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United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. **Place additional certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Theta Xi Fraternity Chapter House  
other names/site number Alpha Chapter of Theta Xi Fraternity Chapter House

### 2. Location

street & number 1490 Sage Avenue  not for publication  
city or town Troy  vicinity  
state New York code NY county Rensselaer code 083 zip code 12180

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60.

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

national  statewide  local

Ruth A. Purpoint DSHPO 10/11/13  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official Date

Title State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

entered in the National Register  determined eligible for the National Register

determined not eligible for the National Register  removed from the National Register

other (explain:)

Jon Edson B. Beall 12-11-13  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**5. Classification**

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

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

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

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
0	0	district
0	0	site
0	0	structure
0	0	object
1	0	<b>Total</b>

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

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

N/A

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

**Current Functions**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Education/ Education-related housing  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Education/ Education-related housing  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

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

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions.)

Late 19<sup>th</sup> and 20<sup>th</sup> Century Revivals/Tudor Revival  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

foundation: Concrete/brick  
walls: Brick/Hollow tile  
\_\_\_\_\_  
roof: Slate  
other: Stone  
\_\_\_\_\_

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## Narrative Description

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### Summary Paragraph

The Theta Xi Fraternity Chapter House, an excellent local example of the Tudor Revival architectural style in the City of Troy, is located at 1490 Sage Avenue at the northern edge of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Built in 1931 from the design of architect Joseph M. Lawlor of the New York firm of Lawlor and Haase, the two-and-one-half story chapter house is Flemish bond brick veneer over hollow tile with a poured concrete foundation/basement. The building has a tall slate gable roof, a slightly irregular T-plan, and original metal casement windows. It sits on a hillside with a high exposed basement on its southern end. An entry pavilion, with half-timbered second and attic stories, is in the façade's (west elevation) reentrant corner; the Tudor arch limestone entryway faces west above a tall brick and stone stoop. The interior of the Theta Xi house has original flooring, woodwork, staircases, and decorative limestone fireplace and exhibits a high degree of integrity.

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## Narrative Description

The Theta Xi Fraternity Chapter House is located on the north side of the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute's (RPI) campus at the corner of Sage Avenue and Sherry Road. It is diagonally (southwest) across from the Rensselaer Student Union (1967). Directly west of the house is the former Delta Kappa Epsilon (1946) fraternity house, now the Institute's admissions office, while to the south, across Sage Avenue, is the Rensselaer Engineering Society's chapter house (1924). Directly across Sherry Road (east) is a metered asphalt parking lot. Single-family residential housing extends north from the rear of the Theta Xi chapter house and admissions office as part of a historic circa 1920 planned subdivision.

Located on a hillside, the Theta Xi house is centered on its lot. Along the west property line is a modern tall black aluminum fence that extends north to the rear property line and separates the chapter house from the RPI admissions office lot. To the rear of the house (north) is an asphalt parking lot, whose entrance is to the east off Sherry Road; a low wood retaining wall separates the parking lot from a grassy area further north and adjacent to a single-family residence. Sherry Road runs along the east property line and adjacent to the driveway is a small modern wood storage shed set on a larger concrete pad. The eastern side of the property is also steeply sloped down to Sherry Road, although a flatter area near to the chapter house has a concrete block fire pit. The lot's principal frontage (south) is along Sage Avenue, where a concrete sidewalk runs along the city's right-of-way. Leading up the steep slope is a two-tiered walkway consisting of modern textured concrete paving blocks set between original stone steps. Flanking the lower set of steps are low evergreen bushes and two light poles. At the top of the second set of stairs, the walkway turns east and opens up into a small paver block forecourt immediate in front of the chapter house's brick entryway. The forecourt extends north with a short walkway to the rear parking lot. Landscaping consists of the sidewalk evergreens, low foundation bushes in front of the west elevation and two tall pine trees: one to the east of the sidewalk and one near the fire pit. A large wood chapter house sign is set prominently on the yard's slope to the southwest of the house.

### Exterior

The two-and-one-half story, gable roof (slate) Theta Xi chapter house is of masonry construction (Flemish bond brick veneer over a hollow tile core) and has an irregular T-plan. Its tall brick basement is exposed below the soldier course water table as it descends the lot's hillside. Facing west, the façade's principal decorative element is the elegant brick and half-timbered lower gable roof entry pavilion set in the reentrant corner. Six stone steps lead up to a flagstone landing; flanking the steps are brick cheeks with stone coping, with the southern cheek extending as a short solid balustrade. Entrance to the chapter house is through a handsome vertical-plank oak door glazed with eight small square-shaped lights. Both the door and its limestone architrave are Tudor arched; the architrave is deeply molded and is part of an elegant limestone surround. The flat-arched surround has a square hood mold with ears, decorative triangular paneled spandrels, and quoins. Small metal sconces flank the entryway. Above the entrance are the pavilion's half-timbered second and attic stories, which slightly overhang the brick first story. The second story's half-timbering creates a low paneled bulkhead, whose bottom rail is set on molded wood corbels while the upper rail is also a continuous sill for a center paired ten-light metal casement. A third rail delineates the attic from the second story as a "tie beam." Vertical boards extend from the bottom rail, through the sill rail and tie beam rail, to the gable's timbered rake board. These vertical boards either flank the casements or bisect the second and attic story casements. The attic gable has a center eight-light paired casement with a wood surround and slightly overhanging open eaves with collar beam ends and wide framed rake boards; the north rake dies into the main slate roof. Painted stucco infills between the half timbering.

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Brick and half timbering return on the south side of the entry pavilion. The exposed basement level has a centered six-light casement; the first story has a ten-light casement, while second story has a paired ten-light casement. Rail and vertical board details also return. On the pavilion's south roof slope is a tall horizontal wood sided gable roof dormer with a paired eight-light casement.

To the north of the entry pavilion is the northwest gable front leg/pavilion of the T-plan that projects beyond the entry pavilion. Its exposed basement is blind. On the first story are two sets of symmetrically placed paired eight-light casements with eight-light sidelights and paired four-light transoms with two-light sidelights. The metal casements have rowlock sills and simple splayed wood lintels. Two smaller, but similar detailed, paired ten-light casements are on the second story, while the gable/attic story has two paired eight-light casements. The gable casements also have rowlock sills, but instead of wood lintels there are thin metal lintel plates set below the horizontal wood sided gable apex. Brick corbelling with short stone caps support the gable which is brick to lintel height and wood above. A narrow vertical louvered vent is in the apex and there are narrow rake boards that extend down to the corbelling.

To the south of the entry pavilion is the three-bay T-plan stem. Here the basement level is exposed with six-light paired casements in the reentrant corner, a center single six-light casement, and paired eight-light casements at the south end. The first and second stories each have three window openings that are similar in detail to the windows of the northwest gable pavilion. Three similar detailed dormers are on the attic story.

The short gable end south elevation is dominated by a large center exterior chimney, which has two unequal stone shoulders. The lower longer shoulder, on the west side of the chimney, is near the first story lintel level, while the shorter upper shoulder, on the east side of the chimney, is proximate to the second story sill level; adjacent to the attic story casements are a third set of stone shoulders. Above these shoulders, the chimney stack decreases again; at the gable apex a center one-brick-deep recess "divides" the chimney into "two" stacks. Each "stack" has a slightly corbelled brick cap. There is also a decorative "S" scrolled chimney iron. The basement, first, and second stories have casement configurations similar to the west elevation's south end bay. However, the gable apex has a simple half-timbered pattern with only vertical boards that flank the chimney; the overhanging open eaves have collar beam ends. Also flanking the chimney are paired eight-light casements. This elevation also showcases the chapter house's cornerstone and time capsule, which is located on the southwest corner directly above the soldier course. "The Corner Stone, made of Indiana limestone, is approximately 3' x1' x1', having "Alpha of Theta Xi" and the date 1931 carved thereon, and provided a copper box sufficiently large enough to hold. . . various fraternity letters and records."<sup>1</sup>

