

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

For NPS use only

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Canfield Casino and Congress Park

and/or common

2. Location

street & number

not for publication

city, town Saratoga Springs vicinity of

state New York code 36 county Saratoga code 091

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"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	<input type="checkbox"/> in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	<input type="checkbox"/> being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> other: Recreation

(casino & public park)

4. Owner of Property

name Mr. Thomas G. McTygue, Commissioner of Public Works

street & number City Hall

city, town Saratoga Springs vicinity of state New York

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Saratoga County Courthouse

street & number

city, town Ballston Spa state New York

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

Nineteenth Century Architecture of Saratoga Springs: Architecture Worth Saving has this property been determined eligible? yes no

date 1970 federal state county local

depository for survey records Joan Siegfried, Professor of Art History, Skidmore College

city, town Saratoga Springs state New York

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" 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

Summary¹

The 17 acres forming Congress Park today are an accumulation of property acquired by the city in stages in 1901-13. They consist of the old Congress Spring holdings, including the site of the bottling works and Congress Spring Park; the Canfield Casino and its park; and the former Congress Hotel property. Scattered through the essentially basin-shaped park are paths, groves of trees, lawns, an Italian garden, and springs with Grecian pavilions. The abundant water supply has been channelled into streams, ponds, and fountains. The most notable fountain surrounds Daniel Chester French's renowned statue, "Spirit of Life," placed in 1915, which is a memorial to Saratoga's benefactor, Spencer Trask, a close friend of the sculptor.

Congress Park

The northwest corner of the present-day Park is the former site of three significant buildings demolished in the 1910s: Congress Hall, the Congress Spring Bottling Plant, and the Congress Spring Pavilion. Congress Hall was a hotel begun in 1812 by the foresighted Gideon Putnam. It was rebuilt to monumental proportions in 1866. The bottling plant and pavilion were outgrowths of Dr. John Clarke's development of the spring, which he bought in 1826 when it was little more than a quagmire. By 1878 a million bottles of Congress Spring water were sold each year, and its fame was worldwide. Both Congress Hall and the bottling plant were razed by the City after it acquired the properties in 1911. Today the public library (1949; enlarged 1967), a small but intrusive building of modern design, at the northwest corner of the Park, and the Trask Memorial fountain stand on their sites.

Across the Park's main road from the Casino, a Greek Revival Doric pavilion has been reconstructed on the site of the original Congress Spring. Its water today is piped from the nearby Congress 1-X Spring. West of the pavilion is the Columbian Spring, tubed by Gideon Putnam in 1806 and reactivated in 1983 with a domed pavilion in replica of the early 19th-century Greek structure. Its invigorating water is high in iron, said to "impart a freshness and beauty to the female complexion." The Congress 3 Spring, farther along the path to the south, is another water which was bottled and distributed worldwide in the mid-19th century. From the hillside to the northeast corner of the Casino flows the Freshwater Spring, popular with city residents.

The Katrina Trask Memorial Stairway (1922) is an attractive historic element on the southwest edge of the Park. It was designed by New York City architects Ludlow and Peabody. Katrina Trask was Spencer Trask's wife.²

(Overlooking the Park on the southeast is the Clarke, or "President's House" [46 Circular Street], which is not included in this nomination but is of interest in relation to the Park. It is a white clapboard Greek Revival 2-story residence built about 1823. This building was originally built for Dr. John Clarke who not

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	architecture	education	military	social
1700-1799	art	engineering	music	humanitarian
X 1800-1899	commerce	exploration settlement	philosophy	theater
1900-	communications	industry	politics government	transportation
		invention		X other (specify)
				Recreation
Specific dates	1820s-1911	Builder Architect	Various	(health spa; gambling casino)

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

Summary

The international fame of Saratoga Springs--the "Queen of the Spas" -- as a health resort and gambling center stemmed primarily from two important sites: the Congress Spring and the Canfield Casino, both in Congress Park. These sites are intimately associated with the most important figures in the city's history: Gideon Putnam, its founder; Dr. John Clarke, the popularizer of Saratoga water; and John Morrissey and Richard Canfield, the two gambling impresarios who turned Saratoga Springs into America's Monte Carlo. The fashionable and wealthy flocked to the city and made it for a time America's most renowned resort.

