United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

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

1. Name

historic

and/or common  Fourth Ward School

2. Location

street & number  8 Washington Street

city, town Seneca Falls

3. Classification

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Category</th>
<th>Ownership</th>
<th>Status</th>
<th>Present Use</th>
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<td>public</td>
<td>occupied</td>
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<td>building(s)</td>
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<td>unoccupied</td>
<td>commercial</td>
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<tr>
<td>structure</td>
<td>both</td>
<td>work in progress</td>
<td>educational</td>
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<td>site</td>
<td>Public Acquisition</td>
<td>X: work in progress</td>
<td>entertainment</td>
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<tr>
<td>object</td>
<td>NA in process</td>
<td>X: yes: restricted</td>
<td>government</td>
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<tr>
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<td>NA being considered</td>
<td>X: yes: unrestricted</td>
<td>industrial</td>
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4. Owner of Property

name  Mark Chaplin

street & number  157 Griffith Street

city, town Rochester

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Seneca County Courthouse

street & number  West Williams Street

city, town Waterloo

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

N.Y. Statewide Inventory of Historic Resources

has this property been determined eligible?  yes X no

date May 16, 1984

depository for survey records N.Y.S. Division for Historic Preservation

city, town Albany

state N.Y. 12238
7. Description

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Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

See Continuation Sheet
### 8. Significance

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<td>___ archeology-historic ___ conservation ___ law ___ science</td>
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<td>___ invention ___ other (specify) ___</td>
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**Specific dates** 1869 - 1896/1904  Builder/ Architect John Bowers, carpenter; R. Jacobson, mason

**Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)**

See Continuation Sheet
9. Major Bibliographical References

See continuation sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property .75 acres

Quadrangle name: Seneca Falls

UTM References

A 1 8 3 5 3 9 4 0 4 7 5 2 2 0

Zone Easting Northing B

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

Verbal boundary description and justification

See enclosed map

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

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>state</th>
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<th>county</th>
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11. Form Prepared By

SEE CONTINUATION SHEET

name/title: Nancy Todd, National Register Program Assistant

organization: N.Y.S. Division for Historic Preservation

street & number: Empire State Plaza, Agency Bldg#1
telephone: 518-474-0479

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: [Signature]

date: February, 1986

For NPS use only

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

Keeper of the National Register: [Signature]

date: 3/9/86

Chief of Registration: [Signature]
The Fourth Ward School is located at 8 Washington Street in the Fourth Ward neighborhood in Seneca Falls, New York and is within the boundaries of the locally designated Seneca Falls Historic District and the federally designated Women's Rights National Historical Park. (The Elizabeth Cady Stanton House is located one and one-half blocks north at 32 Washington Street.) The Fourth Ward neighborhood will not be included as part of the proposed Seneca Falls National Register Historic District now under consideration by the New York State Historic Preservation Office. Although the turn-of-the-century houses in the Fourth Ward exhibit a great degree of uniformity in massing, style and material, the State Historic Preservation Office has determined that, due to extensive alterations, they lack sufficient architectural integrity as a group to meet the National Register criteria for evaluation.

The school building is sited near the northern boundary of the lot line on a flat, grassy, treeless, .75 acre lot; its main elevation faces Washington Street to the west. Surrounded by relatively modest, two-story wood frame, vernacular houses which grew up around it in the late nineteenth century, the red brick schoolhouse is a visual focal point in the residential neighborhood. It is the largest building in the neighborhood, the only brick structure in the immediate area, and the only institutional
structure in the Fourth Ward. While the houses in the Fourth Ward are situated on relatively small, urban lots close to the street, the schoolhouse is located near the center of the large and deep lot. All these features call attention to the structure and add to its visual prominence in the neighborhood. The nomination includes one contributing building.

