

SG-892

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 George T. Robinson House  
other names/site number Bluff Island Lodge  
related multiple property listing N/A

## 2. Location

street & number 15082 Bluff Island  N/A not for publication  
city or town Clayton  N/A vicinity \_\_\_\_\_  
state NY code 36 county Jefferson code 045 zip code 13624

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

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

Michael P. Lynch Deputy SHPO 17 FEB '17  
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:)

[Signature] 4/17/17  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

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**5. Classification**

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

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

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

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
1	0	structures
0	0	objects
3	0	<b>Total</b>

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

NA

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

0

**6. Function or Use**

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

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

DOMESTIC: Hotel

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

**7. Description**

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

LATE VICTORIAN: Shingle Style

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: STONE

walls: WOOD

roof: ASPHALT

other:

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## Narrative Description

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### Summary Paragraph

The George T. Robinson House, in the town of Clayton, Jefferson County, New York, is a highly intact 2 ½ story, inverted “T-plan,” Shingle Style home. The building occupies a center location on the southern side of Bluff Island overlooking the St. Lawrence River and mainland New York State. The home was constructed in 1901 and designed by Pittsburgh architect Thorsten E. Billquist for George T. Robinson and his family, also from Pittsburgh. The south-facing facade is dominated by an open porch that wraps around the entire length of the first floor; the porch roof is supported by evenly spaced stone pillars. The walls and roof are finished with shingles, and the foundation and porch supports are built of red granite that originated from a quarry located on Picton Island, to the north of Bluff Island. The interior of the house is finished with wood paneling and wainscoting from floor to ceiling. There is an 11-foot granite-faced brick chimney within the wall that separates the living room and dining room, so that there is a fireplace in both rooms. Historically, the second floor contained seven bedrooms and four bathrooms, while part of the attic held a living space for employed help. Other important resources of the property include a pump house on the west, once used to tap water from the lake, and the surface remains of a walled garden directly north on a slight slope. On the adjoining cove, a 2-story boat house once stood; it was crushed by ice in 1965. Overall, the George T. Robinson House is in good condition with strong integrity in terms of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association. The only alterations to the property have been the loss of the boat house, general deterioration over the years, and recent renovations to update utilities, replace severely weathered shingles and upper windows, and reconfigure the rear of the kitchen wing.

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## Narrative Description

### Location and Setting:

The George T. Robinson House is located on the south side of 61-acre Bluff Island, one of nearly two thousand islands situated in the St. Lawrence River, in the township of Clayton, Jefferson County, New York. The 26-acre property is only accessible by boat and is roughly two miles northeast of the village of Clayton. The closest islands are Picton Island to the north and Grindstone Island to the west, in a cluster along with Round Island, Wellesley Island, and Ivy Lea Island. The house sits on the rocky southerly point of Bluff Island, with its facade facing south towards Round Island and the mainland of New York. To the east is another summer cottage, once owned by Colonel Harry C. Kessler and then known as “The Bluffs”; today the property includes a shop (“Boateak”) only open during the summer months. To the west is a home, constructed in 1976, situated on a rocky outcrop.

### Exterior:

The George T. Robinson House is a 2 ½-story, inverted “T-plan,” Shingle Style building with a cross-gable roof line. The top of the “T” faces south to the water; the base of the “T” holds the dining room and kitchen. Unless noted, all the original windows and doors survive on the main floor. The home was constructed around 1901 and designed by architect Thorsten E. Billquist. The original blueprint and a 2016 photograph of the façade are contrasted below:



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Figure 1. Façade of the George T. Robinson House from blueprint by Thorsten E. Billquist, 1901.

Figure 2. Façade of the George T. Robinson House from the water, 2016.

*Façade:* The south-facing principal elevation consists of a raised stone foundation, open wrap-around porch, and second-story shed dormer within a shingled roof surmounted by a stone chimney. The raised foundation is constructed of rough-cut irregular courses of granite blocks. The south side has five evenly spaced segmented arches; this section is tall enough to stand under. The foundation becomes shorter towards the north end of the home until it reaches the wall of a full basement under the kitchen (the northernmost portion of the house).

The foundation supports an open wraparound porch with evenly spaced sandstone pillars that support the roof enclosing the second story. Under the porch roof, this elevation of the building has one wooden door on the west (nine panels of glass in the top half and paneled on the lower half); seven eight-over-eight double-hung sash windows in the center (this section of the wall extends into the porch area by three feet); and one eight-over-eight window on the east. Above the porch, within the salt-box roof line of the front façade, there is a ribbon of shed dormers; these windows hold smaller eight-over-eight wood sash that replicate the deteriorated originals.

*East Elevation:* The east side of the “T-plan” Robinson House has two parts: the gable end of the principal elevation and the east side of the kitchen wing. On the gable end, the section of the building under the porch has one door on the left and one eight-over-eight window on the right – both door and window match those on the façade. Moving up to the second floor, there are two eight-over-eight windows, with a lone centered six-over-six window in the attic; unlike the façade, the porch on the east elevation supports part of the second floor. In the north-facing corner between the gable end and the kitchen wing, there is one eight-over-eight window on the first floor and two eight-over-eight windows on the second floor (one above the end of the open porch). These windows offer light for a bedroom and for the open staircase that leads from the first floor to the second.

The east elevation of the “T” has three bays on both the first and second floors; the two floors are divided by a piece of wooden trim that runs the length of the wing and marks the floor of the second story. Starting from the left of the first floor, the first bay holds a semi-circular bay window composed of four decorative glass windows (single panes on the bottom with diamond patterns on the top); the second holds a single eight-over-eight window; and the third holds two double replacement eight-over-eight windows. The second story has two eight-over-eight windows and one double replacement window. The headers of the first-floor windows are up against the trim line between the floors; the headers of the second-floor windows are right below the roof line.

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A significant detail on this façade – also seen on the west façade – is a slight flare of the last three rows of shingles on both the first and second floors. On the first floor, the flared-out shingles stop below the kitchen (the last room in the north end of the home). This is the only part of the house that actually has a basement. Historically, it most likely was used for cold storage, given the fact that the kitchen is directly above it.

*North Elevation:* The north side of the house is the gable end of the “T-plan.” A small, one-story porch has a set of stone stairs leading down to the ground. The gable end had a brick chimney that extended to the attic and divided the fenestration; this feature has been removed. On the first floor, there is a door to the left and an eight-over-eight window on the right; on the second floor is a set of six-over-six windows originally separated by the chimney; and, in the attic space, there are two smaller windows with diamond-patterned panes.

*West Elevation:* On the west side of the Robinson House, three features seen on other exterior walls are repeated: the wooden trim that acts as a visual divider for the first and second stories; first-floor window headers up against this trim line; and flared-out shingles at the bottom of the first and second floors. This side of the building is the most weathered. During renovations by the present owners, the northernmost window on both the first and second floors of the kitchen wing was replaced and doubled. On the first floor, to the right of the kitchen, is a small four-over-four window that provides natural light for a storage room and an eight-over-eight window lighting the dining room. On the second floor there are five windows – two eight-over-eight windows on either side of a small, central, six-over-six window that provides natural light for a set of back stairs to the second floor and attic. The roof line includes a dormer above the stairs with a pair of small six-over-six windows. Turning the corner to the back of the main section of the house, there are a single eight-over-eight window on the first floor and four windows on the second (which again extends over the open porch.) The first window on the left is a small four-over-four window into an historic linen closet; the second, an eight-over-eight window into the hall; and the third and fourth are six-over-six windows into two separate bathrooms.

## INTERIOR

Thorsten E. Billquist’s original architectural drawings of the George T. Robinson House survive. Overall, they demonstrate that the main rooms of the first floor have been little altered and that the principal changes to the second floor involve re-plumbing and expansion of bathrooms (in some cases, into existing closet space). Almost every room is sheathed from floor to ceiling with narrow horizontal wainscoting that has retained its natural wood finish.

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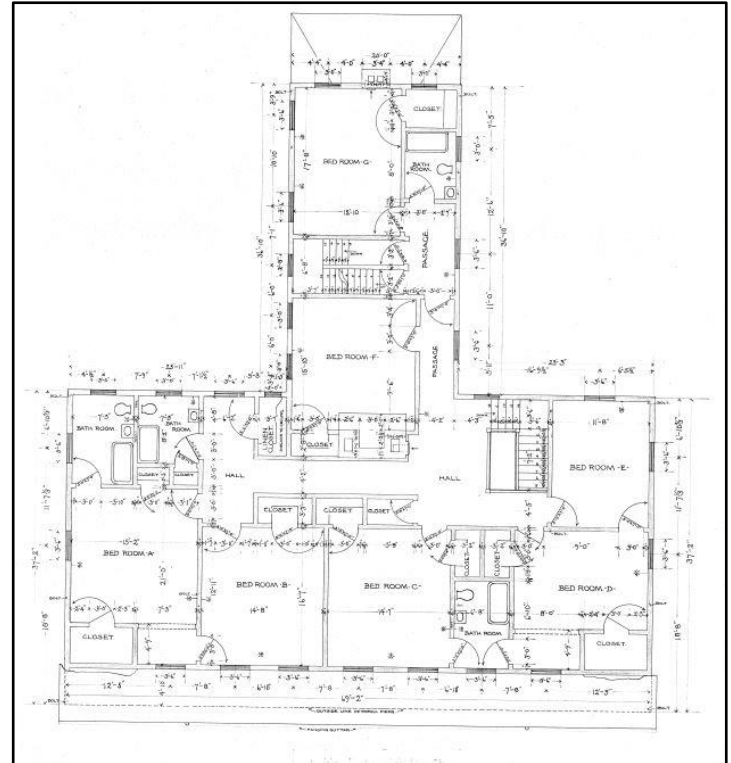
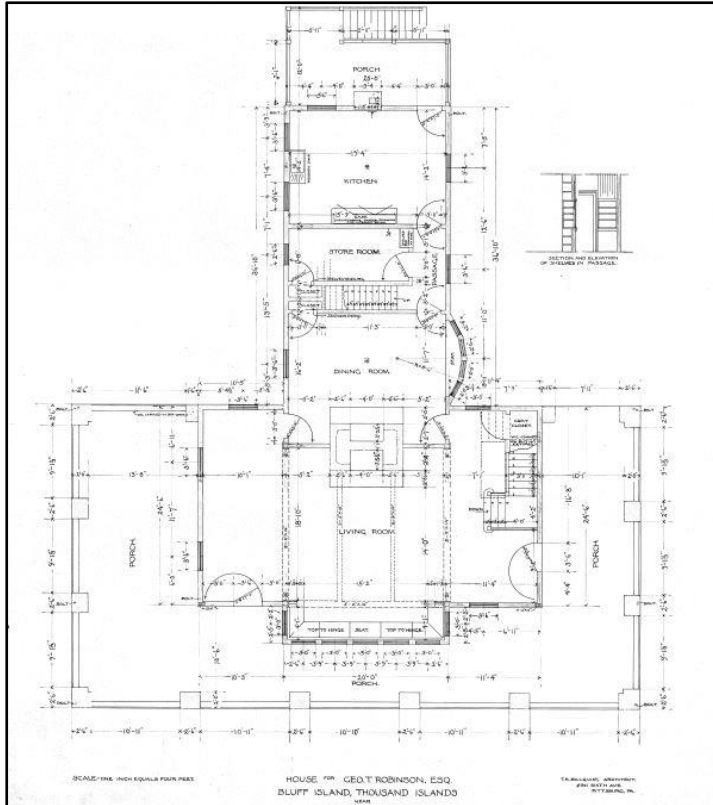


Figure 3: First Floor plan of the George T. Robinson House from blueprint by Thorsten E. Billquist, 1901.

