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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
MULTIPLE PROPERTY DOCUMENTATION FORM

NATIONAL REGISTER

This form is for use in documenting multiple property groups relating to one or several historic contexts. See instructions in Guidelines for Completing National Register Forms (National Register Bulletin 16). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the requested information. For additional space use continuation sheets (Form 10-900-a). Type all entries.

A. Name of Multiple Property Listing

Historic and Architectural Resources of the Town of Mexico, Oswego County

B. Associated Historic Contexts

1. Settlement Period and Early Development in the Town of Mexico 1792-c.1850
2. Industrial Development in the Town of Mexico 1803-1940
3. Agricultural Development in the Town of Mexico 1795-1940
4. Travel and Tourism in the Town of Mexico 1793-1940
5. The Abolition Movement in the Town of Mexico 1835-1855

C. Geographical Data

The political boundaries of the Town of Mexico, Oswego County, New York

[ ] See continuation sheet

D. Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966, as amended, I hereby certify that this documentation form meets the National Register documentation standards and sets forth requirements for listing of related properties consistent with the National Register criteria. This submission meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60 and the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Planning and Evaluation.

Signature of certifying official — Date: 12/28/90

Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation
State or Federal agency and bureau

I, hereby, certify that this multiple property documentation form has been approved by the National Register as a basis for evaluating related properties for listing in the National Register.

6/20/91

E. HISTORIC CONTEXTS

1. Settlement Period and Early Development of the Town of Mexico

The settlement period of the town of Mexico dates from the 1792 purchase of the entire area of the present town by land speculators to the arbitrary date of 1817, the general limit of 25 years for the first generation of settlers. By that time, a number of people had settled in the planned city of Vera Cruz and in the town, but it was not until the 1820's through the 1840's that the town was substantially settled. The number of extant properties associated with the settlement period of the town is quite small, but if one counts the number of "first" buildings on a particular property, there are quite a large number of extant properties from the period of early development in Mexico. Several farmsteads and a number of village properties are included in this nomination that are associated with the early development of Mexico.

Geography

The most recent glaciers covering New York State receeded not more than 8 to 10 thousand years ago. As the glaciers melted, vast amounts of pebbles and boulders were left behind and these gravel deposits provided stone for concrete, road construction, and other uses from the beginning of non-native settlement.

Mexico is underlain by two sedimentary layers. In the northern part of the town, the bedrock is Oswego Sandstone of the Lorraine group, which is gray in color. In the southern part of the town, the bedrock is of the Queenston Formation and Medina group, consisting of sandstone, shale, and siltstone, which are red in color. The gray sandstone in the hamlet of Arthur became an important building material in the nineteenth century, being used for foundations, sidewalks, and entire buildings.

Mexico lies entirely within the Lake Ontario Plain; the surface is gently rolling. On the whole, the soils, composed of clay, sand, and gravelly loam, are poorly drained and there are many post-glacial swamps. After the forests were cleared in the early nineteenth century, the stony soils lost their fertility quickly, forcing conversion of tilled fields into pasture land and hay fields.

Lake Ontario, 180 miles in length and about 35 miles in width, is the smallest and the lowest of the Great Lakes. The lake shore is about 200 feet above sea level, rising to an elevation of about 1750 feet in the Tug Hill Plateau to the east. The lake water remains cold long into the summer, which almost eliminates the spring season but provides cool brezes in mid-summer and a mild fall season. The extremes of heat and cold felt farther inland, such as in Syracuse 40 miles to the south, are rarely experienced along the eastern edge of the lake. This moderating effect of Lake Ontario on the near shore climate encouraged the development of summer resorts along the lake in Mexico and enabled the growing of fruits such as apples, cherries, peaches, and pears in the coastal areas.

Another profound consequence for Mexico from Lake Ontario's proximity is the tremendous snowfalls of the region. Popularly known as the "lake effect" snow squalls, 150-200 inches of snow may fall annually on the Mexico area. As Arctic air from Canada passes over the warmer lake from west to east, it picks up moisture, which is released as snow when the air reaches land. Snowfall is further enhanced when the moisture-laden air is forced to rise over the Tug Hill Plateau 12 miles to the east. In pre-historic times, as a result of the hard winters, the Iroquois Indian tribes fished Lake Ontario in the summer but lived inland during the rest of the year.

The unique climactic conditions, lake effect snow and the warming effects of the lake, influenced activities in two ways: blizzards could bring transportation and most human interchange to a standstill several times during the winter, and the late autumn frosts permitted a mixed agricultural

economy based on dairying, small grains, fruits, and vegetables.

A major land form lying to the east of the Lake Ontario Plain and incorporating parts of Oswego, Lewis, Jefferson, and Oneida counties is the Tug Hill Upland, a plateau on the west side of the Adirondack Mountains. It is underlain by Paleozoic sandstones, limestones, and shales; the area is characterized by poor soils and excessive snow. A sparsely populated region to this day, the plateau has always been important to the development of Mexico because both the North and South branches of the Little Salmon River begin in this area and flow through the town of Mexico into Lake Ontario.

The Tug Hill Plateau averages 200-300 inches of snow annually, the heaviest snowfall in the United States east of the Rocky Mountains. The sustained run-off from Tug Hill feeds the Little Salmon River throughout the year and, in the nineteenth century, provided abundant water to power mills in the town.

Within the town all the waterways drain north or northwest and empty into Lake Ontario. The two branches of the Little Salmon River join about a mile south of Colosse in the southeastern corner of the town. The river then flows through the village of Mexico and enters the lake at Mexico Point. Increasing the volume of water within the village is a tributary, Black Creek, which arises in the southwestern area of the town. Another small stream, Sage Creek, drains the eastern part of the town, emptying into Lake Ontario a mile east of Mexico Point.

When the last glacier melted 10 thousand years ago, ridges of gravel and larger stones were deposited at intervals by the receeding waters of the Champlain Sea. Where the Little Salmon River, Black Creek, and Sage Creek pass over these stony ridges, early settlers found suitable mill sites.

Settlement

Oswego County, New York, borders the southeastern corner of Lake Ontario where the shoreline turns from a west-east direction to a northerly direction. Located in the north-central portion of the county, the town of Mexico is bordered by Lake Ontario and the town of Richland on the north, the town of Parish on the east, the towns of Hastings and Palermo on the south, and the town of New Haven on the west. From Mexico Village the city of Oswego (population 22,000) lies 12 miles to the west, Syracuse is 40 miles to the south, and Albany is 150 miles to the east.

The present political boundaries of the town of Mexico date from 1836, but the town was originally much larger. In 1792, when the political boundaries were established for the area, the town consisted of what is now Onondaga and Cortland counties and that part of Oswego County east of the Oswego River. In 1796, as new counties were formed, the second Mexico consisted of lands east of the Oswego River, north of Oneida Lake and River, and portions of Jefferson, Lewis, and Oneida counties. By 1804, after several subtractions, the town of Mexico receded to within the present boundaries of Oswego County and, by 1836, enclosed its present area of 28,219 acres.

