



**Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation**

**ANDREW M. CUOMO**  
Governor

**ROSE HARVEY**  
Commissioner



8 June 2018

Alexis Abernathy  
National Park Service  
National Register of Historic Places

Mail Stop 7228

1849 C Street NW  
Washington DC 20240

Re: National Register Nomination Name Change

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am writing to request a name change for the following nomination:

Spirit House, Georgetown, Madison County

Extensive new research has documented that the name Spirit House was not used until the 1930s, long after the period of significance. The resource was constructed by Timothy Brown as both a residence and center for spiritualism and was known extensively as Brown's Hall during the period of significance. I am attaching a summary of that research.

The New York State Historic Preservation Office requests that the name be changed to:

Brown's Hall, Georgetown, Madison County .

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

Sincerely:

Roger Daniel Mackay  
Deputy State Historic Preservation Officer  
New York State Historic Preservation Office

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action: Additional Documentation

Property Name: Brown's Hall

Multiple Name:

State & County: NEW YORK, Madison

Date Received: 6/14/2018      Date of Pending List: 7/9/2018      Date of 16th Day: 7/24/2018      Date of 45th Day: 7/30/2018      Date of Weekly List: 7/30/2018

Reference number: AD06000160

Nominator: State

Reason For Review:

X Accept       Return       Reject      7/27/2018 Date

Abstract/Summary  
Comments:

Recommendation/  
Criteria



Reviewer Alexis Abernathy

Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2236

Date 7/27/2018

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

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

**United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Continuation Sheet**

Section number \_\_\_\_\_ Page \_\_\_\_\_

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**SUPPLEMENTARY LISTING RECORD**

NRIS Reference Number: 06000160

Date Listed: 3/22/06

Spirit House  
Property Name

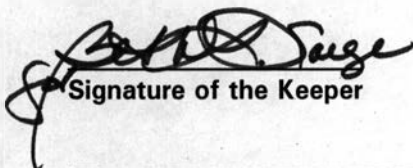
Madison  
County

NY  
State

N/A  
Multiple Name

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This property is listed in the National Register of Historic Places in accordance with the attached nomination documentation subject to the following exceptions, exclusions, or amendments, notwithstanding the National Park Service certification included in the nomination documentation.

  
Signature of the Keeper

3/22/06  
Date of Action

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Amended Items in Nomination:

**8. Statement of Significance: Criteria Consideration(s)**

Criteria exception a is applicable as the building was originally used for religious purposes.

This information was confirmed with NYSHPO staff by telephone.

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**DISTRIBUTION:**

- National Register property file
- Nominating Authority (without attachment)



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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an 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 entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

1. Name of Property

historic name Spirit House

other name/site number Timothy Brown House, Brown Hall

2. Location

street & number NY 26  not for publication

city or town Georgetown vicinity \_\_\_\_\_

state New York code NY county Madison code 053 zip code 13072

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  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)  
[Signature] 12/26/05  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that the property is:  
 entered in the National Register.  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined eligible for the National Register  
 See continuation sheet.  
 determined not eligible for the National Register.  
 removed from the National Register.  
 other, (explain:)

Signature of the Keeper [Signature] Date of Action 3/22/06

Spirit House (Timothy Brown House)  
Name of Property

Georgetown, Madison County, New York  
County and State

**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.)

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
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

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Function**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Current Function**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single dwelling  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

DOMESTIC: vacant  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

foundation stone

walls wood

roof asphalt

other \_\_\_\_\_

**Narrative Description**

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

Spirit House (Timothy Brown House)  
Georgetown, Madison County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 1

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**NARRATIVE DESCRIPTION**

The Spirit House, also known as the Timothy Brown House, sits about 20 feet back from the road on the east side of New York Route 26 near the center of the hamlet of Georgetown in southern Madison County. The hamlet, which once boasted two hotels and various commercial activities typical of the center of a large agricultural area in the nineteenth century, is now primarily residential in character with a general store, churches and a few other services available to the local residents. The building is situated on a parcel of less than one acre with mature trees behind a picket fence in front and a wooded area in the rear. To either side and across the road from the Spirit House are other nineteenth-century buildings and just north of it is the intersection of New York Route 80, the center of Georgetown.

The main block of the house is essentially square, measuring 34'8" by 33'6", and is two stories in height. The Spirit House is constructed of wood and the front and side faces of the building are divided into three parts. On the front (west) is a center door flanked by single windows. The areas above and below the openings are sheathed in flush-board siding laid vertically but in the spaces between the openings and at the corners of the building are one of the features that make the building unique. Rather than conventional pilasters and corner boards, the Spirit House features two-by-fours arranged vertically and scalloped at regular intervals. In the center of each face of the corner elements, the boards are staggered so that the scalloped sections overlap each other, whereas at the corners they are laid with the scalloped areas adjacent to each other. The use of the scallop pattern gives the Spirit House a highly textured surface and it is almost impossible to discern how it is constructed without close inspection. At the corners, 26 two-by-fours are so arranged and separating the bays on the front and two side elevations are 13 two-by-fours.

Above the second story is a three-tiered cornice that features downward-pointing "keys." Each plane of the cornice projects slightly farther than the one below it, and above the third range is a corbelling that resembles a brick corbelled cornice, except that it is executed in wood. Originally, the building had a shallow pyramidal roof, but that was reconstructed in the 1930s to pitch into the center of the building. In either case, the roof was not visible from the ground.

Windows are double-hung with four-over-four sash and retain their original louvered blinds, painted green. In the front (west) center bay is a door, and another one has been added to the north side, east bay.

The east, or rear, of the building does not have the same decorative elements as the other three faces and part of the south face has been altered as well. The reason for this is that the Spirit House once had an entire church building moved from another location in the hamlet and attached to the east side, and after it was removed around 1906, a small addition was built across the rear and part of the south side. It is not clear whether the rear was always more plain than the other three sides of the building or whether this condition only came about after the other part of the building was demolished.

Spirit House (Timothy Brown House)  
Georgetown, Madison County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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On the interior, the Spirit House retains some of its original architectural elements. On the first floor, the openings in the front of the house have decorative woodwork resembling that of the exterior. The center entrance now opens into a living room that occupies the two north bays of the house, but this room originally stretched across the entire front of the building. South of the living room is a room last used as a bedroom. The entry, three window openings in this room, two in the adjacent room to the south that was originally part of this room, and two doors at the rear (east) side of the room are trimmed with two-by-four decorative architraves reminiscent of the corners and "pilasters" of the exterior. A wall pierced by a wide double doorway now separates this former space into two rooms, thought to have been constructed late in the nineteenth century when the use of the building changed.

Behind the living room and adjacent bedroom in the original building is a dining room and kitchen. Along the south wall of the original Spirit House is a one-story addition that houses a bathroom and sun parlor, and behind the east wall of the original house is a utility room, wood shed, pantry and enclosed porch. Entered from the dining room and hugging the original east wall of the house is a narrow enclosed stairway to the second floor. According to one former owner of the house, whose family purchased it from Brown's widow, the first floor behind the present-day living room and bedroom had been occupied by a miscellaneous room where the present-day dining room is located and two "dark rooms" where communication with the spirits took place, along with a hall, in the present-day kitchen.

