

**BUILDING-STRUCTURE INVENTORY FORM**  
DIVISION FOR HISTORIC PRESERVATION  
NEW YORK STATE PARKS AND RECREATION  
(518) 237-8643

FOR OFFICE USE ONLY:

UNIQUE SITE NO.:

QUAD:

SERIES:

NEG. NO.:

YOUR NAME: Allison Rachleff

DATE: May 15, 1992

YOUR ADDRESS: 106 W. Sibley Hall, Ithaca, NY

TELEPHONE: (607) 255-6544

ORGANIZATION (if any): Cornell University

\* \* \* \* \*

**IDENTIFICATION**

- 1. BUILDING NAME(S): World War Memorial Library
- 2. COUNTY: Steuben TOWN/CITY: Corning VILLAGE:
- 3. STREET LOCATION: 149 Pine Street
- 4. OWNERSHIP: a. public  b. private
- 5. PRESENT OWNER: Steuben County ADDRESS: 149 Pine Street
- 6. USE: Original: Private Club Present: County Office Space
- 7. ACCESSIBILITY TO PUBLIC: Exterior visible from public road: Yes  No   
Interior accessible: Yes  No  Explain: Enclosed office space & medical clinic

**DESCRIPTION**

- 8. BUILDING MATERIAL: a. clapboard  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   
c. masonry load bearing walls   
d. metal (explain)  
e. other
- 10. CONDITION: a. excellent  b. good  c. fair  d. deteriorated
- 11. INTEGRITY: a. original site  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 [ ] 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 [ X ] b. woodland [ ]
- c. scattered buildings [ ]
- d. densely built-up [ X ] e. commercial [ X ]
- f. industrial [ ] g. residential [ X ]
- h. other: Public park south of structure

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: 1897; Reconstruction: 1929

ARCHITECT: Original: Pierce & Bickford; Reconstruction: Palmer Rogers

BUILDER: Reconstruction: Corning Building Company

20. HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL IMPORTANCE:

See Continuation Sheet

21. SOURCES:

See Continuation Sheet

22. THEME:

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149 Pine Street

Corning, New York

**11c. INTEGRITY:**

Following a 1926 fire which gutted the building, then known as the City Club, 149 Pine Street was reconstructed to house the World War Memorial Library. In order to accommodate this new function, a projecting pavilion on the west facade was extended and a shed dormer, six bays wide, was added to the roof of that pavilion to provide more natural light for library patrons. The southwest corner of west facade also was altered to provide a rear entry to the first floor. The northwest corner reveals the most extensive alterations as the body of the building projects beyond the two-story Ionic pilaster which formerly marked this corner. In addition, the 1929 reconstruction eliminated the third interior chimney, the the two end wall chimneys which stand today.

In 1975, the library's facilities were deemed inadequate to serve the needs of Corning. When the Joseph J. Nasser Civic Plaza was built in 1975, a new library was constructed, replacing the World War Memorial Library. In 1976, Steuben County began leasing the building from the City of Corning and interior renovations were undertaken to accommodate increased office space.

**17. INTERRELATIONSHIP OF BUILDING AND SURROUNDINGS:**

The World War Memorial Library is situated on the northwest corner of Pine and West First streets. The main or east facade is set back roughly forty-five feet from West First Street, as entry is gained by climbing a flight of stairs from the sidewalk level to the library's portico. In relation to its more residential western and northern neighbors, the building is monumental in size and dominates its corner location. West of the library is a

vacant lot which is currently used for parking. Nevertheless, the building is closely interrelated to the other public structures in the vicinity. For example, east of the Library, across Pine Street sits the First Presbyterian Church. South of the Library across West First Street sits the Steuben County Courthouse in Courthouse Park. Hence, the presence of the World War Memorial Library and other public edifices indicate a transitional zone in the Southside neighborhood, characterized by commercial and public structures.

## **18. OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING AND SITE:**

The World War Memorial Library is an excellent example of a two-and-a-half-story Neoclassical Style public building. Popular in New York State between 1890-1940, McAlester's *Field Guide to American Houses* notes that the Neoclassical Style is identified by a full-height porch with a roof, supported by Ionic or Corinthian columns. Overall, the facades reflect symmetry with balanced windows and a centered door on the principal facade. Originally constructed in 1897, the masonry building suffered a major fire in 1926 which totally ravaged its interior. The building which survives today has been reconstructed from the shell of the original building which functioned as the Corning City Club.

