

BUILDING-STRUCTURE INVENTORY FORM

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY

DIVISION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION
NEW YORK STATE PARKS AND RECREATION
ALBANY, NEW YORK (518) 474-0479

UNIQUE SITE NO.
QUAD
SERIES
NEG. NO.

YOUR NAME: Azhar S. Tyabji
YOUR ADDRESS: 106 W. Sibley Hall, Ithaca, NY
ORGANIZATION (if any): Cornell University

DATE: Spring, 1994
TELEPHONE: (607)255-4331

IDENTIFICATION

- 1. BUILDING NAME(S): Public School #3
- 2. COUNTY: Steuben TOWN/CITY: Corning VILLAGE:
- 3. STREET LOCATION: ~~121 East Fifth Street~~ 259 Chemung
- 4. OWNERSHIP: a. public [] b. private [X]
- 5. PRESENT OWNER: James K. Houghton ADDRESS: 33 E. Third St.
- 6. USE: Original: Public elementary school Present: Privately owned condominiums
- 7. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Exterior visible from public road Yes[X] No []
Interior accessible: Yes [] No [X] Explain: Private premises

DESCRIPTION

- 8. BUILDING MATERIAL: a. clapboard[] b. stone[] c. brick[X] d. board & batten[]
e. cobblestone[] f. shingles[] g. stucco[] other: limestone
- 9. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM: a. wood frame with interlocking joints[]
b. wood frame with light members[]
c. masonry load bearing walls[X]
d. metal (explain)
e. other
- 10. CONDITION: a. excellent[X] b. good[] c. fair[] d. deteriorated[]
- 11. INTEGRITY: a. original site[X] b. moved[] if so, when?
c. list major alterations and dates (if known):
See Continuation Sheet
- 12. PHOTO:
- 13. MAP:

14. THREATS TO BUILDING: a. none known[X] b. zoning[] c. roads[]
d. developers[] e. deterioration[]
f. other:

15. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS AND PROPERTY: a. barn[] b. carriage house[]
c. garage[]
d. privy[] e. shed[]
f. greenhouse[]
g. shop[] h. gardens[]
i. landscape features:

j. other:

16. SURROUNDINGS OF THE BUILDING: (Check more than one if necessary)
a. open land[] b. woodland[]
c. scattered buildings[X]
d. densely built-up[] e. commercial[]
f. industrial[] g. residential[X]
h. other:

17. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDINGS AND SURROUNDINGS:

See Continuation Sheet

18. OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING AND SITE:
(Including interior features if known):

See Continuation Sheet

SIGNIFICANCE

19. DATE OF INITIAL CONSTRUCTION: 1909

ARCHITECT: Elise Johnson-Schmidt, Consultant in Renovation

BUILDER: Corning Building Company

20. HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE:

See Continuation Sheet

21. SOURCES:

See Continuation Sheet

22. THEME:

11c. MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND DATES:

Between 1988 and 1992, the building received a new asphalt roof, and all one-over-one double-hung sash were replaced with replacement sash. A new sump system was installed, and eaves, gutter and tin roof (now of asphalt) changed in 1992. The same year, a wheelchair lift was installed at the northern edge of the west entrance, facilitated by a slab of poured concrete added on top of the previous stoop. A removable fire separation wall was added between the interior wooden stairwells. Much of the interior was remodeled, including the installation of modern kitchen units and bathrooms in each "condominium" (see section 20), and extra-wide doorways and a first-story bedroom for the handicapped.

15i. RELATED OUTBUILDINGS AND PROPERTY:

There are no outbuildings on the property. The building is located on leveled ground along the slope of the Spencer Hill rise. Thus, when viewed from the north, the house appears to be elevated in comparison with other houses around the intersection of East Fourth and Chemung Streets.

17. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS:

The structure, occupying corner lots on its block, is inconsistent with its neighbors in setback, size, and east-to-west separation. It is surrounded on all four sides with ample open space, isolating it from other properties along East Fourth and Chemung Streets.

18. OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING AND SITE:

This structure is a modified interpretation of the Four-Family Portico-Front house, as described in Gottfried and Jennings' American Vernacular Design, 1870-1940. The house successfully features many of the defining characteristics usually observed in the four-family group by the authors' definition, including a "[p]ortico composition [which historically] included four columns evenly spaced or paired, with a wide center space for the entrance", its narrative "extend[ing] colonial and classical revival design vocabularies to buildings more in scale with classical buildings than were most cottages, creating what might be called a colonial-Roman look."

This building, notes Siobhan Kelly in a paper entitled "A Tale of Two Cities and Two Schools: Adaptive Reuse in Upstate New York," is a "two-story brick structure consist[ing] of two simple-linear, rectangular blocks placed back-to-back to form a symmetrical decked, hipped roof building centered on a long north-south axis. Still very similar today, the main entrance facing east to Chemung Street features heavy double doors beneath an arched transom framed with limestone voussoirs. A set of wide concrete steps leads up to the porch. Coupled Doric columns support either side of the flat-roofed portico. Centered beneath a triangular pediment on the second story, a limestone date panel reads "1909." The wooden frames of the two-over-two double-hung sash windows are set between limestone lug sills

and flat, keystone lintels. A tooled stone belt course sits atop the poured concrete foundation. Spaced at regular intervals, small casement windows light the basement. The western portion of the building is the mirror image of its eastern counterpart." A wooden balluster encloses an open balcony on the roof of the porch on the west facade. The roof of the building is outlined with wide overhanging eaves.

The south facade features a projecting bay which covers the western half of the building. This projecting wall has a hipped roof. The north facade, which reflects its southern counterpart, is accented on the basement story by an enclosed porch with a shed roof in the reentrant angle formed by the projecting east bay. The building, built with brick, has an asphalt roof featuring two corbelled brick ridge chimneys above the north and south facades.