Figure 4: Second Floor plan of the George T. Robinson House from blueprint by Thorsten E. Billquist, 1901.

*First Floor:* The main entrances of the home are located under the porch of the side-gabled end of the “T-plan,” with one door on the south façade and the other on the east elevation. These entrances lead into a large open space (38 ft. across) that was historically used as the living room. This room has wood paneling from floor to ceiling and an 11-foot brick fireplace faced with rough-cut stone in the center of the room. Along the south wall (extending into the porch), there is a large built-in window seat with a ribbon of five windows on the front and one on each side; this seating area is three feet deep.

The living room also contains a set of open stairs (next to the east door) that leads up to the second story; below the stairs there is a storage area. Openings on either side of the fireplace lead into the kitchen wing. The west opening holds a door into the dining room at the south end of the wing; the east opening leads to a passageway that runs the length of the wing to the kitchen.

The south wall of the dining room contains another stone fireplace off the central chimney. There is a closet with built-in shelves in the northwest corner of the room. On the adjoining passageway is the semi-circular bay window of the east elevation, with a built-in bench below. Next past the dining room is a second set of stairs (with access to staff bedrooms in the attic), a storage room with more built-in shelves, a built-in shelving unit in the passageway, and the kitchen. A door in the kitchen opens outside onto a small porch behind the north elevation with stairs to the ground.

*Second Floor:* The main set of stairs in the living room ascends and opens into a hallway on the second floor of the house. To the south (looking west of the stairs), are the doorways into the five bedrooms directly above the living room and porch. On Billquist’s building plans for the home, these bedrooms are labeled “A” through “E,”

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with Bedroom "A" on the west side of the house and bedroom "E" above the porch and behind the stairs on the east side of the house. Each bedroom has closet space; a number of the rooms connect to each other. When the house was built, there were three bathrooms in the front section of the building and one in the ell; despite changes, the four rooms remain bathrooms.

As on the first floor, a passageway along the east elevation extends though the kitchen wing to the north end of the house. On the left side of the passage, the first doorway leads into another bedroom ("F"); then past the second set of stairs (down to the kitchen and up to the attic); and finally into bedroom "G," directly above the kitchen.

*Attic:* The majority of the attic is unfinished and uninsulated; the brick chimney, roof rafters, and trusses are fully visible. One small portion above the kitchen has been partitioned with 2x4s and sheetrock for housing. Unlike the windows in the rest of the attic, the windows in this room have diamond panes.

### **Alterations:**

Based on the architectural plans of Thorsten E. Billquist, the George T. Robinson House historically held seven bedrooms; when the property was sold in April of 2016, it was described as a five-bedroom single-family residence. The biggest noticeable difference is bedroom "G" at the north end of the house on the second floor. Billquist's blueprints show that this room had its own bathroom and closet; today the room has neither and is just a large bedroom. The date these changes occurred is unknown but was most likely after the Hubbard family purchased the home in 1963.<sup>1</sup>

As of 2016, the current owners are in the process of renovating the property. Severely-weathered shingles on the west and east elevations of the house have been replaced. (The original shingles under the roofed porch are in excellent condition and have been retained.) On the façade, the string of windows above the porch was also severely weathered; these have been reproduced and replaced. Other windows have been refurbished and fitted with storms. Sections of the roof have been replaced where leaks have occurred. Interior renovations include: updating utilities from gas to electric; updating plumbing (but retaining original tubs and sinks that are in working condition); refinishing floor and wall surfaces; and slightly reconfiguring the rear of the kitchen wing. The current layout of both floors and functions of all rooms remain essentially the same.

### **Other Structures:**

Two other historic resources – a pump house and garden walls – convey the history of the George T. Robinson House.

A pump house west of the house is located on a rocky ledge next to the St. Lawrence River and accessed by a path from the western side of the porch foundation. The small wood-frame building is roughly 5 x 7 feet in dimension, clad in wooden shingles, and contains an old pump and pressure tank.

Directly north of the house is a slope with the remains of a series of red granite walls; their overall shape is rectangular (roughly 10 x 20 feet), and the walls at their tallest stand about two feet high. Based on historic newspaper articles, it is likely that these surface remains are part of a walled garden and a contributing structure. Anne Holdship Robinson was involved with garden clubs in Clayton and Cape Vincent and hosted garden club

<sup>1</sup> Information from realtor, Trude Fitelson, 2016.



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meetings and picnics at her summer home on Bluff Island. Also to the north, but at the base of the hill, was a granite foundation (no longer extant). Based on the site's relationship to the kitchen and garden, the building may have been used for cold storage or served as a tool shed.

### Lost Features:

As previously mentioned, a two-story boat house designed by Thorsten E. Billquist once stood to the east of the home. Historic blueprints and a photo from the sale of the property in the 1950s show where the boat house was located. It collapsed in the winter of 1964-65 from ice pressure.



Figure 5: Boat House elevations from blueprint by Thorsten E. Billquist, 1901.

### Summary:

Overall, the recent rehabilitation of the main building and loss of the boat house do not detract from the overall integrity of the George T. Robinson House in terms of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association.



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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.)

SOCIAL HISTORY

ARCHITECTURE

#### Period of Significance

1901-1948

#### Significant Dates

1901

#### Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

NA

#### Cultural Affiliation

NA

#### Architect/Builder

Thorsten E. Billquist

**Period of Significance (justification):** Date of construction (1901) to the death of Anne Holdship Robinson (1948). These dates encompass the period of ownership by the family that constructed the George T. Robinson House.

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

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### Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The George T. Robinson House is locally significant under **Criterion A: Social History** for its association with a way of life in the Thousand Islands from the beginning to the middle of the 20<sup>th</sup> century. At the turn of the century, the area was at the height of its popularity as a summer resort for the wealthy. The Robinson family came from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where Mr. Robinson worked in the steel and manufacturing industries. He built the house on Bluff Island in 1901, and it remained his family's summer residence until 1948, when his daughter Anne H. Robinson died. The property is also locally significant under **Criterion C: Architecture**. The house was designed by Thorsten E. Billquist in 1901 in the Shingle Style commonly used in late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century summer resort areas. The 2 ½ story, inverted "T-plan" building possesses the most important features of the style – shingled walls without corner boards, an extensive porch, rusticated stone chimney and porch details, shed windows, and a wood-paneled interior.

### Historic Context

#### *Thousand Islands Region History*

The region of the Thousand Islands was used frequently by Native American tribes, French colonists, English colonists, and United States settlers during the French and Indian War, American Revolution, and War of 1812. Prior to 1822, Bluff Island was also known as Craufurd Island, in honor of Major-General Robert Craufurd of the British Army, who was killed in 1812 while storming Ciudad Rodrigo in Spain during the Napoleonic Peninsular War. In 1822, the International Boundary Commission separated the Thousand Islands into British and American territory; 61-acre Bluff Island was placed on the American side of the line and renamed on American maps.<sup>2</sup> Nonetheless, the island continued to be viewed as part of the Wellington Islands, named for Arthur Wellesley, 1<sup>st</sup> Duke of Wellington, the most prominent general of the Napoleonic War.<sup>3</sup>

The new boundaries allowed both sides of the river to thrive. By the end of the 1820s, the town of Clayton was established as a timber town and had a number of growing businesses associated with the maritime industry.<sup>4</sup> Its ship-building companies included *Smith and Merrick* (established in 1832) and *Fowler and Esselstyne* (1841). Before the middle of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, interest in developing the islands near Clayton began. In 1845, many of the American islands were sold and, by 1850, Azariah Walton owned most of them. Walton, his sons, John and Lyman, and their business partner, Andrew Cornwall, were most interested in regional timber rights, but the St. Lawrence River area was also coming to be known as a tourist destination for fishing and hunting.<sup>5</sup>

In 1872, the social scene in the Thousand Islands gained national attention when George Pullman, developer of the Pullman sleeping car, invited President Ulysses S. Grant to his summer home on "Pullman Island," located close to Alexandria Bay.<sup>6</sup> News that the president of the United States had visited the Thousand Islands put the region on the map as an elite tourist destination for the upper and middle classes from the 1880s to the early 20<sup>th</sup> century – the period called the Gilded Age. Tourists and summer inhabitants of the Thousand Islands began to

2 Susan Smith, *The First Summer Peoples: The Thousand Islands, 1650-1910* (Erin, Ont.: Boston Mills Press, 1993), 79.

3 Ibid., 159, 203. "Craufurd, Robert (1764-1812), of Blyth Hall, Yorks," *The History of Parliament: the House of Commons 1790-1820*, ed. R. G. Thorne (London: Haynes Publishing, 1986). [<http://www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/craufurd-robert-1764-1812>]

4 Smith, *First Summer Peoples*, 89. Laurie Ann Nulton, "The Golden Age of the Thousand Islands: Its People and its Castles" (M.A. diss., Georgetown University, 1981), 8.

