

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
INVENTORY -- NOMINATION FORM**

SEE INSTRUCTIONS IN *HOW TO COMPLETE NATIONAL REGISTER FORMS*
TYPE ALL ENTRIES -- COMPLETE APPLICABLE SECTIONS

1 NAME

HISTORIC
William H. Seward House
AND/OR COMMON
William H. Seward House

2 LOCATION

STREET & NUMBER
33 South Street
CITY, TOWN
Auburn
STATE
New York
VICINITY OF
33
COUNTY
Cayuga
CODE
11
NOT FOR PUBLICATION
CONGRESSIONAL DISTRICT

3 CLASSIFICATION

CATEGORY	OWNERSHIP	STATUS	PRESENT USE
<input type="checkbox"/> DISTRICT	<input type="checkbox"/> PUBLIC	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> OCCUPIED	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> BUILDING(S)	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE	<input type="checkbox"/> UNOCCUPIED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> MUSEUM
<input type="checkbox"/> STRUCTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> BOTH	<input type="checkbox"/> WORK IN PROGRESS	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCIAL
<input type="checkbox"/> SITE	PUBLIC ACQUISITION	ACCESSIBLE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATIONAL
<input type="checkbox"/> OBJECT	<input type="checkbox"/> IN PROCESS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> YES: RESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> ENTERTAINMENT
	<input type="checkbox"/> BEING CONSIDERED	<input type="checkbox"/> YES: UNRESTRICTED	<input type="checkbox"/> GOVERNMENT
		<input type="checkbox"/> NO	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRIAL
			<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY
			<input type="checkbox"/> PARK
			<input type="checkbox"/> PRIVATE RESIDENCE
			<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGIOUS
			<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENTIFIC
			<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
			<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER:

4 OWNER OF PROPERTY

NAME
Foundation Historic Association, Inc.
STREET & NUMBER
96 Genessee Street
CITY, TOWN
Auburn
STATE
New York
VICINITY OF

5 LOCATION OF LEGAL DESCRIPTION

COURTHOUSE,
REGISTRY OF DEEDS, ETC.
Cayuga County Courthouse
STREET & NUMBER
CITY, TOWN
Auburn
STATE
New York

6 REPRESENTATION IN EXISTING SURVEYS

TITLE
None
DATE
FEDERAL STATE COUNTY LOCAL
DEPOSITORY FOR
SURVEY RECORDS
CITY, TOWN
STATE

7 DESCRIPTION

CONDITION		CHECK ONE	CHECK ONE
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> EXCELLENT	<input type="checkbox"/> DETERIORATED	<input type="checkbox"/> UNALTERED	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ORIGINAL SITE
<input type="checkbox"/> GOOD	<input type="checkbox"/> RUINS	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> ALTERED	<input type="checkbox"/> MOVED DATE _____
<input type="checkbox"/> FAIR	<input type="checkbox"/> UNEXPOSED		

DESCRIBE THE PRESENT AND ORIGINAL (IF KNOWN) PHYSICAL APPEARANCE

The William Seward House was initially constructed for Judge Elijah Miller in 1816-17, and was subsequently enlarged by Seward in 1847 and 1870. The original house, which now forms the eastern (front) section of the building, is rectangular, two stories high, gable roofed, with a raised basement. The entire building is yellow-painted brick on stone foundations with brownstone windows, arches, sills and watertable. The original house, which is laid out in a central hall plan, was two rooms deep. The central doorway is topped with a round, keystone arch over the fanlight transom and the double doors. The round arch is repeated in the Palladian window which is located above the door on the second floor. Above this window, a triangular pediment, pierced by a fanlight, projects from the gable roof. The fanlights are repeated in both the gable ends of this section of the building. There are two interior chimneys located at either gable end.

In 1847, Seward made the first additions to the house, which consisted of the construction of the two story tower on the northwestern corner of the original house and a two-story wing on the west (rear) wall of the main house. Both these additions had hip roofs and the west wing had gable roof dormers, one on each side. A porte-cochere was added on the north wall of the tower, and a one-story, square carriage house was added on the southwest corner of the west wing. The final addition, made in 1870, consisted of an extension of the south end of the original house, one room deep, with a central porch, flanked by hexagonal bays, and a three story hip-roofed tower on the southwest corner of the original house. At approximately this time, twin one-and-a-half story square stone carriage houses were constructed on the western boundary of the property.

The interior of the house is virtually unchanged since the days of Seward's occupancy. Among the best preserved rooms on the first floor are the North Library, formerly Judge Miller's sitting room, on the northwest corner of the original house; the Parlor, on the northeast corner of the original house; the Drawing Room which occupies the extension on the south; and the Dining Room, which occupies the 1870 addition on the west end of the house. All these rooms are furnished with possessions of the Miller and Seward families. The 1847 west addition originally contained the kitchen and pantry, but is presently used for exhibition space. Located in the central hall, is the spiral staircase, installed in 1870, which was a gift from the California Pioneer Society, in gratitude for Seward's efforts to have California admitted to the Union as a free state.