Access to the second story is now gained via the narrow staircase where one of the darkrooms had been; it is not known where the original staircase was located. When the church was attached to the rear of the Spirit House, the back wall of the second story of the house was removed and an interior second story was added to the church, connecting to the Spirit House's second story, thereby creating a large room where séances were held. By the late-nineteenth century, interest in Spiritualism had waned, but the building continued to be used for public meetings, not related to Spiritualism. In 1906, after the use of the house for public meetings was discontinued, the former church was removed, the back wall of the house was reconstructed, and the second story was reconfigured into smaller bedrooms and later a bathroom was added. That is the present condition of the building. The original four-over-four windows are present but woodwork is plain and doors contain two panels, suggesting an early-twentieth-century origin. Throughout the house, narrow-board hardwood floors were installed, covering original wide-plank floors.

The house has been vacant for approximately twenty years, but it has not suffered any physical deterioration or vandalism and is in good condition. It has a historic marker in front of it but only the exterior has been accessible to the public since the 1980s.

Spirit House (Timothy Brown House)  
Name of Property

Georgetown, Madison County, New York  
County and State

**8. 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 of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

**Narrative Statement of Significance**

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

**Areas of Significance**

(enter categories from instructions)

RELIGION

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

c.1865-1885

**Significant Dates**

c.1865, 1885

**Significant Persons**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

**Cultural Affiliation**

**Architect/Builder**

Timothy Brown

**9. Major Bibliographical References**

**Bibliography**

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

**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 # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_



Spirit House (Timothy Brown House)  
Georgetown, Madison County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

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**SIGNIFICANCE:**

The Spirit House, also known as the Timothy Brown House or Brown's Hall, is significant under Criterion A as a property related to the rise of Spiritualism in Central New York State in the 1850s. It was built in the 1860s by Timothy Brown for his residence and for meetings of Spiritualists in a large hall on the second floor. At the height of popularity of the movement, Brown attracted hundreds of people to the small hamlet of Georgetown for meetings. By the late 1870s, interest in Spiritualism in Georgetown declined but Brown retained the building as his residence until his death in 1885. His wife occupied the house for many years after that, finally leaving the property in 1899.

The property is also significant under Criterion C as an unusual example of the eclecticism that characterized architecture in the middle of the nineteenth century. The house defies stylistic classification and is a unique and very personal expression of one man's religious fervor at a time and in a place where many religious currents were consuming the local population.

Georgetown is a large town on the southern boundary of Madison County, and the county is nearly at the center of New York State. Prior to the settlement of the area by European-Americans after the close of the American Revolution, present-day Madison County was the home of the Oneida Indians of the Iroquois Six Nations. By the time of the survey of the state after 1789, the entire northern half of the county was part of the Oneida Reservation while most of the southern part had been divided into rectangular townships within the large County of Herkimer. These "Twenty Towns" had been purchased by Governor George Clinton for the State of New York from the Indians in 1788; and Georgetown is Township #6.

European-American settlement of the area had begun to the north of Georgetown along the road laid out in 1790 by James and William Wadsworth, on their way to the Genesee Valley at present-day Rochester, 100 miles to the west. This road went from present-day Utica to Oneida Castle, the center of the Oneida Reservation.

At the beginning of the nineteenth century, the large counties in what is now Central New York were broken up into smaller entities, and in 1806, Madison County was formed by the breakup of Chenango County, which itself had earlier been part of the much larger Herkimer County. The name Chenango was retained for the county to the south of the new Madison County, while Madison was named for the United States president at the time of its formation.

Georgetown was incorporated in 1815 and among its most important early industries were dairy farming and hop growing, the latter of which declined in the later nineteenth century. Dairying gave rise to cheese making, an occupation that remained important for the balance of the nineteenth century. Sawmills were established in the very early nineteenth century on the many creeks that

Spirit House (Timothy Brown House)  
Georgetown, Madison County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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traversed the town, and as areas were cleared of forest growth, more substantial frame dwellings replaced the earlier log cabins. Georgetown grew slowly in the early years, as settlers from New England began to populate Central New York. The hamlet at the center of the town attracted merchants, doctors, and other types of workers that would logically serve the center of a large agricultural area.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, a number of religious upheavals took place in Central New York. Northwest of Georgetown, in Seneca or Ontario County, Joseph Smith founded the Mormon religion, later departing for Ohio. In the northern sector of Madison County, John Humphrey Noyes began the Oneida Community in 1848 with the following precepts: "the right of man to be governed by God and to live in the social state of heaven;...the right of woman to dispose of her sexual nature by attraction instead of by law and routine and to bear children only when she chooses; [and] the right of all to diminish the labors and increase the advantages of life by association." The Oneida Community lasted for almost 40 years.

In the early 1840s, William Miller preached that the world would come to an end in 1843 and attracted a large following for a short time during that decade. When nothing happened, interest in his movement declined.

A new religious excitement in the 1850s was Spiritualism. This faith attracted liberals who had drifted far from a literal interpretation of the Bible and became interested in the ideas of Swedish philosopher Emanuel Swedenborg. His writings "combined many of the liberal religious doctrines with the new sociological ideas of the time." In 1848, the two daughters of John Fox of Hydeville, Wayne County, claimed they heard strange tapping sounds at night and that they had communicated with spirits who answered their questions. Thus was born the Spiritualist movement, which, by 1855, claimed over a million converts throughout the world, more than one third of whom were in New York State.

Into the small hamlet of Georgetown, Timothy Brown arrived in 1845 and his wife Sarah and son joined him three years later. Brown was born in Vermont in 1815 and it is not clear whether he was an adherent of Spiritualism before he arrived in Georgetown or only became interested in the phenomenon after he took up residence in the community. Either way, soon after his arrival, he constructed a house south of the hamlet that was described in a newspaper article as having a "double cornice, with two rows of hand made balls." In the upstairs rooms, under the eaves, he built secret dark closets, where he claimed the spirits were kept. This house, which bears some resemblance to a Gothic-inspired cottage typical of the mid-nineteenth century, still exists.

Soon after, Brown began construction on his second residence in the center of the hamlet, the subject of this nomination. Conflicting sources say it took Brown five, ten, or fourteen years to construct the building, but it is assumed to have been completed by 1868 because an invitation to a public gathering at the house has been discovered.

Spirit House (Timothy Brown House)  
Georgetown, Madison County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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In 1879, in the *Banner of Light*, a Spiritualist periodical, the house and its construction were described as follows:

Along with this [clairvoyant phenomena] was borne in upon him [Brown] the conviction that *this house must be built*, and consecrated to Spiritualism and to free speech in the service of humanity. He could not resist the conviction, and it became the aim and enthusiasm of his life. He bought a wood-lot, got out his own logs and hewed his timber for the frame, which he began to build himself. Not a carpenter, and all unused to tools, he found that if he put his chisel in the wrong place his arm had no power to use the mallet or strike a blow, but when the chisel was rightly placed the blows were freely dealt. So, amidst the doubt or ridicule of his neighbors, the frame of a front building, thirty-five feet square, was finished. A master carpenter took charge of its raising, and when it stood complete he said to the people, 'This is as good and perfect a frame as I ever saw,' and they went home astonished. All this time, and through all the ten years which he took to finish his task, he was obliged to make a living and go on as he best could, on simplest fare and with constant labor, up to sixteen hours a day. His brave wife could not share his enthusiasm, but wrought as a skilled cheese-maker in the factories near by, and so won good wages and kept the house in order.

