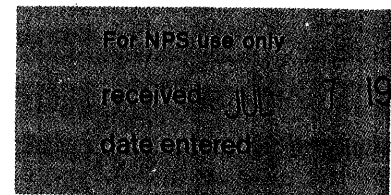


OMC NO. 1024 0013  
EXP. 12/31/84

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park 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

and/or common Montgomery County Buildings Thematic Group

3 (see list inside)

2. Location

Broadway, and Park Sts. ay and

1. Railroad & Broad Streets, Fonda 2. Broad & Court Streets, Fonda  
street & number 3. Route 5, Yosts vicinity not for publication

city, town Fonda and Yosts vicinity vicinity of congressional district

state New York code 036 county Montgomery code 57

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" 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 checked="" type="checkbox"/> in process	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> government
Thematic Group	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial
		<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

name Montgomery County

street & number County Office Building

city, town Fonda vicinity of state N.Y.

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Montgomery County Clerk's Office

street & number County Office Building

city, town Fonda state N.Y.

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date 1978 ☐ federal ☒ state ☐ county ☐ local

depository for survey records Office of Parks, Recreation, and Historic Preservation

city, town Albany state N.Y.

## 7. Description

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

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

The Montgomery County Buildings Thematic Group includes three properties historically associated with the governmental administration of present day Montgomery County, New York: the Old Courthouse Complex, including both the 1836 Greek Revival courthouse and the sheriff's residence/jail structure; the 1892 New Courthouse; and the historic Schenck Farm, which has served since 1899 as the Montgomery County Poor Farm. The former two properties are located in the county seat, Fonda, while the Poor Farm is near the hamlet of Yosts, approximately ten miles southwest of Fonda. A survey undertaken by the County Department of Public Works and the County Historian identified these as the only county-owned properties more than fifty years old that were historically used for county administration. A variety of architectural styles and forms are included, reflecting the range of historical periods and functions represented.

Montgomery County occupies just over 400 square miles on both sides of the lower Mohawk River. In general, the topography consists of broad valley lands rising to steep rolling hills channeled by many creeks and streams. All the county's villages and its single city, Amsterdam, are located along the river corridor, which is also the route of the historic Erie Canal, the present New York State Barge Canal, and several rail lines. Fonda, on the north side of the river and approximately midway in its traverse through the county, is the county seat.

1. The Old Courthouse Complex, (photo 1) occupies a property of 3.6 acres in the center of Fonda, just south of the railroad. The courthouse (Photo 2) occupies the middle of the s: the sheriff's residence/jail building to the east. A small boiler house (photo 3), a with large frame garage, and parking areas lie to the south. The property is bounded on the south by Park Street, on the west by Broad Street and on the north by Railroad Street. A narrow alley runs between the courthouse and the jail.

The old courthouse is a massive, two-story Greek Revival style building of painted brick on a coursed limestone foundation. It is a simple rectangular structure, its low-pitched gable roof crowned by a large dome surmounted by a hexagonal turret and an eagle weathervane. The massive portico, facing Railroad Street on the north, consists of four large Ionic columns flanked by square Tuscan columns in antis (photo 4). The pediment is adorned with a relief carving of the New York State seal. The richly molded and modillioned entablature wraps around both sides of the building, but only the boxed cornice continues along the rear roofline. The side elevations consist of nine bays separated by square Tuscan pilasters (photos 2 & 5). The northernmost bay is blind concealing the portico; the remaining bays are pierced by rectangular windows on each of the two floors. Originally, these contained tall, multi-paned sash separated at the second floor level by embossed panels, but in 1967 these were replaced by shorter aluminum windows, and the moldings and panels were covered with stucco (photo 5).

The sheriff's residence is a square brick structure in the Italianate style, five bays wide and two stories high (photo 6). It is a simple and symmetrical building with a central double door and regular fenestration. The tall, double-hung windows are topped by cast-iron lintels. Paired brackets support the broad eaves of the flat roof. A modern one-story porch runs the full front width of the house.