Returning on the east elevation, the brick details of the west and south elevations continue, although this elevation has a double "L"-plan. The southern two bays have casement configurations similar to those of the south elevation (basement, first, second, and attic stories). The center projecting gable pavilion has two symmetrically placed, at-grade six-light casements on the basement level. An eight-light casement with four-light sidelights is to the south on the first story, while two eight-light casements are to the north (the northernmost is in the reentrant corner). Above on the second story, a ten-light casement with five-light sidelights is to the south with a raised (staircase landing) ten-light casement to the north near the reentrant corner. The attic story has a similar casement arrangement, but with an eight-light casement to the south and a raised eight-light casement in the reentrant corner with a thin metal lintel below the horizontal wood sided apex. Brick corbelling with a short stone cap supports the gable on the south corner. A narrow vertical louvered vent is in the apex and there are narrow rake boards. At the elevation's north end is a second projecting gable pavilion. The reentrant corner has casements that face south: the basement has a six-light casement, the first story has a ten-light casement, the second story has paired ten-light casements, and there is a gable dormer with paired eight-light casements. Facing east, the pavilion has two sets of symmetrically placed six-light casements with four-light transoms on the first story; a large modern stainless steel range hood vent is between the two casements. The second story has two paired ten-light casements set over the first story sash, while the gable (attic story) has two eight-light paired casements set slightly closer. Instead of wood lintels, the gable casements have thin metal lintel plates set below the horizontal wood sided gable apex. Brick corbelling with short stone caps supports the gable, which is brick to lintel height and wood above. A narrow horizontal louvered vent is in the apex and there are narrow rake boards that extend down to the corbelling. The basement level of the pavilion has a concrete stairwell with a pipe railing. Concrete stairs extend down to a basement door at the pavilion's south end; a three-light horizontal awning sash is at the north end.

The service (north) or rear elevation is adjacent to the asphalt parking lot and has casement and brickwork (soldier course water table, rowlock sills) details similar to the other elevations. Near the northeast corner is a large exterior brick chimney that is flanked by paired six-light casements with four-light awning transoms. Off-center (to the east) is an added

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(1982) projecting brick one-story gable roof entryway/vestibule, whose north facing solid door is slightly above grade; its east and west elevations are blind. The elevation's west end has three sets of paired six-light casements with four-light transoms. On the second story are four sets of paired eight-light casements symmetrically placed across the center of the elevation; the easternmost casement pair is adjacent to the chimney. Four similar gable roof dormers with paired eight-light casements are in line with the second-story sash; the easternmost dormer is also adjacent to the chimney. The original open metal fire escape ladder is attached to the west side of the chimney; open metal fire escape platforms extend from the chimney/ladder across the adjacent second story and dormer sash. The west sides of the platforms are supported by brackets.

### Interior

Entry to the Theta Xi chapter house is through a small slate-floored vestibule, which has a handsome molded oak baseboard. The Tudor Revival entrance door has a wide Tudor-arched, heavily molded oak surround. Both the door surround and baseboard moldings are used throughout the house. Vestibule walls and ceiling are plaster, which is also used throughout the house, except where repairs have been made. On the south side of the vestibule is a single ten-light casement. This casement, as with all the casements in the house, is recessed in the thick wall and is without a surround/casing. Instead, the plaster wall wraps around the recess. All of the metal casements are original to the house and retain their original lever openers. Directly opposite the entry door is a wide square-topped door with six lights in its upper portion; through this doorway is the large L-plan "hall."

The hall is the circulation center of the house with the living room to the south, the dining room with adjacent kitchen to the north, and staircase to the basement and upper floors to the east in the hall's L-plan "leg." On the west wall, to the south of the entrance door, are paired eight-light casements with four-light transoms and sidelights. Turning the corner, the south wall has a very shallow segmental-arched niche that copies the adjacent uncased segmental-arched living room opening. On the opposite wall, the arrangement is reversed with a segmental-arched opening to the dining room in the northwest corner, while a deep segmental-arched niche is to the east. This niche contains an original oak bookcase that fills its lower half. Each half of the wide bookcase has three open shelves with a row of narrow vertical mail slots above. The remaining east wall is blind on its north half with the "leg" projecting east in its south half. The hall has a coved ceiling whose large flat plaster field is defined by a narrow oak stop; two modern light fixtures illuminate the space. The hall's eastern leg contains a handsome open newel oak staircase that rises from the basement to the attic story. Simple, but solid, square newel posts anchor the square spindle balustrade with molded hand rail; treads and risers are oak as are the paneled stringers. The basement flight consists of a straight run of stair, while the two upper stories dog-legged flights have a return/landing.

Along the short hallway to the north of the staircase is a large wardrobe/closet that is now used as a small office. An original one-panel oak door opens into this L-plan space whose interior has the same baseboard and trim, although painted. Two wall coat racks with shelves are to the north and east. In the center of this hallway is an original telephone closet whose door is missing, but its original one-light hinged transom is extant. The area behind the transom contains a fire hose connection with the remainder of the space blocked by wall board that also lowers the closet's ceiling. Entrance to the east corner half-bath is also through a one-panel door; the half-bath has replacement fixtures (urinal, toilet, pedestal sink) albeit in their original locations. A tall modern ceramic tile dado surrounds the room except for the single eight-light casement that faces east. The floor and marble threshold are original with the floor consisting of a field of white hexagonal porcelain tiles joined on their sides with the angles filled by smaller square tiles. All three of the hallway openings have the house's handsome wide oak casings; the telephone closet's casing extends to the ceiling. At the end of the hallway, facing east, is a set of paired eight-light casements with sidelights. Flooring in the hall is oak, which continues into the living and dining rooms.

The arched living room opening is centered in the room's east wall directly opposite the chapter house's limestone fireplace. Flanking the fireplace are paired eight-light casement groups similar to the hall's casements; two similar casement sets are symmetrically aligned on the room's east and west sides. The large ceiling is divided into thirds by cased oak beams that extend from either side of the room's opening to the fireplace; a wide but simple oak cornice encircles the room. There is a modern ceiling fan/light fixture centered in the ceiling's center bay, while simple modern surfaced-mounted fixtures are centered in the end bays. Also encircling the room is a non-original oak vertical-paneled dado that extends from the oak baseboard to window sill height. The dado has a narrow flat cap and apron; the single oak board window sills are in line with the dado, but their apron consists of two horizontal boards with stops that separate them from the single board dado apron.

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The limestone fireplace is the house's centerpiece decoration. Its wide four-centered Tudor arch frames a large firebox that is enclosed by a hooded metal fire screen. Fixed one-light sash flank two paired one-light folding doors that open to allow access to the firebox. These sash are set over a narrow perforated base and top with slide closures. The curved metal hood slightly overhangs the doors and has a small center brass plaque inscribed "In memory of Richard Kaufmann, A797."<sup>2</sup> Below the fire screen and extending out into the oak floor is a wide random slate hearth. The limestone Tudor arch is heavily molded, extending down to an angled stone base. The molded outer sides of the base rise up and extend to create a square mantel that supports a large simply molded cornice/mantel shelf. Between the two moldings is a wide frieze decorated by the fraternity's coat of arms in the center flanked by three squares.<sup>3</sup> The coat of arms has a large shield whose field is divided by a bar in bend (dexter to sinister) embossed by three fleurs-de-lis. Above the bar is a pair of balances with a sword arranged crosswise, while below the bar is a closed book. Below the shield is a scroll with the motto "Juncta Juvant" inscribed thereon and low, diagonal-pointing, fleurs-de-lis; the top of the scroll has the Arabic numerals "62" on its dexter side and "94" on its sinister. Atop the shield is a unicorn crest flanked by leaves emanating from the shield's upper corners. To either side of the coat of arms are three carved squares. The two center squares have shields with diagonal bars (sinister to dexter); the shields are encircled by five leaves and have four corner fleurs-de-lis. However, the flanking squares have Tudor roses set in a simple circular band with four corner fleurs-de-lis. Large triangular leaves in the imposts complete the fireplace's decoration.

Across the hall from the living room is the dining room, which is a simple open space similar to that of the hall. It has similar baseboards and a cove ceiling with oak stop, but with four modern light fixtures. On its west side are two eight-light casements with sidelights and transoms similar to those of the living room, but the north side has three central six-light casements with four-light transoms. An inset oak storage unit is located in the room's southeast corner. It has three shelves and the same casing as found throughout the house; originally it had casement doors, but only the hinge "ghosts" remain. In the opposite corner (northeast) is the open doorway to the kitchen; mostly likely a swing door was once in place.

