

**United States Department of the Interior  
Heritage Conservation and Recreation Service**

**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*  
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

**1. Name**

historic Village of Athens Multiple Resource Area  
and/or common Historic Resources of the Village of Athens (Partial Inventory:  
Historic and Architectural Properties).

**2. Location**

street & number The incorporation limits of the Village of — not for publication

city, town Athens — vicinity of — congressional district 29th

state New York code 036 county Greene code 039

**3. Classification**

see continuation sheets #1 & 2

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture
<input type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational
<input type="checkbox"/> site	<b>Public Acquisition</b>	<b>Accessible</b>	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government
Multiple	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
Resources		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military
			<input type="checkbox"/> museum
			<input type="checkbox"/> park
			<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
			<input type="checkbox"/> religious
			<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
			<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
			<input type="checkbox"/> other:

**4. Owner of Property**

see continuation sheet #3 & owners lists

name

street & number

city, town — vicinity of — state

**5. Location of Legal Description**

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Greene County Couthouse

street & number Main Street

city, town Catskill state New York

**6. Representation in Existing Surveys**

title Statewide Inventory has this property been determined eligible? ☐ yes ☒ no

date July, 1979 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Historic Preservation Field Services

city, town Empire State Plaza Albany state New York

## 7. Description

<b>Condition</b>		<b>Check one</b>	<b>Check one</b>
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved      date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

### Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The village of Athens (population 3,650) is situated on the west bank of the Hudson River, opposite the city of Hudson. It has a noteworthy river front being at the head of deep water navigation on the Hudson. The main channel of the Hudson runs close to the village shore affording ample facilities for large river going vessels. The terrain is fairly level, rising gently from the Hudson.

Until 1800, the Athens area was mostly farmland with only a handful of scattered residences. By 1854, the village as it basically appears today was established. Through the nineteenth century, the village grew westward away from the river and northward along the river. Since 1900, the village has changed very little.

The character of properties within the village of Athens is quite diverse, ranging from a Dutch Colonial structure virtually sitting upon the village's main roadway (Washington Street), to quiet tree-lined streets containing a variety of nineteenth- and twentieth-century architecture. The Albertus Van Loon House, built in 1724, is a stone, Dutch Colonial structure representative of the early Dutch influence along the Hudson River. A fine collection of stately Federal residences as well as an unusual group of Federal rowhouses are found in the business district of the village. However, the most predominant style found in the area is the Greek Revival. Simple residences in this style are located along tree-lined North Warren, North Church, and North Franklin Streets. The Brick Row Historic District contains twenty-seven Greek Revival rowhouses in a totally isolated section of northern Athens.

Various structures reflective of the middle and late nineteenth century architectural styles are also found within the village. Especially significant in this regard are a number of elegant Second Empire style residences on small lots and Italianate commercial structures.

The majority of the structures outside of the two districts are relatively new residences and house trailers on lots set back from the road.

Proposed for nomination are three single buildings, the Lower Village District, and the Brick Row District.

The Athens Lower Village Historic District consists of all the properties within the village of Athens roughly bordered by the Hudson River on the east, number 51 South Washington Street on the south, numbers eighty-nine and one hundred and twenty-two Second Street on the north, and the west side of Market Street on the west. (see map).

Located along the west bank of the Hudson River, the homes within the district retain the scale and density of a small, mid-nineteenth century village dependent upon the river. Virtually unaltered since the nineteenth century, the commercial, ecclesiastical, and residential structures within the district

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Athens Lower Village Historic District Greene County  
Continuation sheet

Item number

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1

The historic resources survey of the village of Athens took place in three stages. In the first stage, Doris Manley of the State Historic Preservation Office staff and Loretta Simon, Village Trustee conducted a windshield survey examining every property within the village limits of the incorporated village. In the process, they identified all structures of architectural interest, including all extant structures which appeared in the 1867 Greene County Atlas. In the second stage, documentation was prepared for all these properties and any other properties of historic significance and recorded on New York State's building-structure inventory forms. In the third stage, these properties were examined in the light of the National Register criteria and additional documentation was provided as necessary for properties which appeared to be eligible. Nomination of the properties was then initiated.

The structures outside the north, west and south boundary line of the Athens Lower Village Historic District are heavily altered and/or new construction. The boundary line on the south was drawn to include the Black Rock Site.

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

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represent a variety of architectural styles which were prevalent throughout the 1800's. Most notable are the exceptional Federal and Greek Revival examples of the early nineteenth century, and the elaborate Second Empire and Italianate buildings of the middle to late 1800's. See Table I for additional description.