With the frame raised he still toiled on, and all the building, save doors and window-sashes—everything, from cellar floor and foundation stones to the quaintly beautiful and unique carving of the cornice, is the work of his own hands—not a week's work to help him, and that of common laborers. All these years he wrought after the spiritual model, ever clear in his mind and felt that he was guided by supernal intelligence and skill.

The upper floor was a hall thirty-five feet square, the lower part of the home of his wife and himself. He then (in 1874) bought at small cost a second-hand Presbyterian church, put it in the rear on the north side, built a piazza, and laid a floor to divide it into two stories, threw all the upper floor, front and rear, together, and his free hall is now seventy feet by thirty-five, plainly but neatly fitted up to seat some six hundred people or more, and the whole perfected building is the architectural ornament of the town. The singular yet beautiful carving on the front would attract attention anywhere. Good judges say that the work is substantial and thorough, the skill in its finer parts remarkable.

Soon, the novelty of Spiritualism soon wore off. According to a local newspaper,

The derision of local residents turned to irritability, especially when a visiting spiritualist left a notebook in the home of one of the townspeople. It was found by the landlady and curiosity prompted her to examine it. A few days later its contents were published in a local newspaper. The notebook contained names, dates, and epitaphs gleaned from old country

Spirit House (Timothy Brown House)  
Georgetown, Madison County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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records and the area's graveyards. This was so offensive to the good citizens' tastes that the meetings in Brown's Hall were brought to an end.

While Spiritualism in Georgetown declined, the Browns remained in the house. Timothy Brown died in 1885 and according to his wife's obituary of 1908, Sarah Brown remained in the house. Their son and daughter-in-law, who had moved to Chicago, returned to Georgetown in 1887 to take care of Sarah. However, both younger people died within a year and Mrs. Brown remained in the house alone until 1899 when she entered the Old Ladies' Home in Oneida. In 1908 she died at age 93.

Even after Spiritualism lost favor with the local population, Brown's Hall continued to be a gathering place for the residents of Georgetown. The interior of the house was altered to reflect its changing use, but the exterior remains very little changed from its original construction date.

The house went through a series of owners in the twentieth century. It was the subject of a history research paper by a State University of New York at Cortland student, Milton Chapin, in 1965, and was documented by the Historic American Buildings Survey (HABS) in 1966, using Chapin's research for the data pages of the HABS report.

Since the late 1960s, there have been numerous false starts in listing the property in the National Register, but presently, the Town of Georgetown, with cooperation of the present owner, is sponsoring the nomination of this worthy property to the Register so it can gain the recognition it deserves.

Spirit House (Timothy Brown House)  
Georgetown, Madison County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

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**BIBLIOGRAPHY**

**BOOKS**

Ellis, David M., Frost, James A., Syrett, Harold C., & Carman, Harry J., A History of New York State., Ithaca, New York: Cornell University Press., 1967.

Hammond, Louisa M., History of Madison County. Syracuse, NY: Truair, Smith & Co., Book and Job Printers. 1872.

Smith, James H., History of Chenango and Madison County. Syracuse, NY: Mason and Company. 1880.

**OTHER**

Miscellaneous newspaper clippings, notes, photographs from files provided by previous nomination sponsors.

Historic American Buildings Survey materials, 1963-1966.

Spirit House (Timothy Brown House)  
Name of Property

Georgetown, Madison County, New York  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** less than 1 acre

### UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 439568 4734832  
Zone Easting Northing

2 18  
Zone Easting Northing

3 18  
Zone Easting Northing

4 18  
Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

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

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Anthony Opalka, Historic Preservation Program Analyst

organization NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation

date December 7, 2005

street & number PO Box 189

telephone 518-237-8643

city or town Waterford

state NY zip code 12188-0189

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

#### Continuation Sheets

#### 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.

#### Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

#### Additional items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

### Property Owner

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

name/title \_\_\_\_\_

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. 470 *et seq.*).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

Spirit House (Timothy Brown House)  
Georgetown, Madison County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Photographs

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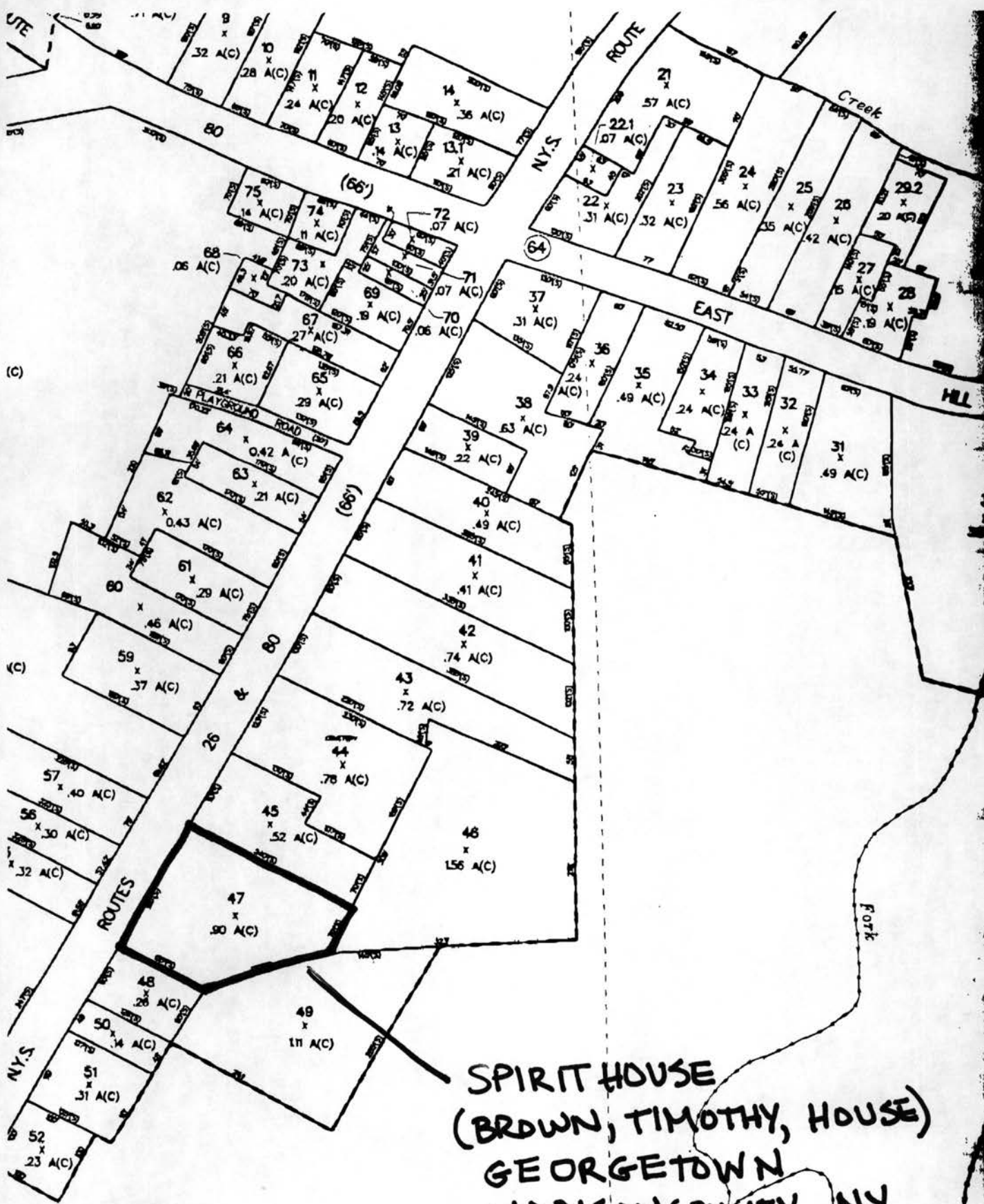
Photograph key

Pictures taken July 2005

Photographer: Anthony Opalka

Negatives: NYSHPO, Waterford, NY 12188

1. View of front and north elevations
2. Close-up of cornice
3. Close-up of exterior wall treatments
4. Close-up of cornice
5. Close-up of corner treatment
6. View of rear elevation/addition
7. Interior first floor front room
8. Interior first floor front room (later 19<sup>th</sup>-century doorway on right)
9. Interior first floor front room
10. Interior second floor room



SPIRIT HOUSE  
 (BROWN, TIMOTHY, HOUSE)  
 GEORGETOWN  
 MADISON COUNTY, NY





SPIRIT (TIMOTHY BROWN) HOUSE  
GEORGETOWN, MADISON CO. N.Y.