The Iroquois Indians are known to have lived in the Mexico area for several hundred years prior to European settlement. The Onondaga tribe of the Iroquois, the last Native American inhabitants of the region, reputedly had hunting and fishing camps at several locations in Mexico, but these have not been documented to any great extent. Prior to the Revolutionary War and for a number of years after, there was no European settlement in the Mexico area, largely due to legal barriers and potential Indian hostility. Settlement had occurred before the Revolution along the Mohawk Valley and at strategic military and trading locations, but it was not until the purchase of a vast tract of land by the State of New York in 1788 from the Iroquois that settlement began in the area.

One important event did occur in Mexico during the Revolution. In 1777 British forces under the command of General Barry St. Leger landed on Mexico Point on an expedition to capture the American forces at Fort Stanwix in the Mohawk Valley. The legend persists that Silas Town, a spy in the Continental Army and a later inhabitant of Mexico Point, learned of St. Leger's plans at the Point and was able to warn Fort Stanwix and thus save the fort from a surprise attack. The site at Mexico Point has been named Spy Island, and a nineteenth-century monument marks the site.

Oswego County is bounded on the north in part by Lake Ontario and on the south in part by Oneida Lake. Throughout the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, travelers from the eastern seaboard bound for Lake Ontario and the upper Great Lakes could take one of two water routes: either travel up the St. Lawrence River or pass through Oneida Lake. The Oneida Lake trip involved traveling up the Hudson and Mohawk rivers with a portage at Fort Stanwix at the headwaters of the Mohawk River, then westward to Wood Creek and Oneida Lake, then down the Oneida and Oswego rivers to the settlement of Oswego on Lake Ontario. From Oswego, goods could be transshipped down the St. Lawrence River to Montreal or up the Great Lakes to the west. To reach Lake Ontario from Oneida Lake, travelers had to use the water passage.

George Scriba, a New York City merchant and land speculator, and his partners purchased 500,000 acres of land east of the Oswego River in 1792, and by 1795 had begun to sell parcels to settlers. This included the present town of Mexico. One of Scriba's first concerns was to establish an overland route from his settlement, Rotterdam (now Constantia) on the north shore of Oneida Lake, to Mexico Point at the mouth of the Little Salmon River on Lake Ontario. This meant building a road through a dense wilderness, but it was a necessary improvement in order to compete with previously developed routes and to sell farm and mill sites. Scriba even planned a canal to link the two lakes so that industrial and commercial development would occur on the inland route rather than in the Oswego River

Valley, but this proved to be impossible due to the 110 foot drop along the route.

In 1793, surveyor Benjamin Wright submitted a bill to Scriba for surveying a road from Constantia to Mexico Point; according to author Simpson (p.66), it followed an already existing Indian trail. The route passed through present-day Colosse in the town of Mexico, then kept fairly close to the east side of the Little Salmon River, turned north at the top of Pulaski Hill (Tubbs Street in Mexico Village), crossed the river at present-day Texas, and reached Lake Ontario at Mexico Point. Scriba's road, south of Mexico Village, corresponds approximately to present-day County Route 58 from Colosse to Lamb's Corners (County Route 58 from Lamb's Corners to Mexico was surveyed in 1805 but was not built for several years). North of the village, the route of the Scriba Road is more difficult to trace, although Hamilton Street angling from North Street to Route 3 is almost on the exact line. The first settlers in the area by necessity chose sites on the Scriba Road. The Phineas Davis Farmstead (extant, included in this nomination) is the site of the original 1799 Davis homestead (not extant). Also located on the original Scriba Road, a short distance north of the Davis Farm, is the Richard Hamilton Farmstead, which was probably settled in the 1820's (extant, included in this nomination). A second Scriba Road was surveyed to the east of the original one, running from Colosse to Lamb's Corners, Row Road, and Smithers Road; gradually the original Scriba Road was abandoned and only remnants of it remain.

By 1796, Scriba had planned the "City of Mexico" (later to be renamed "Vera Cruz") on the west side of the Little Salmon River outlet as the terminus of trade and commerce on Lake Ontario. Using today's landmarks, this beautifully laid-out city stretched from Lake Ontario south to the hamlet of Texas, from the Little Salmon River on the east to the present town line between Mexico and New Haven on the west.

Although the city existed on paper, the actual building of stores, mills, and residences proceeded at a very slow pace. In the early nineteenth century, tensions with England

and the War of 1812 restricted migration and some settlers even moved away. Two disasterous shipwrecks in 1799 accounted for the loss of nearly all the adult men of Vera Cruz. A fire in 1820 destroyed the remaining buildings: Sciba's scheme for the creation of a grand port city faded away. The location, however, still retained its natural beauty; in another 100 years it would become the summmer resort of Mexico Point and, a half century after that, a mecca for sports fishermen and summer travelers. The archeological remains of Vera Cruz have not been investigated.

Although the City of Vera Cruz was a complete failure, the remainder of the town of Mexico was gradually settled. Named Township 20, Mexico was divided into 161 lots of 125 to 150 acres each, with a number of five to six-acre mill lots. According to the terms of sale, with certain exceptions, no more than one lot could be sold to an individual and that person was to settle on the land and clear four acres in the first year of occupancy. A downpayment of $20 was required for a whole lot; $10 for a half-lot (Simpson 88). A number of sales were made in the 1790's, but there were still barriers to settlement. The holding of the fort at Oswego by the British until 1796, the disaster at Vera Cruz, and the threat of British invasion during the War of 1812 delayed land sales in Mexico until after the war.

Several other roads were developed in the early nineteenth century in or through the town and village of Mexico, encouraging the settlement and development of the town. The second major road to cross the town stretched in an east-west direction from Fort Stanwix (present-day City of Rome) west to Camden, to Mexico Village, then to Fort Ontario at Oswego. This route went through Amboy and Parish, towns lying to the east of Mexico, and was completed as far as Mexico by 1802. Present-day State Route 69 corresponds to this early road. About a mile east of Colosse is the site of Red Mills (archeological site, not included in this nomination), established c. 1810 at the point where the original Rome-Oswego Road crossed the North Branch of the Little Salmon River. An alternate Camden-Mexico route was

developed parallel and to the north of the original Rome-Oswego Road. It extended west from the Camden-Pulaski Road (NYS Route 13), passed through Mexico and Oswego and eventually followed the Lake Ontario shoreline west across the state. It is present-day NYS Route 104.

By 1803, B. Winch had surveyed an east-west "main street" for the present village of Mexico along the Rome-Oswego Road: this remains as Main Street in the village. Two years later this route was extended west to the Oswego River (Simpson 109). The Rome-Oswego and Scriba roads were used by thousands of people migrating from New England to the west, particularly before the Erie Canal opened in 1825; when they reached Oswego they boarded lake boats and continued the journey across Lake Ontario. Where the Scriba Road and the Rome-Oswego Road crossed, emerged the village of Mexico.

The Salina-Sackett's Harbor Road (now NYS Route 11) was built by the State of New York in 1814; it crossed the east side of the town of Mexico in a north-south direction, extending from Syracuse to Sackett's Harbor, the largest U.S. Naval base on Lake Ontario in the early nineteenth century. The highway was called the "Salt Road" because it was paid for from duties on salt that was shipped over the road from Syracuse. At the intersection of the Salina Road and the Rome-Oswego Road, the hamlet of Colosse developed.