The slight L-plan kitchen has a modern red square tile floor and a modern ceramic tile dado to three-quarters height; the upper walls and ceiling are plaster.<sup>4</sup> On the north wall, adjacent to the dining room opening, is a solid metal door to the added brick entryway/vestibule, which is one step down from the kitchen's floor level. The kitchen's red tile floor continues in this space, whose walls and gabled ceiling are finished in wood paneling. At the vestibule's north end is an exterior door to the parking lot. To the east of the metal door are two sets of paired six-light casements with four-light awning transoms, while the east wall has two similar casement pairs flanking the large stove with range hood. Turning the corner, the south wall has a single eight-light casement facing south. Adjacent to this single casement is a pantry (formerly a half-bath) whose original casement is blocked on the interior. However, the original two-panel door (painted) is extant, as is the original three-quarter-inch square porcelain tile floor with its staggered running bond field and marble threshold. The pantry has wood shelving. Next to the pantry is an original painted two-panel door that leads to the straight-run service stairs to the basement.

The second story is accessed via the hall's staircase. At the top of the staircase is a raised cabinet sans door with a fire hose valve similar to the one located above the telephone closet. These valves are labeled, "W.D. Allen Mfg. Co., Chicago, New York, Patented Aug. 1924." Directly ahead is a wall separating the staircase area from the second story hallway; the wide doorway is without its door. On the second story are twelve study/sleeping rooms arranged along a T-plan double-loaded corridor. All of the rooms are quite simple with casings similar to that of the first story, although most are painted; however, maple rather than oak flooring is used here. Carpeting covers some of the floors and a variety of door styles are in place (one-panel, flush, six-panel, etc.). Each room has at least one set of paired casement sash with corner rooms having two sets. All of the rooms are equipped with closets, which either flank the entry doors or are situated along a side wall. At south end of the corridor is an original narrow linen/storage closet. To the north of the staircase is the floor's bathroom, which has been remodeled and has modern fixtures. Two toilet stalls flank the entry with a urinal beyond; at the east end are three tile and concrete shower stalls to the north and three sinks to the south. The bathroom's flooring is modern small square tiles, but the original marble threshold remains; the hallway in front of the bathroom has large ceramic tile set over the maple flooring. A hall storage closet is opposite the bathroom. Originally, the guest room, located above the vestibule, had a half-bath; a disconnected bathtub remains, but the area is used as a closet.

The third or attic story has only nine study/sleeping rooms arranged along a single double-loaded corridor; all have paired dormer casements. A fire hose valve and cabinet is in line with the similar second story cabinet, but the wall separating the staircase area from the corridor has a large square opening to the south and a doorway to the north. This opening helps illuminate the corridor. An attic hatch is adjacent to the opening on the staircase side. The bathroom is located

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above the second story bathroom and has a similar design and similar modern fixtures. At the south end of the corridor are four study/sleeping rooms that are directly over those of the second story and have historic painted trim; these rooms were built (1942) at one end of the large dormitory space that originally encompassed the third floor.<sup>5</sup> The remaining five rooms are of a different shape and style from the others. It is known that the four northern rooms were added in the 1980s just beyond an original doorway (sans door). The large room across from the staircase has a loft area that extends into the attic with a short wall ladder for access. As on the second story, a variety of door styles are used; flooring is a mixture of hardwood and carpet. At the south end of the hallway is a pull-down attic stairway hatch.

The concrete floored basement of the Theta Xi chapter house contains public, private, and service space. A straight flight of stairs leads down to the basement and ends at the T-plan hallway. To the south, below the living room, is a large lounge area which has rough plaster walls and a modern plank ceiling with recessed lighting. The lower half of the walls (below the windows) has a modern wood dado of diagonal wood planks framed by end pieces and it is capped. Centered on the south wall, below the living room's fireplace, are two closets set to either side of a wood-covered brick support column; these closets have original painted two-panel doors but modern flat casings. On either side of the closets are paired eight-light casements. Two similar sets of casements are on the east side, while the west side has a set of paired casements to the south and a single raised six-light casement to the north. The west side of the room also has a large angled modern built-in bar with horizontal plank sheathing and a wood counter that extends to the north side. On the bar's service side are a small refrigerator and storage cabinets to the south and a low stainless steel double sink on a wood base to the north; the bar returns along the north end wall with two built-in beer coolers below and two inset shelving units above. Behind the bar the rough plaster foundation walls remain exposed on the lower half of the wall, while the upper half has framed diagonal plank siding that returns on the north wall. Between the west windows is a built-in television storage cabinet with a hinged one-light glass door. At the east end of the ceiling is a recessed projector screen. Adjacent to the north end of the bar is a two-panel door into a storage room that has a six-light casement on its west wall. Modern vertical board paneling covers the walls to half-height with the remainder of the walls and ceiling exposed plaster. Centered in the hallway is a solid door that opens into the private fraternity chapter room. This area has concrete floors and plaster walls; entrance is into an L-shaped foyer with the door to the chapter room at the end of the short northeast leg. The chapter room is without windows and has a rectangular space along its south wall. Along the stem of the T-plan hallway and across from the staircase is a second large storage room, which is similar to the bar storage room with a wide two-panel door and plaster walls and ceiling. At the east end of the hallway, behind the stairs, is a narrow closet with a six-light casement and a small square tile floor. Originally, this may have been a half-bath. Its walls are covered with plywood and there is a modern six-panel door. Opposite the lounge area, at the north end of the hallway, is the house's boiler and service room. A modern six-panel metal fire door separates the room from the hallway. Directly in front of the entry is a large concrete block cooler, which occupies the northeast corner. It has a heavy wood door and a flat top. To the east of the cooler are two water heaters and a modern boiler. Behind the boiler are two original coal chutes with metal doors inscribed, "Jas. McKinney & Son, Albany, N.Y." The east side of the room has a two-panel door to the exterior stairs off-center to the south. In the southeast corner is a narrow brick enclosed "closet" that originally held a dumbwaiter to the kitchen. Next to this closet, facing south, is a six-light casement. Along the south wall is a large room under the first-story bathroom that houses laundry facilities; it also has a six-light casement. Lastly, to the west of the laundry room, along the south wall, rises the open rung, straight-run wood staircase to the kitchen.

### Integrity

The architectural integrity of the Theta Xi chapter house is excellent. The original configuration of its first and second stories is intact, as are its original finishes. Only a few alterations have occurred since its construction in 1931. These include altering the third story's open dormitory space into private rooms, moving the rear service door, and adding an entry vestibule onto the rear elevation. Minor remodeling of service areas, principally the kitchen and bathrooms, has also occurred. However, the care that the members of the Theta Xi fraternity have shown toward their historic chapter house is a testament to their appreciation of the house's Tudor Revival architectural style.

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**8. Statement of Significance**

**Applicable National Register Criteria**

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

**Criteria Considerations**

(Mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

**Areas of Significance**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

ARCHITECTURE

**Period of Significance**

1931

**Significant Dates**

1931

**Significant Person**

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

**Cultural Affiliation**

N/A

**Architect/Builder**

Lawlor, Joseph M., architect

Rosch Brothers, contractor

**Period of Significance (justification)**

The period of significance, 1931, is the year that the Theta Xi Fraternity Chapter House was constructed.

**Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)**

N/A

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### Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The Theta Xi Fraternity Chapter House, located on the campus of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in Troy, New York, is eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places in association with Criterion C, in the area of architecture; it is being nominated at the local significance level. The chapter house is an excellent local example of the Tudor Revival architectural style as interpreted by New York architect Joseph M. Lawlor and as applied for domestic purposes. Characteristics of this style as expressed in the Theta Xi house include its steeply pitched slate gable roof with intersecting gables, Tudor-arched limestone entryway, grouped casement windows, and tall chimneys. The building embodies characteristic features of the fraternity house type, as expressed in its various social spaces, its industrial kitchen, and its large number of small bedrooms. The Theta Xi house's historic integrity has been maintained over the years and the building continues to look and function much the way it did when completed. The period of significance for this nomination is 1931, the year in which the house was built.