PHOTO #1



SPIRIT (TIMOTHY BROWN) HOUSE  
GEORGETOWN, MADISON CO. N.Y.

PHOTO #2



SPIRIT (TIMOTHY BROWN) HOUSE  
GEORGETOWN, MADISON CO. N.Y.

PHOTO #3



SPIRIT (TIMOTHY BROWN) HOUSE  
GEORGETOWN, MADISON CO. N.Y.

PHOTO #4





SPIRIT (TIMOTHY BROWN) HOUSE  
GEORGETOWN, MADISON CO. N.Y.

PHOTO #5



SPIRIT (TIMOTHY BROWN) HOUSE  
GEORGETOWN, MADISON CO. N.Y.

PHOTO # 6



SPIRIT (TIMOTHY BROWN) MOUSE  
GEORGETOWN, MADISON CO. N.Y.

PHOTO #7



SPIRIT (TIMOTHY BROWN) HOUSE  
GEORGETOWN, MADISON CO. N.Y.

PHOTO #8





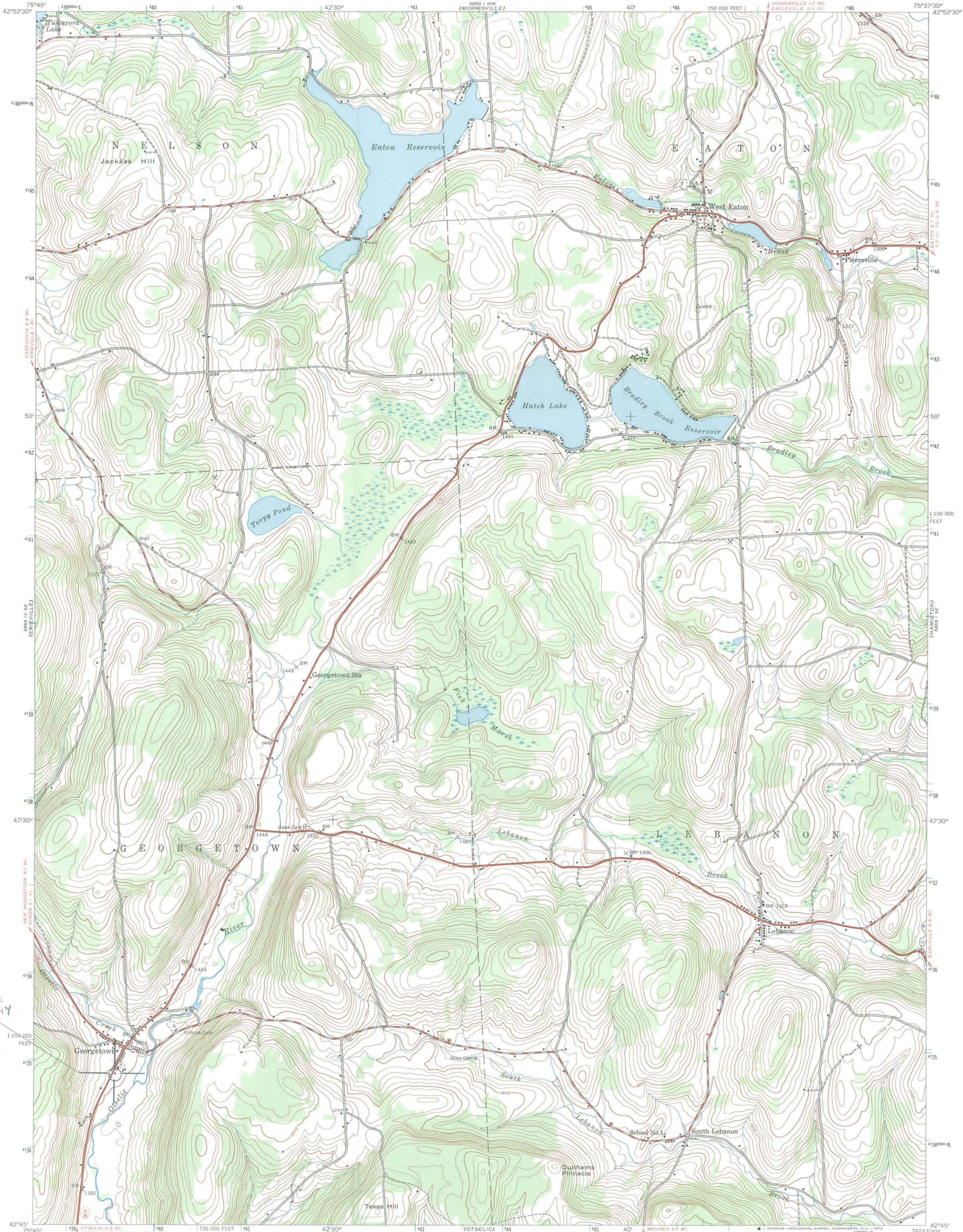
SPIRIT (TIMOTHY BROWN) HOUSE  
GEORGETOWN, MADISON CO. N.Y.

PHOTO #9



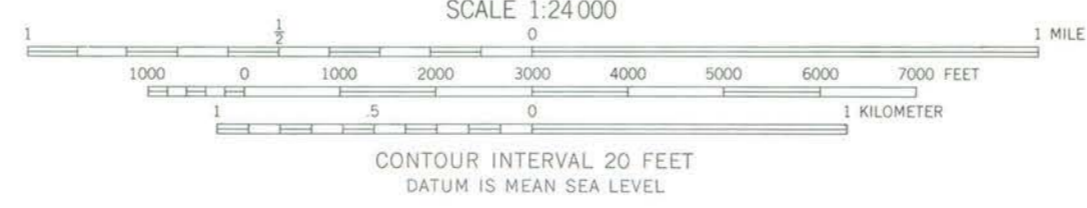
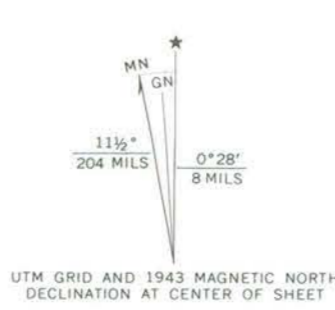
SPIRIT (TIMOTHY BROWN) HOUSE  
GEORGETOWN, MADISON CO. N.Y.