CONTINUATION SHEET, Page 2
Public School #3
Corning, New York

20. HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE:

The following account consists mainly of edited portions of a paper by Siobhan Kelly entitled "A Tale of Two Cities and Two Schools: Adaptive Reuse in Upstate New York." All quotations are taken from this work, unless otherwise indicated.

The predicament of a rapidly growing city in 1880 called for an expansion in Corning's school system. "In 1907-1908, overcrowding caused plans to be approved to build a new grammar school, School Three, so that the Corning Free Academy could be used primarily as a high school for District Nine. Thus on 27 November 1907, under the auspices of its president Amory Houghton, Jr., the area school board bought a tract of former farmland from Frank E. and Mary L. Waite...The school board then invited bids from area contractors [to develop the land]. Corning Building Company, a prolific local firm, won the contract with a low bid of \$23,870. Work began on the structure in late July of 1909."

"Public School # 3 housed elementary school students for over forty years...Among its [current] alumni is United States Representative Amory Houghton, great-great grandson of the founder of Corning Glass Works and great-grandson of the school board president who voted to build School Three."

In 1953, owing to the destruction of School One in an afternoon blaze, fire concerns forced school officials to move from School Three to safer quarters at the Carder and Severn Schools. The building thus remained vacant until 1958, when Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., Dr. William Lee Perry, and Frederick Parsons, three distinguished citizens, sought state approval for a regional community college to be located in the city. Corning Community College opened in 1958, "with six full-time faculty, four part-time instructors, 125 day students, and 60 evening students [who] were accommodated by old School Three."

"After the rapidly expanding college moved its new \$4.5 million dollar campus on Spencer Hill, certain administrative and extracurricular offices remained in the 1909 school. PS #3 continued to be used as a satellite campus building until the early 1970s. When Hurricane Agnes struck in 1972, the school district appropriated the building to be used as an evacuation center and temporary shelter during the brutal and unexpected flood. The site was then deserted for the next fifteen years."

"A deed in the Steuben County Courthouse dated 20 May 1988 records the sale of School Three and its plot. They were transferred from the City School District and the City of Corning to one C. Matthew Dann of Painted Post. Dann, an area developer, also received a permit to build condominiums in the former school...Dann had architectural renderings composed which divided the structure into six upmarket condominiums complete with all modern amenities." Even as preliminary work on the alterations to the structure were under way, the plan to renovate the structure for its market value stalled owing to financial instability, proving "a boon for area preservationists."

"In the summer of 1992, James K. Houghton, [son of James B. Houghton, president of Corning, Incorporated], who was then working as a shift supervisor at the Corning Asahi Video Products plant in Pennsylvania...recognized the potential for the old brick building." Houghton planned to acquire the building as personal property, and as premises for his own home. Although he and Elise Johnson-Schmidt (an architect who served as consultant for the project) "collaborated to explore the viability of following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Certified Rehabilitation in order to qualify for tax credits," it was eventually deemed economically necessary to leave Dann's previous efforts at renovation alone. This, in addition to Houghton's wish to acquire the property primarily as his residence, meant that he would be subject to state taxation policies. "Therefore, [Houghton] elected to market the renovated units as "buyer occupied condominiums."" "The fact that the adaptive reuse of the historic structure would benefit the community and perhaps lead to marginal financial gain were secondary considerations." Houghton subsequently bought the property in 1992. Erford Keeler, a local contractor, was hired to do construction work based on an architectural analysis undertaken by Johnson-Schmidt to appropriately renovate the structure.

This building occupies lots 14, 15, and 16 of Block 39, as laid out in the 1855 Brewer and Canfield map of Corning. Although its architectural features have for the most part stood the test of time and manipulation, the building is a good example of the merits of adaptive reuse. It has seen an extensive renovation of the interior, including the adaptation of two living units to comply with the American Disabilities Act, the salvaging of most of the original flooring, and the retention of two sections of the older tin roof. "An integral feature of the original school were its matching wooden staircases which ran in opposite directions in the center hall." Although they were not of regulation height, a New York State variation on the building code was won following an appeal by Houghton and Johnson-Schmidt, the steps being considered "important to the integrity of the building." Another important feature that was retained was the original wainscoting of the building.

"Houghton received his certificate of occupancy in July 1993 and moved in immediately." It is of some note that "the new condominiums are beautifully appointed, and the original character of School Three remains." It is a tribute to the sensitivity of the architect and owner that the overall integrity of the building has not gone unnoticed by the public, and that the building "is still vital in the Southside neighborhood."

21. SOURCES:

Primary Sources:

Dimitroff, Thomas P. and Lois S. Janes: A History of the Corning-Painted Post Area: 200 Years in Painted Post Country. Corning: Corning Area Bicentennial Commission, 1991.

Kelly, Siobhan: "A Tale of Two Cities and Two Schools: Adaptive Reuse in Upstate New York." Unpublished paper, Graduate Program in Historic Preservation Planning, Cornell University, 1993, pp.10-21.

Secondary Sources:

Corning Public Library Photographic Collection, c.1909-1935 series of photographs of Public School #3.

McAlester, V. and L.A *Field Guide to American Houses*. New York: Alfred A. Knopf, 1991.

Map of Corning. 1855. Buffalo: H. Brewer and C.A. Canfield.

View of Corning, New York, Looking Toward the South. 1882. Philadelphia: Philadelphia Publishing House, C.J. Corbin, Field Manager.