About one mile to the west of Colosse was the area of the French Street Settlement, where a group of French emigrants settled c.1820-40. The influence of this group of farmers and craftsmen on the development of Mexico and the manifestation of their cultural background in agricultural practices and architecture has yet to be documented, excepting for the fine stone-cutting abilities of the Salladin family, who operated a monument business in Mexico and Oswego from the mid-nineteenth century until 1974. Extant examples of their work, reflecting their French Catholic heritage, are located in at least two cemeteries in Mexico and elsewhere in Oswego County.

The hamlet of Union Square, present-day Maple Grove, developed in a similar way to Colosse at the intersection of the Salina Road and the northern branch of the Rome-Oswego Road. Whereas the Scriba Road was built for commercial reasons, the Rome-Osewgo Road and the Salina-Sackett's Harbor Road initially served a military purpose as well as an aid to settlement; they provided a supply route for Lake Ontario military establishments before and during the War of 1812. Another military turnpike of importance during the same period connected Plattsburg on Lake Champlain in the northeastern corner of the state to Sackett's Harbor on Lake Ontario; a combination of Indian trails, farm lanes, and town roads then connected Sackett's Harbor to Mexico. The portion of the road from Sackett's Harbor along the eastern bend of Lake Ontario south to Mexico is present-day NYS Route 3. Eventually, Route 3 extended south out of Mexico and angled to the west to cross the Oswego River at Fulton. The route became a state highway in the early twentieth century. Two roads branched off in a southwest direction from NYS Route 3 north of Mexico Village. They constituted short-cuts to reach the Rome-Oswego Road to the west of the village, shortening the travel time to Oswego.

Leonard Ames, an early settler in the town, served continuously as Commissioner of Highways in the town of Mexico from 1815 to 1834 and was responsible for designing much of the highway system of the town. The Rev. Thomas A. Weed said that "after Commissioner Ames finished his work, there was no road within twenty miles but led to the village of Mexico or what was part of the Ames Farm, strangers finding that all roads led to Mexico, to the number of nine distinct, important thoroughfares" (Simpson 247). Since Ames owned and operated a grindstone factory across Main Street from his house, he undoubtedly designed and built County Route 16, the straight road from Mexico Village to the stone quarry in the hamlet of Arthur. Stone used in the construction of his own house (extant, included in this nomination) and for the manufacture of grindstones in his factory was hauled from the Arthur quarry.

The Scriba Road and the several roads built in the early nineteenth century had a profound impact on the settlement of the town. Where these roads intersected, hamlets were established to serve travelers and to provide the needs for trade and commerce of newly developed farms and mills. Several hamlets began in the early-nineteenth century, including Colosse, Maple View, Arthur and Texas, but the largest was "Mexicoville," later to become the village of Mexico. Historic buildings are extant at each of the smaller hamlets in the town, but none of the hamlets retains sufficient architectural integrity to be included in this nomination as an historic district. Mexico Village retains several hundred historic buildings; the central core of the village is included in the nomination as the Mexico Village Historic District.

2. Industrial Development in the Town of Mexico

The period of significance for the industrial development of the town of Mexico dates from the erection of the first known sawmill in 1803 to the continued development of the baked bean industry beyond the 50-year National Register eligibility limit of 1939. The number of extant properties associated with industrial development is quite large, but they are mostly located in the village of Mexico. These include residences of mill owners and other buildings in the village constructed during the most prosperous years of Mexico's industries in the nineteenth century. Many of these are within the Mexico Historic District, which is included in this nomination. No actual industrial buildings are extant, but there are several known industrial archeological sites in the village and town: none is included in this nomination because they have either not been well documented or their present integrity has not been determined.

Industrial and commercial development in the town of Mexico was closely intertwined with agricultural development during the nineteenth century. Whereas streams provided the water power with which to process the raw materials, the development of farms provided the raw material itself. Before fields could be planted, trees were cut down and burned (to produce potash) or were hauled to saw mills for the production of lumber, staves, crates, and boxes. Carding, fulling, and cloth mills depended on the raising of sheep, and tanneries relied on the raising of cattle and the availability of hemlock. Grist mills enabled farmers to have their corn and wheat ground close at hand, rather that making the week-long journey to mills at Redfield (located on the Tug Hill Plateau) or to Camden (farther east in Oneida County). The town of Mexico developed in a similar way to other upstate rural areas; small hamlets grew at transportation crossroads and good mill sites, and a larger community, the village of Mexico, grew around the intersection of principal routes and the best mill sites, serving the needs of the entire town.

The importance of mill sites in Mexico is illustrated by the terms of the sale of lands by George Scriba in the 1790's and subsequent land speculators. Mill seats were reserved with five or six acres of land, and lots bounding the two major streams in the town could not cross them (Simpson 88). The site of the present village of Mexico had two advantages over other locations in the town for becoming the center of industry and commerce: the early advantage of the route of the Scriba Road and subsequent planned roads that passed through the village, and the potential mill sites on both the Black Creek and the Little Salmon River. By 1851, when the village of Mexico was incorporated, it had become the most important community in the town due to the presence of several mills and its location on the principal trade routes serving farms in the town and more distant markets.

The first mill in the town was reputedly the sawmill of John Morton, built in 1803 on the west side of the Little Salmon River, on the north side of Main Street in Mexicoville (later changed to Mexico). Main Street was surveyed by Winch in the same year. Morton soon after added a gristmill to his operations. Gristmills, like sawmills, were important to the development of farms by providing a nearby location for processing wheat into flour. Numerous mills were built in the town and village of Mexico in the early nineteenth century to exploit the vast supply of timber, support newly settled farms, and supply goods to the growing population of the area. Early industries in Mexico Village in addition to Morton's sawmill and gristmill included: a cloth dressing factory erected in 1813 by George Kingsbury, a tannery erected in 1818 by Deacon Jabin Wood on the Lower Salmon River, a carding machine and clothing works erected in 1820 by Southworth and Owen on the Black Creek, a carding machine and clothing factory erected in 1825 by Bezaliel Thayer on the Little Salmon River, a sawmill and tannery erected in 1825 by Orson Ames on the Black Creek, a gristmill erected c.1829 by Veeder Green on the Little Salmon River, a foundry erected in 1832 by Asa Beebe on the Little Salmon River, and a sawmill erected c.1841 by Edwin Ames, Sr. on the Little Salmon River (Simpson 256; Johnson 266). Early industries elsewhere in the town included several mills and a stone

quarry at Arthur, several mills at Red Mills (c.1810, mid-1820's), and other unidentified mills along the Little Salmon River and the Black Creek.

The prosperity of the mills and industries in the town of Mexico in the early nineteenth century is reflected in the growth and prosperity of the village of Mexico. Mill owners, in addition to expanding their mill operations, constructed substantial stone or frame residences in or near Mexico Village in the late Federal and Greek Revival styles and supported related businesses and professions, schools, and religious institutions. None of the early mill buildings survives; however, physical evidence exists for many, such as stone flumes, dams, and foundations. One complex has been extensively documented through an archeological investigation - the Toad Hollow Industrial Complex in Mexico Village (Rutsch and Morrell, 1982). The Gustin-Earle Factory site in Toad Hollow was determined eligible by the Department of the Interior on July 1, 1976, but National Register level documentation still needs to be developed for the site. Although none of the early mills survives in the town of Mexico, a relatively large number of early-nineteenth century residences, and some churches and commercial buildings remain that are associated with Mexico's industrial prosperity. Several early-nineteenth century buildings constructed of sandstone from the quarry in Arthur are also extant in the town. One of these, a small former commercial building in Mexico Village, has been identified by the State Historic Preservation Office as being potentially eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places, but is not included in this nomination due to lack of documentation. Three of these stone buildings, the Leonard Ames House, Chandler House, and Arthur Tavern, are included in this nomination.