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

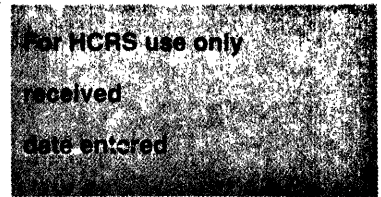
**National Register of Historic Places  
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Montgomery County Buildings Thematic Group

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The three-story yellow brick jail is attached to the rear of the sheriff's house and is of equal width and height (photo 7). Each side elevation is divided into eleven bays containing tall glass block windows covered by iron grating. The restrained Georgian detail of the building includes flat limestone lintels with keystones atop the windows and brick corner panels which suggest quoins. A two-bay one-story entrance protrudes from the northwest corner of the jail. A modern three-story stair tower extends from the center rear of the building. A large, low, modern addition is attached to the east of the jail (photo 1): Its front portion is one-story over a basement, while the rear is a ground-level garage that runs the full length of the jail.

2. The New Courthouse (photo 8) is located on the north edge of the village of Fonda, facing south onto Broad Street. To the east is Court Street; to the north is a steep escarpment; and to the west is a landscaped park beyond which lies the modern county office building. The Courthouse is a Richardsonian Romanesque building of red brick, with a foundation, sill course, and occasional accents of limestone. In form, it is a broad rectangle with a square entrance tower jutting from the front and a small T at the rear; a large rectangular addition extends to the rear (photos 8 & 11). The one-story building appears larger due to its high hipped roof with broad flared eaves. Fenestration consists of large round-arched windows in the courtroom at the front of the building, narrower arched windows in the offices behind, and the simple rectangular windows of the rear addition. The tower is three-stories high with a steep pyramidal roof: (photo 9) Its upper level is an open belfry with an arcade of three tall round arches on each face (photo 10). The triple-arch form is repeated in small windows on the tower's second floor. On the first floor, a large round-arched opening shelters the courtroom entrance.
3. The County Farm is an isolated property of 352 acres on the north bank of the Mohawk River just west of the rocky outcrop known as Big Nose. A large stream, known historically as Canagara, but identified as Knauderack Creek on modern maps, bisects the property, flowing south to join the Mohawk River. The eastern and western property boundaries lie along wooded escarpments that shelter the broad triangle of rich cropland. A complex of twenty buildings sits near the center of the property on the north side of State Route 5 where it crosses Canagara Creek.

The nominated property includes all land presently associated with the County Farm. Although this acreage was acquired by the county in two purchases (1899 and 1937), the whole property was connected under the historic Schenck ownership. Two Rights-of-way -- NYS Route 5 and a double-track rail line -- divide the property into three parcels.

The main building of the county farm complex is the Schenck homestead, a two-story, five-bay brick house of the Federal period, to which Victorian dormers, a Colonial Revival style porch, and numerous rear wings have been added (photo 13). Its symmetrical plan, stone lintels, and elliptical attic louvers mark it as a substantial, early house of this region. Flanking this structure are two identical foursquare, two-story residences, hip-roofed structures dating from the turn of the century (photo 14). North of these lie numerous outbuildings:

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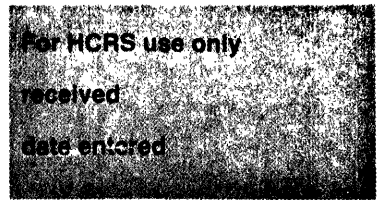
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Montgomery County Buildings Thematic Group

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sheds, garages and barns. The easternmost is a very large hay barn with an octagonal silo on its east side. Across the creek to the west of this complex are several more outbuildings, the largest being a deteriorating New World Dutch-type barn which has been somewhat altered by the addition of a Victorian cupola, louvered gable windows, and a long rear wing (photo 15).

Although the archaeological potential of the county farm was not investigated during the survey of county properties, there is documentary evidence for sites associated both with contact period Iroquois and later European settlers. The presence of Native American remains on the county farm property, specifically in the corn field northeast of the intersection of Farm Road with NYS Route 5 (photo 12), has been reported several times in the twentieth century. Arthur Parker reports the existence of the site (1922:620)

Village site on the Schenck Farm at the county house back from the river.  
Historic Mohawk occupation.