Throughout Saratoga's existence as a community there has been a tension between its appeal as a place for tranquil restoration of health and mental well-being through the "water cure" and the desire for indulgence in gambling and other fleshly pleasures. These two sites are Saratoga's epicenter and reflect both these contrasting, and sometimes conflicting, aspects of her history. Because Saratoga's great hotels of the 19th century have all been demolished, the Casino and Congress Park are the most apt reminders of the city's apogee as a national resort.

History¹

Congress Spring was so named after it was visited in 1792 by a group of adventurers including two Congressmen, from whom its name derived. Gideon Putnam, in 1803, bought an acre of ground around the spring, then situated in a swampy tract, and erected Union Hall Hotel. In 1805, after purchasing an additional 130 acres, he laid out the town of Saratoga Springs around his spring. He was so successful that he enlarged the hotel twice. He died in 1812 while supervising work on another hotel, Congress Hall (on the present library site).

Early in the 19th century, Saratoga endured fierce competition with nearby Ballston Spa, as well as mineral springs in Pennsylvania and Virginia. Partially because the town had what was probably the first temperance society in America, gambling, dancing, and alcohol were proscribed until around 1820. The gradual relaxation of these bans drew a more varied clientele to the city. Hotels were expanded and new ones added. Dr. John Clarke, of New York City, who had been the proprietor of that city's first "soda fountain," moved to Saratoga in the mid-1820s, purchased the Congress Spring site, and erected a residence across the street. He began bottling Saratoga water and promoted its use to great effect. His promotional efforts were aided by the discovery of iodine in the water. Clarke also improved the spring site, laying out the lawn in basically its present crescent shape, and installing drains to reclaim the swamp-like land.

9. Major Bibliographical References

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

10. Geographical Data

Acreege of nominated property approximately 17

Quadrangle name Saratoga Springs

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UTM References

A	1,8	5,9,9	1,4,0	4,7,7,0	1,0,0,0
	Zone	Easting		Northing	

B	1,8	5,9,8	9,0,0	4,7,6,9	7,1,0,0
	Zone	Easting		Northing	

C	1,8	5,9,8	7,7,0	4,7,6,9	9,6,0
	Zone	Easting		Northing	

D	1,8	5,9,8	8,0,0	4,7,7,0	1,4,1,0
	Zone	Easting		Northing	

E					
	Zone	Easting		Northing	

F					
	Zone	Easting		Northing	

G					
	Zone	Easting		Northing	

H					
	Zone	Easting		Northing	

Verbal boundary description and justification

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

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 James H. Charleton, Historian

organization History Division, National Park Service date November 1985

street & number 1100 L Street, NW telephone (202) 343-8165

city or town Washington state DC 20013-7127

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

title _____ date _____

For NPS use only

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

date _____

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

Chief of Registration

date _____

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only began the bottling of Congress Spring water, but also donated the Thorvaldsen vases in front of the Casino, and designed and named Circular Street. The house is now the residence of Skidmore College's president.)

Casino

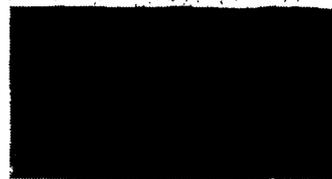
The original architect of the Casino's early construction is unknown. It is situated in the hollow of the Park facing south and was built in two stages: the main building in 1870 and its east wing in 1871, and the diningroom and kitchen extension to the north in 1902-03. The Renaissance Revival building has a soft pink to orange hue characteristic of the brick of the Upper Hudson River kilns.