During the second half of the nineteenth century, water-powered industries thrived in Mexico. The depletion of timber necessitated a shift from the production of lumber to wood-related industries, such as boxes and staves, but the completion of a railroad between Rome and Oswego through the town in 1866 provided cheaper transportation of all goods

between Mexico and more distant markets and thus boosted the economy. The Mexico Railroad Depot is included in this nomination.

The Toad Hollow Industrial Complex, located where Academy Street (formerly Mill Street) crosses the Little Salmon River in Mexico Village, contained the most significant concentration of industries during the second half of the nineteenth century. Veeder Green constructed the first mill, a gristmill, on the site c.1829, and a variety of mills were in operation in the area from then until the 1940's. The "Stage III Cultural Resource Survey of the Toad Hollow Industrial Complex" (Rutsch and Morrell, 1982) identifies the following industries in Toad Hollow:

Newell and Adams sawmill (1850's - 1870's)
Wait Matherson shop (1840's)
carding and clothing works (1840's)
Edwin Ames, Sr. sawmill (c.1841 - 1870's)
Homer Ames sawmill (1870's - 1940)
Homer Ames cider mill (1884 - c.1911)
Asa Beebe Railroad Mill (flour) (c.1851 - 1899)
Robbins & Sons gristmill
Gustin/Earle animal poke and butter dish factory (1875 - 1899)

Rutsch and Morrell indicate that the development of Toad Hollow typifies that of other small mill complexes in upstate New York. The gristmills and sawmills were established first, then diversified to serve a changing economy, and they were eventually put out of business by competition from the huge industrial centers that developed in the late nineteenth century. Although many of the industries were small operations, some, such as the butter dish factory of Frank M. Earle, had about 50 employees in the 1880's.

The depletion of virgin timber forced a shift from the production of lumber in Toad Hollow to the production of finished wood products later in the nineteenth century such as butter dishes, buckets, caskets, staves, potato planters, sleds, berry baskets, sash and blinds, and animal pokes.

Also, an increase in agricultural products spurred the growth of processsing factories such as cider mills, corn canning factories, and cheese factories.

Several other industries located elsewhere in Mexico were important to the economy of the town during the second half of the nineteenth century: Lewis Miller's carriage factory, Samuel Beebe's iron foundry, A.C. Erskine's sash and blind factory, Bews & Walton's iron foundry, J.A. Rickard and Simon Leroy's cabinet shop, Wilson's corn canning factory, J. McKennelly's tannery, and William's sash, blind, and door factory. Wilson's two corn canning factories, one in Mexico Village near the railroad depot, and the other in Taberg, New York, employed 200-300 people during the harvest season and produced as much as 200 million cans annually. Another late industry in the town was the extraction of natural gas and oil, but it was short-lived due to an insufficient supply.

The final industry to be developed, and the only one still important to the economy of Mexico, was the production and canning of baked beans. Grandma Brown's Beans was established during the Depression by an enterprising woman trying to make some extra money selling her baked beans. The popularity of her product led to the establishment of a small factory on the second floor of the present Mexico Library building on Main Street; the business still thrives, although now in a modern plant at the edge of the village.

The later mills in Mexico also have not survived, but many of the millowner's houses and other buildings built by or supported by the industries are extant in the village and town. Although some millowners built their residences in Toad Hollow or near the other mills, many lived in the better neighborhoods in the village, such as Church Street, Jefferson Street, and Spring Street. Many are substantial frame or brick residences in the Italianate or later Victorian styles. Hopefully, some of the sites of Mexico's industrial reesources can be thoroughly documented and included in the multiple property nomination as archeological sites at a later date.

3. Agricultural Development in the Town of Mexico

The period of significance of agricultural development in the town and village of Mexico dates from the initial sale of lots by land speculators to settlers in 1795 to the 50-year National Register eligibility limit of 1939. A few farmsteads exist from the initial land purchases in the late eighteenth century: one is included in this nomination. A large number of farmsteads exist from initial purchases in the early nineteenth century: several are included in this nomination.

As a newly opened territory in the late eighteenth century, the primary focus of the development of the town of Mexico was that of exploitation of the relatively large amount of potential farmland and mill sites that was available to settlers. Mexico became and was, throughout the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, primarily an agricultural community composed of numerous small farms that supported most of the economy. Once the land speculators surveyed lots and roads were cut, fairly fertile farm lots from 50 to 150 acres in size were sold to settlers, who mostly came from New England. Grains and corn were the primary crops raised in the early nineteenth century, but as the soils lost their fertility, farmers eventually shifted to dairy products and fruit growing. The connection of Mexico to Oswego and Rome by rail in 1866 enabled farm products such as cheese and canned corn to be easily exported to distant markets.

In clearing the fields of their newly purchased farm lots, farmers burned trees to make potash, sold logs to sawmills, and had lumber cut for the construction of houses and barns. Initially log houses or modest frame houses were constructed; these reflected the vernacular styles common to other newly settled areas in the eastern United States in that better building materials such as brick were not readily available and the principal concern of settlers was to get the newly cleared fields under cultivation rather than to concentrate on building an expensive house. Later, as farmers were able to produce a surplus of crops for sale, the

first homesteads were either replaced or incorporated into larger houses. Although no log cabins are known to remain in the town, a number of extant farmhouses are the first, second, or third residence built by the original settler of the property. For example, the Leonard Ames family settled in Mexico in 1804. They first constructed a log cabin on their property and replaced it with a small frame house in 1815. As the family prospered, they constructed the present Greek Revival stone house in 1835 and attached the earlier house to it as an ell (both extant, included in this nomination). Likewise, Phineas Davis constructed a log cabin on his new farm in 1799 (not extant), a frame house in 1813 (extant, not included in this nomination), and his son built the present Italianate brick house in 1870 (extant, included in this nomination).

Farmhouses were usually situated close to a well-traveled road to facilitate the transportation of goods to and from Mexico Village and other destinations. Outbuildings were located either behind the house or across the road. As a farmer prospered, additional land adjacent to the farm was often acquired, more fields were cleared, and secondary outbuildings, such as carriage barns or shop buildings, were constructed.

The importance of agriculture to the economy of Mexico is illustrated by data from the 1840 U.S. Census that shows that, counting males over 16 years of age in the town of Mexico, 755 men or 71.8% of the total number of men in the town were engaged in agriculture, 10 (1.0%) were in the professions, 135 (12.8%) were in manufacturing, and 18 men (1.7%) worked on canals, lakes, or rivers. There were no persons listed under the categories of mining or commerce. In contrast, the 1845 New York State Census, counting males 21 years or older, listed 417 (52.9%) engaged in agriculture, 10 (1.3%) were merchants, 10 (1.3%) were manufacturers, 131 (16.6%) were mechanics, 6 (.8%) were attorneys, 8 (1%) were clergymen, and 4 (.5%) were physicians. Although there were obviously working men under 21 and not all occupations were reported, the majority still made their living by farming. The 1845 Census also lists 4 inns and taverns in

Mexico and 9 retail stores, but no groceries; certainly most of the food was grown on local farms. Of the total population of 3768 in the town in 1845, 2940 were born in New York State, 13 in other states, 70 in Great Britain or possessions, 153 in France, and one in Germany. The number of improved acreage was 14,720.