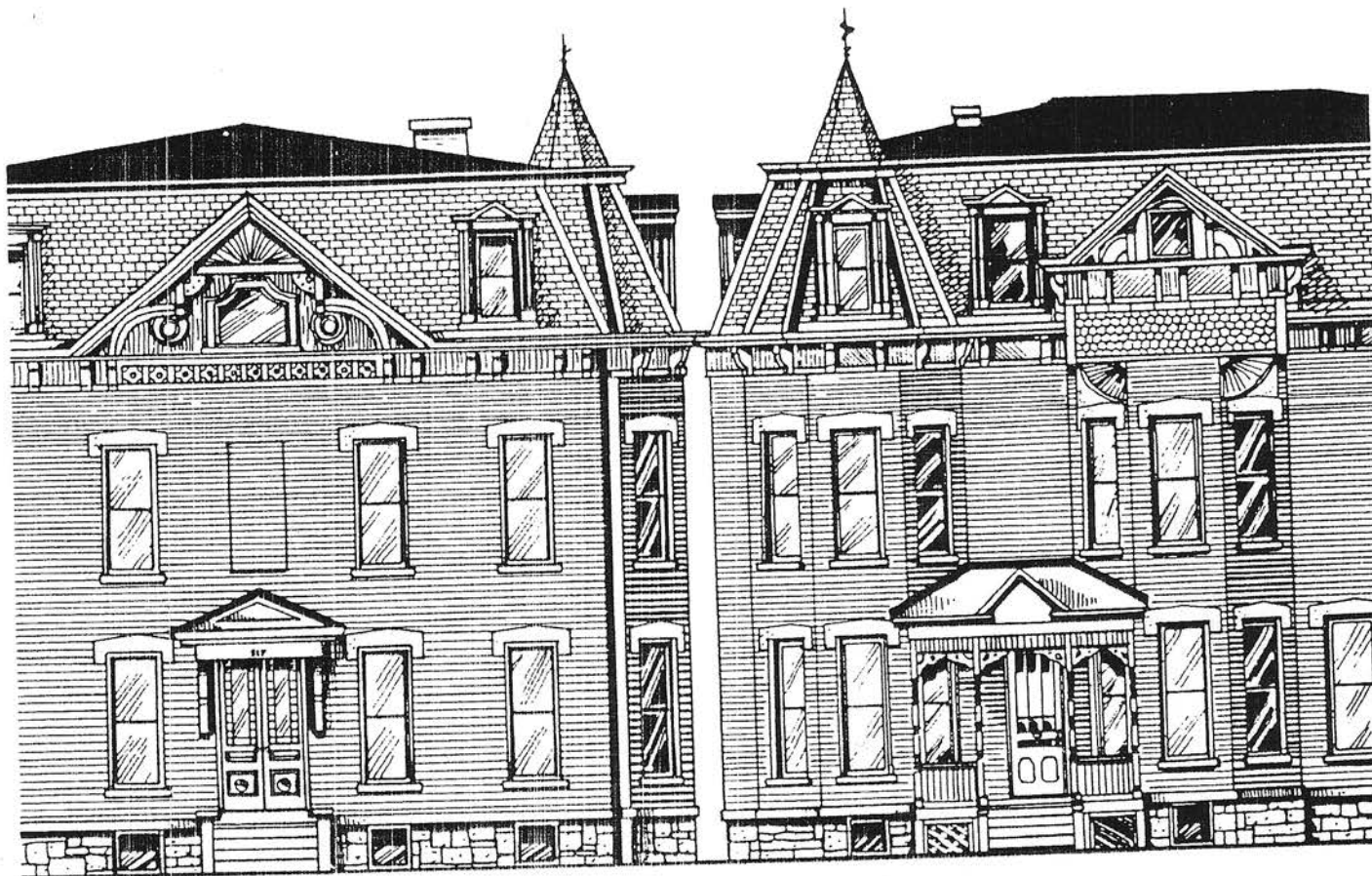
City of Corning. 1893. Corning: Harry C. Heermans, City Engineer.

Steuben County Tax Records, Steuben County Records Center, Bath, New York. (1860-1909)

ADDITIONAL PHOTOGRAPHS: (To be attached later)

*School 3
History*

**A Tale of Two Cities and Two Schools:
Adaptive Reuse in Upstate New York**



Siobhán K. Kelly
CRP 562: Perspectives on Preservation
Professor Michael A. Tomlan
15 December 1993

the current residents were actually students at St. Pat's earlier in the century. They delight in watching television in the same room they used to pore over impossible chemistry experiments. The public are thrilled, too. They are happy to see a familiar landmark get a second wind. Some of the nuns who used to teach there could not get over the success of the rehabilitation. It makes them happy to see there former home still serving a useful purpose. Finally, City Council cannot complain. The project has infused the city's downtown business district with and economic boost.

Crossed seems to be pleased with his endeavors. His latest undertaking involves the adaptive reuse of Elmira's Dunn Memorial Building into more housing for the elderly. He has struck upon a profitable success formula and plans to stick to it.

Preservationists should be proud, too. The complex has since been designated a historic landmark. And, in April 1993, the Elmira building won recognition from the Preservation League of New York State for successfully combining Historic Preservation with social service. Saint Patrick's Second Generation can serve as an excellent model for future preservation schemes.

The Saga of School Three: 1909 - 1993

In many ways, the development of Corning, New York mirrors the growth of its neighbor, Elmira. Located fifteen miles to the west of Elmira on the Chemung River, American Indian tribes roamed the area since 8000 BC. Early white settlers built log cabins and founded basic schools shortly after their arrival in 1789. In 1835, speculators from the Corning Land Company bought 340 acres on the south side of the Chemung River and laid out plans for the future city in a simple grid pattern. A formal school system was adopted in 1839.²⁸

Between 1835 and 1865, the river and its feeder canal were vital transportation links to Corning. They provided essential support for the locale's lumber and coal industries. By the turn of the century, three major railroads made their way through the

²⁸ John Auwaeter, *Reconnaissance Level Survey, Southside Neighborhood Proposed Historic District, Corning, New York*, pp. 15-16.

city, thus making Corning a major center of transportation. In 1849, the village could boast that it was New York State's third busiest inland port.²⁹

Attracted by affordable resources and the transportation network, Amory Houghton relocated his Brooklyn Flint Glass Works to Corning in 1868. This company, later renamed Corning Glass Works and now Corning Incorporated, would dictate much of the future growth and prosperity of the region.