The Brick Row Historic District consists of twenty-seven brick, Greek Revival rowhouses and one clapboard structure in an isolated section of northern Athens, off of the Athens-Coxsackie Road (Route 385). The southernmost property in the district is 1 Brick Row while the northernmost is 32 Brick Row (see map).

The row is divided into two sections, the lower portion contains seventeen residences, while the upper segment contains eleven. These Greek Revival rowhouses are for the most part in excellent condition. The only alterations have been the enclosing of many of the front porches, and the demolition of three of the residences.

The Albertus Van Loon House is located on North Washington Street in the northern section of the village of Athens. It is a rectangular shaped, one and one-half story, five-bay stone house with gambrel roof. Brick chimneys are located along the ridge at the gable ends. The foundation and walls consist of uncoursed rubble.

Significant interior features include sixteen-inch hand-hewn beams and plank ceiling in the living room and an Adams style fireplace with an adjoining corner cupboard. A cornerstone which bears the date of 1724 is located on the corner of this fireplace. The entire structure is remarkably intact, having its original room layout, windows, doors, and decorative features still in place. It is likely that the gambrel roof was added sometime during the third quarter of the eighteenth century.

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The Stranahan-DelVecchio House on North Washington Street is a majestic Greek Revival structure which overlooks the Hudson River. It is composed of a two and one-half story, three-bay central block with attached two-story symmetrical wings. A three-bay monumental portico supported by Ionic columns extends the width of the river side of the central block. Four interior brick chimneys are located along the slopes of the gable roof. The double-hung sash windows are contained below marble lintels.

The main facade features a fine Greek Revival entranceway with a single rectangular transom light and engaged Doric columns. Also of significance are the boxed cornices and the broad entablature which features eyebrow windows on the northern and western walls.

The interior of the Stranahan-DelVecchio House has remained virtually unaltered since its construction circa 1852. Only one room has been modernized. The majority of the original interior doors and doorknobs remain, as well as the surrounding woodwork and plaster ceilings. Particularly noteworthy are an elegant marble fireplace in the living room and the engaged Ionic columns which frame the opening of the main upstairs bedroom.

The Zion Lutheran Church is located on North Washington Street in the upper village of the village of Athens. Built in 1853, this fine Greek Revival brick church features a pair of wooden Doric columns in antis, and brick pilasters. Above the plain entablature and denticulated pediment stands a square tower with two stages. Each stage contains a full, but plain, Doric entablature and Doric pilasters. A simple wooden cross adorns the belfry.

Long rectangular windows characteristic of Greek Revival ecclesiastical structures are visible on the northern and southern walls. Staley Hall, which was built adjacent to the southern wall, does not join the church along the southern wall. The windows on the western facade have been bricked in.

The interior is plain and rectangular shaped with a simple altar. Four long, rectangular, stained-glass windows adorn the northern and southern walls. A magnificent tin ceiling dating from the late nineteenth century is the most outstanding feature of the interior.

## 8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
— prehistoric	— archeology-prehistoric	— community planning	— landscape architecture	— religion
— 1400-1499	— archeology-historic	— conservation	— law	— science
— 1500-1599	— agriculture	— economics	— literature	— sculpture
— 1600-1699	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> architecture	— education	— military	— social/
— 1700-1799	— art	— engineering	— music	humanitarian
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	— philosophy	— theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1900-	— communications	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> industry	— politics/government	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> transportation
		— invention		— other (specify)

Specific dates

Builder/Architect

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The village of Athens is a community along the Hudson River which has retained much of its architectural and historical integrity since its settling in 1706. It reflects over two hundred and fifty years of development and change, from farmland to a prosperous shipbuilding center and railroad terminus, to a tranquil residential and commercial community. Athens is also typical of numerous Hudson River communities which prospered in the nineteenth century due to the resources of the Hudson River, but which never greatly changed since that time.

The earliest residents of the Athens area were Indians of the Algonquin Nation, mostly Mohicans and Delawares. They fished in the river and planted corn along its banks. An area off of Washington Street along the river, known as Black Rock, is thought to have been a significant ceremonial site for these Indians, but no testing for archeological resources has been done.

Athens is mentioned in a diary kept by Robert Juet of his trip up the Hudson with Henry Hudson on the Halfmoon in 1609. He describes their running aground on the flats between Athens and Hudson, and their subsequent anchoring for several days. During the anchoring, the crew visited the west shore and marvelled at "the good ground for corne, and other garden herbs, with great stands of goodly oakes, and walnut trees, and chestnut trees, ewe trees, and trees of sweet wood in great abundance, and a great store of slate for houses."