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### Narrative Statement of Significance

#### History

The City of Troy dates to 1789, when a group of residents met to change the name of their small village, platted in 1787, from Vanderheyden to Troy. Previously inhabited by Mohican Indians followed by three generations of the Vanderheyden family, the area was destined to grow due to its location near the northernmost navigable reaches of the Hudson River and at the eastern terminus of the 1825 Erie Canal.<sup>6</sup> Four years after its founding (1791), Troy became part of the newly established Rensselaer County, which was subdivided from Albany County, the formerly eastern district of the manor of Rensselaer that was granted to Killiaen Van Rensselaer by the Dutch West India Company. Joined with Rensselaerswyck by the state legislature to form the new town of Troy, it became the county seat in 1793.<sup>7</sup> The town grew quickly so that by 1800 it had had 300 dwellings, exclusive of commercial buildings, and a population of 1800.<sup>8</sup> By 1812 it had 540 houses and 120 stores. A contemporary statistical writer described Troy as follows:

*Few, if any, of the towns on the Hudson enjoy greater facilities for manufactures than Troy. There are a rolling and slitting mill, an extensive cotton and woolen factory, a paper mill, a carding machine, fulling mill, a manufactory of fire-arms, and one also of shovels and spades, besides several nail works, a distillery, and several grain and saw mills.*<sup>9</sup>

By 1815, the village had a population of 4,254 and petitioned the state legislature for status as a city, which was granted in 1816. The opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 contributed greatly to the city's success. Its population in 1825 was 7,859, almost double that of ten years before. In addition,

*The numerous manufactories included six grist mills, three saw mills, an oil mill, a fulling mill, a cotton factory, a distillery, a shovel and spade factory, two iron furnaces, three breweries, a large machine shop, four tanneries, two shoe factories, a paper mill, a rope manufactory, three carriage factories, a gun factory, two bleaching and calendaring concerns and two chair factories, besides many less important manufacturing establishments.*<sup>10</sup>

This prosperity enhanced the founding, by Stephen Van Rensselaer, of the Rensselaer School in November, 1824. Van Rensselaer hoped that the school would help diffuse scientific knowledge, particularly with regards to the application of scientific principles to various occupations to improve the common man's working conditions. The school opened to students in January 1825 and occupied space in the former Farmer's Bank building. Its course of instruction included "chemistry, experimental philosophy and natural history, with their application to agriculture, domestic economy, and the arts. Land survey, in which the school soon gained a world-wide reputation, was also taught."<sup>11</sup> The state legislature incorporated the school in 1826, the same year it graduated its first students. A catalogue of officers and students from that date lists two professors (Eaton and Beck) and eighteen students.<sup>12</sup> The name of the school was changed to the Rensselaer Institute in 1833 and was moved to a larger and more convenient location in Troy, the former Vanderheyden mansion.<sup>13</sup> In this same year, a complete course in civil, as opposed to military, engineering was established, which resulted in eight members of the class of 1835 receiving the first Civil Engineering degrees ever conferred by an English speaking country. The school moved to the corner of State and Sixth streets in 1844 after a short return to the Farmer's Bank building. A more rigorous curriculum and more rigid standards of scholarship from graduates were instituted under

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a reorganization that took place in 1849, the same year that the school's name was changed to the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute (RPI). At this time there were only three other engineering schools in the United States: at Harvard, Yale, and the University of Michigan, all having been started around 1847.<sup>14</sup>

A massive fire in 1862 destroyed a large part of downtown Troy, including buildings used by RPI. The school quickly resumed instruction in rented quarters, but as a result, RPI began its slow "climb" up the hill. In 1864, the Main Building became the first building designed and built for RPI; it was located on the Eighth Street slope. Two 1904 fires destroyed the Main Building and damaged the Winslow Laboratory and, rather than rebuilding on that site, RPI President Palmer C. Ricketts and the Board of Trustees focused on building "up the hill" from downtown Troy. The Warren estate was purchased in 1905 and since that time, all RPI buildings, except for the gymnasium, have been located between Eighth and Fifteenth streets.<sup>15</sup>

Little mention is given in RPI histories as to student accommodations, as board and lodging were not originally furnished by the school. Instead, students lived in private homes and rooming houses. It was not until 1907 that the first student housing was established at RPI in a large brick dwelling house on the ten-and-one-half acre Warren property that fronted Eighth Street; this building accommodated thirty students. The first purpose-built dormitory and dining hall was not built until 1915. In as much as these first dormitories, including another built in 1923, were for first year students only, members of the three upper classes still had to find their own housing. It was not until 1932 that a large dormitory for upper classmen was completed.<sup>16</sup>

### **Origin of Greek Letter Societies and Theta Xi**

Greek Letter Societies, commonly known as fraternities and sororities, have had a profound effect on American collegiate life. As the modern university system was evolving in the late 1800s from the English "paternalistic" system to the Germanic laissez-faire system, Greek Letter Societies provided a stabilizing force. In addition, they contributed to student social and cultural discipline, housing, political and social affairs, and alumni activities. By the turn of the century fraternities seem to have captured the imagination and enthusiasm of students from coast to coast, putting a mark on higher education in this country that set it apart from systems elsewhere in the world. A French Government Commission which visited the United States on the eve of World War I reported that, on the whole, the most remarkable aspect of our colleges and universities was the great organizing ability of students and, especially, their fraternity system.<sup>17</sup>

Phi Beta Kappa, the first American student society with a Greek Letter name, was founded for social and cultural reasons in 1776 at the College of William and Mary in Virginia. Preceded by "The Flat Hat Club" of a somewhat similar nature, Phi Beta Kappa was literary in character -- promoting the free discussion of questions of interest to its members -- and secret in temperament, reflecting the tumultuous times during which it was founded. It brought together members in common friendship and in promotion of a common object of "brotherhood, morality and intellectual development."

Unlike other earlier local clubs, Phi Beta Kappa allowed for expansion through the formation of associated chapters; the founding members were perhaps influenced by the widespread Masonic Order. The first branch chapters were established at Yale and Harvard in 1779 and from there spread to other colleges. One year after a secret and select literary society (Chi Phi) was squelched at Princeton, the Kappa Alpha Society was formed in 1825 at Union College, New York. Because it was the first group to practice continuously the basic principles that still guide present day societies, Kappa Alpha is considered the first modern Greek Letter Society. The new group met with opposition from college officials, but was popular with students. By 1827 two new similar societies (Delta Phi and Sigma Phi) were founded at Union.<sup>18</sup> Theta Delta Chi, established at Union College in 1847, located its third chapter at Rensselaer in 1853. It was the first secret society then in existence at RPI. Six years later (1859) a local fraternity, Sigma Delta, was founded as a competitor to Theta Delta Chi. Sigma Delta was Theta Xi's precursor.<sup>19</sup>

### **Theta Xi**

During Sigma Delta's early years it appears that debates were a regular feature of chapter meetings, as were distributing charity to the poor and needy of Troy. With increasing membership and activity came efforts to join with a national fraternity and overtures were made to Sigma Phi when a petition for membership was made at their 1864 national convention. At the convention the Sigma Phis decided that no new chapters should be established for the time being and thus no action was taken on the Sigma Delta petition. As a result of the rejection, eight members of Sigma Delta decided to found a new fraternity. On April 29, 1864 the eight former members of Sigma Delta met for the purpose of founding

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Theta Xi. The constitution, by-laws, and rules of order were adopted by a unanimous vote of the eight founding members: Peter H. Fox, Ralph G. Packard, Christopher C. Waite, George B. Brainerd, Samuel Buel, Jr., Henry H. Farnum, Thomas C. Raymond, and Nathaniel H. Starbuck, after which the oath of initiation was taken as a body. Various committees were set up to work on an initiation service and for deciding on a grip, various symbols, and other work associated with the founding of a new fraternity. Thus, Theta Xi became the only college fraternity to be founded during the Civil War and was accomplished at the first school of science and engineering established in any English-speaking country.<sup>20</sup>

At their organizational meeting, the founders decided that the official name for the new fraternity would be the Alpha Chapter of Theta Xi and that subsequent chapters would follow the Greek alphabet. Thus, the second chapter established at Yale University in 1865 was the Beta Chapter of Theta Xi. However, the group grew slowly at first so that by the turn of the century there were only six chapters.<sup>21</sup> Further growth was anticipated, however, and was realized during the first two decades of the twentieth century, when seventeen chapters were added. Many of these chapters were buying or building chapter houses.

Records of the Alpha Chapter of Theta Xi indicate that the idea of living together as a group was considered as early as 1864. However, it was thought that permission from the RPI faculty for such an endeavor would not be forthcoming.<sup>22</sup> Details about the locations of the chapter room and members' accommodations are not known until 1889. *City Directory* research has revealed that the fraternity rented Room 18 in the Times Building on Broadway (1889, 1890) and rooms at 1821 Fifth Avenue (1891-1895). In 1901, the chapter had a house at 1819 Seventh Ave., from whence it moved to 122 First (1902-1912). From 1915 to 1930, when the new chapter house was built, the fraternity lived at 2347 Fifteenth Street.<sup>23</sup> With the growth of the national Theta Xi fraternity came the desire from the Alpha Chapter for a chapter house of their own.