The burgeoning village of Corning consolidated with its neighbor Knoxville in 1880. As the city grew, so did its student population. In 1907-1908, Corning's 2,728 students were crowded into the city's schools. 1,057 of these students were attending classes in the public institutions on the Southside.³⁰ Plans were approved to build a new grammar school, School Three, so that the Corning Free Academy could be used primarily as a high school for District Nine. Thus on 27 November 1907, under the auspices of its president Amory Houghton, Jr., the area school board bought a tract of former farmland from Frank E. and Mary L. Waite.³¹ This plot of land lay at the junction of Chemung and East Fifth Streets on the rise of Spencer Hill. (Lots 14, 15, and 16 as laid out in the Brewer and Canfield Map of Corning, 1855). The school board then borrowed \$30,000 to construct a new school and invited bids from area contractors. Corning Building Company, a prolific local firm, won the contract with a low bid of \$23,870.³² Work began in late July 1909.

The new two-story brick structure consisted of two simple-linear, rectangular blocks placed back-to-back to form a symmetrical decked, hipped roof building centered on a long north-south axis. Still very similar today, the main entrance facing east to Chemung Street features heavy double doors beneath an arched transom framed with limestone voussoirs. A set of wide concrete steps leads up to the porch. Coupled Doric columns support either side of the flat-roofed portico. Centered beneath a triangular

²⁹ Auwaeter, p. ?

³⁰ Thomas P. Dimitroff and Lois S. Janes, *History of the Corning-Painted Post Area: 200 Years in Painted Post Country*, (New York, 1991), p. 163.

³¹ Steuben County Clerks Office: Record of Deeds. . (Bath, New York) Liber 304, p. 561, 1907.

³² Corning-Painted Post School District Archives. Records of School Board Minutes (Corning), 1909.

pediment on the second story, a limestone date panel reads "1909." The wooden frames of the two-over-two double-hung sash windows are set betwixt limestone lug sills and flat, keystone lintels. A tooled stone beltcourse sits atop the poured concrete foundation. Spaced at regular intervals, small casement windows light the basement. The western portion of the building is the mirror image of its eastern counterpart.

Public School # 3 housed elementary school students for over forty years. It was known for its high standards and pleasant atmosphere. Several period photographs exist detailing May Day celebrations on the property. There are even a few old photographs of some of the original classes posing both on the front stoop and in their classrooms.³³ In a recent newspaper interview, Ernestine King, the mother of some former students, reminisced, "It was a really excellent grammar school. We felt our children were well serviced by that school."³⁴ Among its alumni is United States' Representative Amory Houghton, great-great grandson of the founder of Corning Glass Works and great-grandson of the school board president who voted to build School Three.

In 1953, at about the same time the entire district was busy contending the amalgamation of the current Corning and Painted Post school boards, a fantastic mid-afternoon blaze destroyed School One on the corner of Third and Walnut streets.³⁵ Because this neighboring primary school was of similar age and construction to School Three, many local parents were concerned for their children's safety. PS #3 was shortly forsaken in favor of the more modern Carder and Severn schools.

The building lay dormant until 1958. In 1956 quick thinking and some clever orchestration on the part of prominent townsmen Arthur A. Houghton, Jr., Dr. William Lee Perry, and Frederick Parsons resulted in New York State approving plans for a regional community college to be located in Corning rather than Elmira.³⁶ Corning Community College opened on 10 September 1958. Its six full-time faculty, four part-time instructors, 125 day students, and 60 evening students were accommodated by old

³³ Corning Public Library Photographic Collection, c. 1909-1935.

³⁴ Susan M. Gale, "Condos Coming to Corning," *Corning Leader* (New York), February 2, 1993.

³⁵ Dimitroff and Janes, p.278.

³⁶ Corning Community College Archives. Personal letter from William Perry to current administration.

School Three.³⁷

After the rapidly expanding college moved to its new \$4.5 million campus on Spencer Hill, certain administrative and extracurricular offices remained in the 1909 school. PS #3 continued to be used as a satellite campus building until the early 1970's. When Hurricane Agnes struck in 1972, the school district appropriated the building to be used as an evacuation center and temporary shelter during the brutal and unexpected flood.³⁸ The loyal site was then deserted for the next fifteen years.

A deed in the Steuben County Courthouse dated 20 May 1988 records the sale of School Three and its plot. They were transferred from the City School District and the City of Corning to one C. Matthew Dann of Painted Post. Mr. Dann, an area developer, also received a permit to build condominiums in the former school.³⁹

Matthew Dann had major plans for the building. Set in a prestigious residential district, the school boasts a desirable location. Mr. Dann had architectural renderings composed which divided the structure into six upmarket condominiums complete with all modern amenities. The high ceilings, large windows and original interior woodwork of the school were extremely marketable features. While refurbishing these elements and stripping the lathe and plaster walls back to bare brick, the Dann Corporation put a new roof on the building and started to replace all the original windows with modern vinyl counterparts. However, Mr. Dann did not do his research before he jumped into the project. Investing too much money into luxuries like restoring the interior woodwork, the developer did not balance his books properly. Also, his rehabilitation work did not meet local and state construction codes. The wiring, plumbing, and mechanical systems were completely non-regulation. Within a few months, the bank foreclosed on C. Matthew Dann, and the ambitious project was abandoned. Although Dann's extravagance may have been a financial disaster for his company, it was a boon for area preservationists.

In the summer of 1992, James B. Houghton, president of Corning Incorporated,

³⁷ "Industry Helped Corning Get College," *Rochester Times-Union*, February 27, 1961.

³⁸ Gale.