5 Smith, *First Summer Peoples*, 81. Nulton, 10.

6 Smith, *First Summer Peoples*, 82.

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be grouped together under the term, “summer people,” referring to the fact that they only lived in the area during the summer months.<sup>7</sup>

The Thousand Islands and similar summer resort areas in the eastern United States grew in popularity during this time for a number of factors: the rise of industrial capitalism (which increased personal wealth); middle-class concerns for health and individual welfare in crowded cities; the romantic movement and its celebration of nature; and rapid improvements in transportation (railroads and steamboats).<sup>8</sup> *The House Beautiful*, a periodical of the era, published an article entitled, “Fine Country Estates,” reporting that the past decade (1890s) had seen the rise of the “American country place,” and that America's elites were building their estates in places like Long Island and the Thousand Islands, to escape “city turmoil.” The article continued by stating that the popularity of purchasing small islands throughout the Great Lakes and Thousand Islands regions had an appeal to people who wanted to build a country home – owners of such islands could experience the joy of “being its ruler, that savors of kingship and [brings] special gladness to the heart of one who tires of the conventions of a city.”<sup>9</sup>

The Thousand Islands also held many opportunities to enjoy nature, such as fishing, hunting, and boating, that were popular among summer people. In addition, entire families could visit the region to engage in social activities, such as cruises on private yachts and dinner parties at local hotels like the Frontenac and the Columbian. The summer people who visited the Thousand Island region helped foster the growth of the area by purchasing land and building houses.<sup>10</sup> As interest in the area grew, Andrew Cornwall and John Walton, the executors of Azariah Walton's estate, began to sell the islands to wealthy visitors with the stipulation that homes must be built within two to three years of purchase.<sup>11</sup> In 1900, George T. Robinson purchased a portion of Bluff Island from his brother-in-law to build a summer “cottage” where his family could escape Pittsburgh and its summer heat.

By the end of the 1910s, the Gilded Age was over. The Thousand Islands saw a decline for a variety of reasons, including both the growing popularity of the automobile and the lack of good roads in northern New York State. Where the roads were good, the automobile allowed people to travel freely and not be limited to one area for the entire summer season. Further, the deaths of some of the wealthiest summer people, including George Pullman, decreased interest in the Thousand Islands among social strivers. Large fires had also destroyed a number of popular hotels, including the Frontenac on Round Island in 1911 and the Columbian on Wellesley Island in 1912. Once important social centers of the Thousand Islands, neither hotel was rebuilt. Political issues also put a damper on individual ability and means to visit summer resort areas. In particular, World War I put an end to the steamboat routes; boats were taken for government uses and supplies often ran short. The 1920s saw some improvement, but the brief revival ended with the stock market crash of 1929 and Great Depression that followed.<sup>12</sup>

Not until shortly before World War II did the Thousand Islands see a second resurgence in its travel and resort industries, with the development of new recreation options and new businesses to accommodate tourists. Behind

7 Nulton, 10. The region began to attract a wide range of people; Thousand Island Park was established as a Methodist revival community in 1875.

8 Stephen J. Hornsby, “The Gilded Age and the Making of Bar Harbor,” *Geographical Review*, 83:4 (1993), 455. [<http://www.jstor.org/stable/215826>]

9 “Fine Country Estates,” *House Beautiful* 10 (1901), 333. [<https://books.google.com/>]

10 Smith, *First Summer Peoples*, 97-99.

11 Smith, *First Summer Peoples*, 81.

12 Susan W. Smith, *A History of Recreation in the 1000 Islands*, (St. Lawrence Islands Nation Park: Parks Canada, 1976). [<http://www.oliverkilian.com/ecology/thousand-islands/island-insights/recreation/recreation.html#Hotels and Resorts>]

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the improvement were large-scale building projects that bolstered the Thousand Islands's importance in the national arena of tourism. In 1938, the completion of the Thousand Island International Bridge helped promote and renew interest in the region. The bridge connected the United States to Canada through a series of spans from Hill Island in Canada to Wellesley Island in the St. Lawrence channel, and then to mainland New York. President Franklin D. Roosevelt and Canadian Prime Minister William Lyon Mackenzie King attended the official ribbon cutting and opening of the bridge.<sup>13</sup>

After World War II, tourism continued to pick up in the Thousand Islands. The 1950s especially saw a boom in summer people and new cottage building. Since cars and boats were being mass produced, more people could own these once "luxury" items and visit the St. Lawrence River during the summer.<sup>14</sup> However, their cottages were no longer the Shingle Style mansions of the Gilded Age; the new summer people enjoyed more modest camps and rental cabins.

During the 1950s the construction of the St. Lawrence Seaway brought another round of international coverage to the region. The St. Lawrence Seaway was unofficially completed July 4, 1958, when the United States Coast Guard cutter *Maple* became the first vessel to pass through the locks. The Seaway and its locks were officially opened June 26, 1959, when Queen Elizabeth II arrived aboard the Royal Yacht *Britannia* and joined President Dwight Eisenhower at the St. Lambert lock, the easternmost lock of the seaway. The queen's yacht continued its voyage up the St. Lawrence River passing through the Thousand Islands as she proceeded to Chicago and drawing renewed attention to the region.<sup>15</sup> The Thousand Islands region continues to be a summer destination for many people because of the variety of recreational and tourist offerings in the region: historical sites, museums, tour boat lines, state parks, camping, fishing, and boating.

## Criterion A: Social History

### *Robinson Family History*

The George T. Robinson House fits into the overarching social history of the Thousand Islands in regards to changes in the region's way of life in the early- to mid-20<sup>th</sup> century. The home was built as a Gilded Age private residence in 1901 and inherited by the daughter of the builder; however, it proved hard to sell at her death and was even used briefly as a fishing lodge, run by a local couple from Clayton, in the 1950s. The house was designed by Pittsburgh architect Thorsten E. Billquist for Pittsburgh industrialist George T. Robinson and his family and built in the Shingle Style, one of the most popular architectural styles for cottage design in the Gilded Age.

George T. Robinson was born in Pittsburgh, PA, in 1838, the son of Ann Holdship and William C. Robinson. Ann was the daughter of Henry Holdship, who owned the largest paper-making establishment in western Pennsylvania. William was a member of the firm Robinson and Minis, which ran a foundry. Specifically, Robinson and Minis built steam boats and their engines, and William Robinson himself owned a small fleet of steam boats.<sup>16</sup> Probably as a result of his father's work, George T. Robinson became involved in the steel and engine-building industries in Pennsylvania.

13 Adrian G. Ten Cate, ed., *Pictorial History of the Thousand Islands of the St. Lawrence River*, 2<sup>nd</sup> Ed. (Brockville, ON: Besancourt Publishers, 1982), 222-223. While the bridge greatly helped the area between Alexandria Bay and Clayton, it also helped end the last steamboat ferry services.

14 Ibid., 228-229.

15 Ibid., 233.

16 Dorothy Smith Coleman, "Pioneers of Pittsburgh: The Robinsons," *Western Pennsylvania Historical Magazine* 42:1 (1959), 73. [<https://journals.psu.edu/wph/article/view/2627/2460>]



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Robinson married Althea Rebecca Dilworth on November 3, 1863. Together they had five children: Mary Mason, William Christopher, Anne Holdship, Stuart Holdship, and Henry Holdship. According to the United States census of 1880, Robinson's occupation was listed as "iron founder and engine builder."<sup>17</sup> By the 1910 census, he had changed his occupation to "capitalist."<sup>18</sup> Up until 1897, George Robinson was president of the Robinson-Rea Manufacturing Company, one of the first steel foundries in Pittsburgh, building engines and rolling mill machinery.<sup>19</sup> In that year, his company and the Leechburg Foundry and Machine Company consolidated and became part of a new organization, the Mesta Machine Company. The South Side Pittsburgh plant that had been used by Robinson-Rae Manufacturing Company continued to be used by Mesta Machine Company. And George Robinson still had a role to play; he was a member of the board of directors for Mesta.<sup>20</sup>

Robinson's work in the steel industry allowed him to provide his family with an extremely comfortable life, and the reorganization of his company gave him more free time. In the spirit of the Gilded Age, he purchased land in the Thousand Islands and built a summer home. Robinson bought the northern and western portion of Bluff Island from General Harry C. Kessler, who happened to be his brother-in-law. General Kessler was born in Philadelphia in 1844 and enlisted in the Union Army during the Civil War.<sup>21</sup> He had married Josephine Alden Dilworth on November 8, 1876 – Josephine was a younger sister of George T Robinson's wife, Althea.<sup>22</sup>

This transaction was recorded at the Jefferson County Clerk's office August 30, 1900, only ten days after the recorded date for the Kesslers' purchase of the entire island from Fannie and Eugene Washburn.<sup>23</sup> The local paper noted the sale, describing Bluff Island as "...one of the most desirable unimproved islands in this section of the river."<sup>24</sup> By the next summer, the Kessler and Robinson families had begun to build their summer homes. In May of 1901, the *Watertown Re-Union*, briefly reported that construction of the buildings on Bluff Island was "progressing rapidly."<sup>25</sup> That summer, the Robinson family vacationed on nearby Grenell Island.<sup>26</sup>

Documents regarding the construction process of the George T. Robinson House are lacking and consist solely of blueprints created by Thorsten E Billquist for the house and boat house. Specific materials are not mentioned in the blueprints but most likely were locally sourced. During the turn of the century, red granite quarries were located on both Grindstone and Picton Islands, and Clayton and the surrounding area held a number of lumber

17 United States Census Bureau, "United States Census, 1880, George T. Robinson, Pittsburgh, Allegheny, Pennsylvania, United States," citing enumeration district ED1 166, sheet 357D, NARA microfilm publication T9 (Washington DC.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d, roll 1095, FHL microfilm 1,255,095, 1880). [<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MG7T-YRN>]

18 United States Census Bureau, "United States Census, 1910, George T. Robinson, Pittsburgh Ward 7, Allegheny, Pennsylvania, United States," citing enumeration district ED 360, sheet 5, NARA microfilm publication T624 (Washington DC.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d, FHL microfilm 1,375,314, 1910). [<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:MG7T-YRN>]

19 "Obituaries," *The Iron Trade Review* 62 (1918). 167. [<http://books.google.com/>]

20 "The Mesta Machine Company," *The Metal Worker* 50:24 (1898). 45. [<http://books.google.com/>]

21 "Harry C Kessler," [Pennsylvania Digital Collections] (Philadelphia: Library Company of Philadelphia, 2012). [[http://lcpdams.librarycompany.org:8881/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object\\_id=79376&local\\_base=GEN01](http://lcpdams.librarycompany.org:8881/R/?func=dbin-jump-full&object_id=79376&local_base=GEN01)]

22 United States Census Bureau, "United States Census, 1850, Josephine Dilworth in household of William Dilworth, Allegheny City, Ward 1, Allegheny, Pennsylvania, United States," citing family 82, NARA microfilm publication M432 (Washington DC.: National Archives and Records Administration, n.d.). [<https://familysearch.org/ark:/61903/1:1:M44H-2LH>]

23 "Deed of Sale from Fannie L. Washburn and Eugene R. Washburn to Harry C. Keesler, August 20, 1900," (filed August 30, 1900), Jefferson County Clerk's Office: Watertown, New York, Liber 296 of Deeds, 331-332.

24 "Brevities," *The Watertown Herald*, August 18, 1900.

25 "Clayton," *The Watertown Re-Union*, May 22, 1901.