The principal portion of the building is rectangular in layout. It is 3 stories with a basement. The structure is wood-framed to center-bearing walls. On the front (south) facade the brick around the front doorway and at the corners of the first floor and east wing is made to look like rusticated stone. A belt course delineates the first and second floors. The front (south) facade is distinguished by a different treatment of the sandstone window trim--segmental pediments over the windows and front door on the first floor, triangular pediments on the second, and rectangular ones on the third. The roofline is accentuated by a richly ornamented cornice with brackets. This cornice continues along the west side of the building. Centered above the cornice on the front (south) facade is a free-standing segmental pediment.

On the interior is a central hall with a stairway. On the first floor, office and library were on the west side. On the east a room that was the first diningroom opens into the large gambling room in the east wing. On the second floor were three private gambling rooms and, on the third, living quarters.

The east wing containing the large gaming room is three bays wide on the front (south) facade and five bays on the east facade. In contrast to the main portion of the building, the doorway and the two windows flanking it are 1-1/2 stories high. Over the arched window heads are segmental pediments and over the doorway a triangular pediment echoing the alternate treatment of pediments on the front facade of the 3-story portion. The cornice, too, reflects that of the main building but is more ornate. There are two domes in the roof of the gaming room. Interior details of the room--woodwork, ceiling, immense mirrors, statuettes, lighting fixtures, and some furniture--still remain.

The diningroom and kitchen wing to the rear (north) date from 1903. This addition required the removal of several 1-story service wings that stood behind the building. The diningroom is a brick structure with floor framing supported on steel beams. The arched roof is framed with riveted arch beams supported on columns. The kitchen and rear storage area are brick with floor framing supported by steel beams and the roof by an inverted truss.³

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The huge diningroom, measuring 93' x 58', runs on an east-west axis. At both ends are stained glass windows depicting horses in different historical periods. The barrel-vaulted ceiling has octagonal coffers which are filled with stained glass windows, which provided an innovative system of indirect lighting. The room's plasterwork is richly decorated and its original parquet floor remains. A primitive, but effective, system of air conditioning utilized vents in the walls and opening of the coffered windows.

Under the City's stewardship, the Casino has become a focal point of community activities. Neither Morrissey nor Canfield admitted town residents, and ladies were not allowed beyond the first floor. Today, the former gaming rooms and private apartment on the second and third floors house a museum operated by the Historical Society of Saratoga Springs. Canfield's reading room and office have been converted to an art gallery and gift shop also managed by the Historical Society. The parlor, once the principal gaming room, is used for concerts, lectures, seminars, and private parties. The bar in the center room, where Morrissey's patrons once sought refreshment, was restored during the 1970s. The ballroom is used for such events as weddings, proms, parties, community forums, and political rallies. Many furnishings from the "golden era" of the Casino are present in the building.⁴

Two vases (1824), designed by the Danish sculptor Albert Bertel Thorvaldsen, depicting "Day" and "Night" stand on the lawn in front of the Casino. The Casino's gardens are an integral part of its charm, especially the formal Italian-style garden from Canfield's era, to the northeast. Its entrance is framed by two white marble columns.

Condition

The Casino Building is well-maintained and possesses a high degree of historic integrity; a new air conditioning and heating system was installed in 1984 with minimal effect on historic fabric. The Park is administered according to a 1977 master plan that calls for preservation of its historic landscape features.⁵

Footnotes

¹The bulk of this description is an edited version of the relevant parts of the Casino-Congress Park-Circular Street Historic District nomination to the National Register of Historic Places prepared by Cornelia Brooke, of the New York State Historic Trust, in 1972. The description of the Park has been refined with data from the master plan referenced in Note 5 below.

²LA Partnership, "A Conservation Report for the Katrina Trask Stairway" (Saratoga Springs, New York, 1985).