The Theta Xi Association of Troy, New York, was incorporated in 1909 to "promote social intercourse and mutual improvement" but also to "acquire and hold real property" and "to erect, improve or furnish, manage and operate a building or buildings thereon for the occupancy, use and benefits of its said members."<sup>24</sup> A search for a suitable lot for a chapter house near the institute was begun and even involved college president Palmer Ricketts, a fraternity member (A84).<sup>25</sup> A lot was secured in 1911 for \$2500 near the institute grounds along Fifteenth Street and plans for a house were drawn up in 1913. A booklet with two sets of plans was distributed to fraternity members, but funds to actually build a house were not forthcoming. By 1916, these plans were dropped.<sup>26</sup> The next attempt to build a chapter house occurred in 1921 when a new building committee was formed. It issued (1922) a detailed sixteen-page booklet with a new house plan drawn by Joseph Lawlor of the New York City firm of Lawlor and Haase. At this time, the firm was also providing architectural services to the institute. The design, a large and handsome Colonial Revival building, was in keeping with the institute's dormitories (Lawlor and Haase designs) near which the new chapter house would be located. It was hoped that the new house would be ready by September 1923 in time for the institute Centennial Anniversary.<sup>27</sup> However, once again funds were not forthcoming.

The mid-1920s saw a number of fraternities investing in land to the east of Fifteenth Street in a new development along Sage Avenue by the Troy Parkway Villa Site Company. The association sold its Fifteenth Street property in 1926 and bought a 218' by 136' parcel at 1490 Sage Avenue. With the new land came a new chapter house design by Joseph Lawlor in the English or Tudor Revival architectural style and new fund raising efforts. By March 1927 a contract for construction was being let with hopes that the new house would be occupied in the fall term. The plans showed housing for about thirty men and construction would cost around \$60,000. However, once again funds were not available and all through 1927 and 1928 there were repeated calls to the alumni to donate.<sup>28</sup> It was not until 1931 that the association felt confident enough to actually start construction.

The board of directors of the association voted in April, 1931 to start construction of the new chapter house to be completed by September, 1931. Years of fund raising had resulted in enough funds to begin construction, although a building loan/mortgage would still be necessary. The rationale for building in the midst of a depression was addressed with the chief reason being that the current house was in such poor condition as to be uninhabitable and that no other suitable building to move to was available anywhere near the Institute. The association was also able to obtain a very favorable construction estimate. The third reason given was that the property taxes on the Sage Avenue lot were consuming much needed capital. To help raise the additional funds needed the association suggested that each new member take out a \$1,000 insurance policy with the first \$200 of which was payable to the association.<sup>29</sup>

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Architect Joseph Lawlor's design for the new English style chapter house provided for a basement, main floor, and two floors of sleeping and study rooms. In the basement was the chapter room, billiard room, quarters for servants, and storerooms. The main floor had a large entrance hall, living room, dining room, kitchen and pantry. Sleeping and study rooms were to be on the second and third floors along with bathrooms. A guest room was also located on the second floor. The house was to be built with a brick veneer backed by hollow tile and covered with a slate roof.<sup>30</sup> Sketches of the proposed house used for publicity purposes from 1928 on show the house basically as built except for a small flat roof terrace (over an extended basement) on the east side; this section was never constructed.

A \$50,000 contract was awarded to the Rosch Brothers of Albany, New York, who had previously built a house for the institute's president, Palmer Ricketts. A loan of \$25,000 was arranged with a Troy building and loan company to augment the \$25,000 in cash and \$4,000 in pledges received for construction. Additional money for furnishing the house and landscaping was still needed.<sup>31</sup> A cornerstone laying ceremony was held in conjunction with RPI's 1931 commencement (June 13). President Ricketts laid the cornerstone and various items were placed inside. By this time, however, the plans had been changed slightly so that the second floor contained eleven study rooms, a guest room with bath, and a bathroom; the third floor was to have one large dormitory (suitable for subdivision) and bathroom. Occupancy was around thirty-three men. The house was finished by September 1, 1931 with students occupying it for the fall term, although furnishing took a few more months.<sup>32</sup> Except for a few minor changes, the Alpha Chapter of Theta Xi's chapter house is essentially as completed in 1931.

### **Tudor Revival Architectural Style**

The Theta Xi chapter house is a derivative of the Tudor Revival architectural style as individually interpreted by architect Joseph M. Lawlor. Based on English vernacular architecture of the Gothic or Tudor traditions of the fifteenth through seventeenth centuries, the Tudor or English Revival architectural style was promoted in Britain by Richard Norman Shaw in the 1880s and subsequently popularized in the United States through architects' and builders' manuals and design books. World War I and European travel also sparked interest in the style. Predominate from 1900 to 1940, the Tudor Revival style engaged the domestic architectural scene, along with several other related period revival styles. It was especially popular for catalogue and ready-made houses from the mid-1920s through the 1930s as it was prominently featured in catalogues and popular magazines.<sup>33</sup>

Characteristics of the style include a steeply pitched roof, which is usually side gabled and with one or more intersecting gables. Steep front-facing gables often extend over entrances or the entrance is sheltered by a porch; second story overhangs are typical. Plans are generally asymmetrical. Tall stacked chimneys with numerous chimney pots or flues are common. Brick, rubble stone, half-timbering, and stucco are common wall surfaces and the use of slate, especially as a roof material, is normal. Brick masonry walls are the most typical surface, often with contrasting upper stories or gables. Brick bonding is often Flemish or English bond with stone trim. Windows are generally narrow, multi-light, and grouped into bands of three or more; casements and dormers are common. Leaded glass and diamond-shaped panes were common treatments. Transoms are often used above the main windows and stone mullions divide casements and transoms. Heavy wood doors decorated with strap hinges or small sash are frequently set in Tudor or ogee arched doorways, often in gable fronted entrance ways. Interiors have large halls, carved woodwork, stone floors, beamed ceilings, and arched fireplaces.<sup>34</sup>

The Theta Xi chapter house is an excellent local example of the Tudor Revival architectural style. Architect Lawlor's design exhibits a number of the style's distinguishing characteristics, including its Flemish bond brick work and the inclusion of contrasting half-timbering and stucco as significant elements. The steeply pitched side gable roof is sheathed in slate while the asymmetrical plan includes the dominate use of intersecting gable pavilions. Although the entrance is not sheltered by a porch, the half-timbered entrance pavilion emphasizes its importance as does the handsome Tudor-arched eight-light door. The equally handsome Tudor-arched limestone architrave is also an excellent style element. The flat-arched surround with square hood mold, ears, decorative triangular paneled spandrels, and quoins is essentially Tudor Revival.

Other Tudor Revival design elements include the slightly overhanging half-timbered stories supported on corbels and the tall chimneys with multiple stacks. Stone is used only as an accent: in the entrance way, on the chimney shoulders, and as caps on the corbelled gable supports. The narrow, multi-light casements are grouped as pairs with those of the first story with sidelights and transoms with sidelights. Multiple dormers add interest to the steep roof line. The Tudor Revival design is restrained on the interior but can be seen in the predominate use of heavy oak door casings. Simple segmental

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arched openings lead into the principal public rooms, the living and dining rooms, while the large hall acts as a second living room. The living room is distinguished by a beamed ceiling, and, although quite simple, the hall and dining rooms' coved ceilings add simple elegance to those rooms. The principal Tudor design element of the interior, however, is the elegant limestone fireplace with its four-centered Tudor arched firebox and hooded metal fire screen. Although part of the fraternity's symbolism, the inclusion of a coat-of-arms in the fireplace design along with shields and Tudor roses enhances the Tudor Revival design as does the heavily molded Tudor arch that extends down to an angled stone base. The molded outer sides of the base rise up and extend to create a square mantel that supports a large simply molded cornice/mantel shelf. An additional element is the use of random slate as the hearth material which matches that of the entry vestibule.