³⁹ Steuben County Clerks Office. Record of Deeds. (Bath, New York), Liber 1175, p. 236, 1988.

was involved in a life-threatening automobile accident. His son, James de K. Houghton, who was then working as a shift supervisor at the Corning Asahi Video Products plant in Pennsylvania, transferred to the head office in order to be with his family. The younger Houghton saw the building on the Southside and became intrigued. Having lived overseas and in New York City, James has rather cosmopolitan tastes in architecture and design. Inspired by loft apartments and former warehouses converted to artists' studios, he recognized the potential for the old brick building. And since the thirty year-old had no real desire to remain living on the homestead, the availability of School Three was a promising prospect.

Houghton contacted Elise Johnson-Schmidt at the Market Street Restoration Agency to conduct an initial architectural analysis of the building. At the same time, he researched financing options as James planned to undertake the development as a private venture, independent of his family or the resources of Corning, Incorporated. When Johnson-Schmidt returned to him with a positive recommendation, the two collaborated to explore the viability of following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Certified Rehabilitation in order to qualify for tax credits. However, as Dann had already divided the school into six separate living units, two of which were nearly complete, it did not make sound economic sense to rip out his renovation work and begin again. And in a property market like that of Corning, renting out the six upscale apartments as separate units did not justify itself. Houghton's primary objective was to acquire a home for himself and to gain some experience in the development game. Therefore, he elected to market the renovated units as "buyer occupied condominiums." This would disqualify him from the tax act provisions but enable Houghton to fulfill his personal goals. The fact that the adaptive reuse of the historic structure would benefit the community and perhaps lead to marginal financial gain were secondary considerations.

Houghton bought the building in October 1992. Johnson-Schmidt completed her drawings October 30, the day before giving birth to her first child. Construction work began on January 27, 1993.⁴⁰ Erford Keeler, a local contractor was hired to do the construction. As Houghton was still working in Pennsylvania, Stephen Blackwell, long-

⁴⁰ Elise Johnson-Schmidt, interview by author, November 4, 1993.

time family advisor, served as site manager.⁴¹ The crew's mission is simply stated: to complete the renovations, bring the building up to code, and come in on time and under budget.

Several challenges faced the team. The building sits on a site that slopes down to the valley. Run-off from the street above can pose a serious drainage problem. Many years of neglect resulted in rising damp on the south side of the building. Johnson-Schmidt corrected the problem by installing a new sump system, raising some of the basement floors, and instituting a program of eaves, gutter, and roof repairs. Two rather unsympathetic additions had been tacked onto the building earlier in the century. As they served no useful purpose in the school's current context, Johnson-Schmidt had them removed. New mechanical systems were installed in the center section of the basement. Exterior junction boxes and conditioning units were masked by clever landscaping.

To comply with the American Disabilities Act, two of the living units were converted to be handicapped accessible. They feature extra-wide doorways, first story bedroom, and safety bars in the bathrooms. A wheelchair lift is now situated at the northern edge of the west entrance. To accommodate this, an extra slab of concrete was laid atop the old stoop. However, the difference between the old and new material is barely discernible.

Because of her preservation interests, Johnson-Schmidt emphasized the advantages of a sympathetic rehabilitation. Although it was too late to save the basement windows, all the wooden sashes were kept and interior storm windows installed. She chose an exterior paint scheme in keeping with the historic nature of the building: the woodwork is now painted in a dark green gloss reminiscent of that used by public schools at the turn of the century. Ironically, photographs unearthed during this research project indicate that the school's exterior woodwork was originally an off-white shade. However, Johnson-Schmidt's choice is preferable to the owner's inspiration to paint the lintels of each unit in a different color.

On the interior, a supreme effort was made to salvage as much of the original wooden flooring as possible. Where Dann had sanded it down too far, new planking of a

⁴¹ James D. Houghton, interview by author, November 12, 1993.

similar pattern was installed. Only two sections of the tin roof could be saved. One of these now features in the study of an upstairs unit. Houghton commandeered the other portion for his top-story apartment. This piece had previously been part of the basement roof. Throughout the building the original wainscoting was retained. Although Dann had overpainted much of the wood upstairs with a white semi-gloss, the wood work in the other apartments was refinished to accentuate the natural grain. Because early schools had sanitary lath and plaster walls, Johnson-Schmidt advocated that the brick walls be replastered. Houghton disagreed, however, and the brick remains exposed lending warmth to the interior spaces.

An integral feature of the original school was its matching wooden staircases which ran in opposite directions in the center hall. These stairwells measure fourteen feet in height. State code only allows for twelve foot stairways. Arguing that the original wooden steps were important to the integrity of the building, Johnson-Schmidt applied for a New York State variance and won. As a concession, however, a fire separation wall had to be installed between the two units along the center line of the building. Although this disrupts the visual flow of the original stairwells, it is of some consolation to know that the fire wall is removable should the state ever change its code restrictions.

Modern kitchen and bathroom units were installed in all of the condominiums. Yet there is still room for the future owners to individualize their homes. The occupants will choose hardware and color schemes, as well as supplying their own furniture. In addition, they may pay for extra details such as glass block or loft conversions.

Houghton received his certificate of occupancy in July 1993 and moved in immediately.⁴² Two of the units are already spoken for and one future owner is in the process of customizing his apartment. He hopes to move in as soon as James receives his official Condominium designation from the Attorney General. This is expected in early December of 1993. Once it is acquired, the condominiums will go on the market. As of yet, no price has been set for the three remaining luxury units.

Because of the nature of his maiden venture, Houghton is reluctant to disclose any monetary figures. Needless to say, this project was not a "bargain basement"

⁴² Houghton, interview by author.

rehabilitation. The new condominiums are beautifully appointed, and the original character of the School Three remains. No doubt PS #3 will be a prestigious and highly coveted address. The local population are extremely curious to see how their landmark has been adapted. In a wise public relations' move, James held an open-house for area residents and former students of the grammar school. The general response was overwhelmingly positive. Area preservationists are delighted with the outcome as well. The community school was saved from dilapidation and is still vital in the Southside neighborhood.