The Fourth Ward School, erected ca. 1869, is a T-shaped brick building with Italianate style features. The building is composed of a rectangular, two-story, hip-roofed main block flanked by two one-story, gable-roofed service wings (added ca. 1896 - 1904). The cubic-massed main block features a hipped roof sheathed with standing seam, galvanized metal and is surmounted by a prominent cupola. Brick interior chimneys, located slightly off-center on the north and south elevations, pierce the roofline. Broadly projecting eaves and a wide, unembellished freize accentuate the roofline. Fenestration generally is regular. Segmentally arched window openings with shouldered brick lintels and dressed stone sills contain six-over-six or two-over-two double-hung sash windows. In scale, form, configuration and detailing, the school is essentially an adaption for civic use of a typical Italianate style residential form common in the region during the period.
The three-bay-wide front (west) facade of the main block features regular fenestration. The centrally located main entrance features slightly recessed, paired, original wooden doors surmounted by a six-paned transom light and a segmentally arched, shouldered brick lintel. A wooden hood with a decorative wooden cornice supported by scroll brackets surmounts the entrance. The doors, originally reached by wooden steps, are now reached by a three-step concrete stoop added in the early to mid twentieth century. Segmentally arched openings contain six-over-six double-hung windows. The north bay of the first story, converted from a window into a secondary entrance in the early to mid twentieth century, has since been converted back into a window opening. Visually dominating the facade is the wood frame cupola atop the hipped roof. The cupola features a low-pitched, hipped roof now sheathed with standing-seam, galvanized metal (but originally sheathed with wooden shingles). Each elevation of the cupola features a tripartite, louvered window unit surrounded by simple wooden trim. Originally it housed the school bell. The finial, which originally surmounted the cupola, was removed in the early twentieth century.

The two one-story side wings, added to the main block ca. 1896 - ca. 1904, are flush with the plane of the front facade. Each wing, originally housing lavatory and office facilities,
features a gable, metal-tiled roof with simple cornice returns. The north wing features a single, slightly off-center window in the front elevation with no openings in the side or rear elevations. The south bay contains a pair of slightly asymmetrically placed windows in the front elevation, one symmetrically placed in the side (south) and one in the rear (east) elevation. The segmentally arched openings feature shouldered brick lintels and cast cement sills and contain two-over-two double-hung sash windows.

The three-bay-wide, side (north and south) elevations of the main block feature slightly irregular fenestration, the windows having been placed toward the rear section of the structure, leaving a solid brick wall on the west side for the internal stairwells. The one-story side wings were added against these blank walls. The regularly spaced, segmentally arched openings with shouldered brick lintels contain six-over-six double-hung sash windows. While the north elevation has remained relatively intact over the years, the south elevation of the main block has been altered. A rectangular window over the rear gable of the south wing was added sometime after 1933. It has since been converted back to a brick wall. Also sometime after 1933, the center window on the first floor of the south elevation was converted into a garage door opening. Later, it was converted
into a single door and rectangular window opening, the window placed to the left (west) of the door. The present owners have maintained the post-1933 door and window openings although new windows and a new door have been installed.

The rear (east) elevation is four bays wide and features regular fenestration. Originally, the openings were all segmentally arched with shouldered brick surrounds containing six-over-six double-hung sash windows. Sometime after 1933, the two center windows on the first floor were converted to doors. The present owners have maintained the doors on the main floor and converted the two center windows on the second floor into secondary entrances. In addition, a wooden porch and stairs serving the four apartments has been added.

The Fourth Ward School has a partially excavated basement and an interior brick bearing wall on the first floor which bisects the building into north and south compartments. At the main entrance, a vestibule (oriented north-south) provides access into the classrooms on the first floor. The vestibule once contained two curving staircases, one in the northwest corner and one in the southwest corner. Only the northwest staircase remains. The room configuration on the second floor was originally identical to the first except the vestibule was divided into three compartments. The north and south compartments served
as an entryway into the respective classroom, and the middle compartment was originally constructed as a library. Sometime after its construction, the second-floor vestibule partitions were removed. They have since been replaced by the present owner. Two large wooden posts on the second floor, one located in the center of the building near the front wall and the other in the center near the rear wall, support a massive truss system. A single pocket door originally separating the two rooms on the second floor has been replaced by an interior partition. Over the years, the structure has undergone considerable interior alterations including the removal of the southwest staircase, the cutting doors through the bearing walls into the north and south additions for access into the lavatory and office facilities, and the division of the internal space of the four classrooms into separate apartments. Current restoration plans retain the overall configuration, two rooms on the first floor and two rooms on the second, by sub-dividing each original room into separate living units.