PHOTO #10



SPIRIT HOUSE  
(BROWN, TIMOTHY  
HOUSE)  
GEORGETOWN,  
MADISON CO.  
NEW YORK  
WEST EATON  
QUAD  
ZONE 18  
4391568E  
4734832N

Maped by the Army Map Service  
Published for civil use by the Geological Survey  
Control by USC&GS and TVA  
Topography from aerial photographs by photogrammetric methods  
Aerial photographs taken 1942. Field check 1943  
Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum  
10,000-foot grid based on New York coordinate system, central zone  
1000-meter Universal Transverse Mercator grid ticks,  
zone 18, shown in blue



ROAD CLASSIFICATION

Heavy-duty	Light-duty
Medium-duty	Unimproved dirt
State Route	

WEST EATON, N. Y.  
SW 1/4 MORRISVILLE 15' QUADRANGLE  
N 4245—W 7537.5/7.5

THIS MAP COMPLIES WITH NATIONAL MAP ACCURACY STANDARDS  
FOR SALE BY U. S. GEOLOGICAL SURVEY, WASHINGTON, D. C. 20242  
A FOLDER DESCRIBING TOPOGRAPHIC MAPS AND SYMBOLS IS AVAILABLE ON REQUEST

National Register of Historic Places  
Memo to File

# Correspondence

The Correspondence consists of communications from (and possibly to) the nominating authority, notes from the staff of the National Register of Historic Places, and/or other material the National Register of Historic Places received associated with the property.

Correspondence may also include information from other sources, drafts of the nomination, letters of support or objection, memorandums, and ephemera which document the efforts to recognize the property.

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY Spirit House  
NAME:

MULTIPLE  
NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, Madison

DATE RECEIVED: 2/07/06 DATE OF PENDING LIST: 3/03/06  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 3/18/06 DATE OF 45TH DAY: 3/23/06  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 06000160

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: Y NATIONAL: N

COMMENT WAIVER: N

     ACCEPT      RETURN      REJECT                      DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

*Fascinating building technique  
manifesting truly unique vernacular  
structure associated with the rise  
and fall of Spiritualism during the  
19th Century.*

RECOM./CRITERIA Accept All

REVIEWER Savage DISCIPLINE Architectural History

TELEPHONE                      DATE 3/22/06

DOCUMENTATION see attached comments Y/N see attached SLR YN

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

### STATEMENT OF OWNER SUPPORT

Before an individual nomination proposal will be reviewed or nominated, the owner(s) of record must sign and date the following statement:

I, Helen B. Karteric, am the owner of the property at  
(print or type owner name)

916 Rt. 26 S. Georgetown NY 13072  
(street number and name, city, village or town, state of nominated property)

I support its consideration and inclusion in the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

Helen B. Karteric 7/13/05  
(signature and date)

339 Berne Rd.  
Airville, Pa 17302  
(mailing address)



# Report of research on Timothy Brown of Georgetown, Madison County, New York

Prepared by Michael F. Lynch, P.E., AIA, Director, Division for Historic Preservation

January-April 2017

Enclosed with this report is a CD on which are burned copies of almost every resource found and upon which is based my letter dated 5 April 2017. Those items not scanned are typically those the owner already provided to us.

Also enclosed are hard copies of many key documents, most annotated to make it easy to find the relevant information to which reference is made. Many of these are reprints of full pages of period newspapers. Where the print is too small to read enlarged excerpts of the important news items have been placed on a separate document titled "Newspaper Excerpts" (these newspaper pages are also included on the CD and can be enlarged to make reading easier).

## **Research Methodology**

All of the research was done on-line using publicly-available records and scans of published primary and secondary sources. Appended to this report is a "Chronological Guide to Brown Family History", and a "Chronological Guide to Newspaper Articles 1854-1947" relevant to the study of this building. Throughout this report, the letter identifier (for family history) or numerical designation (for newspapers) noted in the Guides is used as a short-hand reference instead of the long-form footnote. Documents regarding people not related to the Timothy Brown of Georgetown are referenced but not tagged, and are to be found on the CD in the file folder bearing that person's name.

## **Primary and Secondary Sources:**

First, a word about primary and secondary sources. (emphasis added in the following quote):

*Primary sources are: contemporary accounts of an event, written by someone who experienced or witnessed the event in question. These original documents (i.e., they are not about another document or account) are often diaries, letters, memoirs, journals, speeches, manuscripts, interviews and other such unpublished works. They may also include published pieces such as **newspaper or magazine articles (as long as they are written soon after the fact and not as historical accounts)**, photographs, audio or video recordings, research reports in the natural or social sciences, or original literary or theatrical works. [<http://guides.library.ucsc.edu/primarysecondary>]*

Newspaper articles written by contemporaries during the person's lifetime with direct knowledge of the person or event (such as local editors and reporters) are considered primary sources. However, primary sources may contain inaccuracies, errors, or conflicting information, so it is preferable to find multiple, independent primary sources to verify the accuracy of the information. For example, the Federal census records indicate a variety of possible ages for Timothy Brown (43 in 1850=birth year 1807; 50 in 1860=birth year of 1810; 62 in 1870 and 72 in 1880=birth year of 1808). The obituaries for Timothy Brown in 1885 [91-93] list his age as 77, indicating he was born in 1808. A birth record to verify this has not yet been located, but the preponderance of evidence supports this as his birth year.

Newspaper articles based on articles in other newspapers, or articles written after Mr. Brown's death are considered secondary sources. County histories of the period are often based on information from other (uncredited) sources and therefore are usually considered secondary sources.

Secondary sources may also contain inaccuracies or errors, so where possible it is preferable to use them as a guide or finding aid to search for primary sources to verify the accuracy of information. For example, the published obituary for Sarah H. Brown, a secondary source [105] states she and Timothy married on June 22, 1836, but the original marriage record [C] gives the date as June 21, 1836). Information from primary sources is usually given primacy over secondary sources.

### **Census Records:**

The Federal and New York State census information is a primary source, as it was recorded at the time in the field by a local resident/census taker, in the order in which it was taken, usually house-to-house, street by street. In urban areas the street addresses are often identified. Therefore it is usually possible to see who lived near or next to one another. For example, on the 1875 Georgetown map,[BB] the homes of Hiram Atwood and Timothy Brown are shown on either side of the Baptist church and cemetery. Their names appear one after the other in the 1865 New York State [R] and 1870 Federal [X] censuses, which is consistent with Timothy buying the property on which he built Brown's Hall ca. 1864.

Variations in spelling of names often results from the enumerator spelling phonetically rather than verifying the spelling with the person being interviewed. Also, the information is generally reported by the head of household or other knoweldgable person within the residence, but this is subject to faulty or incomplete memories and errors appear throughout.

The census records are a searchable database that was accessed on [Ancestry.com](http://Ancestry.com). Because it is possible to search for persons of the same name in multiple locations, all Timothy Browns in Madison County were searched for the period 1850-1885.

Federal Census-The Federal census is taken every ten years. From 1790-1840 they only list the name of the head-of-household, followed by a spreadsheet noting the number of occupants of that household in various age and gender groups. Therefore these records do not provide a definitive list of names of family members.

The Federal census starting in 1850 and thereafter lists by name all residents in a household, starting with the head-of-household, followed by spouse and descendants in order of decreasing age, plus boarders, servants and other family members. Other useful information can be found, depending on the year, as the information tracked changed from census to census but usually includes occupation, place of birth, age, numbers of children born/living, and sometimes years married or widowed, and relation to head-of-household.