The site is also included in the (New York) Statewide Inventory of Historic Resources (site A057-08-0014) and at the New York State Museum is listed as a burial site (Schenck site - Fda 14-1). On the basis of potsherds and European trade heads -- "primarily plain dark red with various linings, occasional blue tubular" - collected from the surface, local avocational archaeologist Volkert Veeder identifies the site as a small, early seventeenth century Mohawk village. There is no historical mention of a village at this location.

No known systematic excavation of the Mohawk site has been undertaken. Some subsurface disturbance can be expected as a consequence of regular cultivation. Features commonly retained in village sites where cultivation has occurred are hearths, post molds, and storage/refuse pits. A broad range of artifact categories can also be expected in a contact period village.

Historical record indicates that in the late 18th and 19th centuries several small industries were developed on the county farm property along the Canagara Creek. Exact locations are not recorded and no attempt has been made to locate the sites or identify remains. However, given the record of development, it is expected that a rich potential exists for historic archaeology.

## 8. Significance

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

H. Grieme, L. Marcellus, M. Comrie,

**Specific dates** 1836, 1882, 1892, 1899, <sup>1912</sup> **Builder/Architect** W.J. Beardsley, Fuller & Wheeler, L. Kinne

### Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The three properties nominated as the Montgomery County Buildings Thematic Group are significant for their association with the history of government administration in Montgomery County. Some components also have architectural or archaeological significance.

The property occupied by the Old County Courthouse Complex has been a center for government administration since 1836, when Fonda was established as the county seat. The Old Courthouse, built that same year, was the hub of all county legal, judicial, legislative, and political affairs for over fifty years. It has further significance as an imposing example of Greek Revival architecture. Next to the courthouse are buildings historically associated with the county's criminal justice programs: the 1882 Sheriff's Residence -- a well-preserved Italianate house -- and the attached 1912 Jail.

The New Courthouse, built in 1892, is significant for its association with the county's legal and judicial activities since that time. It is a notable example of late nineteenth century Romanesque Revival design.

The site of county welfare programs since 1899, the County Farm property also has significant historical associations with early settlement of the Mohawk Valley and families prominent in that development. The farm has archaeological potential as a result of this historical occupation and also includes a documented but unexcavated Native American site. The grouping of farm buildings exemplifies vernacular building methods and landscape design. Two of the buildings are of particular note: the Federal style Schenck homestead and the Dutch barn.

In 1772, Tryon County was formed from Albany County at the request of Sir William Johnson, who established the county seat in Johnstown. The new county encompassed all the land west from Albany County to Buffalo and was bounded on the north by Canada and south by Pennsylvania. After the Revolution, the name of the despised Tory governor Lord Tryon was abandoned and the county was renamed in honor of the hero of Quebec, General Richard Montgomery. As the western lands were settled, over thirty counties were formed from the mother Montgomery County, and by the 1830's it encompassed only 980 square miles.

The Mohawk River was always the major corridor through the county, as the route for important roads and turnpikes and the focus of most settlement. Traffic was heavy both before and after the Revolution and became intense with completion of the Erie Canal in 1825. Johnstown, four miles north of the river, seemed increasingly remote. In the 1830's, with talk of bringing the railroad through the valley to Utica, a group of land speculators campaigned to move the county seat to Fonda, a new, planned community located a mile west of the Caughnawaga section that had been core of the settlement since the days of its founder Jelles Fonda. The Fonda

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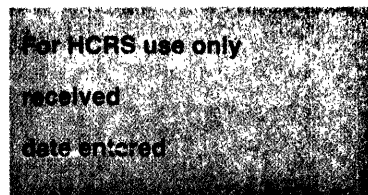
**National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form**

Montgomery County Buildings Thematic Group

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promoters argued that the old courthouse and jail in Johnstown were inadequate, that travel to the northern community was difficult, and "that the valley since construction of the Erie Canal is the common business center of the county."<sup>1</sup>

By August 1, 1836 when the locomotive DeWitt Clinton hauled coaches over the newly completed Schenectady and Utica Railroad, the issue was decided; the voters and legislators had authorized transfer of the county seat and construction of a new jail and courthouse. Shortly thereafter, citizens of the northern areas, offended at losing Johnstown as county seat, again divided the county, establishing the current boundaries of Montgomery and Fulton Counties.