Despite the alterations made to the Fourth Ward School over the years, much of the significant interior detail still remains. The most dramatic feature is the curved staircase which has a graceful wooden handrail and turned newel post. Most of the wainscot around the interior of the exterior walls is intact as
are the lath and plaster walls above it, the beaded tongue and groove ceiling on the first floor, the pressed metal ceiling on the second floor (dating from the early twentieth century), and the narrow maple floor boards throughout. More obvious reminders of the building's original function which remain include a blackboard (believed to date from the early twentieth century) in the north apartment on the second floor, a bathroom stall, and a ladder leading to the cupola. The bell, which announced the beginning and end of the school day for 64 years, was sold at the estate sale following the previous occupant's death.
Built in 1869, the Fourth Ward School in Seneca Falls, New York is architecturally significant as a distinctive example of mid-nineteenth century schoolhouse architecture in Central New York. As a building type, it illustrates the mid- to late nineteenth century evolution of schoolhouse architecture from one-room schoolhouses to larger buildings which featured segregated classrooms, each with its own teacher. A typical example, it embodies many of the features that were popular in schoolhouse design during that period including a symmetrical plan, modern amenities and separate classrooms occupied by students segregated according to age. Stylistically, the Fourth Ward School is a representative example of the Italianate style. Although it is a civic building, in form, massing and detailing, it is essentially an adaptation of Italianate style residential architecture forms common in the region during the period. Italianate style attributes embodied in the building include the cubic massing, a low-pitched hipped roof surmounted by a prominent cupola, broadly projecting eaves and a wide unembellished frieze. The school also reflects an important aspect in the development of public education in New York State because its construction was, to a great extent, initiated by state legislation in 1867 which abolished the rate-bill thereby making public education "free," and consolidated local schools into
larger districts, which gave the local school board more control over raising funds. Within the context of the city of Seneca Falls, the Fourth Ward School is significant for its association with the industrial expansion and the population growth of Seneca Falls during the mid-nineteenth century and the consequent expansion of the city's school system. A visual focal point in the Fourth Ward neighborhood, the school serves as an important reminder of the nineteenth century growth and prosperity of the neighborhood and the city.

Like many communities along the Erie Canal and its feeders, Seneca Falls grew with break-neck speed after the completion of the canal in 1825. That year, Seneca Falls was a small community with only three mills built along the 45-foot drop in the Seneca River. Thirty five years later, in 1860, it was a bustling city renowned for the production of pumps and fire engines. The local economy had become nationally and internationally based, and the capital that was generated nurtured other industries and spawned a wealthy industrial class interested in art and culture. Literary societies and social clubs developed, band concerts were held and theatre became a diversion. The dramatic growth in population as well as a growing interest in the arts put tremendous pressure on the local schools. Seneca Falls's common schools were funded, as were all common schools in New York at the time, only
in part by state funds administered by the State Superintendent of Public Education. It was the responsibility of the local communities to provide funds through taxing district property owners and through a rate-bill which placed a direct charge on the parents of the children attending school.\(^1\) While there was considerable support in Seneca Falls for improved public education through increased funding on both the state and local levels, it was not until 1867 -- two years before the construction of the Fourth Ward School -- that major improvements began to occur. That year, the New York State legislature abolished the rate-bill, thereby making education, at least theoretically, available to everyone.\(^2\) In addition, the legislature redrew the district boundaries and several common schools were consolidated.\(^3\) At the same time, the Seneca Falls Academy, until then a private institution charged with "rounding out the system (of education) by furnishing means for higher culture," \(^4\) was placed under the authority of the Board of Education. Thus, all levels of schools in Seneca Falls were placed under the auspices of one governing body, allowing for improved allocation and use of local resources. The Board immediately levied a tax on property owners that year\(^5\) and raised the taxes again in 1868. These measures, however, did not resolve the over-crowding in the area schools.
By the middle of the nineteenth century, patterns of settlement and land use were emerging. The businessman built their businesses on the north side of the Seneca River, in the First and Second Wards, and constructed their imposing homes along Cayuga Street, also north of the river. The mill and factory workers lived south of the river, in the Third and Fourth Wards. Two small, one-room schoolhouses (dating from the 1830s) served the educational needs of the Third and Fourth Wards. The Fourth Ward Schoolhouse played an important role in the immediate area, serving as the focal point around which rapid development and expansion during the third quarter of the century in the Fourth Ward neighborhood occurred.