The Federal census records for 1890 were destroyed in a fire and only exist in small batches in local repositories where copies happen to have been kept. Madison County does not appear to have been fortunate enough to have a copy.

In addition to the population or "general" census, there was also an agricultural products census recorded at the same time in 1850 and 1860. These record the amount of land in production, counts of various kinds of livestock and agricultural produce, as well as the value of equipment.

New York State-New York State conducted its own census every ten years from 1855-1925, with the exception of one in 1892 instead of 1895. They follow the basic format of the Federal census records.

**Other Documentation:** The collection of documents researched and included on the CD and in hard copy can be characterized as follows:

1. "Chronological Guide to Brown Family History" [each item is identified by letter that is referenced in brackets in the body of the text]
  - a. Federal and State census records 1820-1900
  - b. Marriage records
  - c. Birth records
  - d. Death notices/Obituaries
  - e. City directories
2. Other Timothy Browns in Madison County
  - a. Census records
  - b. Newspaper article
3. Timothy Brown patents
  - a. Two US patents
  - b. Documentation for witnesses to patent applications
4. "Chronological Guide to Newspaper Articles 1854-1947 [each newspaper page is identified by number and that number is used in brackets in the body of the text]
  - a. Scanned copies of each page referenced in the Guide. Entire pages scanned to show the publication date, context, and other local news being reported upon
  - b. Hard copies of selected pages, identified by the number in the guide
  - c. Enlarged excerpts of articles for easy reading (also identified by sheet number in the guide)

During the course of discussions with the owner, and in reviewing the owner's communication of 2015, many questions were raised by the owner. Many of those questions are addressed below, with references to related documents:

**1. Is there more than one Timothy or Sarah Brown in Georgetown at this time (1850-1890)?**

**Do we have the right Timothy Brown? Do we have the right Sarah Brown?**

- a. Timothy Brown and Sarah H. McLaughlin were married in Topsham, Vermont on June 21, 1836 [C]
  - i. Friend Blood who performed the ceremony was a Presbyterian minister [C]
- b. Search of 1850 Federal census for Timothy and Sarah Brown in Georgetown [G]
  - i. There were 14 Brown family households representing 56 people
  - ii. There is only one Timothy Brown, Farmer, age 42, born in Vermont, married to Sarah Brown
  - iii. There are three Sarah Browns
    1. Sarah E. Brown, age 2, daughter of Jerome Brown
    2. Sarah E. Brown, age 22, wife of Alfred A. Brown, born NY
    3. Sarah Brown, age 35, wife of Timothy Brown, born NH
- c. Search of 1860 Federal census records for Georgetown [N]
  - i. There were 7 Brown family households and one Brown boarder representing 29 people
  - ii. There is only one Timothy Brown, Farmer, age 50, born in Vermont, married to Sarah Brown
  - iii. There are three Sarah Browns
    1. Sarah E. Brown, age 12, daughter of Jerome Brown
    2. Sarah E. Brown, age 32, wife of Alfred A. Brown, born NY
    3. Sarah Brown, age 43, wife of Timothy Brown, born VT (sic)
- d. Search of the 1870 Federal census records for Georgetown [X]
  - i. There were 9 Brown family households and two Brown boarders representing 44 people
  - ii. There is only one Timothy Brown, Retired Farmer, age 62, born in Vermont, married to Sarah Brown
  - iii. There are two Sarah Browns
    1. Sarah Brown, age 44, wife of Alfred Brown, born NY
    2. Sarah Brown, age 55, wife of Timothy Brown, born VT (sic)
- e. Search of the 1880 Federal census records for Georgetown (the records are too faint to print but the PDFs can be read on the screen) [EE]
  - i. There were 12 Brown family households and 7 Brown boarders representing 63 people
  - ii. There is only one Timothy Brown, Farmer, age 72, born in Vermont, married to Sarah Brown
  - iii. There are three Sarah Browns
    1. Sarah A. Brown, age 42, wife of Benjamin Brown
    2. Sarah Brown, age 52, wife of Alfred A. Brown, born NY
    3. Sarah Brown, age 64, wife of Timothy Brown, born NH

- f. Timothy Brown of Georgetown died in Georgetown "of pneumonia" on May 8, 1885 [90]
- g. Sarah H. Brown, wife of Timothy Brown of Georgetown, died in Oneida on July 6, 1908 at the age of "about 93 years" [103]
- h. Conclusion: There is only one Timothy Brown in Georgetown during the period under consideration, and he was married to Sarah H. (McLaughlin) Brown the entire time. The records provide conflicting information on where Sarah was born, Vermont or New Hampshire

**2. Are there other Timothy Browns in Madison County at this time?**

- a. Search of the 1850 Federal census for Madison County
  - i. There is one Timothy Brown listed in nearby Sullivan
    - 1. Timothy S. Brown, age 22, farmer, born New York, son of and living in household of John Brown
- b. Search of the 1860 Federal census for Madison County
  - i. There are two Timothy Browns in neaby DeRuyter
    - 1. Timothy G. Brown, age 35, farmer, born in NY (also listed as Timothy Brown in the Productions of Agriculture census for DeRuyter)
    - 2. Wife is Malvina
    - 3. Timothy L. Brown, age 3, son of Timothy G. and Malvina Brown
  - ii. There is one Timothy Brown in nearby Sullivan
    - 1. Timothy S. Brown, age 31, farmer, born in New York, head of household with siblings and mother in residence
- c. 1864-Timothy G. Brown, age 38, farmer, of DeRuyter was mustered out of the Union Army at Harper's Ferry due to disability
- d. 1865 Timothy S. Brown elected Supervisor of Town of Sullivan (*Oswego Commercial Advertiser*, Friday March 10, 1865, np)
- e. Search of the 1870 Federal census for Madison County
  - i. There one Timothy Brown in neaby DeRuyter
    - 1. Timonthy G. Brown, age 44, farmer, born in NY
    - 2. Wife is Malvina
    - 3. Son Timothy L. Brown who would have been 13, is not listed-presumed deceased
  - ii. There is one Timothy Brown in nearby Sullivan
    - 1. Timothy Brown, age 42, farmer, born New York, married to Jane Brown, age 31
- f. Search of the 1880 Federal census for Madison County
  - i. There is one Timothy Brown in neaby DeRuyter
    - 1. Timonthy G. Brown, age 54, farmer, born in NY
    - 2. Wife is Malvina
  - ii. There is one Timothy Brown in nearby Sullivan
    - 1. Timothy Brown, age 51, farmer, born New York, married to Jane H. Brown, age 41.

- g. Timothy G. Brown of DeRuyter died in DeRuyter of “neuralgia of the heart, on Sunday” January 6, 1884 (*The DeRuyter New Era*, Tuesday, Jan. 10, 1884, pg 3)
- h. Timothy S. Brown of Sullivan is listed in the 1905 NYS census, age 76, still married to Jane
- i. Malvina Brown, wife of Timothy G. Brown of DeRuyter died in Cazenovia on September 3, 1924. According to her obituary, she was born September 6, 1830 and married Timothy G. Brown in 1852. (*The Cazenovia Republican*, Thursday, September 11, 1924, pg 4)
- j. Conclusion: Although there are other Timothy Browns living in nearby Madison County communities during the time in question, none of them were born in Vermont, none were married to a woman named Sarah, and none lived in Georgetown. Timothy G. Brown of DeRuyter pre-deceased Timothy Brown of Georgetown, and Timothy S. Brown of Sullivan lived at least twenty years longer. These are not the Timothy Brown we are looking for.