26 Thousand Islands Museum Archives, "American Islands Binder A-M," Clayton, New York.

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companies.<sup>27</sup> Pittsburgh architect Thorsten E. Billquist may not have known where to source these materials in the Thousand Islands but, presumably, the local builders did.

The connection between the Kesslers and the Robinsons demonstrates the familial nature of much late 19<sup>th</sup> century industrial capitalism; the two families' ability to purchase a 61-acre island and build separate architect-designed summer homes shows the nature of wealth among America's elite during the Gilded Age. The summer people of the Gilded Age looked for places where they could escape from the health and social problems of rapidly industrializing cities by vacationing somewhere fresh and full of natural beauty. The region of the Thousand Islands and St. Lawrence River was the ideal Gilded Age locale.

At some time in late 1901, Althea Rebecca Robinson died in Pittsburgh, so the house became the residence of the elder Robinson and his daughter, Anne Holdship Robinson. It was officially finished by 1904, based on news reports that George's son William, his wife, and their young son were visiting Bluff Island.<sup>28</sup> Thereafter, two generations of the Robinson family vacationed each summer at their Shingle Style cottage until the death of Anne Robinson in 1948.

Snippets in local newspapers of the Thousand Islands (and Pittsburgh) give insight into how this family – and other upper-class families – lived during these summers. In 1909, George and Anne Robinson prepared for two weddings at the cottage. The Hoffman-Kessler wedding was the first. The activities of the members of the Robinson and Hoffman families were well documented in the local newspapers, such as when they dined at the Frontenac Hotel the week prior to the wedding.<sup>29</sup> The bride was Althea Dilworth Hoffman, the daughter of Mary Mason Hoffman and granddaughter of George T. Robinson; the groom was her cousin, Harry C. Kessler Jr., the only son of Harry C. and Josephine Alden Kessler. This wedding took place August 09, 1909. The second Robinson wedding of that year occurred on October 14, when Mary Mason Hoffman married her second husband, Frank J. Lynch, on Bluff Island.<sup>30</sup>

Interesting tidbits of the family's summer activities are found in the most unusual places. The *Annual Report for the Carnegie Museum* lists Anne H. Robinson as a donor for the year of April 1, 1911 to April 30, 1912. Anne gave the museum land and fresh water shells from Bluff Island and the St. Lawrence River, collected in July of 1911. She also donated, "insects, particularly Odonata and their nymphs, from Bluff Island."<sup>31</sup> These snippets of information concerning the Robinson family's summer vacation reveal how many educated summer people enjoyed the Thousand Islands at the turn of the century. Bluff Island was a place to relax, socialize, and enjoy the natural splendor of the St. Lawrence River and, as *The House Beautiful* put it, to escape the "city turmoil."<sup>32</sup>

George T. Robinson died December 24, 1917, at his home in Pittsburgh. In his will, George left his home in Pittsburgh at 4926 Wallingford Street and all of its possessions to his daughter, Anne Holdship Robinson. Anne along with his other children also received money and shares of stock in the *Mesta Machine Company*.<sup>33</sup> Anne continued to reside in Clayton during the summers and was involved in the local summer community through

27 "Clayton News," *The Watertown Re-Union*, March 31, 1906. "Clayton News," *The Watertown Re-Union*, July 21, 1900. Smith, *First Summer Peoples*, 79, 81.

28 "In the Social World," *The Index* 11: 7 (1904), 11. [<http://books.google.com/>]

29 "Thousand Island Park, N.Y.," *The Index* 21:5 (1909), 9. [<http://books.google.com/>]

30 Harrison D. Mason, *Archibald Dale Mason: His Life, Ancestry, and Descendants* (Pittsburgh, PA: Privately Published, 1921). [[https://archive.org/stream/archibalddalemas00maso/archibalddalemas00maso\\_djvu.txt](https://archive.org/stream/archibalddalemas00maso/archibalddalemas00maso_djvu.txt)]

31 Carnegie Museum, "Permanent Accessions to the Carnegie Museum," *Annual Report of the Director of the Carnegie Museum* 15 (1912), 56. [<http://books.google.com/>]

32 "Fine Country Estates," 334.

33 Thousand Islands Museum Archives, "Family Binder: Robinson," Clayton, New York.

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local garden clubs and the Episcopal Church until her death in 1948.

An averted tragedy in June 1930 reveals that she did not spend her summers on the island alone. A page 1 story in the local Clayton paper tells that her 38-foot powerboat exploded, burned, and sank as she returned to Bluff Island after shopping. "In the craft at the time were Miss Robinson, her two maids, Nellie Scanlan and Bridie Lucy of Pittsburg, and Charles E. Steele of this village, who is caretaker of the Robinson property." All escaped by putting on life jackets and taking to the water; the caretaker suffered burned hands and "Miss Robinson was slightly burned about the ankles."<sup>34</sup>

The local papers also make it clear that Anne was actively involved in gardening, hosting garden meetings at Bluff Island.<sup>35</sup> In 1935, the *Cape Vincent Eagle* noted that four ladies of the "Anne Robinson Garden Club," attended an improvement league meeting in Clayton (though Anne was not present).<sup>36</sup> Another garden club was formed in June, 1938, more closely associated with Clayton's Improvement League. Its first meeting was held on July 5th, at the home of Mrs. Joseph Davis; the second meeting was held in Clayton, at the summer home of "Miss Ann [sic] Robinson, Bluff Island," and included members of both the Clayton and Cape Vincent garden clubs.<sup>37</sup> Anne's own garden club made the news again in 1941, when the "Anne Robinson Garden Club," held its meeting and picnic at her home on Bluff Island.<sup>38</sup> Summer cottages of the Gilded Age typically had formal landscaping such as terraces or flower beds.<sup>39</sup> Although there is no photographic evidence of Anne's gardens, the granite walls located on the slope north of the house are most likely the surface remains of her gardens, as there is no other nearby location where flowering plants could have been protected from the prevailing winds.

Anne Holdship Robinson's other interest seems to have been the local Episcopal Church in Clayton. She continued to summer at Bluff Island until her death in April 1948, when she passed away in Pittsburgh.<sup>40</sup> In Anne's will, the George T. Robinson House was left to her brother, William, in December of 1948. William and his immediate family had no need for the property and donated it to Clayton's Christ Episcopal Church, where Anne had been a member during her life. In 1951, Christ Episcopal Church sold the property because they too had no use for it.

### *1951 to Present*

The records for the history of the George T. Robinson House after Anne's death are scarce. The majority of the history comes from the Thousand Island Museum's archives and Jefferson County Clerk deed records. Harry and Ruby Butcher of Clayton purchased the property in 1951.<sup>41</sup> Previously, they had run a popular snack shop, "Harry's Snack Shop," in Clayton, and the couple turned the George T. Robinson House into a fishing resort. For three summers from 1951 to 1954, the Butchers ran the "Bluff Island Lodge."<sup>42</sup>

In 1954, the Butchers began to look into selling the property. The Thousand Island Museum's archives have a

34 "Boat Catches Afire: Occupants Escape by Taking to Water," *On the St. Lawrence and Clayton Independent*, July 3, 1930, 1

35 "Last Will and Testament of George T. Robinson, May 15, 1909." (Sealed February 20, 1917, filed October 20, 1920), Jefferson County Clerk's Office: Watertown, New York, Liber 2361 of Deeds, 571-572.

36 "Improvement League Holds Meeting," *Cape Vincent Eagle*, May 9, 1935.

37 "Garden Club is Formed in Village," *Cape Vincent Eagle*, June 23, 1938.

38 "Garden Club to Meet," *Clayton News*, August 12, 1941.

39 Hornsby, 459.

40 Thousand Islands Museum Archives, "Family Binder."

41 "Deed of Sale from Christ Church of the Town of Clayton to Harry W. and Ruby K. Butcher October 9, 1951," (filed October 9, 1951), Jefferson County Clerk's Office: Watertown, New York, Liber 559 of Deeds, 180-181.

42 Thousand Islands Museum Archives, "American Islands Binder."

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number of news clippings related to the sale and eventual purchase of the lodge. The sale ad listed the building as having 7 bedrooms, 5 bathrooms, a 38' living room, an 11' stone fireplace, quarters on the third floor for help, a dining room large enough to accommodate 24 people, a pantry, and a large kitchen. At that time the property also had its boat house and came with seven boats. By October of 1954, the Butchers had either sold or begun to lease the Bluff Island Lodge to Mr. and Mrs. Jack Cutler, of Pittsburgh, who continued to use the property as a lodge.<sup>43</sup> However, the chronology is not entirely clear; deeds recorded at the Jefferson County Clerk's Office show something a little different. In 1956, Ruby Butcher sold the property to Willard Cutler, and the Cutler family sold it to Timothy Hubbard in 1963, after the death of Willard Cutler.<sup>44</sup>

The Hubbard family continued to own the home and lived there during the summers for more than fifty years. Timothy Hubbard was a professor at Syracuse University and in 1986 wrote the Dolphin Book Club best seller, *The Race*. His daughter, Stephanie Hubbard, is also a writer and wrote *Bluff Island Rescue Service*, a memoir of growing up on Bluff Island, which was published in 2010.<sup>45</sup> The Hubbard family again used the property as a single-family residence up until 2016, when the home was sold to its current owners, David and Robin Lucas.

### Criterion C: Architectural Significance

#### *Shingle Style*

In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, a new style of architecture began to develop in seaside resort towns of the Northeastern United States – places like Newport, RI; Long Island, NY; Martha's Vineyard, MA; Bar Harbor, ME; and the Thousand Islands. The Shingle Style evolved and borrowed elements from other 19<sup>th</sup> century architectural styles such as Queen Anne, Colonial Revival, and Richardsonian Romanesque, but it was distinguished from these by its picturesque exterior of natural cedar shingles and, at times, masonry. Shingle Style houses were typically built as summer cottages for America's elite who had the means to build homes that would only be occupied for a few months of the year. Architects who received commissions to design these homes included McKim, Mead, and White; H. H. Richardson; Peabody and Stearns; and William Ralph Emerson.<sup>46</sup> The style quickly spread through the Northeast because these large eastern architectural firms trained many young architects who subsequently set up their own offices.<sup>47</sup>

These young architects combined their training with the design goals of their clientele to create homes that varied greatly; elements from other popular architectural styles of the time – porches, asymmetrical massing, gambrel roofs, columns, Romanesque arches, irregular shapes, and towers – can all be seen in Shingle Style homes. However, the key element that held these architectural parts together was the extensive use of natural wooden shingles for exterior cladding; these shingles created the look of a smooth, uninterrupted surface on all sorts of massive, irregular homes.<sup>48</sup> The interiors of Shingle Style homes were also distinctive and almost “modern,” with open floor plans allowing rooms to flow into one another.<sup>49</sup> Their layouts centered around a few large rooms – generally the living room and/or dining room, where family activities occurred. The reason for

43 Ibid.

44 “Deed of Sale from Willard Cutler to Timothy William Hubbard August 16, 1963” (filed September 16, 1963, Jefferson County Clerk's Office: Watertown, New York, Liber 741 of Deeds, 380.

