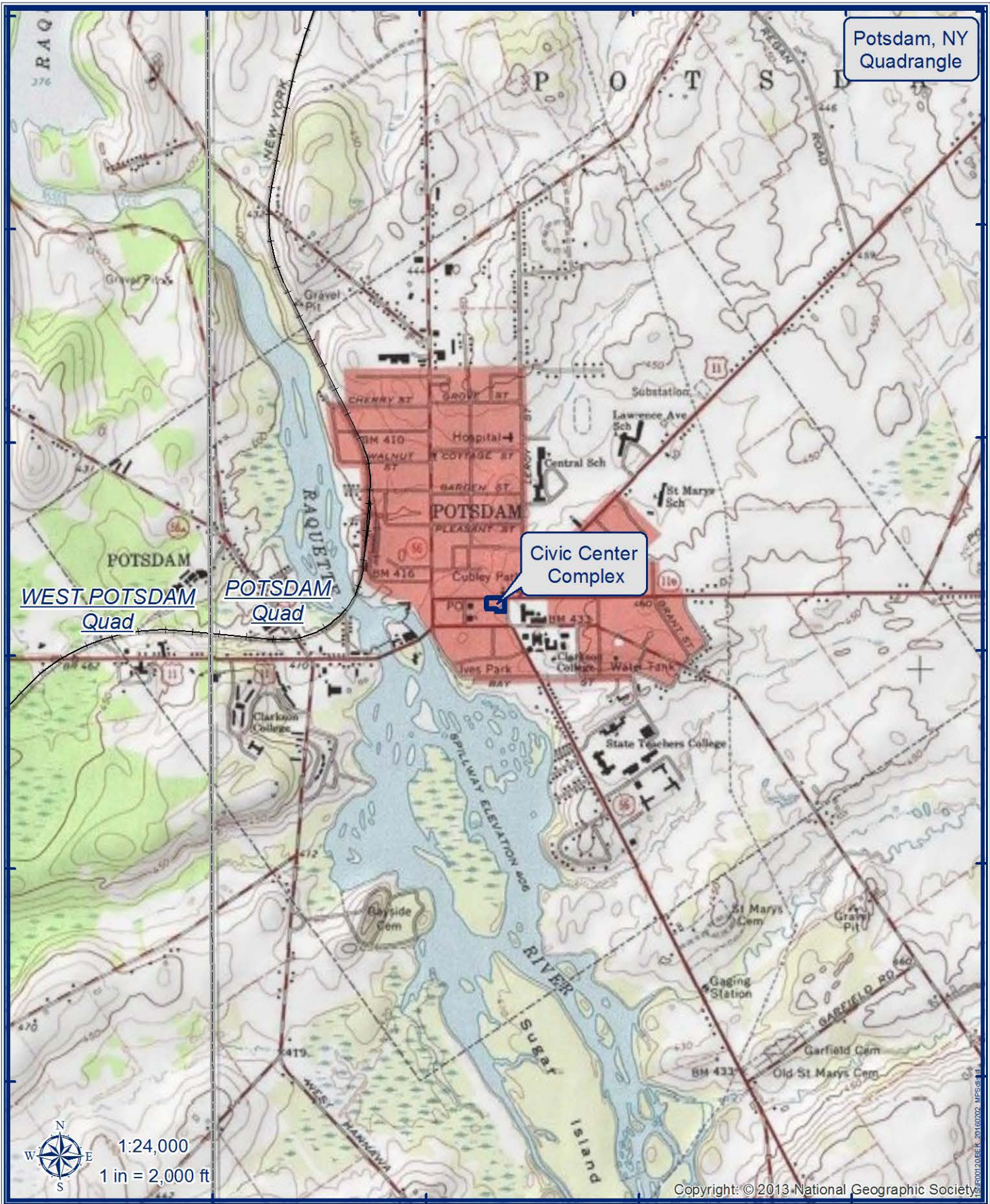
County and State



ABOVE, view showing former library in north block; space now occupied by the Potsdam Museum

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4949000
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4944000