The main or east facade includes many notable features. The facade is five bays wide, punctuated by a balanced fenestration pattern. The first and fifth bays are dominated by oriels on the first story, containing twelve-over-twelve double-hung sash. The oriel is embellished with classical detailing as it sits on a paneled base, crowned by a classical entablature. The floor above contains a triple window as two nine-over-nine double-hung sash flank a larger fifteen-over-fifteen window. This same window is repeated in the pedimented gabled dormer, over the first and fifth bays.

Continuation Sheet, Page 2

149 Pine Street

Corning, New York

**18. OTHER NOTABLE FEATURES OF BUILDING AND SITE (con't.):**

The second and fourth bays contain fifteen-over-fifteen double-hung sash on the both stories. The central bay is dominated by paneled double doors with a toplight above. The entry is flanked by fluted pilaster strips which support a full entablature . Balanced above the entablature sits a broken swan's neck pediment such as those found on Neoclassical structures. The window above the entry once contained the Memorial Window by Frederick Carder but is now filled with plate glass. The entire facade is dominated by a two-story pedimented portico, supported by four colossal wood Ionic columns. These columns are mirrored on the facade by Ionic pilasters which flank the first and fifth bays. The frieze in the entablature below the pediment is inscribed with "World War Memorial Library." The pediment itself is adorned with an oculus window, embellished with floral swags.

Because the north facade has been obstructed by a fire escape, the south facade serves as a better representation of the side facade. On the first and second story, the facade is two bays long, with the standard fifteen-over-fifteen windows. The first story windows are adorned with a flat arch in masonry, accentuated by a keystone above and lug sill below. Ionic pilasters on the east and west corners support an entablature with a cornice which serves to divide the top half-story from the principal two stories. This area is four bays wide, defined by smaller six-over-six sash. Quarter circle lunettes are placed above these windows to unify the facade. Paneled end wall chimneys divide this facade into two distinct halves and occur on both the north and south facades.

According to the Sanborn maps, the west or rear facade underwent the most extensive alterations during the 1929 reconstruction. Before the fire, the facade contained a central projecting portion. Following the fire, this portion was extended in the northwest corner to accommodate a rear entry to the library. The extension is most evident on the north facade where the Ionic pilaster is no longer at the northwest corner, but set back, indicating alterations have occurred. As a result, the west facade is the most irregular and contains none of the symmetry discernable on the east facade. The second story window in the northwest corner contains the same triple window which occurs on the main facade. However, below this window, there is a bricked-in window, made evident by the surround. Two other fifteen-over-fifteen windows occur toward the southwest corner but do not maintain the rhythmic pattern of the other facades. This entire projecting portion is dominated by a six bay shed dormer with eight-over-eight windows. Two bays at the southwest corner remain from before the reconstruction. While the first story window contains a single nine-over-nine double hung sash, the second story contains two nine-over-nine sash. The rear entry to the library obstructs the regularity once present at this corner. A pedimented gabled dormer has also been retained from the original building and contains the same fifteen-over-fifteen double hung sash present on the east facade.

Other notable features of the building include the roof and foundation. The roof assumes a gambrel form and is sheathed in slate. The shed and pedimented gabled dormers are also sheathed in slate. The foundation is constructed of ashlar masonry blocks, laid in regular courses. At the northeast corner of the east facade, the foundation assumes the form of the oriel above and contains nine-over-nine double-hung sash. However, at the southeast corner, the foundation shrinks in size, indicating the building was banked into a slight incline. This is further emphasized by the oriel form containing six-over-six double-hung sash.

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149 Pine Street

Corning, New York

**20. HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE:**

The World War Memorial Library is architecturally significant as an example of classically inspired civic architecture from the turn of the century in Corning. Erected in 1897 as the Corning City Club, the building suffered a terrible conflagration in 1926 and as a result, was reconstructed in 1929 to serve as both a library and a memorial to Corning natives who lost their lives in World War I. The original building was designed by Joseph Pierce and Hiram Bickford, Elmira-based architects who had designed many of Corning's most prominent residences and public buildings between 1890-1931. The reconstruction occurred under the direction of Palmer Rogers, another New York architect who had designed several public buildings in the Corning vicinity.