45 John Golden, “Island Author Navigates From Ocean to Banks,” *Watertown Daily Times*, July 9, 1995. Stephanie Hubbard, “Great Reviews Are Coming In! Get Your Own Copy! Tell Your Friends!” [<http://www.bluffislandrescueservice.com/>]

46 Mark Gelerner, *A History of American Architecture: Buildings in Their Cultural and Technological Context* (Hanover, NH: University Press of New England, 2001), 181.

47 Leland Roth, “The Shingle Idiom,” *Old House Interiors* (September 2001), 62. [<http://books.google.com/>]

48 Gelerner, 181.

49 Bill O'Donnell, “Kraggsyde II,” *Old House Journal* (May/June 1987), 23. [<http://books.google.com/>]



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this informality (compared to other contemporary designs) was the use of Shingle Style homes as vacation residences.<sup>50</sup> Periodicals of the time, such as *House Beautiful*, contain advertisements that illustrate the popularity of Shingle Style estates in seaside resort areas. A single page from 1908 contains advertisements for “Cabot’s Shingle Stain,” “Colonial Houses for Modern Times,” and “Picturesque Summer Cottages.” The drawings in all these advertisements depict Shingle Style homes.<sup>51</sup>

### *Architecture of the George T. Robinson House*

Between the townships of Clayton and Alexandria Bay, which make up a majority of the Thousand Island Region, there are three other Shingle Style properties listed on the State and National Registers. These properties include: the Boldt Yacht House on Wellesley Island, built in 1903 for George C. Boldt’s estate (NR 90NR01159, listed 1978); the Densmore Church, constructed in 1900, also located on Wellesley Island (NR 90NR01116, listed 1988); and Ingleside, a private estate on Cherry Island that combines Queen Anne and Shingle Style architectural features, constructed sometime between 1899 and 1906 (NR 90NR01115, listed 1980.) The Thousand Islands had been a summer resort area since the 1870s, but Shingle Style homes became a common sight there around the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century.<sup>52</sup>

George Robinson employed Pittsburgh architect Thorsten E. Billquist to design his summer home on Bluff Island. Thorsten E. Billquist was born in Sweden and educated at the University of Gothenburgh. He immigrated to the United States in 1892, first living in New York and working with the firm of McKim, Mead, and White, where he was involved to some extent with the design of the Boston Public Library. Shortly after that, Billquist moved to Pittsburgh, where he worked for a brief time for the firm of Longfellow, Alden, and Harlow and then with architect William Ross Proctor. By 1896, Billquist had launched his own practice by winning the contest to design the Allegheny Observatory (NR 79002157, listed 1979) in Pittsburgh. By 1905, Billquist had partnered with Edward B. Lee to create the firm Billquist and Lee, which was active from 1905-1909. He was elected to the American Institute of Architects in 1905 and died in 1923.<sup>53</sup>

The reason for the choice of the Shingle Style for the George T. Robinson House is unknown. However, the house is located in a summer vacation area where Shingle Style homes were a common sight. There is also the previous work experience that Billquist had during his years at the firms of McKim, Mead and White and Longfellow, Alden, and Harlow. Both firms had key partners who had worked for Henry Hobson Richardson, the architect who designed many high-style homes and popularized the key features of every architectural style of the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Working with these firms most likely inspired Billquist in his own designs during his career.<sup>54</sup>

Billquist designed a summer home for the Robinson family that incorporates many of the key architectural features of the Shingle Style. The frame house is clad in cedar shingles and has a raised basement constructed of rough-cut red granite blocks. The facade, which faces south towards mainland New York, is dominated by an open porch that is covered at the ends by the floor of the second story; the porch columns are also constructed of rough-cut red granite blocks. The interior of the house is finished exclusively in wood. The first floor of the

50 Jonathan Lane, "The Period House in the Nineteen-Twenties." *Journal of the Society of Architectural Historians* 20:4 (1961), 169-78.

51 [Ads], *House Beautiful* 18 (1908), 40. [<http://books.google.com/>]

52 Smith, *First Summer Peoples*, 82.

53 “Obituary: Thorsten E. Billquist,” *Journal of the American Institute of Architects* 11:5 (1923), 226. [<http://public.aia.org/sites/hdoaa/wiki/AIA%20scans/Obits/obits1923journalMay.pdf>]

54 Virginia Savage McAlester, *A Field Guide to American Houses* [Second Edition] (NY: Alfred A. Knopf, 2014), 181.

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home has a large, open layout, with a large living room and wide hall running the length of the kitchen wing. All the main entrances enter into this living room; its other key features are a large window alcove with built-in bench and an 11-foot granite fireplace. The fireplace is double sided; it is built within the wall that separates the living room from the dining room so that each room could have a separate fire going simultaneously. Both rooms were the primary sites for family and social activities by the Robinson family and subsequent owners. A kitchen and storage room is set off at the end of the wing beyond the dining room.

The upstairs of the home historically had seven bedrooms, four bathrooms, and numerous closets. Little has changed, the exception being the removal of a bathroom and closet, most likely during the ownership of the Hubbard Family. The upstairs also a main hallway allowing easy movement throughout the different rooms; some rooms are connected to each other and even share bathrooms. The rear stair case gives access to attic space that housed help during the summer months.

### Conclusion

The George T. Robinson House is locally significant under both **Criterion A: Social History** and **Criterion C: Architecture**. The house relates to the summer resort era of the Thousand Islands at the turn of the 20<sup>th</sup> century and was designed by Thorsten E. Billquist in 1901 as the Shingle Style summer home for the Robinson family from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. George T. Robinson worked in the steel and manufacturing industries, and bequeathed the house to his daughter, Anne Holdship Robinson. By her death, the nature of tourism in the Thousand Islands had changed, and the property passed to Harry and Ruby Butcher in the 1950s. They ran the house as the “Bluff Island Lodge,” where tourists could stay while visiting the surrounding area.

The George T. Robinson House is also a great local example of the Shingle Style, an architectural style commonly used in summer resort areas in the Northeastern United States. Architect Thorsten E. Billquist had ties and work experience in the architectural firms of McKim, Mead and White, and Longfellow, Alden, and Harlow, both of which designed buildings that were key to defining the style. Both firms also had key partners who had worked with H. H. Richardson, the architect who has been credited with designing the William Watts Sherman House, the prototype of the Shingle Style in the United States.

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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: Thousand Island Museum

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): \_\_\_\_\_

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### 10. Geographical Data

**Acreage of Property** 26.03 acres

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

#### UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18N 414647 4902749  
Zone Easting Northing

5 18N 414459 4902319  
Zone Easting Northing

2 18N 414770 4902387  
Zone Easting Northing

6 18N 414299 4902630  
Zone Easting Northing

3 18N 414641 4902349  
Zone Easting Northing

7 18N 414406 4902690  
Zone Easting Northing

4 18N 414597 4902317  
Zone Easting Northing

#### Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary is defined by a heavy line on the attached map.

#### Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses the lot historically and currently associated with the nominated building.



George T. Robinson House  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, NY  
County and State

George T. Robinson House  
Clayton, Jefferson Co., NY

15082 Bluff Island  
Clayton, NY 13624



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



 Robinson House

 NEW YORK STATE Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

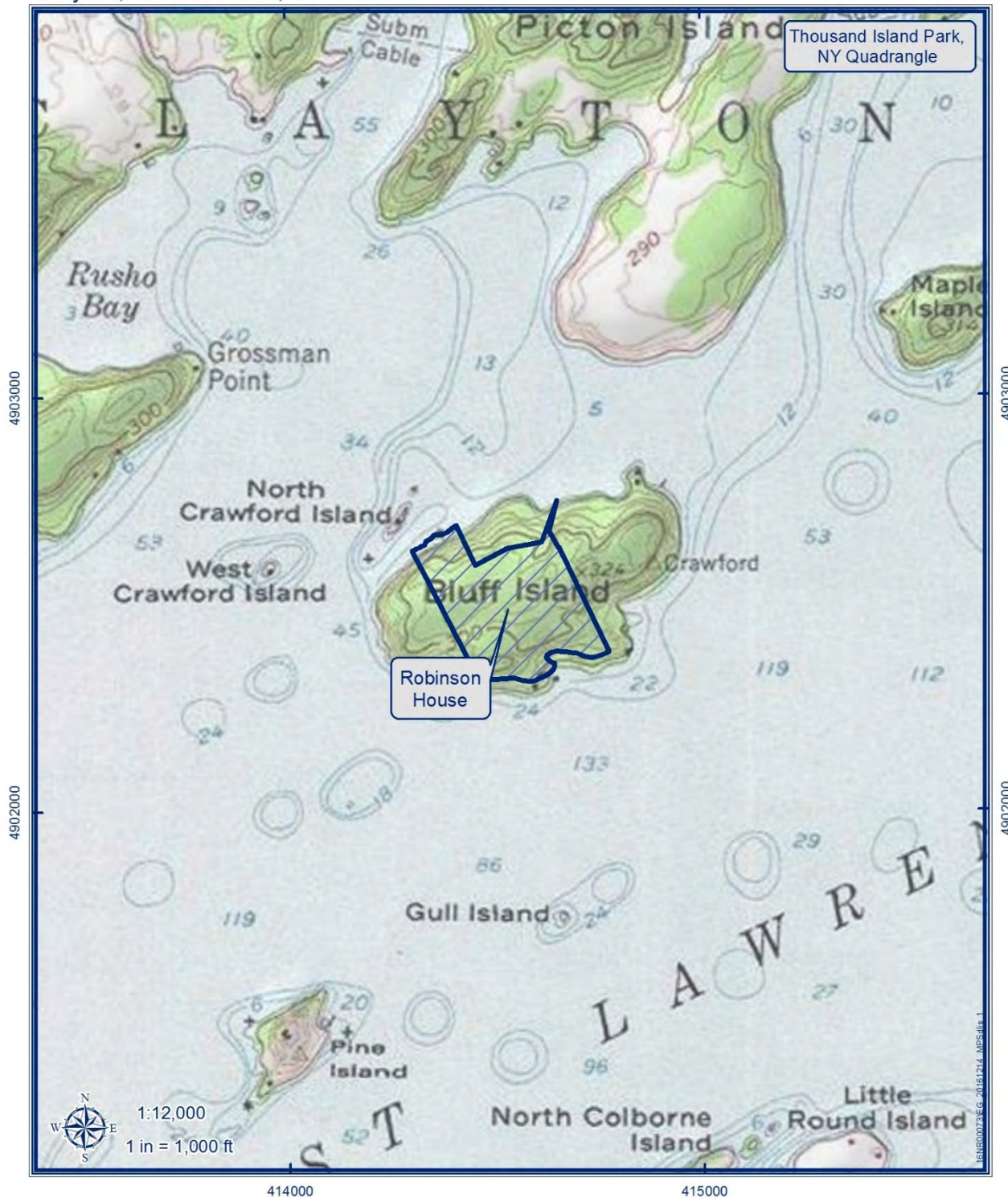


George T. Robinson House  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, NY  
County and State