The earliest European settler in Athens was Jan Van Loon, who secured title to the land from various owners in 1685. In 1706, Van Loon was living on his land known as Loonenburgh. The Jan Van Loon House (39 South Washington Street) still stands, although only one wall remains from the original structure. The Albertus Van Loon House (85 North Washington Street) an exceptional, stone, Dutch Colonial built in 1724, also remains from the Van Loon era.

In 1794, a company of New York City speculators led by Edward Livingston, purchased a tract of land forming what is now the upper village area. These men began to lay out a dream city called "Esperanza," which they hoped would become the capitol of New York State and the terminus of the Erie Canal. But, these plans never materialized, due to the loss of much of their financial support. The land was partitioned in 1799. A small community grew in the upper village area in the initial years of the 1800's, but it never rivaled the lower village in size or importance.

At the turn of the nineteenth century, the village of Athens began to form,

<sup>1</sup>J.B. Beers, History of Greene County, New York (J.B. Beers and Co., N.Y., 1884), p.23.

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This was largely due to the efforts of Isaac Northrup, who, in 1800, purchased the large farm of the Van Loons and other adjoining properties and set about the planning of the village along the Hudson.

By 1805, a number of elegant structures were built, each reflecting the wealth of the early settlers of Athens. The Northrup House (32 South Washington Street), built by the village's founder, was constructed in 1803 and is a fine Federal style residence. Another exceptional Federal residence is the Nichols House (16 South Franklin Street), built in 1803. Nichols fought at Yorkstown, Bull Run, Fredericksburg, and the Battle of the Wilderness during the Civil War.

The initial years of the village were so successful, that in 1805 the village of Athens was incorporated, making it one of the oldest incorporated villages in New York State. The incorporation joined the lower village and the small scattered community to the north known as the upper village.

Also, three turnpikes, the Schoharie Turnpike (1802), the Albany-Greene Turnpike (1806), and the Athens Turnpike (1809), were begun in the early years of the 1800's, bringing Athens in closer proximity to the surrounding area.

By the middle of the nineteenth century, Athens was an established and successful community. Numerous factors were significant in the village's prosperity, the most important being its location along the Hudson. The Hudson-Athens Ferry, which operated from 1778 to 1935, attracted numerous individuals and industries to the area. The largest of the industries was the Athens Shipyards.

Established in 1843 by William Coffin, the shipyards were the center of industry in Athens until its closing in 1941. In its years of operation, numerous vessels were constructed, the majority of which were used for travel on the Hudson. Initially the shipyards produced canalboats and barges, but later expanded into the manufacture of towboats, schooners, and steamboats. At the shipyards, a marine railway was constructed in 1862 and is still in operating condition. This is thought to be the oldest marine railway in the world.<sup>1</sup>

Another important industry which contributed to the village's growth

<sup>1</sup>Athens Bicentennial Committee, Athens Its People and Industry  
(Athens, N.Y.), 1976, p.29.

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and stabilization at mid-century was the Clark Pottery. This manufacturer of assorted stoneware began operating in 1805 and continued until 1900. Many examples of earthenware produced at Clark Pottery are in museums, including a large collection at Cooperstown, New York.

A number of beautiful structures reflect Athens' stability in the middle of the nineteenth century. The Lydia Coffin House (12 South Water Street) c. 1840, the Stranahan-DelVecchio House (117 North Washington Street) c. 1852, and the Zion Lutheran Church (102 North Washington Street), built in 1853, represent this period.

By 1877, a number of new industries had contributed to the village's prosperity. In 1864, the Saratoga and Hudson River Railroad was formed by two of the nation's wealthiest men, Daniel Drew and Cornelius Vanderbilt. The southern terminus of this line was in Athens, where a large terminal was built in the upper village area. The Brick Row District was constructed at that time to house the railroad line's operating staff. But, the prosperous line lasted only twelve years, for in 1876 the Athens terminal and yards burned to the ground, leaving only Brick Row in testimony to the once successful cargo line.

Also significant in Athens' development was the ice industry. The H.F. Dernell Ice Tool Co. was founded in 1861 and ceased operation in 1936. During its heyday in the 1870's, the company was the largest of its kind in the nation. The ice industry continued in importance into the twentieth century, but of all the ice houses which dotted the river front, only one remains on Water Street.

Thus, by 1877, the village of Athens had experienced its peak in industrial and residential development. The years from mid-century to 1877 were fruitful and, although little remains from these industries, there are exceptional residences which testify to this period in Athens' history. The H.F. Dernell House (10 South Washington Street) c. 1860, represents this period as does 4 Third Street. A fine collection of worker cottages also remains from this era.