The second floor is composed of bedrooms, except for the central hall which serves as the Diplomatic Gallery which contains portraits, documents and other memorabilia of the famous people and events throughout the world with which Seward was associated. Some of the bedrooms have been restored as such, and other rooms have been used to house exhibits. The basement has been restored in part as the summer dining room.

The Seward House is presently located on a trapezoidal plot of land amounting to about 2.5 acres. The house is located on the northern end of the property, with the carriage

8 SIGNIFICANCE

PERIOD	AREAS OF SIGNIFICANCE -- CHECK AND JUSTIFY BELOW			
<input type="checkbox"/> PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-PREHISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNITY PLANNING	<input type="checkbox"/> LANDSCAPE ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> RELIGION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHEOLOGY-HISTORIC	<input type="checkbox"/> CONSERVATION	<input type="checkbox"/> LAW	<input type="checkbox"/> SCIENCE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input type="checkbox"/> AGRICULTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> ECONOMICS	<input type="checkbox"/> LITERATURE	<input type="checkbox"/> SCULPTURE
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> ARCHITECTURE	<input type="checkbox"/> EDUCATION	<input type="checkbox"/> MILITARY	<input type="checkbox"/> SOCIAL/HUMANITARIAN
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> ART	<input type="checkbox"/> ENGINEERING	<input type="checkbox"/> MUSIC	<input type="checkbox"/> THEATER
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMERCE	<input type="checkbox"/> EXPLORATION/SETTLEMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> PHILOSOPHY	<input type="checkbox"/> TRANSPORTATION
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> COMMUNICATIONS	<input type="checkbox"/> INDUSTRY	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> POLITICS/GOVERNMENT	<input type="checkbox"/> OTHER (SPECIFY)
		<input type="checkbox"/> INVENTION		

SPECIFIC DATES	1824-1872	(Seward's Occupancy)	BUILDER/ARCHITECT
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STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE

William Henry Seward (1801-1872) was one of the most distinguished political figures of his time. Beginning his career as a State senator in New York, he went on to serve two terms as governor of that state, one as a U.S. Senator and finally, he served as the Secretary of State from 1861 to 1869. One of the founders of the Republican Party and one of the country's most able foreign diplomats, Seward is best remembered today for his successful negotiation with Russia for the purchase of Alaska, sometimes known as "Seward's Folly."

The William H. Seward House at 33 South Street, Auburn, New York, was the Statesman's home from 1824 until his death. The stately mansion, which was built in 1816 and later enlarged by Seward, is presently maintained as an historic site, replete with furnishings and memorabilia, by the Foundation Historical Association of Auburn.

BIOGRAPHY

William Seward was born on May 16, 1801 in Florida, Orange County, New York, the fourth child in the family of Dr. Samuel and Mary Seward. Seward attended local academies in preparation for college, which he entered 1816. He graduated from Union College in 1820 and was admitted to the bar in New York in 1822. In 1824, he married Frances Miller, the daughter of Judge Elijah Miller of Auburn by whom he was employed. The young couple made their home with the Miller family at 33 South Street, Auburn, and this remained Seward's home for the rest of his life. Although Seward was not physically prepossessing, his great courage, which bordered on recklessness at times, his demanding conscience, and his keen intellect all served to elevate him to his positions of public prominence.

Seward's first political triumph came in 1830, when he was elected to the New York State Senate, at the age of twenty-nine. As early as 1824, Seward had developed a friendship with Thurlow Weed, an influential power in the New York political scene. This friendship proved to be one of value and long standing. In 1838, Seward gained the governor's seat as a member of the newly-formed Whig Party, and then succeeded himself in 1840. During his four years in that office, Seward strongly defended internal improvements, the equalization of the public schools of New York City, the rights of minorities, and spoke out against slavery. Seward declined to run for a third term, desiring instead to return to his law practice in Auburn. He nonetheless maintained an active interest in politics, especially in the 1848 campaign of Zachary Taylor. In 1849, Seward moved to Washington to take his seat as the senator from New York. Here his voice grew increasingly stern in his criticism of slavery. Although he admitted slavery had a Constitutional basis in the Old South, he still denounced the institution as a moral

9 MAJOR BIBLIOGRAPHICAL REFERENCES

- S. Sydney Bradford, "William H. Seward House," National Survey of Historic Sites and Buildings form 10-317, 8/19/63.
 John Hunter Detmold, The Seward House (Foundation Historical Association, Inc., Auburn, New York, 1955).
 Thornton Kirkland Lothrop, William Henry Seward (New York 1899).
 Julius W. Pratt, A History of United States Foreign Policy (New York, 1955).