Even though the village of Mexico and the several small hamlets in the town supported industrial and commercial enterprises, most of these services were for local farmers. Since the town lacked navigable waterways, commercial goods not available locally had to be carried laboriously by wagon from Oswego or Rome until the arrival of the railroad in 1866. The industries that did exist in the town such as grist mills, saw mills, tanneries, carding and fulling mills, did not encourage subsidiary industries except for the relatively small woodworking industries later in the nineteenth century, so manufacturing was never to become dominant over agriculture in the town.

In the first half of the nineteenth century, farmers in Mexico raised grain, such as wheat, oats, and flax, and corn but, gradually, as the trees were cut and erosion occurred, the soil lost its fertility and farmers had to diversify, turning to milk production and fruit production. Tilled fields were converted to pastures, hay lots, and orchards. Large barns, capable of housing a herd of cows and storing hay, were built to accommodate milk production in bulk. Sheep were also raised to provide wool both for home consumption and for sale. Evidence of the farmers' attempts to try innovative farming techniques introduced in the second half of the nineteenth century is best illustrated in the Mexico Octagon Barn (included in this nomination), a building form promoted throughout New York State to make more efficient use of the interiors of farm buildings and residences.

Cheese factories were constructed throughout the town in the 1860's, the first being in Colosse. The second cheese factory was built on the Scriba Road near Lamb's Corners: it was 300 feet long by 40 feet wide and two stories high above a basement. There were at least a half dozen more, in Texas,

Arthur, Maple View, and in other hamlets. Simpson (p.394) noted that in 1865, 316,646 pounds of cheese were produced in the town. Dairy farmers brought their milk to the cheese factories once a day where the manager and two helpers processed the milk into cheese. These three people could process the milk from 600 to 800 cows. The cheese was shipped to as far away as New York City by rail; when expenses were paid, the profits were returned to the farmers. No cheese factories have been documented as being extant in the town.

At present there are approximately 25 dairy farms and 10 fruit farms in the town of Mexico (conversation with Francis Dellamono, Oswego County Cooperative Extension Agent, September, 1987). The large cow barns built in the late nineteenth century are gone, many having collapsed under the weight of the tremendous snowfalls in the region. Fire due to spontaneous combustion in hay has also been an enemy to the barns. The original dairy barns on the Red Mill Farm and Phineas Davis Farm lasted over 100 years; one burned in 1961 and the other collapsed under from the weight of snow in 1980. Other buildings and structures typical of Mexico farms included tenant houses, silos, horse barns, carriage houses, sheep barns, hog houses, corn cribs, smoke houses, spring houses, ice houses, chicken houses, tobacco barns, milk houses, granaries, apple drying barns, and windmills. Since the science of poultry raising did not start until about 1890, chickens were the last farm animal to get housing; chicken houses in Mexico are apt to be of twentieth-century origin.

Since farm property was assessed according to the number of buildings on the property, an owner would demolish a building once it was no longer in use. For that reason, and the long decline in the agricultural economy, a complete farm complex in Mexico is extremely rare. Several of the farmsteads included in this nomination retain at least one historic outbuilding, but only one, Red Mills Farm, retains most of its outbuildings.

4. Travel and Tourism in the Town of Mexico

The period of significance of travel and tourism in the town of Mexico extends from 1793, the year the first road was surveyed, to 1939, the 50-year National Register eligibility limit. Extant resources are few, and as far as can be determined, they are all included in this nomination: the Arthur Tavern, Beck's Hotel in the Mexico Village Historic District, and the Mexico Railroad Depot, which is also associated with agricultural and industrial development.

The early development of roads through the town of Mexico not only encouraged settlement but provided convenient overland routes for trade and travelers, particularly for people traveling west from eastern New York and New England through the Great Lakes, and for the military traveling between forts at Oswego and Sackett's Harbor. A number of taverns, and later hotels, were built in the nineteenth century to accommodate travelers in Mexico Village and at crossroads hamlets in the town. In the late nineteenth century, a successful tourist trade was established with the development of a summer resort at Mexico Point on Lake Ontario.

The primary stopping point in the town of Mexico for travelers throughout the nineteenth century was Mexico Village, which offered accommodations and numerous services such as stores, banks, churches, and blacksmith shops. The largest hotel, Beck's Hotel, built in 1897 on the site of four previous hotels, is still extant. Three other hamlets in the town were stopping points for travelers. The communities located on the Salina-Sackett's Harbor Road (NYS Route 11), Colosse and Maple View, both grew at points where east-west roads carried travelers from Rome to Mexico and Oswego. Since Colosse was the first settlement on the Scriba Road within the town of Mexico, it acquired prestige early, but its lack of industry doomed its future growth. The first settler in Maple View, Solomon Huntington, arrived in 1804 and operated a hotel for travelers. Undoubtedly, the state militia stopped at his tavern during the War of 1812, en route to Sackett's Harbor, Henderson Harbor, or Fort

Ontario. In 1821, a Huntington daughter married Avery Skinner; the couple opened a tavern which enjoyed a long and notable history. The planked Rome-Oswego Road of 1847 facilitated fast stagecoach travel; many travelers stopped at the tavern. In the fall of the year farmers from the North Country stopped overnight while on their way to Syracuse for a year's supply of salt. Eventually, railroads did away with the necessity of traveling a hundred miles for salt (Simpson 241) and today the hotel, cheese factory, and school in Maple View are gone.

The third community in the town of considerable importance in the nineteenth century was Quarryville or, as it was known after 1880, Arthur. Located at the crossing of the Mexico-Texas Road (County route 16) and the New Haven-Port Ontario Road, the hamlet enjoyed two advantages over Colosse and Maple View. In addition to being located on a well-traveled intersection, the community possessed an excellent industrial site on the Little Salmon River and a quarry of superior quality gray sandstone that was used in building construction throughout the area. By 1855, in addition to the tavern at the crossroads, there was a gristmill with four runs of stone, a sawmill, a stavemill, and a tannery. The stone buildings, the principal historic buildings in the hamlet, include the former tavern, former schoolhouse, and a former commercial building, all of which are extant but not included in this nomination due to lack of integrity. The mills are gone.

Tourism was a rather late business in the town and centered largely on the development of Mexico Point on Lake Ontario as a summer resort. Taking advantage of the mild summer weather along the lake, entrepreneurs built large summer hotels that provided month-long vacations for city dwellers. The chestnut groves along the lake also became favorite spots for church picnics. Frank M. Earle, whose factory was in Toad Hollow, built the "Twice Told" hotel on the east bank of the Little Salmon River where it enters Lake Ontario. The Mexico Point Club was built by Orville Hungerford of Watertown in 1906. Prior to the widespread use of automobiles, these hotels prospered. Vacationists arrived

by railroad at the Mexico Depot and were transported by horse-drawn buses the few miles to Mexico Point. After the coming of automobiles, the hotels lost popularity and the last hotel burned in 1951. The archeological remains of these hotels, as well as the original settlement of Vera Cruz, have not been documented. Tourism in recent times in Mexico has centered around vacation homes for people from upstate cities and pleasure boating and fishing.