George T. Robinson House  
Clayton, Jefferson Co., NY

15082 Bluff Island  
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George T. Robinson House  
 Name of Property

Jefferson County, NY  
 County and State

George T. Robinson House  
 Clayton, Jefferson Co., NY

15082 Bluff Island  
 Clayton, NY 13624



 Robinson House

 NEW YORK STATE Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

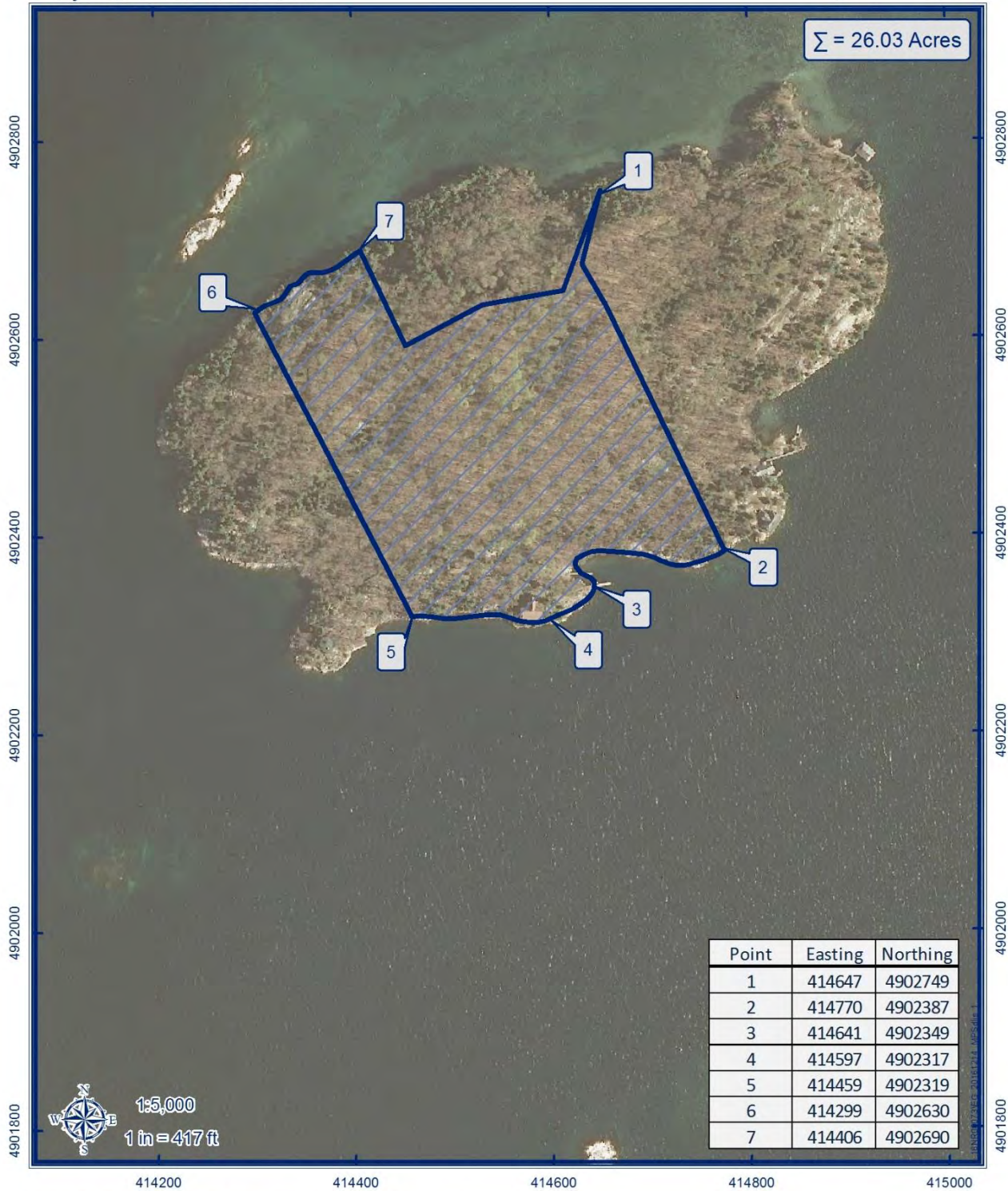


George T. Robinson House  
 Name of Property

Jefferson County, NY  
 County and State

George T. Robinson House  
 Clayton, Jefferson Co., NY

15082 Bluff Island  
 Clayton, NY 13624



Robinson House

NEW YORK STATE OF ENVIRONMENT Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation

George T. Robinson House  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, NY  
County and State

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**11. Form Prepared By**

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name/title Courtney Doyle

organization Historic Preservation Consultant

date November 1, 2016

street & number 4 Market Street, Apt 212

telephone 315-212-8098

city or town Potsdam

state NY

zip code 13676

e-mail doylecl192@gmail.com

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George T. Robinson House  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, NY  
County and State

**Additional Documentation**

**Maps:**



Google Map Detail (Data 2016)



George T. Robinson House  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, NY  
County and State



Tax Parcel (12.00-1-50.3 Map of Bluff Island).



Tax Parcel (12.00-1-50.3 Map with Aerial View of Bluff Island).

George T. Robinson House  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, NY  
County and State

**Additional Figures:**

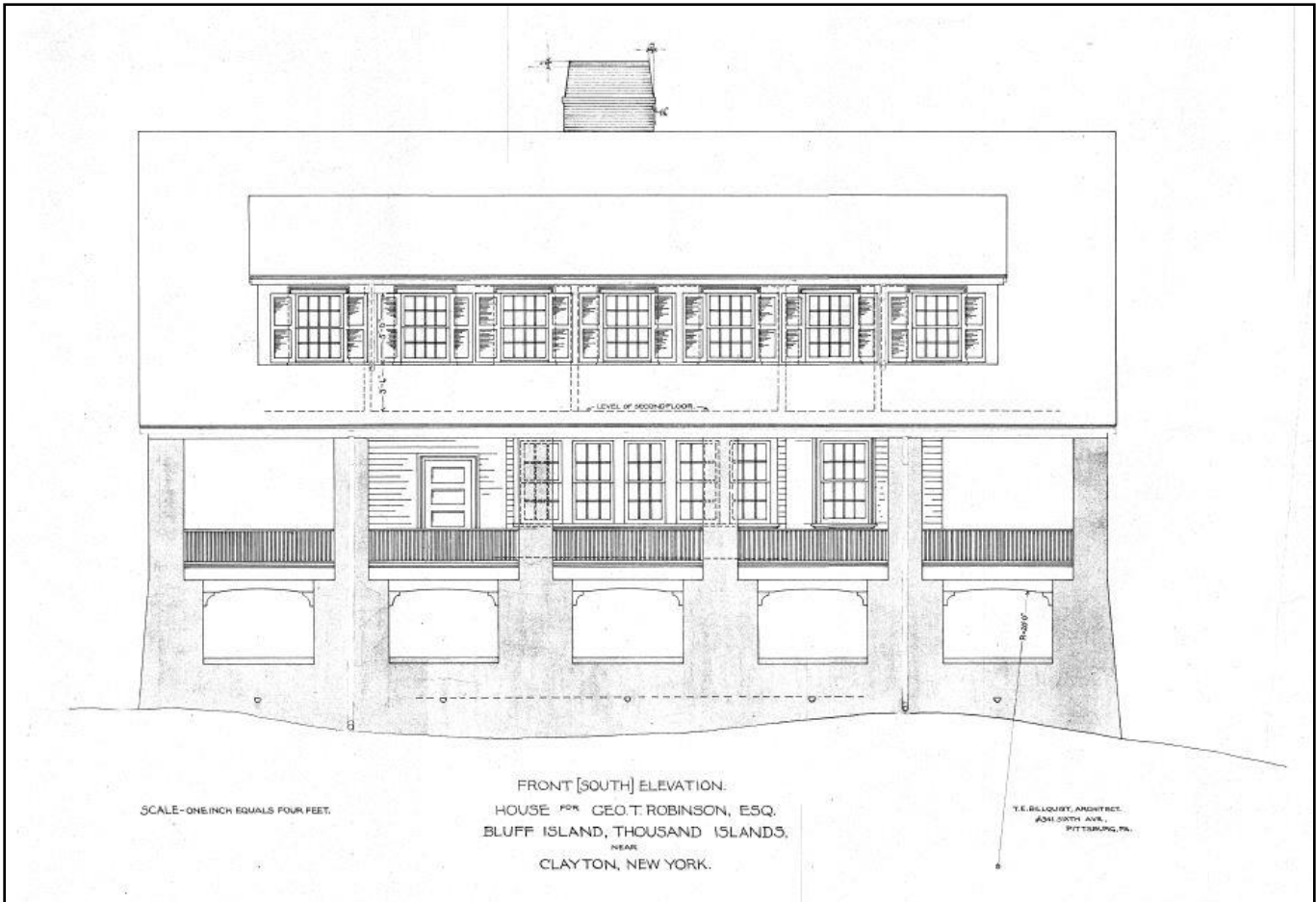


Figure 6. Principal Elevation as depicted in blueprint, Thorsten E. Billquist, 1901.