**3. Was Timothy Brown of Georgetown a farmer or a carpenter/builder?**

- a. In the 1850, 1855, and 1860 census records, Timothy Brown of Georgetown lists his occupation as “Farmer.” [G, I, N]
- b. In the 1865 NYS census Timothy Brown lists his occupation as “carpenter” [R]
- c. In the 1868-69 *Madison County Directory* Timothy Brown is listed as “Carpenter, painter, mason and farmer” with 21 and  $\frac{3}{4}$  acres of land [V]
- d. In 1870 census he is listed as “Retired Farmer” [X]
- e. In the 1875 and 1880 censuses he is once again listed as “Farmer” [AA, EE]
- f. Conclusion: during the period when Timothy Brown was building the original Brown’s Hall he self-identifies as carpenter and other building trades, plus farmer. Prior to and after that period he self-identifies only as a farmer. This is the same Timothy Brown and the only Timothy Brown in Georgetown at this time.

**4. Was Timothy Brown of Georgetwon a “Spiritualist”?** (NOTE: All references to Brown’s Hall noted below appear in local papers under the heading of “Georgetown”)

- a. Spiritualism and spritualist activities in Madison County and surrounding areas were covered regularly in the local newspapers as early as 1854 [1-8]
- b. The first published reference to “Brown’s Hall” found appears on September 16, 1868 which states:

*Charles P. Young of Utica has opened rooms at Brown’s Hall, where he informs the public he will take their pictures, (that is if they are willing) according to the latest style of the art. [10]*

- i. This reference to photography might suggest that the “darkrooms” referenced in subsequent descriptions of the building may be related to photography and not to spiritualist activities. HOWEVER...

- c. The first published reference to spiritualist activities at Brown's Hall appears approximately two years later on August 3, 1870:

*C. H. Read, of Utica, has been holding a "séance" at Brown's hall, claiming to be directed by spiritual power, and performed some mysterious tricks Friday night. [14]*

- i. This might suggest that spiritualist activities took place by others at Brown's hall, but that Mr. Brown himself had little to do with those activities. HOWEVER...

- d. In late 1871 the following notice appeared in the local newspapers:

*The spiritualists of Central New York, recently met at Deansville, and organized an association for dissemination of their doctrines.  
Mr. Timothy Brown, of Georgetown, was elected vice-president... [15,16]*

- e. The obituary for Sarah H. Brown, formerly of Georgetown, states "She was the widow of the late Timothy Brown, famous as a Spiritualist leader throughout New York State." [105]
- f. Conclusion: Timothy Brown of Georgetown was not only an active practitioner but by 1871 was a leader in the Spiritualist movement in Central New York.

**5. Is the Brown's Hall referenced in many, many newspaper articles (see "Chronological Guide to Newspaper Articles") the same as the building built by Timothy Brown?**

- a. From the 1872 *Cazenovia Republican*:

*The most exciting meeting that has been held in our village for some time was the one held by the spiritualists of this and adjoining counties last Thursday, in commemoration of the building of the "world-renowned" spiritualist hall, erected by Timothy Brown... [20]*

- i. But lest the reader think the author of this article is a sycophant and supporter of the spiritualist cause, he is not...he continues "But concerning God and the Bible, we never heard such *blasphemous* words in all our life." [20]

- b. In 1874 the *Cazenovia Republican* reports that:

*Mr. Timothy Brown has purchased...the Presbyterian Church property.  
Mr. B. intends moving the church to the rear of his present hall, and converting it into a hall for public purposes. [29]*

- i. There is a noticeable increase in the number of spiritualist, public and sectarian events held at Brown's Hall after 1875 [40-89]

- c. "The Spiritual Building"

- i. In the Thursday, June 24, 1875 issue of the *Syracuse Daily Courier*, an article with that title appears, based on an interview with Timothy Brown in which Mr. Brown explains how the spirits directed him to "erect a spirit building," how he knew nothing about the carpenter's trade, how he was "directed to purchase the Old

Presbyterian church near by...and moved it back by the side of his building." "Then he intends to have spiritual conventions." "The hall is the only one in the village, and [he] lets any parties have use of it for a small compensation." [38]

- ii. I believe this is the interview on which many of the subsequent articles and stories are based (although uncredited), as it outlines all the basics of him not being a skilled carpenter and being instructed by the spirits on what to do.
  - iii. The bulk of this article was reprinted several days later in the the local paper, the *Cazenovia Republican* [39]
- d. Conclusion: The existing building is the original Brown's Hall erected by Timothy Brown as both a residence and center for spiritualism. The addition of the former church allowed for much larger meetings and the frequency of meetings increased after the addition was completed. But the fact that the church was later removed does not diminish the significance of the surviving original building which was built and used for spiritualist practices and called "Brown's Hall" years before the church hall was added. While Timothy Brown allowed use of the hall for many sectarian and non-sectarian purposes, it very clearly was the seat of spiritualist activity in the area.

#### 6. When and why did spiritualist activity stop at Brown's Hall?

- a. The September 27, 1883 issue of the the *Cazenovia Republican* reports on the unmasking of spiritualist Mr. Frank Baxter as a charlatan. [87] That is the last published mention of Brown's Hall as a spiritualist meeting place to appear in any local newspaper.
- b. The last mention of a spiritualist in Georgetown is reported in the May 21, 1885 *Cazenovia Republican*, noting the death of Easton Northrup, "a Spiritualist and life-long resident of Georgetown." [94]. This is just one week after the death of Timothy Brown was reported in the May 14 issue of the same local newspaper.
- c. It is interesting to note that the obituaries for Timothy Brown do not mention his previous role as a spiritualist or the fact that a mere year-and-a-half earlier the whole spiritualist thing had been debunked. Perhaps this was out of respect for him and his surviving wife who was allowing the community to continue using the Hall.
- d. For the next decade there are many published articles noting activities at Brown's Hall, but none of them are identified as related to spiritualism or meetings of spiritualists. [94-96, 98-102]
- e. The same newspapers do carry articles well into the 1920s about spiritualist meetings at other locations in central New York, often organized by the Central New York Spiritualist Association, of which Timothy Brown was a founding member in 1871.



**7. What is the source of the name “Spirit House”?**

- a. Every published reference to the building found in local newspapers during Timothy Brown’s lifetime refers to it either as “Brown’s Hall” or “Brown’s hall.” The only difference being the capitalization of the word H/hall.
- b. In the June 24, 1875 interview in the *Syracuse Daily Courier*, the building is referred to as “a spirit building.” It is not clear if this is a term used by Timothy Brown or is a term created by the writer [38]. However, the term does not appear to have caught on and the building is always referred to in multiple regional newspapers as Brown’s Hall thereafter.
- c. There are only two published references to the structure as “Brown’s Free Hall.” The first appears in the 1880 History of Chenango and Madison County and the second is in a 1933 article in the *Cazenovia Republican* [109], both secondary sources.
- d. The first published reference to the “Spirit House” appears in the title of a November 23, 1933 newspaper article in the *Madison County Leader and Observer* recounting the history of the building [110].
- e. Conclusion: The correct historical name of the building is “Brown’s Hall.” It was never known as the “Spirit House” during the lifetime of Timothy Brown or Sarah H. Brown. The term “Brown’s Free Hall” appears once during his lifetime in the 1880 County History and it does not reflect the name used to identify the building in any other contemporary publication or reference. The National Register nomination should be revised to correct this.

