

BUILDING-STRUCTURE INVENTORY FORM

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

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY _____

UNIQUE SITE NO. _____
QUAD _____
SERIES _____
NEG. NO. _____

YOUR NAME: Susan E. Lassell
YOUR ADDRESS: 106 W. Sibley Hall, Ithaca, NY
ORGANIZATION (if any): Cornell University

DATE: May 31, 1992
TELEPHONE: (607)255-6851

***** DRAFT *****

IDENTIFICATION

- 1. BUILDING NAME(S):
- 2. COUNTY: Steuben TOWN/CITY: Corning VILLAGE:
- 3. STREET LOCATION: 54 W. First St.
- 4. OWNERSHIP: a. public [] b. private [X]
- 5. PRESENT OWNER: Charles W. & Kristin A. Swain ADDRESS: 54 W. First St., Corning, NY 14830
Present: Two Family Residence
- 6. USE: Original: Residence
- 7. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Exterior visible from public road: Yes [X] No []
Interior accessible: Yes [] No [X] Explain: Private Residence

DESCRIPTION

- 8. BUILDING MATERIAL
 - a. clapboard [X] b. stone [] c. brick [] d. board & batten []
 - e. cobblestone [] f. shingles [] g. stucco [] other:
- 9. STRUCTURAL SYSTEM:
 - a. wood frame with interlocking joints []
 - b. wood frame with light members [X]
 - c. masonry load bearing walls []
 - d. metal (explain)
 - e. other foundation shows interlocking joints
- 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 OUT BUILDINGS AND PROPERTY:
- a. barn []
 - b. carriage house []
 - c. garage []
 - d. privy []
 - e. shed [X]
 - f. greenhouse []
 - g. shop []
 - h. gardens []
 - i. landscape features: decorative trees and stonework in backyard
 - j. other:

16. SURROUNDINGS OF THE BUILDING (CHECK MORE THAN ONE IF NECESSARY)
- a. open land []
 - b. woodland []
 - c. scattered buildings []
 - d. densely built-up []
 - e. commercial []
 - f. industrial []
 - g. residential [X]
 - h. other: Public park

17. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDINGS AND SURROUNDINGS:
(Indicate if building or structure is in an historic district)

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: 1848

ARCHITECT:

BUILDER:

20. HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE:

See Continuation Sheet

21. SOURCES:

See Continuation Sheet

22. THEME:

11c. MAJOR ALTERATIONS AND DATES

Some time between 1863 and 1866 J.N. Hungerford bought lot number 7, to the immediate west of his residence. By 1866 he sold the lot, with the exception of the easterly ten feet fronting W. First street extending the entire depth of the lot, making lot number 8 a total of seventy three feet facing W. First street. According to the current owners, it was likely that during this period the two western most bays were added on to the wing, as indicated by different foundation. It is also possible that the roof of the wing was raised at the same time. There are several factors which support this assertion: a bird's eye view map of 1857 shows that the roof line of the wing is lower than the main gable, hardware on the windows of the second floor are stamped with a late 1860's date, and it would be atypical for an original Greek Revival house to have a full two story wing.

The Sanborn Fire Insurance Map of 1888 shows a square addition to the rear of the wing. Based on the foundation material and other construction elements, the addition could not have been original to the 1860's. However, information to more accurately date construction is not available.

In 1953 a permanent easement was placed on a portion of the lot, to the rear of the house, in conjunction with the installment of the Monkey Run sluice. The public works project demolished a 1920's garage during the process of running the twelve foot diameter underground sluice. After the project was completed, Mrs. Swain began the landscaping which exists today.

In 1959 or 1960 the Swain family hired the firm of Ward & Moore to design and build the rear screened porch. This is the same engineering firm that made the alterations to the western facade of the Elks Club on the opposite corner of Walnut.

17. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS:

Located on the southwest corner of the intersection of W. First street and Walnut street, the house contributes to a powerful node marking the edge of the Southside Neighborhood. Two houses of architectural and historic significance and the northwest corner of Courthouse park mark the remaining corners of the intersection. The house rests on the northern third of the lot, with the entry facade fronting W. First street. On W. First street the setback and spacing match that of its neighbors. On Walnut street, the unimproved southern two thirds of the lot creates a gap in the rhythm of houses lining the park (the southern half of the block has been divided into three lots, each improved with a house).

18. OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING AND SITE

The house represents the "gable front and wing" variation of the Greek Revival Style. This style flourished in New York during the period between 1830 to 1870, with particular emphasis on the gable front and wing variation. Typical stylistic features include the colonnaded porch beneath the front gable, the smooth flush-board on the front gable facade and within the gable, and the doric piers and pilasters on the front gable. The Greek Revival Style arose from American interest in Grecian influences on classical development and the desire to move away from British influences.

The two story house consists of a dominant block which is three bays wide in the gable front end and two wide bays deep. The entire house is covered in wood clapboard, with a wide cornice board beneath the eaves. The recessed two story wing is five bays wide and two bays deep. Both low-slope gabled roofs are covered in composite shingle, with only a slight overhang in the eaves. The front gable-end fenestration is characterized by two-over-two light double-hung sash windows, except for the second story center opening which consists of permanently closed louvered shutters. The front single swing door is surrounded by a plain lintel with ten square lights above the door and five vertical side lights. Full-height pilasters between the fenestration openings mirror the hollow wooden piers "supporting" the gable. Poured concrete covers the full-facade porch. On the south facade of the main unit is a screened porch, which rests on a concrete foundation with flagstone flooring.

The wing of the house is slightly recessed from the gable front, and has an irregular fenestration patterns. A single story shallow bay projects from the first two bays from the east. The third bay consists of an entry door, and the last two contain the typical two-over-two sash windows. A modern metal flat-roof porch awning covers the first three bays. The second floor consists of four two-over-two windows, with none in the third bay above the door. A single unit ell on the southwest corner of the wing rests on a poured concrete foundation yet continues the clapboard siding and cornice board. A bulkhead leading into the basement is located on the south side of the wing, between the ell and the porch.

20. HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE

Both the integrity and age of the house, and its association with a prominent historical figure contribute to the building's significance within the Southside neighborhood. The house was likely one of the first built in relationship to the development of the Southside neighborhood. In fact, construction of the house pre-dates the construction of the first county courthouse, built in 1854 on the Walnut street side of the park. It was

20. HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE cont'd:

in 1848 that Moses P. Little purchased the corner property from Erastus Corning, et.al., for the price of one hundred fifty dollars. By the end of the same year, he sold the lot to George Little for the highly inflated sum of one thousand two hundred ten dollars, indicating the construction of the house. Although a fire in 1925 destroyed nearly three quarters of the interior, the shell of the house retains much of the original fabric, including the clapboarding, the pilasters and the piers which are crucial to the integrity of the original Greek Revival style.

In 1859 the third owner of the house, Benjamin Russell, sold the property to John N. Hungerford, a prominent character in the early economic development of Corning. Hungerford arrived in Corning in July of 1854, and established the George Washington Bank in partnership with George W. Patterson. In the spring of 1859 Hungerford disinvested from the G.W. Bank and established The J.N. Hungerford Bank. Hungerford combined a life of banking with active involvement in politics, including participation in the presidential campaign of Ulysses S. Grant, and a term as congressman in 1876. His community activities included active membership in the Presbyterian Church, and acting as trustee of the Presbyterian Church, Hamilton College and the Elmira Female College.

It is believed that Hungerford contributed the establishment of the Corning Flint Glassworks, perhaps in connection with his banking facilities. Several findings related to the house support that assumption. Hungerford bought the property just months after opening his new bank. He lived in the house from 1859 until 1866, the primary period of development of the Corning Glassworks Co. A significant artifact from that period was discovered by the Swain family after the fire of 1925. Stored in the attic, and

20. HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE cont'd:

unscathed by the fire, were several sets of window shutters, with glass louvers of violet, yellow, blue and green. The modern Corning Company has verified that window shutters were made for J.N. Hungerford's new home, for the purpose of displaying the color selection available from the company. They were referred to at the time as the "Hungerford Blinds." The shutters found by the Swain family are the only known existing sets. (More information on the shutters is available from the Corning Glass Museum, which bought one set from the Swain family.)

In 1914 Frank S. Swain purchased the house, and the Swain family has maintained the integrity to the current day. During the 1940s and early 1950s the interior of the house was divided into three apartments (at this time the house was jointly owned by four Swain siblings, one of whom lived in the upstairs apartment). In 1950 Frank S. Swain Jr. bought the house from his brother and sisters, keeping one of the apartments as an office. In 1984 Charles and Kristin Swain bought the house, and continue to use the western portion of the wing and the rear ell as an office.

21. SOURCES

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Continuation Sheet, Page 5
54-56 West First Street
Corning, New York

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