And what does Houghton think of his first sortie in the development field? He is pleased with the final product and loves his new home. After a well-deserved holiday, the young entrepreneur hopes to rehabilitate another building, yet to be chosen. Houghton has learned from this initial experience and wishes to try his hand at creating middle market housing. This time he looks forward to being his own on-site manager.

Considering Houghton's paternal ancestors' involvement in the building, by supporting the adaptive reuse of School Three, James has fulfilled his legacy. He should be proud.

Conclusion

As these case studies have shown, obsolete buildings need not be demolished. Although these two examples had rather large budgets, it often makes better economic sense to rehabilitate that than build from ground zero. And if the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation are followed, additional financial incentives may apply.

Older buildings often have quality workmanship, materials, and character that cannot be recreated at any cost. Many times the structures have pride of place in the community, too. Yet, the townspeople may not have the means necessary to salvage their architectural heritage. If developers can be made aware of the benefits of rehabilitation, however, adaptive reuse becomes a viable and preferable option.

DATA SHEET

Building Name: **Public School # 3**

Address: 121 East Fifth Street
Corning, New York
(Northwest corner of Chemung and East Fifth Streets)

Ownership: Private

Original Use: Public elementary school

Present Use: Privately owned Condominiums

Date Of Initial Construction: 1909

Architect: Unknown
Builder: Corning Building Company
Developer: Corning Public School District #9

Date of Renovations/Rehabilitation: Initial Changes 1988; Present adaptation 1993.

Architect: Elise Johnson-Schmidt
Consultant(s): Elise Johnson-Schmidt
Builder: Erford Keeler
Developer: James D. Houghton

SOURCES

Texts:

- Auwaeter, John. Reconnaissance Level Survey Southside Neighborhood Proposed Historic District Corning, New York. September 1991.
- Dimitroff, Thomas P. and Lois S. Janes. History of the Corning -Painted Post Area: 200 Years in Painted Post Country. Corning: Corning Area Bicentennial Commission, 1991.
- Reed, Roger G. Architects of Standing: Pierce and Bickford, Elmira, New York, 1890-1932. Elmira: Chemung County Historical Society, 1983.

Newspaper Articles:

- Gale, Susan M. "Condos Coming to Corning." Corning Leader. February 2, 1993.
- "Industry Helped Corning Get College." Rochester Times Union. February 27, 1961.

□

Maps and Illustrations:

- Map of Corning. Brewer and Canfield, 1855.
- Sanborn Map Company, Maps of Corning and Elmira, New York. 1888, 1893, 1903, 1913, 1921, 1930, 1930, 1930 updated to 1948.
- Corning Public Library Photographic Collection, c. 1909-1935 series of photographs of Public School #3.

Government Records:

- Steuben County Clerks Office: Record of Deeds 1796+. (First Floor).

Interviews:

- Houghton, James B.. Interview by author on 12 November 1993 in Public School #3.
Mr. Houghton is the private developer who has undertaken the adaptive reuse of the elementary school.

Johnson-Schmidt, Elise. Interview by author on 4 November 1993. Ms. Johnson-Schmidt is a preservationist, restoration architect, and Executive Director of the Market Street Restoration Agency in Corning, New York.

Mercy, Sisters of. Sister Carmella, former postulant and teacher at St. Patrick's School (1927-1940), Sister Edwina Butler, former student (1920-1928), and Sister Beatrice, frequent visitor and Novitiate were interviewed by the author at Notre Dame Convent, Elmira, New York on November 13, 1993.

Norton, Beatrice. This longtime resident and former pupil of St. Patrick's School (1923-1935, 1990-Present) was interviewed in situ by the author on November 12, 1993.

Tomlan, Michael A. The Preservation Consultant for the Adaptation of St. Patrick's was interviewed by the author on November 11, 1993.

Tyler, Rita. Ms. Tyler, the Accredited Resident Manager for St. Patrick's Apartments, was interviewed by the author in the renovated residence on November 12, 1993.

Miscellaneous:

Corning Community College Archives. The college has some materials dealing with Public School #3 during the time span it was used by the community college.

Corning-Painted Post School District Office, Painted Post, New York. This office is in the early phases of collecting archival materials which have to do with schools within their jurisdiction.

Elmira Star-Gazette Newspaper Library. Clipping files on "St. Patrick's School" and "St. Patrick's Condominiums." (1955-1993).

National Register Historic Nomination Form for the Near Westside Historic District. Prepared by Jan Johnstone, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation. August 1983.

New York State Building Inventory Form for St. Patrick's School and Convent. Prepared by Margaret Pine, Conifer Development, Inc..

Tomlan, Michael A. . Historic Preservation Consultant, Ithaca, New York. Box of personal files, photographs, plans, and memos concerning the adaptive reuse and historic landmark nominations of Public School #3.



August 26, 1993

Mr. Steve Witiaz
Codes Enforcement Officer
Department of Public Works
Corning City Hall
Corning, New York 14830

Dear Steve:

With regards to a sign for School 3 Condominiums at 259 Chemung Street in Corning, James Houghton would like to apply for an area variance based on the following:

The complex will have six family units. Within the residential district signs are allowed to be 2 square feet in area and since the sign represents six units as opposed to one or two, it is logical that the proposed sign be allowed to be 4 square feet in area (two times the normal size of an allowed sign).

The site opening at the school as located measures 189 feet x 165 feet which is three times the typical lot size (63 feet x 165 feet). According to this criteria it would seem the sign would be allowed to be up to 6 square feet (three times the typical sign). (Note, we are asking for 4 square feet versus 6 square feet).

A sign 2 square feet in area would be lost against the building due to its size and it would seem appropriate to allow a variance for a sign 4 square feet in area.