The new Montgomery County government buildings, a two-story brick courthouse and a small stone jail, were both adjacent to the railroad tracks, on a plot of land intended for a park in the original development scheme. The courthouse, erected under the direction of Lawrence Marcellus, boss carpenter, and Henry Adams, mason, is an imposing if somewhat ponderous interpretation of the Greek Revival style, with huge Ionic columns and a heavy dome. In the original design, the only access to the second floor courtroom was from an exterior stair under the portico, and the building was only six bays long. In 1910, extensive interior remodeling was undertaken and a three-bay annex with an interior stair was added to the rear of the building. At that time, the small square boiler house was constructed behind the courthouse. The 1910 alterations designed by architect Henry W. Grieme of Amsterdam were entirely compatible with the original design, but renovations in 1967 severely altered the windows and interior finishes of the building. Despite these changes, the old courthouse, still in use for county offices, retains the dignity and grandeur of its original design.

The original jail was a small stone structure located southwest of the courthouse. In 1882 it was destroyed by a fire. McIntyre Comrie, an architect from Amsterdam, was authorized to draw up plans for a new structure combining jail and sheriff's residence. The resulting structure was a large but restrained Italianate residence with a small jail attached.

The residence, with marble mantels and period moldings on the interior and cast-iron cornices outside, has been carefully preserved. The jail was declared unfit for use in 1911, and two years later it was demolished and replaced with a new jail designed by William J. Beardsley of Poughkeepsie, New York. The stark functional design of the jail complements the residence and the neighboring courthouse in scale and massing. Both residence and jail continue to function in their original use. A modern office and garage addition on the east intrudes upon the historic character of the complex.

Montgomery County was flourishing in the late 19th century, both in industrial villages like Canajoharie and Amsterdam and in its fertile agricultural regions. It was the age of the railroad, and trains passed Fonda courthouse hourly. Noise

<sup>1</sup>William H. Parry and C. Lovell Wilcox, History of Montgomery County Buildings (Fonda, N.Y., 1936), p. 14.

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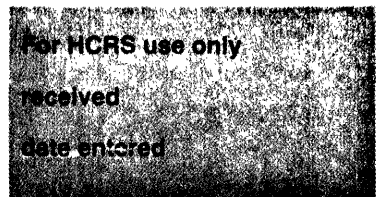
Montgomery County Buildings Thematic Group

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from passing trains, an overcrowded courtroom, and a need for more office space led to an 1892 resolution to build a new courthouse. A new site was selected a few blocks north of the railroad on Broadway (Route 30A). The Albany architectural firm of Fuller and Wheeler, noted for dramatic institutional and commercial buildings in the Romanesque style, was commissioned for the new building. Intended only to house the courtroom and judicial offices, it is an unusually small courthouse of dignified proportions. With its tall central tower, large round-arched openings, and combination of red brick and white stone, it is a striking Romanesque style, civic building. A wing added to the rear in 1940 is compatible with the original design.

In addition to the problems of judicial and governmental administration, the county had to provide humanitarian services for its handicapped and indigent citizens. The poor farm system common in New York State was in effect, but from 1860 to 1898 the county operated its welfare system on a contract basis, with the result that the inmates were moved several times. Finally the county board voted to purchase a centrally located farm. Of many sites considered, the present farm was selected for the fine quality of its buildings and land and for its advantageous location on a major highway, a rail line and the river, in the center of the county.

Known as Schenck Farm after its prominent nineteenth-century owners, the property is historically significant for its association with early settlers of the area and its contribution to development of the region.