5. The Abolition Movement in the Town of Mexico

The period of significance for the abolition movement in Mexico extends from 1835, the year the earliest known anti-slavery petition of Mexico residents was sent to Congress, to 1855, the year of the dedication of the Asa Wing monument in the Mexico Village Cemetery. Activity in the town beyond 1855 has not been documented. Extant resources associated with the abolition movement are difficult to identify due to the clandestine nature of the movement. The residences of many of the Mexicans who were the most active in the abolition movement are extant, and some are included in this nomination, but they are included for their historical and architectural importance as building types rather than for their association with well-known abolitionists. Although several buildings and sites associated with abolition activity have been documented, no properties associated exclusively with the abolition movement are included in this nomination. However, at least one property, the Orson Ames house on Main Street in Mexico Village, possesses a strong possibility for inclusion at a later date if sufficient research justifies its integrity.

In the pre-Civil War era, social reform movements swept over upstate New York to such an extent that contemporary writers such as Whitney Cross characterized the area as the "burned-over district"; the term connotes the fires of revivalism and reform that burned out old settled ways and brought in new ideas. Along with changes in religious thought, reforms advocated new attitudes toward alcoholism, ignorance, poverty, the status of women, family life, and slavery. Major social reforms such as temperance, abolitionism, and women's rights took root throughout upstate communities. The influence of these reform movements on the town and village of Mexico was typical of many other rural communities, with the establishment of a variety of benevolent societies, but a number of residents of the town were particulary active in the abolition movement and a well-known and well-documented slave rescue occurred in Mexico in 1851. Mexico's involvement in the abolition movement is a great source of pride to the residents of the town.

Following the organization of the American Anti-Slavery Society in 1833, its pattern of growth in upstate New York echoed that of other reform societies; county and local societies were formed and often the supporters of Sunday schools and educational societies supported the abolition movement as well. The New York State Anti-Slavery Society recognized two goals: to change public sentiment in the country so that people would demand a repeal of the slave code and to abolish slavery itself. (Slavery had been abolished officially in New York State by 1827.) The state society stressed that "individual responsibility, personal effort, local operation, and patient perservering industry" were necessary so that people on the local level would work toward the abolition of slavery (Wellman 285). Moral persuasion was the primary tool used in the early days of the abolition movement and petitions became the ideal approach with which to persuade the individual. Petitions addressed to the New York State Legislature stressed that equal suffrage should be given to black men, that all fugitive slavery laws in the state should be repealed, and that fugitive slaves should be given a trial by jury (Friend of Man: January 12, 1837). Central New Yorkers also sent hundreds of petitions to Congress to abolish slavery in the District of Columbia, to prevent the extension of slavery into Texas, and to abolish slavery everywhere. In the well researched book Mexico, Mother of Towns, author Judith Wellman identified 41 abolitionists from the town of Mexico who signed two or more extant anti-slavery petitions between 1835 and 1845 (Wellman: p.476). The most well-known include Orson Ames, James S. Chandler, Samuel H. Stone, Peter Chandler, Leonard Ames, Jr., James Caleb Jackson, Asa S. Wing, Wareham Burt, Edmund Wheeler, the Rev. Thomas A. Weed, Elijah Everts, Starr Clark, Dr. Clark D. Snell, Shubal Alfred, E. N. Robbins, Asa Beebe, Harlow Ames, and Peter Sandhovel. Eight men signed all three anti-slavery petitions sent from Mexico to the U.S. Congress in 1835, 1837, and 1845, including Orson Ames, Joseph Barrows, Asa Beebe, Benjamin Gregory Jr., Edwin Huntington, John Turk, John Wickware, and Starr Clark. The residences of many of these abolitionists are still extant in the town and village of Mexico.

The Underground Railroad, a secret network that helped fugitive slaves from the south escape to Canada and elsewhere, operated in Mexico as early as 1833, but documented evidence is difficult to obtain. A historian from Dansville, New York stated that James C. and Lucretia Jackson were rescuing slaves in the town of Mexico between 1833 and 1838 (Simpson: p.348) but Jackson himself, in his autobiography, makes no mention of this. Entries in Mexico resident Asa Wing's diary, however, confirm that Gerrit Smith of Peterboro, New York, sent fugitive slaves to the Jacksons as well as to the Wing family. The Peter Chandler House in Mexico Village, when owned by Leonard Ames, Jr., is known through local tradition as a place of refuge for runaway slaves and Starr Clark's house and tin shop on Main Street in the village is known through local tradition as a place of refuge and a meeting place for abolitonists in Mexico. The Chandler house is included in this nomination for its architectural significance; the Clark house and shop are not included in this nomination due to loss of integrity. Several other properties in the town of Mexico were purportedly associated with the Underground Railroad; these may be confirmed with better documentation. Also, actual tunnels between houses or to escape routes are said to have existed, but the documentation of these is scant, at best.

Although Asa Wing's house was a stop on the Underground Railroad (extant, not included in this nomination), his greatest contributions to the abolition movement were his orations. He traveled extensively throughout the state and New England and, when he died in 1854 of tuberculosis, his loss was mourned throughout the country. In September, 1855, nearly 3,000 people gathered in Mexico for the dedication of a monument in the Mexico Cemetery in his honor. Frederick Douglas, the famous ex-slave, delivered the oration. Douglas said, in part:

> To him was allotted to possess a spirit greatly beyond the strength of his physical constitution. The earnestness of his synpathy, the warmth of his temperment, the natural abhorrence of oppression and

> the coldness and indifference manifested on all sides to the overshadowing and stupendous crime of slavery deeply disturbed him and swept him on to labors far too arduous for his slender frame. He poured out his life for the perishing slave, pleading for him with an eloquence and earnestness which could scarcely have been more direct, pathetic and touching, had his own wife and children been on the auction block... He dared to be called an abolitionist when the demon of slavery made inquisition for blood and mob violence howled from one end of the state to the other. He died a martyr, a glorious martyr, to the cause of emancipation.

The best documented slave rescue in Central New York before the Civil War was the famous "Jerry Rescue" in 1851. William Jerry Henry (McHenry) had escaped from his owner in Missouri and had been passed along by the Underground route to Syracuse, New York, forty miles south of Mexico. In Syracuse, the pro-slavery party decided to prove to the Liberty Party (Abolition Party), who were holding a convention in the city, that the 1850 Fugitive Slave Law would be enforced and arrested Jerry. After Jerry was seized and thrown into jail, a mob of abolitionists stormed the building and spirited Jerry away. Keeping him hidden in a "pro-slavery" house for four days, the Liberty Party members finally planned and effected his escape. Jerry left Syracuse in a horse-drawn wagon traveling north on the Salina-Sackett's Harbor Road (present-day NYS Route 11). Certainly, the Mexico abolitionists spread false tales about Jerry's exact escape route. In 1899, a Syracuse newspaper, in retelling the event, said that Jerry had left the country on a British lumber ship from the shore at Mexico Point. However, the best documentation about the "Jerry Rescue" comes from an eyewitness, Edmund Wheeler, who many years later related the story in the weekly Mexico Independent. According to Wheeler, who was a son-in-law of abolitionist Asa Beebe, Jerry spent his first night of freedom in the Orson Ames house (extant, not included in this nomination) on Main Street in Mexico Village, then was hidden for two weeks

in Deacon Asa Beebe's barn (not extant) in Toad Hollow. Wheeler related that he had seen the white stripes on Jerry's back which were made by the "whip of the cruel slave driver. Jerry was then taken to Oswego, where he was secreted aboard a ship bound for Canada. He found safety in Kingston, Ontario, where he was employed in a chair factory but, unfortunately, enjoyed his freedom for only a short time. He died of tuberculosis on October 8, 1853 and was buried three miles from Kingston in Cataraqui Cemetery.