George T. Robinson House  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, NY  
County and State

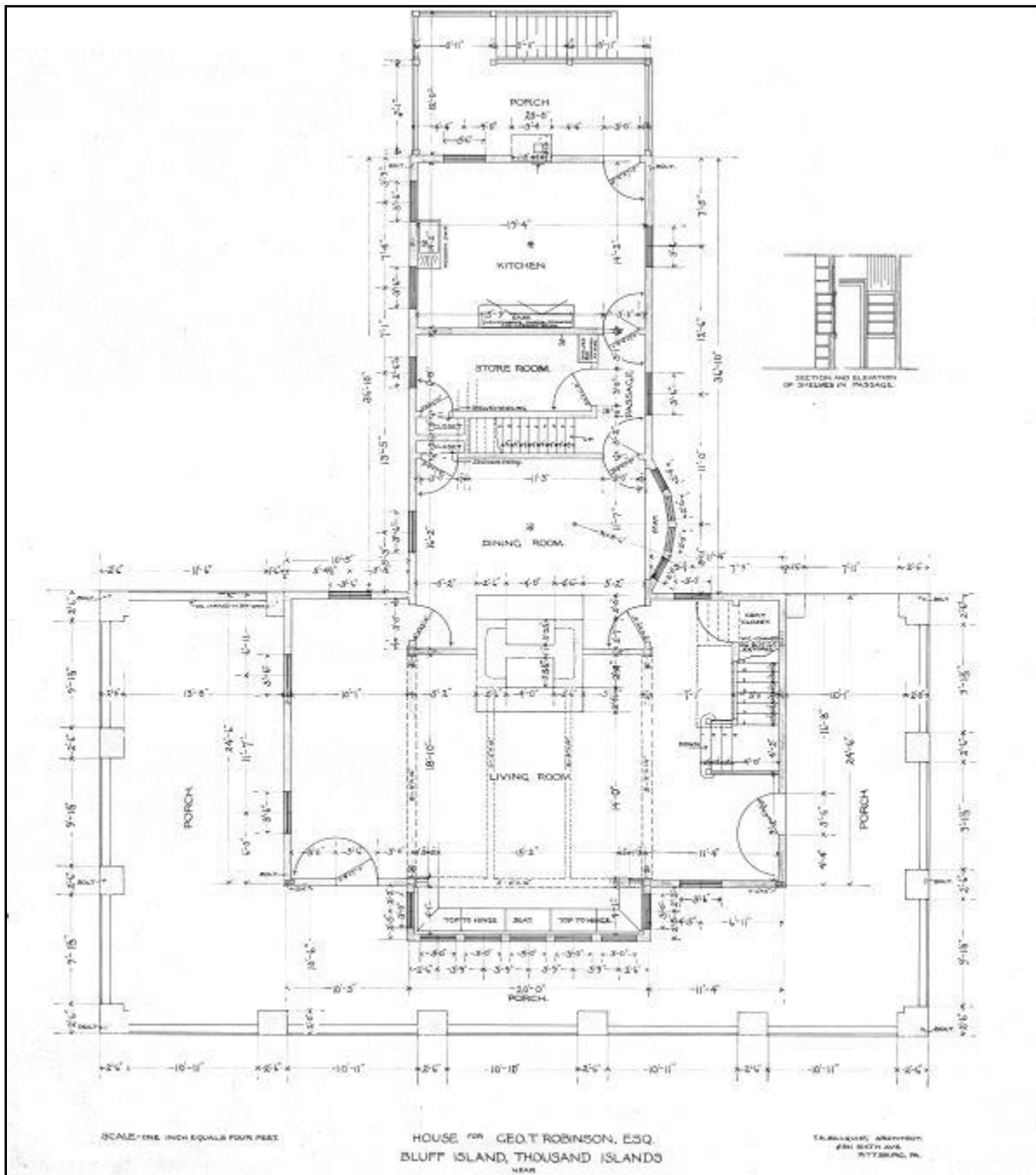


Figure 7. 1<sup>st</sup> Floor Plan as depicted in blueprint, Thorsten E. Billquist, 1901.

George T. Robinson House  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, NY  
County and State

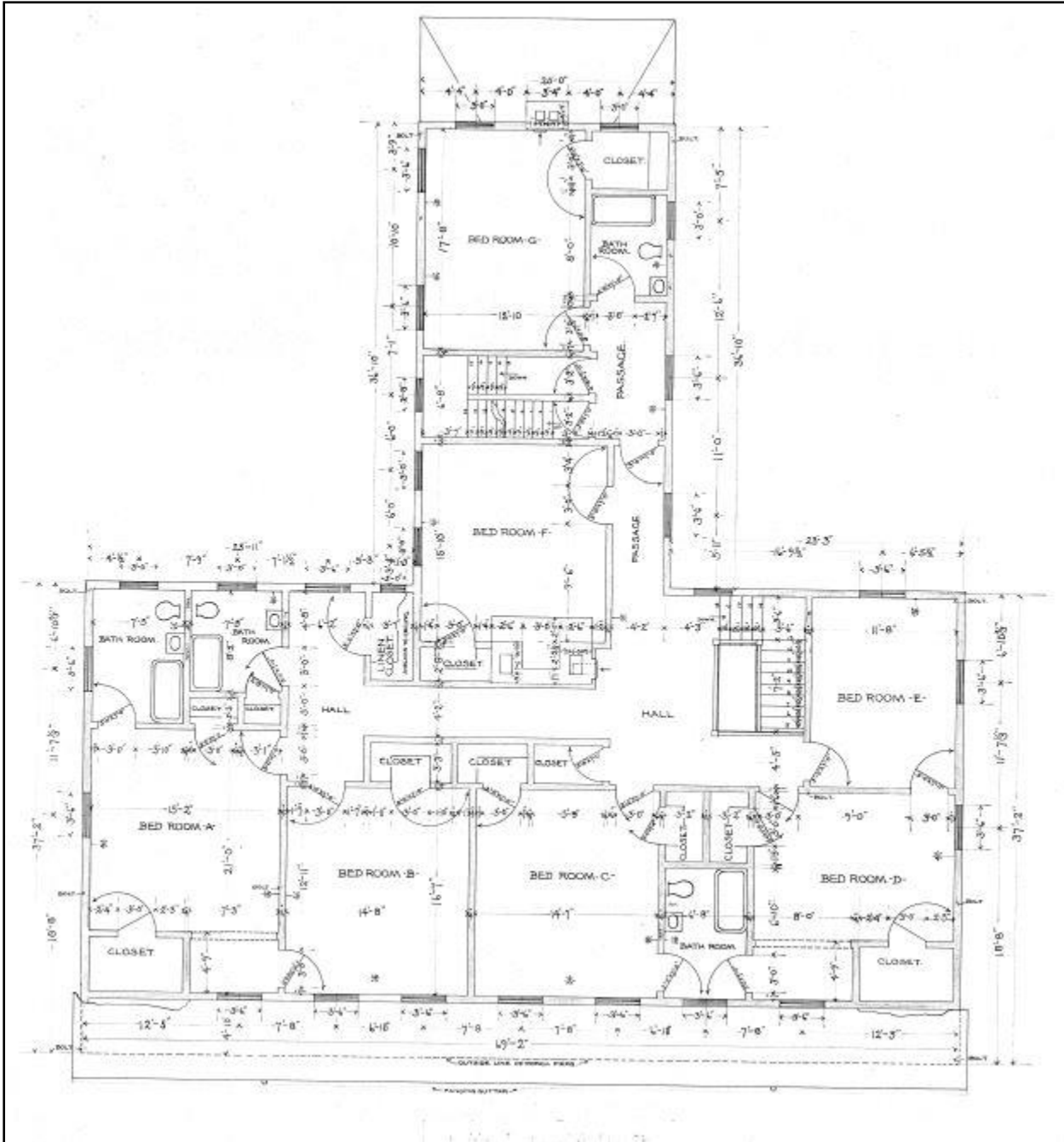


Figure 8. 2<sup>nd</sup> Floor Plan as depicted in blueprint, Thorsten E. Billquist, 1901.



George T. Robinson House  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, NY  
County and State



Figure 9. Principal and Rear Elevations, Boat House, as depicted in blueprint, Thorsten E. Billquist, 1901.

George T. Robinson House  
Name of Property

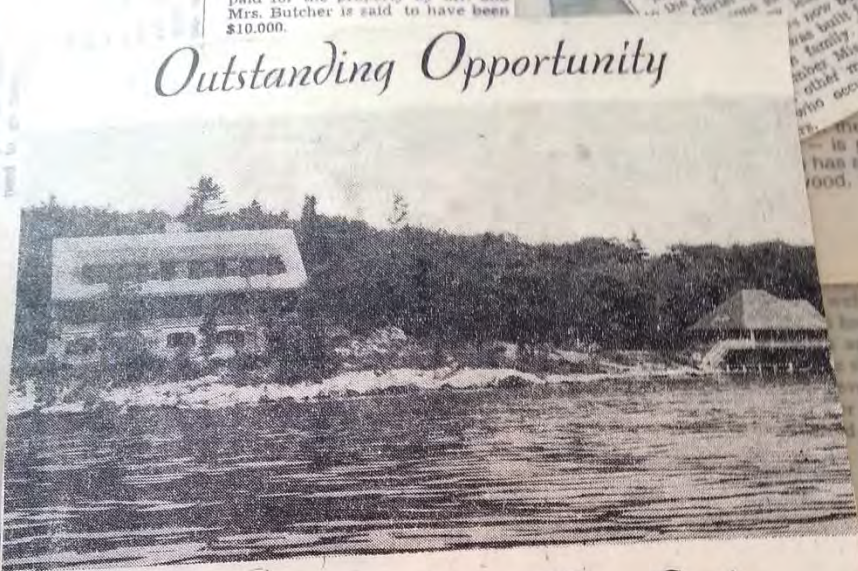
Jefferson County, NY  
County and State



Figure 10. Historic photo of property, from the St. Lawrence River. (Courtesy of Robin and David Lucas).

George T. Robinson House  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, NY  
County and State



*Outstanding Opportunity*

*Island Paradise---For Sale*

100 acre island in the 1000 Island region of the St. Lawrence river, two miles from Clayton. 60 acres owned by lodge, remaining 40 acres owned by private party. Heavily wooded with oak, pine, spruce, birch and maple.

All island equipment is in perfect condition and completely equipped for either commercial or private purposes.

The buildings consist of main lodge with 7 bedrooms, 5 baths, 38' living room with 11' stone fireplace, and quarters on the third floor for help. Dining room accommodates 24 persons, and connects with pantry and large kitchen equipped with two refrigerators, electric dishwasher, hotel-type range, and washing machine, all practically new. The boat house upstairs has four large bedrooms all with running water and a central bath. All rooms in the lodge and boathouse are completely furnished.

Boats include 35' half-cabin cruiser; 22' Gar Wood speed boat, 2 - 16' Shell Lake outboards, 2 St. Lawrence fishing skiffs, and 2 outboard motors.

Powerhouse for water pumping and light plants, gas heaters throughout. Radio telephone communication between mainland and the Island. Buildings newly painted this year.

**Address all communications to:**  
**BLUFF ISLAND LODGE**  
Harry and Ruby Butcher  
1000 Islands  
New York

Clayton

Figure 11. Historic advertisement for property. (Thousand Island History Museum Archives).



George T. Robinson House  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, NY  
County and State



Figure 12. Poster for "Bluff Island Lodge." (Courtesy of Robin and David Lucas).