#### Architect Joseph Lawlor

The architect for the Theta Xi chapter house was Joseph Michael Lawlor, a Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute graduate. Originally from Poughkeepsie, New York, Lawlor graduated from RPI in 1888. According to his RPI obituary, he went on to study at the Ecole Des Beaux Arts in Paris, graduating from that influential institution in 1893. Prior to that time, he first worked for the Manhattan Bridge Company (1889) and then for the C.N.E. & W. Railroad (1890-1891). Upon returning from the Ecole, he worked for Richard M. Hunt's prestigious architectural firm in New York City (1894-1897). Lawlor then worked for two years for H.J. Hardenbergh (a well-known hotel architect), also in New York City, before opening his own practice in 1900. He designed at least three buildings, 611 and 605 W. 112 St. (1904) and 609 W. 111 St. (1905) in New York City and the Poughkeepsie School (1904), before acquiring a partner. In 1906, William J. Haase, joined the firm, creating Lawlor and Haase. This partnership lasted until Haase's death in 1928, although the firm's name remained the same until Lawlor's retirement in 1935, at which time the firm was dissolved. Joseph Lawlor died on 7 August 1955.<sup>35</sup>

The Lawlor and Haase firm was responsible for a number of apartment buildings in New York City including the following: 615 W. 113th St. (1906); 13-19 E. 10th St. (1907); 35 W. 96th St. (1907); 450 Riverside (1908); 305 Riverside (1909); 56-58 11th St. (1912); 103-109 E. 75th St. (1912); 27-33 E. 62nd St. (1912); and 411-415 W. 120th St. (1913).<sup>36</sup> Most notable, however, was the firm's involvement with the development of the Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute's campus. From 1905 with the Walker Building until 1928 when Haase died, the firm was responsible for the design of all campus buildings except for the Troy Building. These buildings include: Walker Laboratory, 1907, 1919; Russell Sage Laboratory, 1909, 1923; '87 Gymnasium, 1912; Quadrangle Dormitories, 1916-1927; Russell Sage Dining Hall, 1916; Winslow Building, 1919 addition; and Amos Eaton Hall, 1928. Under his name alone, Lawlor continued his work at the institute with the Greene Building, 1931; the Union Club House (now Lally Hall), 1932; the North Hall & E Dormitories, 1932; and the Ricketts Building, 1935.<sup>37</sup>

#### Rosch Brothers

There is little information on the Rosch Brothers (Frank J. and Raymond J.) contracting company. Frank Joseph Rosch, Jr. was born in July 1887 in Albany to Frank and Catherine Rosch; his brother, Raymond Jacob Rosch, was born in August 1894. Both were schooled in Albany with Frank attaining an eighth grade education before he began a carpentry career; he was employed by John B Naldbillis in 1917. Raymond was working in a clothing store by the age of fifteen, so probably he also had only a grade school education. The Rosch (Frank and Ray) Brothers Company, builders and carpenters, was first listed in the 1921 Albany *City Directory* as being located at 24 Wilkins Avenue, which was also the home of Frank and Mary Rosch. Frank Rosch Sr. joined the company as a carpenter by 1925; he was previously a piano maker and cabinet maker. The 1928 *City Directory* has the following advertisement: "Rosch Brothers, Contractors & Builders, Carpenters, Masons & Appraisers, Repairing of All Kinds, 24 Wilkins Ave., Albany." Raymond died in 1940, but the firm continued under the same name with Frank Rosch Jr. in charge. His son, Frank Rosch III, joined the company after college (degree in mechanical engineering) and serving in WWII. A son-in-law, Bart Pagano Jr., also joined the firm. In 1959 the firm consisted of Frank Rosch II as president and treasurer, Frank Rosch III as vice-president, and Bart Pagano Jr. as secretary. It was still located at the Rosch home at 24 Wilkins Avenue. Aside from the Theta Xi chapter house, the only other known project from the 1920s or 1930s was a house built for RPI president Palmer Ricketts in Troy a few years before the contract for the Theta Xi house.<sup>38</sup>

#### Other Greek Chapter Houses

According to Palmer C. Ricketts's *History of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute* there were eighteen fraternities active on campus in 1934 and they all had fraternity houses.<sup>39</sup> The specific fraternities and their house locations are not given in

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his publication. Currently (2013), there are thirty-two fraternities on campus; however, their chapter houses are dispersed throughout Troy with the majority located on the south side of campus. It appears from a windshield survey of the chapter houses that the majority are converted single-family residences with only a very few having been constructed as Greek chapter houses. Only two chapter houses are in proximity to the Theta Xi house: the former Delta Kappa Epsilon house and the Rensselaer Society of Engineers house. The Delta Kappa Epsilon chapter house was built in 1946 in a restrained Colonial Revival architectural style next door (west) to Theta Xi. It was purchased by Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute in 1965 and now houses the institute's admissions office. Across Sage Avenue is the handsome Rensselaer Society of Engineers (RSE) chapter house that was built in 1924 from designs of architect Bertram Goodhue. RSE is a local, independent fraternity and is not a Greek letter society. It was established in 1866 as the Pi Eta Scientific Society and changed its name to the Rensselaer Society of Engineers in 1873.

### Summary

The Theta Xi fraternity chapter house is an excellent example of the small-scale residential work of New York architect Joseph M. Lawlor. In this building he has expressed a restrained Tudor Revival architectural style that evokes a collegiate sense of fraternity. Built in 1931, the fraternity house has undergone few changes, none of which detract from its original design or its original building fabric. The Theta Xi chapter house meets the requirements of Criterion C: Architecture for listing in the National Register of Historic Places.

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### Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

N/A

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## 9. Major Bibliographical References

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**Previous documentation on file (NPS):**

preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67 has been requested)  
 previously listed in the National Register  
 previously determined eligible by the National Register  
 designated a National Historic Landmark  
 recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Engineering Record # \_\_\_\_\_  
 recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # \_\_\_\_\_

**Primary location of additional data:**

State Historic Preservation Office  
 Other State agency  
 Federal agency  
 Local government  
 University  
 Other  
Name of repository: Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned):

N/A

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of Property** .65 acres

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

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

Those Certain Lots, Pieces or Parcels of Land, situate in the Fourteenth Ward of the City of Troy, County of Rensselaer and State of New York, designated on a certain map of the lands of the Troy Parkway Villa Site Company, made by Grimes, Headden and Calkins of Troy, N.Y., dated December 1913, and filed in the Office of the Clerk of the County of Rensselaer on the 6<sup>th</sup> day of January 1914, as Lots Number Fifty-four (54) and Fifty-six (56), said lots hereby conveyed being bounded and described on said map as follows:

On the South by Sage Avenue, on the East by Sage Avenue and Sherry Road; on the North by Lot No. 52; and on the West by Lot No. 55 and Lot No. 57; And which said Lots Numbers Fifty-six (56) and Fifty-four (54), hereby conveyed are further bounded and described from a survey and description of said lots made by F. X. Bode, C.E., Troy, N.Y., Dated August 13, 1926, as follows:

Lot No. 56, Beginning at an iron at the intersection of the northerly line of Sage Avenue with the division line between Lot No. 56 and Lot. No. 57, said point of beginning being the southwest corner of said Lot No. 56, hereby conveyed, and runs thence from said point of beginning easterly along the northerly line of Sage Avenue and northerly along the westerly line of Sherry Road a total distances of two hundred six and forty-six one-hundredths (206.46) feet to an southerly line of Lot No. 54; thence westerly along the southerly line of Lot No. 54 a distance of one hundred thirty-six, and twenty-five one-hundredths (136.25) feet to an iron; thence southerly along the easterly line of Lot No. 57 a distance of one hundred eighteen (118.0) feet to the place of beginning, be the distances hereinabove described more or less. Also,

Lot No. 54 – Beginning at an iron at the intersection of the Westerly line of Sherry Road with the division line between Lot No. 54 and Lot NO. 56 and runs thence Westerly along the Northerly line of Lot No. 56 a distance of one hundred thirty-six and twenty-five one hundredths (136.25) feet to an iron; thence northerly along the easterly line of Lot No. 55 a distance of one hundred (100.0) fee to an iron; thence easterly along the southerly line of Lot No. 52 a distance of one hundred eighty-three and sixty-six one-hundredths (183.66) feet to an iron in the westerly line of Sherry Road, thence southerly along the westerly line of Sherry Road as the same curves a distance of one hundred eleven and sixteen one-hundredths (111.16) feet to the place of beginning, be said distances herein described more or less.”

**Boundary Justification** (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

This nomination consists of the property historically associated with the Theta Xi Fraternity House, 1490 Sage Avenue, Troy, Rensselaer County, New York.

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**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Karen Lang Kummer, Architectural Historian

organization \_\_\_\_\_ date May, 2013

street & number 420 Blue Beech Way telephone 217.621.7202

city or town Chesapeake state VA zip code 23320

e-mail klkummer1@gmail.com

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**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.