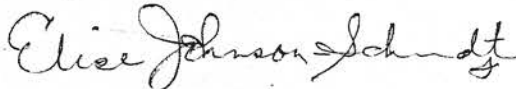
A number of other signs exist in residential districts including one for Dr. Felli, Vollmer Architects, Kahl & Ahrens, Church of Christian Scientists and Bonady Gardens, which are all close to or exceeding the requested sign (Bonady Gardens, Felli and Vollmer Architects are all recent signs).

5 EAST MARKET STREET
CORNING, NEW YORK 14830
(607) 937-5427

Based on the above, could you please include us on the agenda for the September 22 meeting. I will be out of town until September 3 (after your deadline for newspaper) and did not receive an application form. I would like to submit this letter in its place. Please note that a drawing of the sign is attached including all dimensions. The sign will not exceed 4 feet. (Actual sign height is 2 feet 0 1/2 inches plus 7 inch sign advertising units for sale).

Thank you very much for your consideration.


Very truly yours,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Elise Johnson-Schmidt". The signature is written in dark ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Elise Johnson-Schmidt AIA
Executive Director

Attachment (1)

MEMO

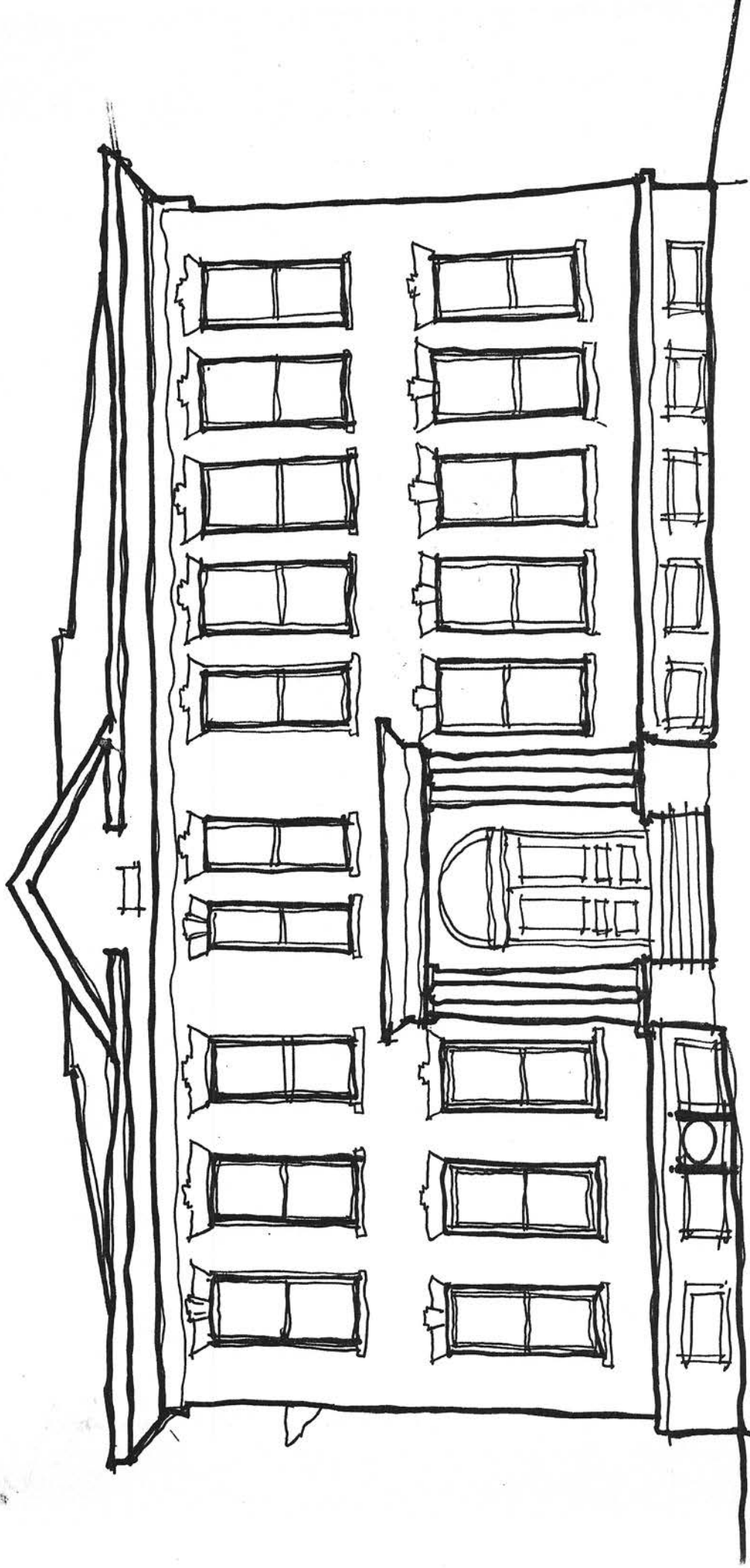
To: Elise Johnson Schmidt and James Houghton
From: Siobhán K. Kelly, Graduate Student in Historic Preservation 
Re: Public School #3
Date: 2 November 1993

I am proposing to use Public School #3 in Corning, New York as a case study for much of my research work at Cornell this semester. I would like to trace the changes the building has undergone since its construction in 1909 by accessing a variety of primary and archival resources.

My primary project is to conduct an in-depth comparison of the adaptive reuse of Public School #3 into upmarket condominiums with the recent conversion of St. Pat's of Elmira into affordable housing. In order to complete the research, it is necessary for me to do the following:

- compile a brief overview of the historical development of the surrounding community and building
- indicate the intent and emphasis of your project. Why you undertook the adaptive reuse of P.S. #3 and what your priorities were in completing the project.
- describe the physical and economic resources at your disposal. This is not meant to be a financial exposé, rather an exploration of what sort of funding, grants, tax incentives, etc. that may have been used in the renovation.
- describe the personnel and management operations of the complex. Is there a board of directors, single owner, cooperative arrangement, resident supervisor, executive director, etc.?
- explain the process by which the preservation, renovation, and adaptive use took place, best done by comparing before with after.
- describe the results: any changes in visual character, economic value, historical significance, educational value, or social significance?
- note what lessons might be learned from this project and apply to future undertakings.