There are several other questions that were raised by the owner that do not affect the nomination but the research provides additional context for understanding Timothy Brown

### **8. Who was the Timothy Brown of Georgetown who was granted two patents?**

- a. On June 24, 1856 a "Timo. Brown" of Georgetown, NY applied for a patent for an "alloy composition" suitable for making cheese-hoops [J]. The application was witnessed by Alexander Sisson and Alfred A. Brown.
  - i. Alexander Sisson was a resident of Georgetown and married Abigail (Brown) Sisson around 1850-52. Abigail was possibly a relative of Timothy, perhaps even his sister (she was the daughter of Edmund and Abigail (White) Brown who married December 27, 1804 in Topsham VT). Abigail was born in 1815 in Topsham, the same town in which Timothy and Sarah H were married in 1836. Edmund is possibly the grandfather/namesake of Timothy's son Edmund-see #10 below)[J.a.ii]
  - ii. Alfred A. Brown was a resident of Georgetown (see various Federal censuses) and in the 1860 census is listed as a neighbor of Timothy and Sarah H. Brown [N]
  - iii. Patent #16,170 was granted to Timothy Brown of Georgetown on December 9, 1856 [L]
  
- b. On October 7, 1856 a "Timo. Brown" of Georgetown, NY applied for a patent for an "Improvement in casting metallic cheese-hoops." The application was witnessed by Alfred Brown and Wm. E. Holmes. [K]
  - i. Alfred Brown, father of Alfred A. Brown, was a well-respected resident of Georgetown and in the 1860 census is listed as a neighbor of Timothy and Sarah H. Brown. [N]
  - ii. In 1856 William E. Holmes was the Presbyterian minister in Georgetown [K.b.i]
  - iii. Patent #19,677 was granted to Timothy Brown of Georgetown on March 23, 1858 [M]
  
- c. Conclusion: the patent applications state the petitioner was a resident of Georgetown, and all the witnesses are from Georgetown and were known to Timothy. As shown in #1, #2 and #5 above, there was only one Timothy Brown residing in Georgetown at this time: the Timothy Brown who built Brown's Hall. Therefore, it is reasonable to conclude that the man who built Brown's Hall is the same man who received two US patents for improvements related to cheesmaking less than ten years before he started building Brown's Hall.

### **9. When did Brown's Hall become a tourist attraction?**

- a. As early as 1872 the *Cazenovia Republican* was drawing attention to Brown's Hall, referring to it as "the 'world-renowned' spiritualist hall." [20]
  
- b. In 1877 the *Cazenovia Republican* again drew attention to the building, this time after the relocation and addition of the church hall to the rear was completed: "A place for sight seers to visit is Brown's Hall. His late ornamentation reminds one, of the temples of the old world." [57]
  
- c. And a year later the *Cazenovia Republican* reported that: "S.E. Burnham set up in town to take stereoscopic views of Brown's Hall." [64]

- d. As early as 1896, more than ten years after the death of Timothy Brown, but starting up again in earnest in 1921 and throughout the 1930s and 40s there were articles in various local papers retelling the story of this “unique structure” and its builder Timothy Brown [102, 108, 109, 110,111, 112, 113]
- e. At least one real photo postcard of the building was issued ca. 1910, although the building is not identified by name, simply as “A Residence at Georgetown, NY. 65” The meaning of the number appears to be related to the number of the image, as other real photo post cards from Georgetown have sequential numbers. The church hall addition at the rear has already been removed by the time of this photo.
- f. Conclusion: Almost from the very beginning, the unique architecture of the building, and the story of the man behind it, attracted curiosity and attention. Even without the spiritualist connection, readers were told the unique architecture of Mr Brown’s Hall was reason enough to travel to see it.

**10. The obituary for Sarah H. Brown mentions a son who pre-deceased her. Who was that son and what happened to him?**

- a. Search of the 1840 Federal census for Newbury, Orange County Vermont
  - i. Timothy Brown is listed as head of household, with one female age 20-30 (likely his wife Sarah) and one male under the age of 5 years (likely their son). [E]
- b. Search of the 1850 Federal census records for Georgetown
  - i. Timothy and Sarah Brown are listed as having one child, a son named Edmund. He is listed as 11 years old and born in Vermont (that would be ca. 1839). [G]
- c. Search of the 1860, 1870 and 1880 Federal census records for Georgetown
  - i. There is no Edmund, Ed or E. Brown listed in Georgetown
- d. Search of census records throughout the country for an Edmund Brown born in Vermont around 1839
  - i. The 1870 Federal Census for the 20<sup>th</sup> Ward in Chicago lists an E. Brown, age 31, engraver, born Vermont. Wife A. A. Brown, age 29 born Ohio. [Y]
- e. With that information the Chicago city directories were searched:
  - i. 1864, Edmund Brown, engraver [Q]
  - ii. 1865, Edmund Brown, engraver with Chicago Engraving Co. [S]
  - iii. 1867, Edmund Brown, engraver [U]
  - iv. 1870, Edmund Brown, general engraver [W]
  - v. 1873, Edmund Brown, engraver [Z]
  - vi. 1877, Edmund Brown, engraver [CC]
  - vii. 1878, Edmund Brown, engraver with E. Brown & Co. [DD]
  - viii. 1882, Edmund Brown, engraver with E. Brown & Co. [FF]
  - ix. 1885, Edmund Brown, engraver with E. Brown & Co. [GG]
    - 1. 1885 is the last entry for Edmund Brown, engraver, in the Chicago directory

- f. Patent issued to Edmund Brown of Chicago
  - i. In 1866, an Edmund Brown of Chicago was issued patent #58,981 for a process to separate gold and silver from ores. [T]
  - ii. There are several Edmund Browns listed in the Chicago directory, but their occupations (laborer, etc) suggest that Edmund the engraver is the most likely candidate.
  - iii. It is interesting to note that the process for separating gold and silver from ores requires a knowledge and understanding of chemical/metallic processes similar to that required by the patent awarded Timothy Brown for the alloy composition of metal cheese hoops.
- g. The 1870 Federal census records that Timothy and Sarah of Georgetown, NY have "1 Male Citizen of the U.S. of 21 years of age and upwards," so they have an adult son, but he is not listed as residing in their household, nor is there an Edmund, Ed or E. Brown listed in the Georgetown, NY census for that year.
- h. The Thursday, September 30 1880 issue of *The Cazenovia Republican* states "Timothy Brown left town for a visit in Chicago, Tuesday morning." [74]
  - i. Perhaps to visit his son Edmund in Chicago?
- i. The Thursday, April 14, 1887 issue of *The DeRuyter New Era-Gleaner* reports "Georgetown-Edmund Brown died last Saturday afternoon, and his funeral services are to be held this afternoon." [97]
- j. Conclusion: Timothy and Sarah H. Brown had one child, Edmund, born in Vermont around 1839 before they moved to Georgetown. He is not recorded in Georgetown in the 1860 census so his whereabouts at the age of 21 are not certain, but he appears in Chicago in 1864. By 1870 he is married but without children. He apparently resides in Chicago until returning home after 1885, probably upon his father's death. He dies shortly thereafter in 1887, which is consistent with the report in the obituary of his mother, Sarah H. Brown.