Theta Xi Fraternity Chapter House  
Name of Property

Rensselaer, New York  
County and State

- **Continuation Sheets**
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

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**Photographs: TIFF format, October 2013; courtesy Theta Xi Fraternity**

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0001 EXTERIOR, view looking towards southwest corner  
0002 EXTERIOR, south elevation, view looking north  
0003 EXTERIOR, view looking towards southeast corner  
0004 EXTERIOR, east elevation, view looking west  
0005 EXTERIOR, north elevation, view looking south  
0006 EXTERIOR, detail view of entrance stairs, west-facing façade  
0007 INTERIOR, living room, view looking towards south wall  
0008 INTERIOR, detail view of fireplace and mantel, living room  
0009 INTERIOR, living room, view looking southwest  
0010 INTERIOR, entrance foyer, view looking south  
0011 INTERIOR, dining room, view looking to southeast  
0012 INTERIOR, third floor landing

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**Property Owner:**

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

name Theta Xi Association of Troy New York, c/o John Reinhardt, President  
street & number 1490 Sage Avenue telephone 703-731-8081  
city or town Troy state New York zip code 12180

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

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

<sup>1</sup> "Alpha Builds at Rensselaer," *The Unicorn of Theta Xi*, Vol. XXVIII, #2 (July, 1931), 31.

<sup>2</sup> Ornamental fireplace hood, screen and andirons presented in memory of Richard Kaufman, who died soon after graduation; *Alpha Bet* 20 April 1956 (Vol. XVII, #2).

<sup>3</sup> This is the fraternity's original coat of arms. The coat of arms was changed slightly in 1933 and 1962 when Kappa Sigma Kappa merged with Theta Xi.

<sup>4</sup> References in various issues of the *Alpha Bet* discuss plans to completely renovate the kitchen before the chapter's centennial in 1964. It appears that the original rear service door, shown on the plans as facing north at the east end of the north elevation (to the east of the boiler chimney), was moved to its current, more central location and the south dining room service doorway was infilled. Other kitchen renovations occurred at this time, but are not detailed. *Alpha Bet* Spring 1961 (Vol. XXII, #2); November, 1964; and April, 1965.

<sup>5</sup> *Alpha Bet* 8 December 1941 (Vol. I, #6), 2 and 9 February 1942 (Vol. II, #1), 2.

<sup>6</sup> Arthur James Weise, *Troy's One Hundred Years, 1789-1889* (Troy, New York: William H. Young, 1891), 28-29.

<sup>7</sup> George Baker Anderson, *Landmarks of Rensselaer County, New York* (Syracuse, New York: D. Mason & Co., 1897), iii.

<sup>8</sup> Weise, 54-55.

<sup>9</sup> Anderson, 243.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid. 254.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid., 253-254 and 341.

<sup>12</sup> Palmer C. Ricketts, *History of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, 1824-1934*, Third Edition (New York: John Wiley & Sons, 1934), 42.

Theta Xi Fraternity Chapter House  
Name of Property

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County and State

<sup>13</sup> Ibid., 67.

<sup>14</sup> Ibid, 90, 93, and 100. All though the new name was used in school publications, it was not made official by the state legislature until 1861.

<sup>15</sup> Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute building histories, Rensselaer archives.

<sup>16</sup> Ibid. 130-132.

<sup>17</sup> Kummer, Karen Lang, Dana L. Pratt, Lachlan F. Blair, and Linda Bastyr. "Fraternity and Sorority Houses at the Urbana-

Champaign Campus of the University of Illinois." (Multiple Property Documentation Form [MPD], May 1989, E-5.

<sup>18</sup> Ibid.

<sup>19</sup> Dr. J. Cutler Andrews, "The Founding of Theta Xi," *The Unicorn*, Vol. 59, #1 (Winter, 1964), 4. Theta Delta Chi fraternity was at RPI until 1870; it was reestablished in 1883, but only lasted until 1896 according to Palmer C. Ricketts, History of Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, Third Edition (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1934).

<sup>20</sup> Dr. J. Cutler Andrews, "The Founding of Theta Xi," *The Unicorn*, Vol. 59, #2 (Spring, 1964), 16, 20.

<sup>21</sup> Subsequent chapters were: Stevens Institute of Technology, 1874; Massachusetts Institute of Technology, 1885; Columbia University, 1899; and Cornell University, 1903.

<sup>22</sup> "Founding of Theta Xi," #2, 20.

<sup>23</sup> [www.alpha6294.com/history\\_house\\_article.php](http://www.alpha6294.com/history_house_article.php); and *Troy City Directories 1880-1950*.

<sup>24</sup> Ibid. and NYS Department of State, Division of Corporations, DOS ID #31007, dated 27 December 1909.

<sup>25</sup> Correspondence between Ricketts and Henry W. Hodge, dated 31 March 1910 in Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Archives.

<sup>26</sup> [www.alpha6294.com/history\\_house\\_article](http://www.alpha6294.com/history_house_article).

<sup>27</sup> Ibid. and "Proposed Chapter House, Alpha Chapter of Theta Xi, 1922," (np: 1922).

<sup>28</sup> [www.alpha6294.com/history\\_house\\_article](http://www.alpha6294.com/history_house_article); "Alpha's New Home," *Alpha Bet* (March, 1927), 3; "Is Our Dream Fading?," *Alpha Bet* (December, 1927), 5; "Our Dream is Not Fading," *Alpha Bet*, (December, 1928), 3; and "New Home for Alpha Chapter," *Theta Xi Quarterly*, Vol. XXV, #1 (April, 1928), 26.

<sup>29</sup> "Our New Home" and "Alpha Association's Work," *Alpha Bet* (May, 19310), 3-4.

<sup>30</sup> E.P. Hamilton, "New Home for Alpha Chapter," *Theta Xi Quarterly*, Vol. XXV, #1 (April, 1928).

<sup>31</sup> "Good News for Alpha Men," Alpha Chapter, New House Bulletin, #1, broadside.

<sup>32</sup> Louis J. Perrottet, "Alpha Lays Corner Stone," *The Unicorn of Theta Xi*, Vol. XXVIII, #2 (July, 1931), 7-8; "Corner-stone Ceremonies Take Place on Commencement Day," Alpha Chapter, New House Bulletin No. 2, broadside; and "Active Chapter Now Living in New House," Alpha Chapter, New House Bulletin No. 3, broadside.

<sup>33</sup> Stephen C. Gordon, *How to Complete the Ohio Historic Inventory* (Columbus, Ohio: Ohio Historic Preservation Office, 1992), 109; and James C. Massey and Shirley Maxwell, *House Styles in America* (New York: Penguin Studio, 1996), 219-225.

<sup>34</sup> Ibid.; Virginia and Lee McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* (New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1985), 355-358; and Rachel Carley, *The Visual Dictionary of American Domestic Architecture* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1994), 200.

<sup>35</sup> "Joseph Lawlor obituary," *Alumni News*, Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, November 1955, 14 and *Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute Catalogues, 1888-1906*.

<sup>36</sup> Office for Metropolitan History, "Manhattan NB Database 1900-1986," (4 March 2013), <http://www.MetroHistory.com>.

<sup>37</sup> Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute building archives.