William Jerry Henry was of course not the only slave to be passed through the Mexico Underground. Asa Wing wrote in his diary about the time when a fugitive slave family, the Thompsons, consisting of the parents and five daughters, resided in the Wing house for several days. The refugees left Mexico, intending to cross over the frozen St. Lawrence River into Canada, but they may have drowned during the crossing because they were never heard from again.

F. ASSOCIATED PROPERTY TYPES

1. Farmsteads in the Town and Village of Mexico

Description

A large number of nineteenth and early-twentieth century farmsteads survive throughout the town of Mexico, although few are still working farms. The location and size of farms in the town was somewhat predetermined by the speculative nature of the development of the town and the location or roads. Like much of central and western New York, the town of Mexico was part of a large land tract that was surveyed and divided into lots all at once. Most of the lots were square in shape, 125 to 150 acres in size, and roads were planned to provide access to the lots in order to make them more saleable. Lots were often subdivided into several small farms. The most desirable lots bounded the principal streams and roads, had a sufficient amount of tillable land, and had little or no swampy areas. Many of the surviving farmsteads have lost much of their original acreage; those closest to the center of Mexico Village were subdivided into small residential lots in the nineteenth century or in more recent times.

Farmhouses were constructed at the edge of farm lots close to the road, and outbuildings were usually situated behind or to the side of the houses, although sometimes they were built across the road from the farmhouses. The best land was cleared and put under cultivation, although trees were often left near the house to provide shade. Woodlots were reserved on the land least suitable for cultivation. The small number of farms still active in Mexico retain their historic rural appearance, with cultivated fields of corn, orchards, and pastures, while many former farms in the town have overgrown fields. A typical surviving nineteenth-century farmstead in Mexio consists of a modest vernacular frame house, a small frame barn, and one or two small outbuildings. Fields are bordered by low stone walls and there is usually a stone well near the house. Occasionally, man-made ponds are located on the property.

The farmhouses that survive in Mexico are of several forms, usually vernacular interpretations of the Federal and Greek Revival styles derived from the building traditions in eastern New York and New England. The largest number have a two-story, three-bay-wide main section with a gable roof and the gable end facing the front. A one and one-half story side wing, recessed from the main section, contains the kitchen. Entrances are located in the end bay of the main section, and in at least one facade of the wing. The wing usually has a one-story open porch across the front. Smaller houses of this type have a two-bay main section with no entrance. Another type of farmhouse in Mexico, although less common, is a five-bay symmetrically composed house with a central entrance. These houses are either one and one-half or a full two stories in height and one room deep, with a kitchen wing at the rear. Both the first and second house forms have clapboard siding and simple decorative features evocative of the Federal and Greek Revival styles (often in combination), such as boxed cornices and molded friezes, 6/6 window sash, and square or turned posts supporting porches. Less typical are those few farmhouses constructed of brick or local sandstone and those that are sophisticated and fully developed examples of their styles. Farmhouses constructed later in the nineteenth century and in the early twentieth century are typically frame vernacular interpretations of prevalent architectural styles, such as Italianate, Queen Anne, and Colonial Revival. A few of these are sophisticated examples of the styles, particularly those closer to Mexico Village.

Most of the farmhouses have been altered. Often the original small house on a farm was demolished or incorporated into a later house as a wing. Additions, both historic and non-historic, are also commonplace. Window sash have often been replaced by larger paned sash. Asbestos and asphalt shingle siding and, more recently, aluminunm and vinyl siding, frequently cover the original clapboards.

The vast majority of original agricultural outbuildings on the farmsteads are no longer extant. Often the only

outbuilding that remains is a small carriage or horse barn that has been converted for use as a garage. A typical nineteenth-century barn in Mexico is rectangular in shape, has a gable roof, horizontal clapboard or vertical board siding, and large sliding or hinged doors on the long facades. Larger barns that were built to house dairy cows replaced earlier multi-use barns in the late-nineteenth century, and most of these are no longer extant. Other outbuildings, such as privies, chicken houses, dairies, granaries, and sheds, have often fallen into disrepair or have been replaced by modern buildings on the active farms.

Most farmsteads have changed in terms of the size of the farm. Acreage was added or sold off from the farms according to the relative prosperity or shift in needs of individual farmers. Unlike more fertile areas in New York State, there does not appear to have been much consolidation of small farms into very large farms. Those closest to the village or no longer active as farms have often lost much of their original acreage. Other alterations to the farmsteads include the paving of driveways, draining of farm ponds, addition of foundation plantings around the farmhouse, and the loss of historic fencing and animal pens.

Significance

The importance of agriculture to the historic development of Mexico is reflected in the large number of historic farmsteads that survive in the town. The farmsteads are historically significant under National Register Criterion A for their association with the agricultural way of life that predominated in Mexico from its earliest settlement through the early twentieth century. They are also architecturally significant under Criterion C, as their farmhouses and outbuildings are representative examples of vernacular building traditions in central New York State, and a small number of farmsteads are architecturally significant as distinctive examples of architectural styles prevalent during their period of construction. The period of significance of farmsteads in Mexico extends from the 1790's, the earliest period of farm development in the town, to 1939, the 50-year National Register eligibility limit, which was a period of general decline in farming in the town.

The surviving farmsteads in Mexico recall the determination and hard work of those people who moved west in search of good land that was no longer available in eastern New York and New England, and that could be purchased free and clear of obligations to large landowners. Faced with remote virgin forests and not the best of soil conditions, the new owners of property in Mexico cleared the land and were able to make a living off of the crops grown on their farms. Their prosperity, along with that of the small industries in the town, led to the development of the village of Mexico as a thriving rural crossroads community that provided goods and services to the farmers which they could not procure on the farms. The farmhouses built in Mexico reflect the relative prosperity of individual farmers, whether they are modest frame vernacular buildings or more distinctive examples of prevalent architecural styles.

The town and village of Mexico experienced its first period of sustained prosperity in the 1820's and 1830's, and this is reflected in the large number of modest vernacular farmhouses that were constructed from the 1830's to c.1850.

These farmhouses are representative examples of vernacular building traditions of the period in rural upstate New York. Well built of hand-sawn and milled lumber on stone foundations, they illustrate the forms and features of the Federal and Greek Revival styles, often combining elements of the two styles, and often using these features until a relatively late date. Decorative elements are few, attesting to the need for a functional rather than picturesque dwelling on a working farm. A handful of these farmhouses are distinctive examples of the Federal and Greek Revival styles, reflecting the higher amount of disposible income possessed by some of the farmers in the town. They exhibit the most sophisticated elements of the styles, including well-proportioned forms, entrance doors flanked by sidelights, and well-crafted decorative elements such as corner pilasters, and prominent molded cornices and friezes. Some of these are constructed of local sandstone, carefully chosen and cut, and laboriously laid up with mortar in a random but planned fashion. One farmhouse, unique in the town, is constructed of cobblestone.