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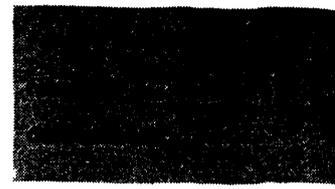
³"Structural Report of the Canfield Casino, Congress Park," by the Office of City Engineer, Saratoga Springs. n.d.

⁴Office of Commissioner of Public Works, City of Saratoga Springs. "The Canfield Casino" (November 6, 1985), p. 2.

⁵Leaver, Anthony, Gerow, and Associates. "Historic Congress Park Master Plan Report." (Saratoga Springs, New York, 1977).

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Saratoga thereafter quickly became one of the nation's premier resorts, its popularity reflected in the phrase "Saratoga trunk." It was particularly favored by Southern aristocrats before the Civil War. The completion of railroads to the city made it convenient of access.

Saratoga entered exciting days when gambling began to thrive in the 1860s. In 1863, retired heavyweight boxing champion (1853-57) John Morrissey established residence in Saratoga and opened a racetrack, which proved so successful he opened a second the following year. In 1866, when he built the main part of the present Casino, on a tract adjacent to Congress Spring Park, he won election to Congress as a Democrat representing New York City. Morrissey was well connected in other ways as well. Commodore Cornelius Vanderbilt, William R. Travers, Jay Gould, and Leonard Jerome were among his associates in racing and became part of the wealthy and fashionable crowd that patronized the Casino and the tracks.

Morrissey thrived as the proprietor of the Casino and added to the community attractions for the gaming-minded by organizing great boat races on Saratoga Lake. After his death in 1878, two other New York gambling figures took over management of the Casino.

Gambling at Saratoga was relatively refined and honest under Morrissey and his successors. This tradition continued under Richard Canfield ("The Prince of Gamblers"), who purchased the Casino in 1894. Canfield enlarged the Casino, later added a formal garden on adjacent land, and made it an even more opulent and sumptuous environment for wealthy sporting gentlemen and their ladies. It featured haute cuisine and fine furnishings, and guests wore formal attire.

Canfield had grandiose schemes and a successful flair. The monumental dining hall, designed by Clarence Luce, and the kitchen extension were built in 1903, and some of the biggest games in gambling history were played under the roof of Canfield's Casino. The Casino is a chapter in the nation's social history. Here mingled, dined, and gambled the paradoxical and yet eminently compatible combination of members of the socially prominent families, such as Whitneys, Vanderbilts, Morgans; flamboyant gambling personalities, such as "Bet-a-million" Gates and Diamond Jim Brady; and prominent figures of the entertaining world, such as Lillian Russell and Florenz Ziegfeld.

Canfield's era, generally regarded as Saratoga's golden age, came to an end in a tide of anti-gambling sentiment in the State. Canfield retired in 1907 and sold the Casino and its grounds to the city in 1911. Legislation (the Pure Food and Drug Act), meanwhile, had a negative effect on the sale and use of Saratoga waters. In 1912, the city bought Congress Spring Park and demolished the Congress Hall Hotel and Bottling Plant. The Casino and Congress Park, joined as a public park in 1913, have remained in the city's ownership since that time.

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The grounds of Congress Spring Park were well known, with Grecian pavilions over the springs, fountains, pools, flower beds, gravelled walks, a bandstand, and a deer lodge. Prominent landscape architects, including Frederick Law Olmsted and Jacob Weidenmann in 1876 and Charles Leavitt and Henry Bacon in 1914, contributed to the development of the park.

Footnote

¹This historical account is a summary of information appearing in the National Register of Historic Places nomination form referenced in Note 1 of the Description; Jeffrey Limerick *et al.*, America's Grand Resort Hôtels (New York: Random House, 1979), pp. 23-27, 35-41; George Waller, Saratoga, Saga of an Impious Era (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey: Prentice-Hall, 1967), passim; and Evelyn Barrett Britten, Chronicles of Saratoga (Saratoga Springs, New York: privately printed, 1959), pp. 48-88; 270-280; 485-488.

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