George T. Robinson House  
Name of Property

Jefferson County, NY  
County and State

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**Photographs:**

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Name of Property: George T. Robinson House

City or Vicinity: Clayton

County: Jefferson State: New York

Photographers: Courtney Doyle (CD, July and August 2016) and David Lucas (DL, November 2016)

Date Photographed: As above

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

- 0001. Exterior, CD – Perspective view looking northwest at George T. Robinson House from St. Lawrence River
- 0002. Exterior, DL – Perspective view looking west at East Facade
- 0003. Exterior, DL – Perspective view looking south at the North Façade, from slope and surface remains
- 0004. Exterior, CD – Perspective view looking southeast at the West Facade
- 0005. Exterior, DL – View of raised foundation below porch, looking east
- 0006. Exterior, CD – View of support pillars and flooring supports below house
- 0007. Exterior, CD – View of porch looking east
- 0008. Exterior, CD – Surface remains of a series of granite walls on a slope, directly north (behind) of the Estate
- 0009. Exterior, CD – Path to the pump house, west of the Estate, stone steps
- 0010. Exterior, CD – Perspective view looking west at the Pump house, west of the Estate
- 0011. Interior, CD – View of the basement under the north end of the house
- 0012. Interior, CD – Living room and fireplace
- 0013. Interior, CD – View of living room in opposite direction, built in bench
- 0014. Interior, CD – Dining room and fireplace
- 0015. Interior, CD – First floor hallway towards north end of house
- 0016. Interior, CD – Back staircase before kitchen
- 0017. Interior, CD – Kitchen and north façade exit
- 0018. Interior, CD – Main staircase in living room
- 0019. Interior, CD – Second floor hallway towards north end of house
- 0020. Interior, DL – Second floor hallway towards east side of house (runs east-west)
- 0021. Interior, CD – Bedroom “D” and entry to Bedroom “E” East Side of House
- 0022. Interior, CD – Connectors between Bedroom “D”, bathroom, and Bedroom “C” looking west
- 0023. Interior, CD – Bedroom “C” looking north towards hallway and main stairs
- 0024. Interior, CD – Bedroom “B” looking northwest towards hallway and doorway to Bedroom “A”
- 0025. Interior, CD – Bedroom “A” looking south west
- 0026. Interior, CD – Bathroom attached to Bedroom “A”
- 0027. Interior, CD – Bedroom “F” and its fireplace
- 0028. Interior, CD – Bedroom “G” looking north
- 0029. Interior, CD – View of attic looking south
- 0030. Interior, CD – View of attic looking north at bedroom constructed of sheetrock

George T. Robinson House  
Name of Property  
Photo Keys

Jefferson County, NY  
County and State

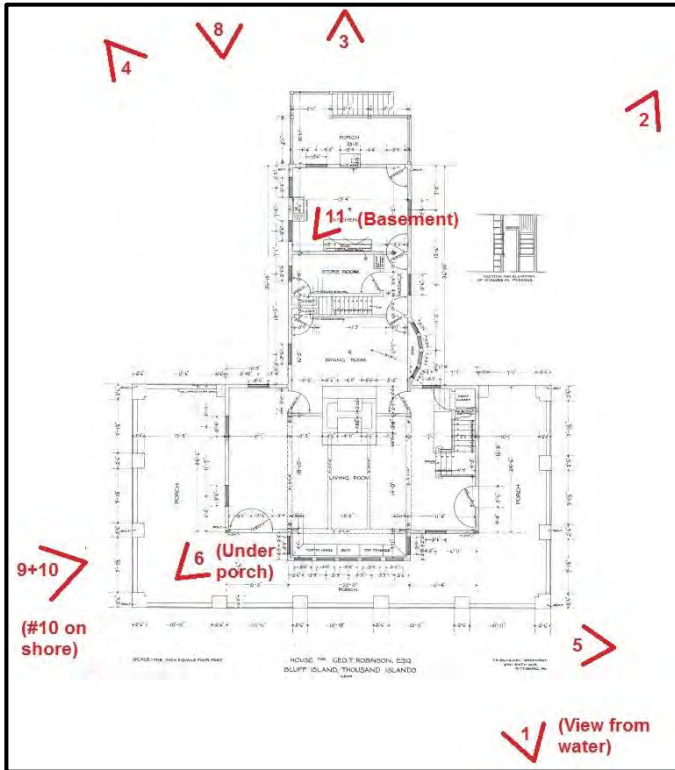


Photo Key: Exterior and Basement

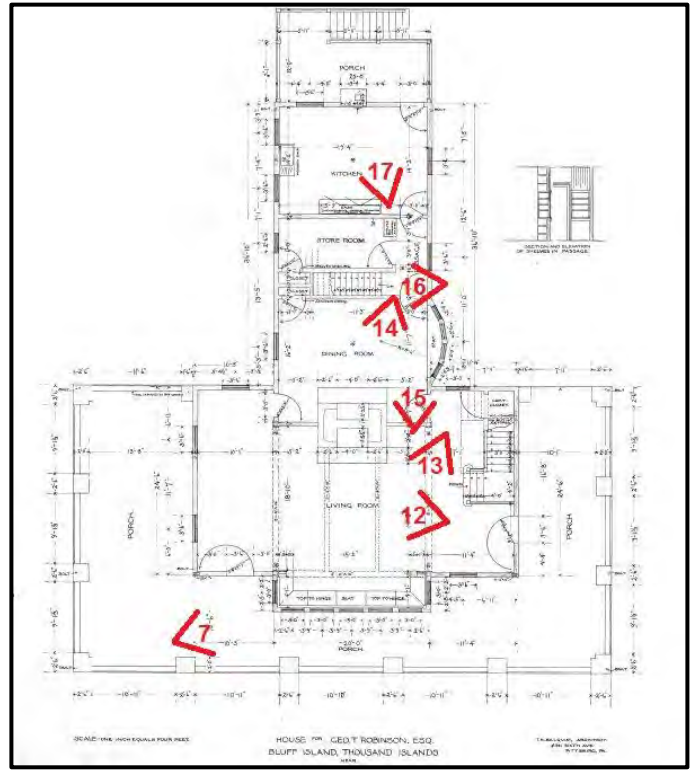


Photo Key: First Floor

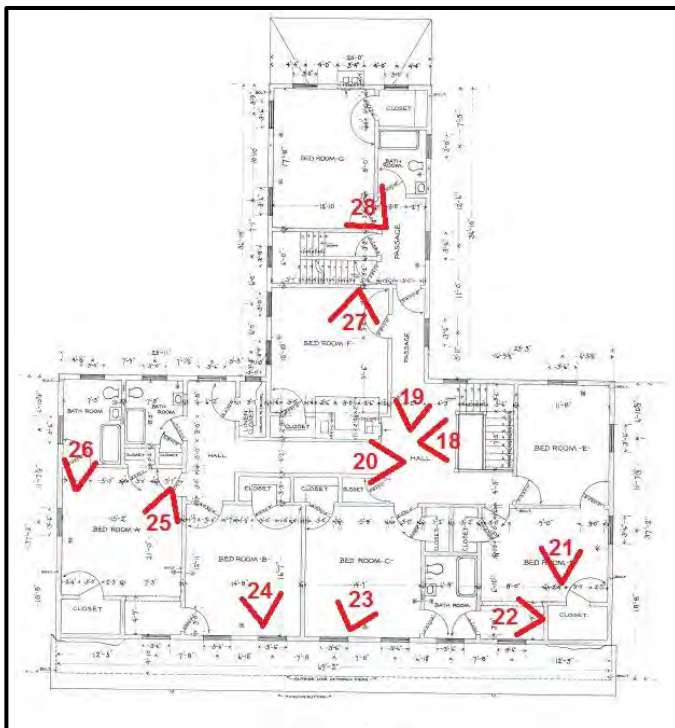


Photo Key: Second Floor

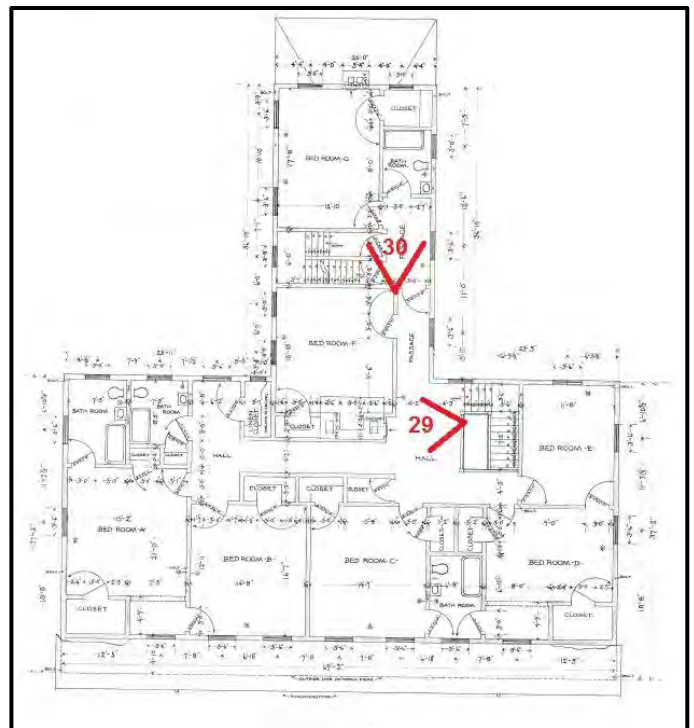


Photo Key: Attic

George T. Robinson House

Jefferson County, NY

Name of Property

County and State

**Property Owner:**

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

name \_\_\_\_\_

street & number \_\_\_\_\_

telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_

state NY

zip code \_\_\_\_\_

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

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













































THE LODGE  
BLUFF ISLAND, N.Y.







OLNEY HALL LODGE

























































UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF THE INTERIOR  
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
EVALUATION/RETURN SHEET

Requested Action:

Property Name:

Multiple Name:

State & County:

Date Received:  Date of Pending List:  Date of 16th Day:  Date of 45th Day:  Date of Weekly List:

Reference number:

Nominator:

Reason For Review:

Accept  Return  Reject  Date

Abstract/Summary  
Comments:

Recommendation/  
Criteria

Reviewer Alexis Abernathy Discipline Historian

Telephone (202)354-2236 Date \_\_\_\_\_

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

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



**Parks, Recreation  
and Historic Preservation**

ANDREW M. CUOMO  
Governor

ROSE HARVEY  
Commissioner



17 February 2017

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 Nomination

Dear Ms. Abernathy:

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

George T. Robinson House, Jefferson County  
F.N. Burt Company Factory "C," Erie County  
Waterloo Downtown Historic District, Seneca County

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

Sincerely:

Kathleen LaFrank  
National Register Coordinator  
New York State Historic Preservation Office