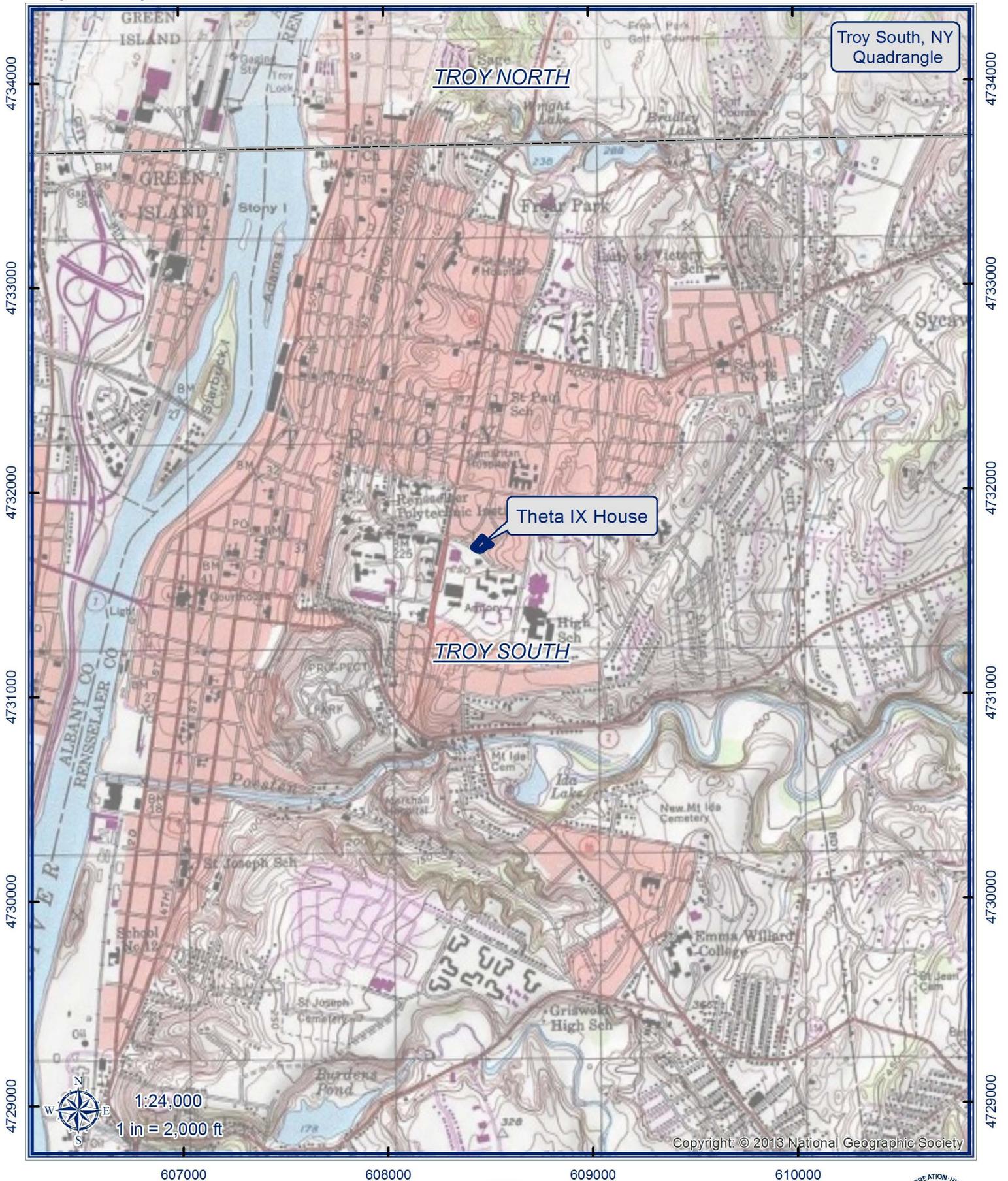
<sup>38</sup> Alpha Chapter, New House Bulletin, #1.

<sup>39</sup> Ricketts, 177.

Theta Xi Fraternity Chapter House  
Name of Property

Rensselaer, New York  
County and State

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

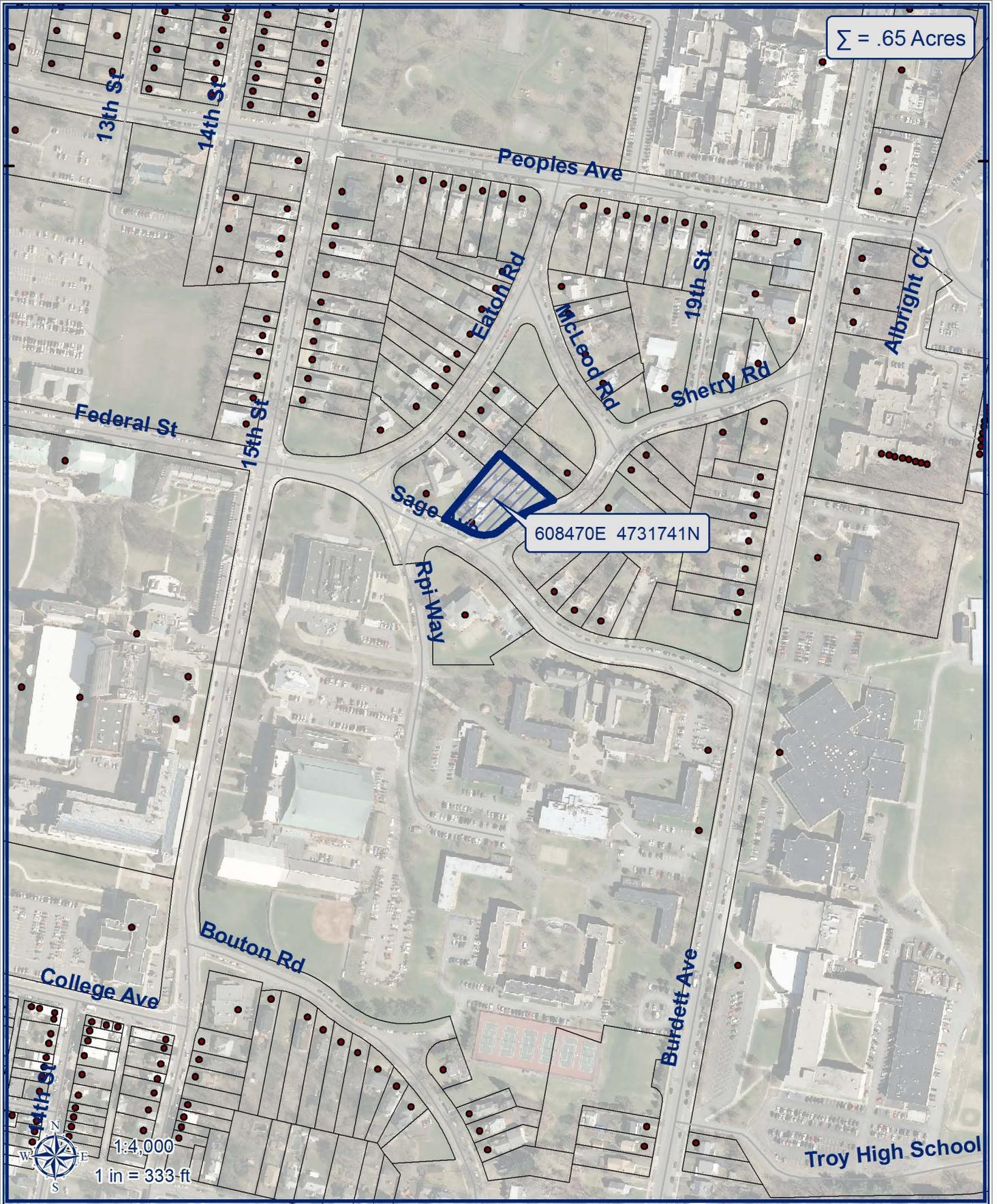


-  Chapter House
-  USGS quad index

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Tax Parcel Data:  
Rensselaer Co, RPS  
[www.rensco.com/countymaps.asp](http://www.rensco.com/countymaps.asp)







ALPHA CHAPTER  
OF THETA XI

1490





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UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

REQUESTED ACTION: NOMINATION

PROPERTY NAME: Theta Xi Fraternity Chapter House

MULTIPLE NAME:

STATE & COUNTY: NEW YORK, Rensselaer

DATE RECEIVED: 10/25/13      DATE OF PENDING LIST: 11/20/13  
DATE OF 16TH DAY: 12/05/13      DATE OF 45TH DAY: 12/11/13  
DATE OF WEEKLY LIST:

REFERENCE NUMBER: 13000911

REASONS FOR REVIEW:

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

COMMENT WAIVER: N

ACCEPT     RETURN     REJECT    12-16-13 DATE

ABSTRACT/SUMMARY COMMENTS:

**Entered in  
The National Register  
of  
Historic Places**

RECOM./CRITERIA \_\_\_\_\_

REVIEWER \_\_\_\_\_ DISCIPLINE \_\_\_\_\_

TELEPHONE \_\_\_\_\_ DATE \_\_\_\_\_

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

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



**New York State Office of Parks,  
Recreation and Historic Preservation**

Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau • Peebles Island, PO Box 189, Waterford, New York 12188-0189

518-237-8643

www.nysparks.com



**Andrew M. Cuomo**  
Governor

**Rose Harvey**  
Commissioner

18 October 2013

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

Re: National Register Nominations

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

I am pleased to enclose three National Register nominations to be considered for listing by the Keeper of the National Register. All nominations are submitted on discs:

St. James Episcopal Church, Warren County  
Neversink Valley Grange, Orange County  
Theta Xi Chapter House, Rensselaer County

Please feel free to call me at 518.237.8643 x 3261 if you have any questions.

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank  
National Register Coordinator  
New York State Historic Preservation Office