Located in the proposed Historic District of the Southside Neighborhood, P.S. #3 is ripe for exploration and documentation. I am extremely excited about its possibilities and delighted to be able to complete the New York State Building Survey and Inventory Forms in the course of my work. Although I have already conducted the basic field survey and library research, any and all additional information that you could share or resources that you might recommend would be greatly appreciated.



School 3
PAIN'T COLOR PROPOSALS

MARKET ST. RESTORATION AGENCY
MAY 1993



STATE OF NEW YORK
DEPARTMENT OF STATE
ALBANY, N.Y. 12231-0001

GAIL S. SHAFFER
SECRETARY OF STATE

STATE OF NEW YORK: DEPARTMENT OF STATE
BUFFALO\ROCHESTER UNIFORM CODE BOARD OF REVIEW

In the Matter of the Petition of:
James D. Houghton
For a Variance with Respect to
the New York State Uniform Fire Prevention
and Building Code

DECISION

PETITION NO. 080-93-51

Upon the application of James D. Houghton, filed pursuant to 19 NYCRR 450 on February 18, 1993, and upon Written Record Proceedings before the Buffalo/Rochester Uniform Code Regional Board of Review held at the Donovan Building, 125 Main Street, Buffalo, New York, on April 22, 1993, and upon all other papers in this matter, the Board makes the following determination:

NATURE OF GRIEVANCE AND RELIEF SOUGHT

The petition pertains to the conversion of an existing C5.5 (school) occupancy, to a B1 (permanent multiple dwelling) occupancy, two stories in height, type 4a (protected ordinary) construction, approximately 15,645 square feet in gross area, known as School No. 3, at 259 Chemung Street, City of Corning, County of Steuben, State of New York. The petitioner is seeking relief from:

- 9 NYCRR 735.3(a)(4), which requires stairways which serve as a required exit from any story to be arranged and of size, materials and construction so as to provide safe ascent and descent and to conform to the requirements of Table I-735 which limits the maximum height of a vertical rise of any run of stairs to 12'-0". [petitioner requests relief to permit a rise of 14'-0"].

FINDINGS OF FACT

1. This is an 87 year old building being converted from a school, a C5.5 occupancy, to a 6 unit multiple residence, a B1 occupancy, with two units on the second floor and four two level units occupying the basement and first floor.
2. The New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation has identified the building as a contributing and significant historic resource within the Southside Historic Preservation District.
3. One of the most significant features of the building is its original two staircases which are the subject of this variance request. These staircases rise from the first to the second floor and each serves only one dwelling unit. They have a vertical rise of 14 feet, versus the code maximum of 12 feet.
4. Each staircase is 48 inches in width whereas only 36 inches are required to meet the code.
5. Units three and four are indicated to be handicapped accessible according to note 31 on sheet A1. However, it should be noted that neither unit can be fully usable as each is a two level unit without handicapped accessible circulation between the two levels and insufficient clearances are provided for a usable bathroom and the laundry is not available for a disabled tenant or owner's use in either unit.
6. The Board notes that the plans show a bedroom in unit number three that has not been provided with natural light and ventilation.

CONCLUSIONS OF LAW

Strict compliance with the provisions of the Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code would entail practical difficulties or unnecessary hardship, would entail a change so slight as to produce a negligible additional benefit consonant with the purposes of the Code, and would inhibit achievement of some other important public policy, in this case being historic preservation.

DETERMINATION

WHEREFORE IT IS DETERMINED that the application for variance from 9 NYCRR 735.3(a)(4) and Table I-735, be and is hereby GRANTED with the condition that the building comply with all other provisions of the Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code for a B1 occupancy, including handicap accessibility and adaptability and natural light and ventilation requirements for all habitable spaces.

Furthermore, it should be noted that the decision of this Board is limited to the specific building and application before it, as contained within the petition, and should not be interpreted to give implied approval of any general plans or specifications presented in support of this application.

Chairman F. Robert Danni and members Stephen J. Trenton, John J. Lauchert, James R. Piazza and Ann Naeseth Schubert all concur.

So ordered.

Buffalo/Rochester Uniform Code Board of Review

F. Robert Danni

By: F. Robert Danni, Chairman

Date: 6/15/93

PETITION NO.080-93-51

The persons below are advised to TAKE NOTICE of the attached notice or other document. The notice or document pertains to a petition to a Board of Review for relief related to the Uniform Fire Prevention and Building Code. There is/are 3 page(s) attached. If any are missing, call (518) 474-4073 and ask for the Variance Unit.

JAMES HOUGHTON
1946 HARVEST CIRCLE
STATE COLLEGE, PA 16803

STEVEN WITIAZ
CITY OF CORNING DPW
CORNING CITY HALL
CORNING, NY 14830

WILLIAM FLOHR
CORNING FIRE DEPT
ONE CORNING BLVD
CORNING, NY 14830

ELISE JOHNSON-SCHMIDT, AIA
131 DAVIS ST
PAINTED POST, NY 14870

TOM DIMITROFF
SOUTHSIDE NEIGHBORHOOD ASSOC
PO BOX 481
CORNING, NY 14830

CORNING PAINTED POST HISTORIAL SOC
BENJAMIN PATTERSON INN
59 W PUTTENY ST
CORNING, NY 14830

MARKET ST RESTORATION AGENCY
5 E MARKET ST
CORNING, NY 14830

MS. CLAIRE W. ADAMS
NYS OFF PARKS, REC & HIST PRES
ESP - AGENCY BLDG #1
ALBANY, NY 12238



CONDONVILLE

SHEPHERD

CHEMUNG