10 GEOGRAPHICAL DATA

ACREAGE OF NOMINATED PROPERTY 2.5 acres

UTM REFERENCES

A 18 3712191510 47531710
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

B
 ZONE EASTING NORTHING

C

D

VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The Seward House National Historic Landmark boundaries are coterminous with those of the Seward House lot as conveyed by the Seward family to the Foundation Historical Association. Beginning at a point on the west curb of South Street approximately 200' north of the intersection of South Street and William Street, proceed north along said curb for 400', thence west-southwest 340' in a straight line to the eastern curb of William Street, thence south along said curb for 340' thence east 145' to the

LIST ALL STATES AND COUNTIES FOR PROPERTIES OVERLAPPING STATE OR COUNTY BOUNDARIES (cont'd)

STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE
STATE	CODE	COUNTY	CODE

11 FORM PREPARED BY

NAME / TITLE

Richard Greenwood, Historian, Landmark Review Task Force
 ORGANIZATION DATE
Historic Sites Survey 1/17/76
 STREET & NUMBER TELEPHONE
1100 L Street, NW. 202-523-5464
 CITY OR TOWN STATE
Washington D.C. 20240

12 STATE HISTORIC PRESERVATION OFFICER CERTIFICATION

THE EVALUATED SIGNIFICANCE OF THIS PROPERTY WITHIN THE STATE IS:

NATIONAL STATE LOCAL

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

FEDERAL REPRESENTATIVE SIGNATURE

TITLE

DATE

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I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS PROPERTY IS INCLUDED IN THE NATIONAL REGISTER

DATE 9/20/83

ATTEST:

DATE

KEEPER OF THE NATIONAL REGISTER

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

(NATIONAL HISTORIC LANDMARKS)

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houses behind it to the west. The southern portion of the grounds are landscaped as a garden. There is a small summerhouse in the garden. A small triangular city park, with a statue of William Seward, is located on South Street, just south of the house.

The Seward House has been maintained as a memorial and museum of William Seward since the death of William Seward III, in 1951.

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wrong and fought its expansion westward. When the Republican Party was organized in 1855, he quickly joined it, vigorously supporting the party's candidate in 1856. In 1858 Seward's reference to "the Irrepressible Conflict between Freedom and Slavery" swept the Nation, being praised in the North and denounced in the South. Boomed as a candidate for the Republican Party's choice for the presidency in 1860, Seward lost to Abraham Lincoln, whom he was to serve with distinction as Secretary of State.

When Lincoln first offered to put Seward at the head of the State Department, the New Yorker declined, but had sufficiently changed his mind to accept the position in 1861. Modesty, however, was never a strong part of Seward's character, and in his first months as Secretary of State, he seemed to expect to dominate the entire administration. This potentially troublesome phase soon passed, and especially in his handling of foreign relations, Seward established an excellent record, despite tenuous situations. A tightrope had to be walked during the Civil War. Differences with other nations, especially with England and France, had to be handled in a deft, sure manner, for we were powerless to do more than protest against their irritating actions. Seward succeeded in this trying task. He ". . . became one of the most discreet of diplomats, conducting the delicate diplomacy of wartime in a manner almost above criticism."¹

Seward was seriously injured in a carriage accident in the spring of 1865, and while still convalescing was assaulted in his bed at the same time that Lincoln was assassinated. Nonetheless, Seward remained in office until 1869. Reviled and scorned by fellow Republicans, who hated the new President Johnson, Seward supported Johnson and proved to be a central figure in the administration. One of American's most far-sighted and expansionist-minded Secretaries of State, he wasted no time when he heard the Russians desired to sell what was then known as "Russian America." Senator Charles Sumner acquired Seward's zeal for the territory, and made an extremely effective speech in the Senate in favor of ratifying the Alaskan treaty. Sumner, by the way, is responsible for the vast area's present name, "Alaska" which he stated was a native word meaning "great land." In purchasing Alaska, America moved boldly into the Pacific. Moreover, for the initial time we placed territory under our flag that was "not legally destined for statehood."²

Other expansionist hopes, such as the acquisition of Hawaii and two islands in the Danish West Indies, were disappointed in Seward's lifetime but fulfilled afterwards.

Following his resignation from the State Department, Seward embarked on a trip around the world, the first major American political figure to do so. He returned home to Auburn in the fall of 1871. Increasingly, paralysis began to destroy his health, and on October 10, 1872, he died quietly in his home.

¹Julius W. Pratt, A History of United States Foreign Policy (New York, 1955), 300.

²Ibid., 327.

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point of origin. These boundaries enclose the Seward House and associated outbuildings and gardens.