Potsdam, NY
Quadrangle

Civic Center
Complex

WEST POTSDAM
Quad

POTSDAM
Quad

1:24,000
1 in = 2,000 ft

Copyright: © 2013 National Geographic Society

500000 501000 502000 503000

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

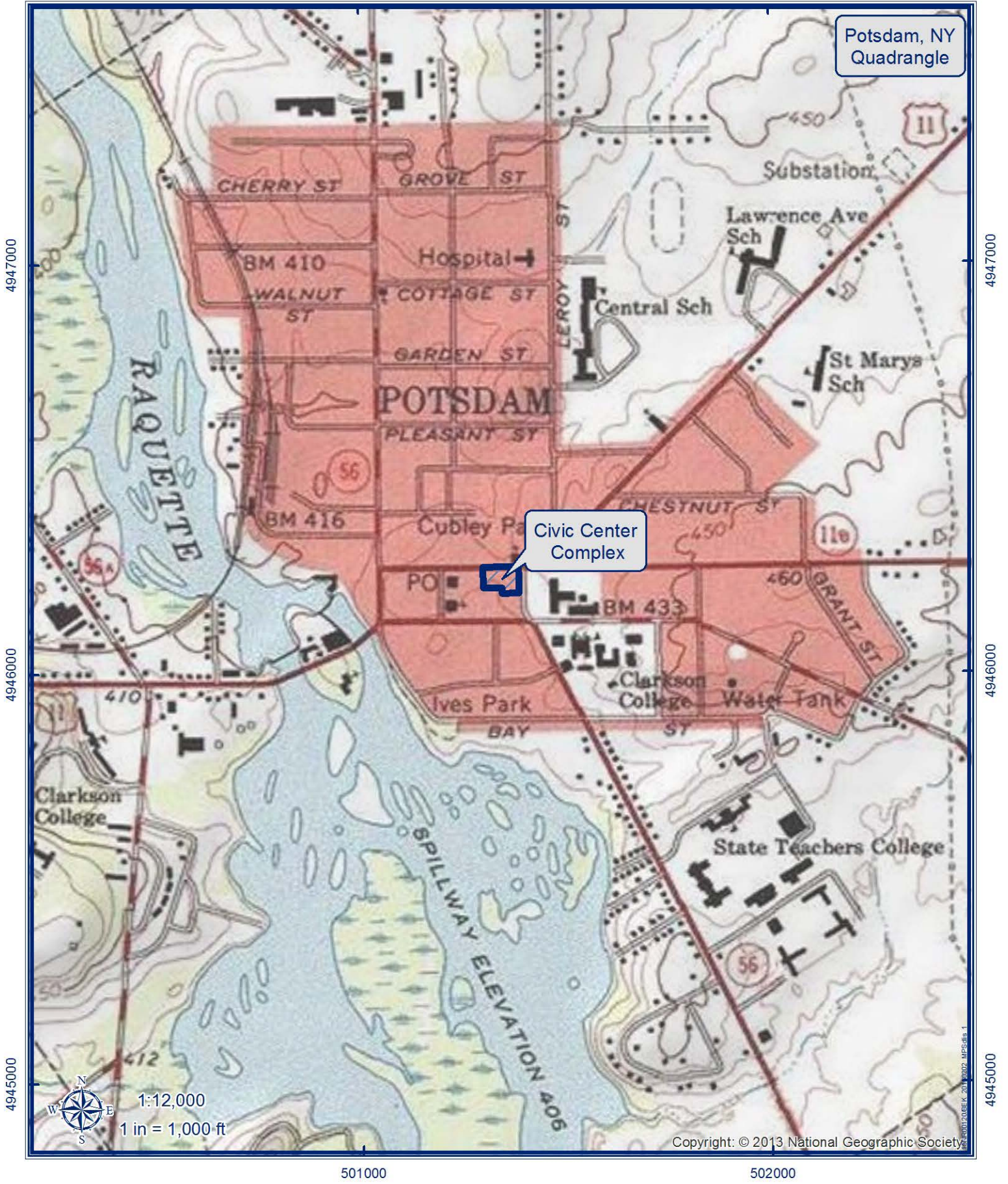


Civic Center Complex



Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation

Potsdam, NY
Quadrangle



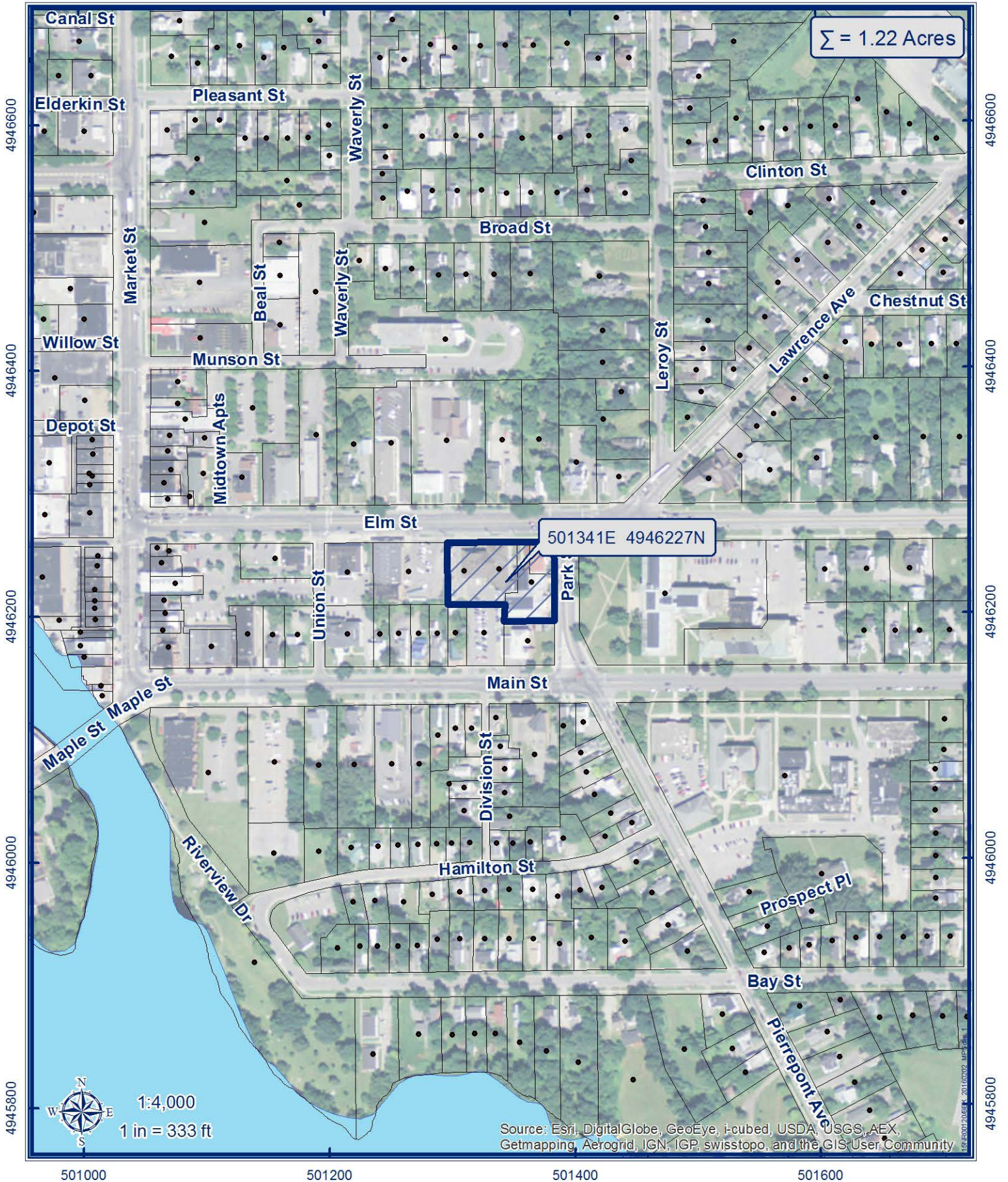
Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N
Projection: Transverse Mercator
Datum: North American 1983
Units: Meter



 Civic Center Complex



**Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation**



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



Civic Center Complex



Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation



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



Civic Center Complex



Parks, Recreation
and Historic Preservation



POTSDAM LIBRARY

MUNICIPAL OFFICES

MUSEUM

Blue parking sign with a white 'P' and a wheelchair icon.



MUSEUM

CITY OFFICES



POTSDAM LIBRARY

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MUSEUM

ICES

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ON EVENT SURFA

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by recycling
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Cell Phones
Recycling Center

Library!

Hungry for Information







POTSDAM PEOPLE

PORTRAITS - Peace Prize







POTSDAM COMMUNITY CENTER
BUILT UNDER THE ADMINISTRATION OF
THE BOARD OF TRUSTEES

IRA H. KENDALL, MAYOR
PERCY S. WILKINS H. EARL BLACK
HOWARD G. CRAIG STANLEY H. SISSON

LANSING, GREENE & BISNETT
ARCHITECTS

WILLIAM BALVEY
SUPERINTENDENT

WILLIS K. HOLT
ASS'T SUPERINTENDENT

1934

PT



NO S

&a20CUNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
&a30CNATIONAL PARK SERVICE

&a22CNATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
&a29CEVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Potsdam Civic Center Complex
NAME:

MULTIPLE
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, St. Lawrence

DATE RECEIVED: 3/18/16 &pw DATE OF PENDING LIST: 4/15/16
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 4/30/16 &pw DATE OF 45TH DAY: 5/03/16
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 16000226

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 5.3.16 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

Entered in
The National Register
of
Historic Places

&a4L

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



14 March 2016

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

Re: National Register Nominations

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

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

Potsdam Civic Center, St. Lawrence County
Essex County Municipal Complex, Essex County
USCO Church, Rockland 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