At the turn of the twentieth century, Athens remained virtually as in 1877. The vast majority of the homes from 1877 still survive, leaving the village rich in architecture and history. Athens remains a fine example of a small, nineteenth-century village of the Hudson River.



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### The Athens Lower Village Historic District

The Athens Lower Village Historic District reflects the historical and architectural growth of the small Hudson River community of Athens. Within the district are excellent examples of residential, ecclesiastical and commercial architecture which vividly portray the village's growth through the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries.

Before 1800, the site of the Lower Village District was part of a large farm owned by John M. Van Loon. John Van Loon was a grandson of Jan Van Loon, the original settler of Athens.

On April 30, 1800, the Van Loon farmland, as well as other adjoining lands, were purchased by Isaac Northrup, who became the village's true founder by laying out a town along the Hudson consisting of ten streets running east to west and five streets north to south. The boundaries of the Lower Village District basically follow the outline of the village in 1801.

In the initial decades of the nineteenth century, a number of prominent citizens from the surrounding regions settled in the newly created village, then called Loonenburg. The beautiful Federal style residences built by these individuals testified to their wealth and prominence. Significant in this regard are the Nichols House at 16 South Franklin Street built in 1803, the Haight House at 38 South Franklin Street built in 1812, the C. Van Loon House (1795-1804) at 89 Second Street, and the Northrup House (1803) at 32 South Washington Street. Also, an exceptional block of two-story Federal rowhouses located on Washington Street were constructed during this period.

By the middle of the century, the Athens Lower Village District area had been firmly established. Numerous river-based industries brought the prosperity necessary for a stable community. Significant during this period were the Athens Shipyards, the Clark Pottery, and various brickyards. The ferry slip, located at the foot of Second Street and used by the Hudson to Athens ferry, also contributed to the district's economic position. Reflective of this period are the Lydia Coffin House (1840) on Water Street and the Federated Church (1833) on Franklin Street. Also, a number of small Greek Revival worker homes remain from this era.

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In 1877, the Lower Village District was basically as it was at the middle of the century, except for a number of newly constructed Second Empire and Italianate style structures. Buildings such as 26 South Franklin Street, 66 Second Street, and 86 Second Street added a great deal of elegance and charm to the district.

The district of 1877 essentially remains today, despite the pressures of the twentieth century. Though many of the industrial, river front buildings have been demolished, the district's architectural and historical integrity remains unscathed. The Athens Lower Village District is still today the primary commercial and residential section of the village of Athens. Additional historical and architectural information may be found in Table I.

### The Brick Row Historic District

The Brick Row Historic District is a significant and unique section of the village of Athens' historical, architectural, and social heritage. It is a silent reminder of a busy shipping era and continues to be an ethnic working community.

The buildings of the Brick Row District are the last remnants of the Saratoga and Hudson River Railroad in Athens. In 1864, Daniel Drew and Cornelius Vanderbilt organized and built this line which ran from Schenectady to Athens. In Schenectady, merchandise such as grain, flour, and oil, which had been shipped east via railroads and the Erie Canal, was carried to Athens on the Saratoga and Hudson line. At the Athens terminal and docks, the goods and passengers were loaded on barges and steamboats for the trip downriver.

The initial years of the railroad line were successful, and contributed significantly in making Athens one of the busiest spots along the Hudson in the 1860's. Its volume of shipping business even surpassed that of Albany. A direct result of the line's success was the construction of Brick Row in 1864. The thirty, brick, Greek Revival rowhouses were built to house the employees of this railroad line.

The prosperity of the Saratoga and Hudson River Railroad (which was sold

<sup>1</sup>Athens Bicentennial Committee, Athens, Its People and Industry (Athens, N.Y., 1976), p.98.

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to the New York Central line in 1867) abruptly ended in 1876, when the Athens terminal and associated dockyards and offices were destroyed by a devastating fire. This fire ended "all vestiges of the shipping glory that was Athens."<sup>1</sup> Only the worker housing at Brick Row remains from the community which had risen around the terminal and dockyards.