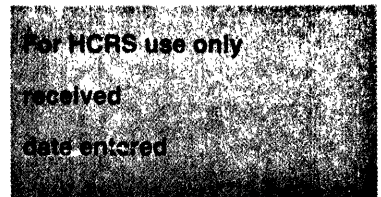
The first deed on the farm property documents a 1716 gift from the Mohawk nation to part-Mohawk trader Captain Harmanus Van Slyck, but it is unknown whether Van Slyck developed the land. Jelles Fonda, a wealthy merchant, purchased the land in 1768 and erected a mill, ashery, and large brick dwelling that were destroyed in a 1780 raid led by Sir John Johnson. After the Revolution, the property passed to William Schenck, who built a substantial brick house near the site of Fonda's house. Schenck developed an extensive local industrial complex consisting of a grist mill, saw mill, fulling mill, cider mill, blacksmith shop and cooper shop. His heirs continued to improve the property, and an 1878 lithograph shows the homestead with numerous barns, sheds and two small mills on the Canagara (Knauderack). When the farm was bought by Montgomery County in 1899, the property included the house, woodshed, horse barn, wagon house, hog house, Dutch barn with extensions for stock, chicken house, and corncrib, as well as extensive orchards, croplands and woodlots. Under county administration, some of the outbuildings were moved or demolished, and the farmhouse was converted to an administration building. Two large residences designed by Utica architect Lynn Kinne, were built for the inmates. Various outbuildings have been added or altered over the years.

The complex, as maintained and developed by the county, has retained its integrity of feeling and appearance due to the simple vernacular design of the buildings and their continued maintenance. The Federal style Schenck homestead and the massive Dutch barn are of considerable architectural significance, as well-preserved examples of their types despite their Victorian accretions.

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The Native American (American Indian) remains reported on the county farm property are significant for their potential comparative value with other, better documented Mohawk villages. Such village sites taken together record the transformation of Mohawk culture from pre-League and pre-European times to post-League and post-European contact times. Some of the Mohawk village sites in this sequence have already been listed on the National Register, i.e. Fort Plain Conservation Area, Garoga Site, Klock Site, Pagerie (Smith) Site, Rice's Wood and Caughnawaga Indian Village. Specific research issues and data correlates have been detailed in these nominations.

The potential historic archaeology of the county farm property is significant for its potential contribution to understanding the nature of frontier farmsteads and their particular historical development vis-a-vis broader, regional development. A specific comparative case is found in the Fort Plain Conservation Area.

The sheriff's residence, jail, and new courthouse continue to be used for their original functions, while the old courthouse is used for county offices. Three modern buildings in Fonda also provide county office space. A modern infirmary now houses some of the county's indigent, but the county farm continues to be used as a home for elderly men. The acreage is still cultivated, but labor is no longer provided by the inmates as in the past.



## 9. Major Bibliographical References

Perry, William H. and Wilcox, C. Lovell. History of Montgomery County Buildings. Unpublished manuscript. Fonda, N.Y.: Dept. of History and Archives of Montgomery County, 1936.

## 10. Geographical Data See continuation sheet

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

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

(See Continuation sheet) Quadrangle scale \_\_\_\_\_

UMT References

A	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
	Zone	Easting	Northing
C	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
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F	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
H	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Verbal boundary description and justification

Boundaries of the nominated properties are marked on the accompanying tax maps.

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

NA

state	code	county	code
state	code	county	code

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title Lucy A. Breyer

organization Historic Preservation Field Services date June 1982

street & number Agency Bldg. 1, Empire State Plaza telephone 474-0479

city or town Albany state New York, 12238

## 12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

☐ national ☐ state ☒ local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature

*Ann Webster Smith*

title Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation

date 25 June 1982

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places  
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only  
received \_\_\_\_\_  
date entered \_\_\_\_\_

Continuation sheet

Item number

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Multiple Resource Area  
Thematic Group

dnr-11

Name Montgomery County Buildings Thematic Resources

State New York

Nomination/Type of Review

Date/Signature

1. County Farm

~~Substantive Review~~

Keeper

Bruce Lee Boyd 8.5.82

Attest

2. Old Courthouse Complex

~~Entered in the~~  
National Register

Keeper

Deloris Byers 8/11/82

Attest

3. New Courthouse

~~Entered in the~~  
National Register

Keeper

Deloris Byers 8/11/82

Attest

4.

Keeper

Attest

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