The surviving early-nineteenth century farmsteads in Mexico, whether they are still working farms or not, illustrate the traditional methods of farming prevalent in the period and how these methods were adapted to Mexico's particular geographical characteristics. The vast amount of virgin forests, lack of good roads or navigable waterways, and relatively poor soil conditions, precluded the development of large farms in the late eighteenth century and throughout the nineteenth century. The remaining farmsteads from this period recall the subsistence nature of farming in the town. Farm complexes were always situated close to a road in order to more easily transport goods to and from nearby mills or shipment points. Outbuildings were situated close to the farmhouse, but usually not attached to it. The most level land on the farm was put under cultivation and the fields were laid out in a fairly regular grid pattern with stones removed from the fields stacked into low walls bordering the fields. Mexican farmers produced all their own food, and the surplus was sold to provide supplies not available on the farm. Timber was cut on woodlots to provide

lumber for the construction of buildings on the farm or sold for other necessstie. Grains, particularly wheat, were the most valuable crop in the early nineteenth century. A mid-sized barn was an essential building for a farmstead and it probably served a multitude of functions besides storing harvested crops. Second in importance was a smaller barn to house animals, particularly cows and horses, and farm vehicles. More prosperous farms had a multitude of single-purpose outbuildings in addition to the barn and carriage barn, including a granary, smokehouse, and shop building.

Farmhouses constructed after the mid-nineteenth century are often representative and vernacular examples of the eclectic styles predominating during the period of their construction. Many of these are simple rectangular or square buildings with little or no ornamentation except for porch supports and trim. A small number of these are distinctive examples of their style recalling the continued importance of agriculture to the ecconomy of the town despite a shift from growing grain crops to dairying and fruit growing. These farmhouses often replaced an earlier and smaller farmhouse and were built by a local builder rather than the farmer, illustrating the continued prosperity of some indivdual farmers in the town.

Farmsteads in Mexico that contain farmhouses or outbuildings constructed after the mid-nineteenth century recall the continued importance of agriculture to the economy and the ability of farmers to prosper in the town. In the shift from growing grains to dairying and fruit growing, the uses of farm outbuildings changed; earlier outbuildings were either altered or replaced, and additional outbuildings were constructed. Larger dairy barns were built to house milk cows, milk houses were built to process milk, and silos were constructed to store feed. Orchards and pasture land replaced some of the land previously under cultivation. Corn was grown in greater quantity and sold to the large canning factory in Mexico Village. In the early twentieth century, most farmers also raised chickens and built small frame shed-roof buildings to shelter them.

Most historic farmsteads in Mexico do not retain all of their original outbuildings; those that do are additionally significant in recalling Mexico's agricultural past. Most historic farmsteads do, however, retain their historic sense of setting despite the loss of cutivated fields or acreage, and therefore continue to convey an agricultural feeling and association.

Registration Requirements

Many farmsteads remain in Mexico from the period of Mexico's agricultural development, although few retain sufficient integrity to convey their period of construction and therefore qualify for registration. Farmsteads should qualify for registration if they retain integrity of location, setting, and physical appearance from their period of construction. Their location and setting should, in general, convey an agricltural feeling, such as the presence of open land, pastures, cultivated fields, and a farmyard; however, retention of setting is not necessary if a farmhouse is a particularly representative or distinctive example of its style and period. The principal building on a farmstead, the farmhouse, should retain a high degree of physical integrity from its period of construction. Expected alterations include additions, replaced windows, and synthetic siding. Alterations made to the farmstead and farmhouse during the historic period of agricultural development in the town, for the most part, contribute to the significance of the farmstead; those alterations made after the period of significance must not affect the principal features of the farmstead that convey its historic appearance. A reduction in acreage or change in the configuration of the farm acreage is commonplace in Mexico and, in general, should not prevent registration, particularly if the principal building on the property, the farmhouse, is a particularly representative or architecturally distinctive example of its style or period of construction. Outbuildings constructed during the period of significance greatly increase the importance of a farmstead as an integral part of the farm complex, and therefore help convey the agricultual way of life in the town. Historic outbuildings are particularly important in Mexico because of the relatively few that remain. Non-historic outbuildings must not detract from the general appearance of the farmstead.

G. Summary of Identification and Evaluation Methods

Discuss the methods used in developing the multiple property listing.

The historic resources included in the Mexico Multiple Property submission were identified by means of two historical and architectural surveys of the town of Mexico: a 1976 county-wide survey sponsored by the Heritage Foundation of Oswego and the Oswego County Council on the Arts, and a 1981 survey conducted by the St. Lawrence-Eastern Ontario Commission.

Supervised by Dr. Judith Wellman, Professor of History, SUNY College at Oswego, the 1976 project was supported by the New York State Council on the Arts and the Oswego County Legislature. Approximately 2,000 New York State Building/Inventory forms were completed by eight trained historians following a windshield survey of Oswego County. Mrs. Euloda Fetcha, historian of the Town of Mexico, and Ms. Elinore Horning, Mexico Historical Society member, researched 197 forms prepared for the town of Mexico.

The 1981 architectural survey by the St. Lawrence-Eastern Ontario Commission included only those towns that bordered the eastern end of Lake Ontario and the southeast side of the St. Lawrence River. The survey encompassed six towns within Oswego County: Oswego, Scriba, New Haven, Mexico, Richland, and Sandy Creek. The commission completed 67 New York State Building/Inventory forms for the town of Mexico.

Both surveys focused on the historical development of Mexico as illustrated by its historic architecture. Neither project attempted to identify properties whose primary significance was archeological.

After combining the building/structure inventory forms from both surveys and eliminating the duplicates, there remained 106 forms to be evaluated against the criteria of eligibility for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The field representative of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the town of Mexico historian, several members of the Mexico Historical Society, and the director and research consultant for the Heritage Foundation of Oswego evaluated all the forms.

Following an on-site inspection, a total of fifteen individual properties and a district of 56 properties were selected whose architectural and historical significance were evident; these properties were proposed for National Register listing. Subsequent to this evaluation, two properties were reevaluated and determined no longer eligible to be included in the multiple property submission. While it is believed that most of the properties in the town that meet the criteria for National Register listing are included in the submission, the French Street settlement area and several cemeteries were not thoroughly identified or evaluated against the National Register criteria. Finally, the multiple property documentation form includes one contextual statement (Abolition) for which no properties have been nominated. Although this theme is one of the most important in Mexico's history, historical documentation of abolition related properties is extremely difficult. However, it is hoped that one or more properties with a documented association with this theme can be brought forward for nomination in the future.

[ ] See continuation sheet

H. Major Bibliographical References

[X] See continuation sheet

Primary location of additional documentation:

[X] State historic preservation office

[ ] Local government
[ ] Other state agency
[ ] Federal agency
[ ] University
[ ] Other

Specify repository:_____

I. Form Prepared By

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Maps
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