After the railroad's demise, Brick Row became a community within itself. Various ethnic groups, including a large number of Italian immigrants who worked in the three Athens brick yards and icehouses, came to reside at Brick Row. Also, 32 Brick Row was originally a tavern for this homogeneous community. A book by Reverend John Kisselburgh entitled In the Shadow of the Halfmoon depicts life at Brick Row at the turn of the century. His recollections were "full of festive Italian weddings, the early morning sounds of men tramping off to another day of hard, dirty work, and the simple pleasures of everyday life with friends and family."<sup>2</sup>

Today, Brick Row remains an isolated community with many first and second generation immigrants still residing there. Its architectural significance has fortunately not been substantially altered since its construction, thus preserving the character of this mid-century community which is unique to Athens.

<sup>1</sup>Athens Bicentennial Committee, Athens, Its People and Industry  
(Athens, N.Y.), 1976, p.98.

<sup>2</sup>Ibid.

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### The Albertus Van Loon House

This structure was built by Albertus Van Loon in 1724. Albertus was the fourth son of Jan Van Loon, the original owner of the large farm which became part of the Northrup Purchase, and the first settler of the area around Athens. Albertus was one of the three Van Loons who deeded land for the erection of the Zion Lutheran Church. The Van Loon family continued to live in the old stone house for three generations after Albertus, until the early 1800's.

Architecturally, the Albertus Van Loon House is the last Dutch Colonial style structure remaining in the village of Athens and one of the few remaining in Greene County. It is a fine example of that style, its most notable features being the rectangular shape, the low, sweeping gambrel roof, and the stone construction. The structure reflects, as well, the traditional craft practices of the region and period, and is a conspicuous reminder of the village's agrarian beginnings.

### The Stranahan-DelVecchio House

The Stranahan-DelVecchio House, built circa 1852, reflects the wealth and prosperity associated with the village of Athens in the middle of the nineteenth century. This beautiful structure was built by William P.A. Stranahan, son of Henry Stranahan. Willaim Stranahan was a prominent real estate agent in the Athens area. The structure remained in the Stranahan family until the end of the nineteenth century. The present owners, the DelVecchio family, have owned and occupied the house for more than sixty years.

Architecturally, the Stranahan-DelVecchio House is one of the finest examples of Greek Revival architecture in the village of Athens, and the best outside of the Lower Village District. It represents a style and format that was common in the region, but seldom at such a scale.

### The Zion Lutheran Church

The Lutheran congregation at Loonenburg (later named Athens) was organized in 1704, making it one of the oldest established Lutheran churches in the nation. This church was originally one of the stations of a

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of a circuit between Albany and New York. The first minister was Reverend Justus Falkner, who was the first minister to be ordained by the Lutheran Church in America. Falkner wrote the New York Church Book, the oldest record of Lutheran ministerial acts in New York State.

The first church building was erected in 1724, upon land deeded to the church by Jan Jr., Albert, and Matthias Van Loon. This first structure was "a square building with four roofs meeting at a point, and supporting a steeple with a spire with ball and vane."<sup>1</sup> A picture of the original building remains on the church seal. The present edifice was constructed in 1853, after the demolition of the 1724 structure.

The Greek Revival church structure represents the taste and craft practices of the region during the middle of the nineteenth century. The area of Greene and Columbia counties is historically linked to the first major German settlements in America. The present edifice is located on the main north-south road and has been a conspicuous landmark for over one hundred years.

<sup>1</sup>J.B. Beers, History of Greene County, New York (J.B. Beers and Co., New York, 1884), p. 172.

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Athens Bicentennial Committee, Athens, Its People and Industry. Athens, N.Y., 1976.  
Beers, J.B., History of Greene County, New York. New York: J.B. Beers and Co., 1884.

## 10. Geographical Data

UTM NOT VERIFIED

see continuation sheet

Acreage of nominated property \_\_\_\_\_

ACREAGE NOT VERIFIED

Quadrangle name \_\_\_\_\_

Quadrangle scale \_\_\_\_\_

UMT References

See Continuation Sheets

A 

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Zone Easting Northing

B 

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Zone Easting Northing

C 

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D 

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E 

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F 

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G 

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H 

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### Verbal boundary description and justification

The incorporation limits of the village of Athens. See Continuation Sheets.

### List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state	code	county	code

state	code	county	code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title

Robert M. Powers

Contact: Larry E. Gobrecht, 518-474-0479

Div. for Historic Preservation

organization

Consultant

date July, 1979

street & number

3 Tingersoll Avenue

telephone

(518)370-3316

city or town

Schenectady

state

New York

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

\_\_\_ national

\_\_\_ state

☒ local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

Director, Historic Preservation Field Services Bureau

title

date

2/28/80

For HCPRS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register.	
<i>Coral D. Shull</i>	date 11-28-80
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest: <i>Sandra Hunt</i>	date 11-28-80
Chief of Registration	