The library is located on the southern portion of lot 16 in Block 65, on the northwest corner of Pine and West First Streets. The plot was purchased by Elizabeth Stewart from Erastus Corning and Joseph Fellows, primary agents of the Corning Land Company, for \$150.00 in 1847. In 1871, Elizabeth Stewart sold the land to Catherine Rogers, the widow of Daniel D. Rogers, a local grocer who was part owner of Hadger & Rogers grocery on Pine Street in the mid-19th century. During this period, the Rogers made their home on this lot at 126 Pine Street, the future site of the library. In 1895, Nellie Rogers Mills, daughter of the late Catherine Rogers, sold the lot containing 126 Pine Street to the Corning City Club for \$5,000.00.

The trustees of the City Club hired Pierce and Bickford to design their new edifice, conveniently located south of Corning's burgeoning commercial district. In the early 1890s Pierce and Bickford had established their reputation in Corning by designing numerous residences for Corning's wealthy citizens. In 1893, the firm was hired by Corning Cooperative Savings and Loan President James A. Drake to design a commercial building to house a department store and offices above. Built in the style of an Italian Renaissance palazzo, Pierce and Bickford demonstrated their preference for classical architecture as they believed it was the truest expression of the taste and feeling of a given culture. Hence, the City Club was erected in the Neoclassical Style.

The 1926 fire gutted the roof and interior of the masonry building but left the shell intact. When the building was remodeled in 1929, a colossal Ionic portico replaced its single story predecessor on the east or principal facade. The Corning Building Company was responsible for the project. Furthermore, the west facade was extended to accommodate the needs of the library which resulted in the addition of a band of shed dormer windows and rear entries to serve this new public. The new building was planned to utilize three floors plus the basement level. The main reading room and reference rooms were located on the second floor, flanking the central hall which was dedicated to the sacrifices made by those who participated in the First World War. Until this time, the city had not officially recognized this tragedy. Corning's heroes were memorialized in a window designed by Frederick Carder and placed over the main entry on the east facade. Carder figures prominently in Corning's reputation as a center specializing in the production of fine cut glass and engraving. Carder himself emphasized in-house blown art glass in the Steuben Glass Works founded in 1903. The window was cast of Bristol yellow glass with the names of thirty local war dead engraved in the central panel, surrounded by a border of variegated glass squares. It has since been removed from the building.

Continuation Sheet, Page 4

149 Pine Street

Corning, New York

**20: HISTORICAL AND ARCHITECTURAL SIGNIFICANCE (con't.):**

The rehabilitation of the library was financed by the Corning community. The Library Committee successfully raised \$75,000 for the purchase of both the building and equipment and turned it over to the city of Corning free of debt. This grand gesture is a true indication of the public spirit which characterized the community at that time. The World War Memorial Library should be recognized as a building possessing both state and local significance. Its original design by Pierce and Bickford and later conversion to a public library and war memorial indicate the building's importance to Corning's inhabitants.

**21. SOURCES:**

Auwaeter, John, Reconnaissance Level Survey, Southside Neighborhood, Corning, NY: Phase II: Historic Overview, Corning, New York: Southside Neighborhood Association, 1991.

Corning Building Company, 100 Years in Corning: The Corning Building Company, 1848-1948. Corning (?): Cartwright & Sons, 1948.

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World War Memorial Library Committee. "A Memorial to the Soldiers of the World War: The Proposed World War Memorial Library." The Library Committee, 1929 (?).

Continuation Sheet, Page 1  
149 Pine Street  
Corning, New York

**11c. INTEGRITY:**

Following a 1926 fire which gutted the building then known as the City Club, 149 Pine Street was reconstructed to house the World War Memorial Library. In order to accommodate this new function, the projection pavilion on the west facade was extended. At this point, a shed dormer six bays wide was appended to provide more natural light for library patrons. The southwest corner of this facade was also altered to include a rear entry to the first floor. The northwest corner reveals the most extensive alterations as the body of

the building projects beyond the two story Ionic pilaster which formerly marked this corner. In addition, the 1929 reconstruction eliminated the third interior chimney, the the two end wall chimneys which stand today.

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149 Pine Street  
Corning, New York

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