In May, 1868, the Board called a tax meeting in order to discuss the construction of a school on the south side of the Seneca River. Few people attended the meeting. The Board of Education did not have to wait long for public interest to develop. In August, three months after the meeting, the one-room brick schoolhouse built in the 1830's at 8 Washington Street in the Fourth Ward was destroyed by fire started by "incendiaries."7 The Finance Committee of the Board of Education levied $4,000 in bonds in order to pay for the construction of the new Fourth Ward School on the site of the first schoolhouse.8 It was ready for occupancy at the beginning of the 1868-69 school year.
The additional school rooms, however, did not ease the pressure on the Seneca Falls school system. As a result, two years later, in 1871, a new Third Ward six-room schoolhouse was constructed on the site of a previous school which had been built in the 1830's. Of the four schools which formed the Seneca Falls school district at this time [the Third Ward School, the Fourth Ward School, the Union school (serving the children of the First and Second Wards), and the Seneca Falls Academy] only the Fourth Ward School is extant.

The exact source of the design of the Fourth Ward School is unknown although in form, scale and style it appears to be derived from Italianate style residential architecture of the period. Two local names are associated with its construction: John Bowers, a carpenter, joiner and framer, and Robert Jacobson, a mason. Certain elements popular in schoolhouse design during the mid- to late nineteenth century and found in the Fourth Ward School were featured in schoolhouse pattern books of that period. These include the symmetrical placement of the two rooms on the first floor and two rooms above reached by two curving staircases (only one survives today), the volume, shape and capacity of the classrooms, the separation of the two classrooms on the second floor by pocket doors, and the prominent siting of the schoolhouse. These features, for the most part, were related to the
comfort of the students, an increasingly important consideration in school architecture during the time, and to the educational movement underway which segregated children according to age and placed them in separate classrooms, each with its own teacher.

An article in a Seneca Falls newspaper, The Reveille, aptly touts the Fourth Ward School as being, in "all respects," the "finest one in the county."11

Stylistically, the Fourth Ward School represents a vernacular adaption for civic use of the Italianate style. It is the only institutional version of the style remaining in Seneca Falls today. Distinctive characteristics of the period and style embodied in the structure include the cubic massing, the low-pitched hipped roof surmounted by a prominent cupola and regular fenestration. Restrained decorative detailing typical of the style includes the wide, unembellished frieze, the ornamental entrance hood and the brick embellishments above the window openings.

The Fourth Ward School served the elementary school children of the Fourth Ward until 1933 when the First, Third and Fourth Ward Schools were consolidated and the larger Elizabeth Cady Stanton School was built on Garden Street as one of the first WPA projects. After the Fourth Ward School closed, Howard B. Warner, an electrician and long-time resident, purchased the building and
converted it into apartments. Although the Fourth Ward School was the subject of several unsympathetic alterations, Warner's conversion was rather haphazard and much of the original interior fabric remains intact. Warner owned the building until his death in 1981.

In 1984, the Trust for Public Land, a national land conservation organization, purchased the Fourth Ward School from the estate of Mr. Warner. The not-for-profit organization stabilized the school and maintained it, and sold it in 1985 to Mark Chaplin. He and his partner, John Strawway, are converting the structure into four apartments, being careful to maintain the historical integrity of the schoolhouse. The substantially intact schoolhouse remains an important reminder of mid- to late nineteenth century school architecture, a representative example of Italianate style architecture and a prominent local landmark in the Fourth Ward community.
FOOTNOTES


2 Ibid., p. 319.


5 The Reveille, 12 June 1967, p. 4.

6 "Tax Meeting," The Reveille, 8 May 1868, p. 4.

7 "School House Burned," The Reveille, 7 August 1868, p. 4.

8 The Reveille, 18, September, 1868, p. 4.

9 Seneca County Directory, 1867-1868, pp. 10, 141.


BIBLIOGRAPHY


Henion, Anne E. "Early Schools of Seneca Falls." 1803-1903 One Hundredth Anniversary of the Town of Junius, Historical papers Read Before the Seneca Falls historical Society. New York: n.d.


Seneca Falls Historical Society, Seneca Falls, New York.

Seneca Falls Reveille, 12 June 1967, 8 May, 7 August, 18 September 1868, 7 August 1869.
Research documentation and draft nomination prepared by:

Mary Williams Neustadter
300 West 106th St.
New York, N.Y. 10025
Fourth Ward School
8 Washington Street
Seneca Falls, Seneca Co., NY
Street map of Fourth Ward neighborhood
Fourth Ward School
8 Washington Street
Seneca Falls, Seneca Co., NY
Photo: N. Todd, 1986
Neg: Div. for Historic Preservation
View: 1 west (front) facade
Fourth Ward School
8 Washington Street
Seneca Falls, Seneca Co., NY
Photo: N. Todd, 1986
Neg: Div. for Historic Preservation
View: 2 south elevation
Fourth Ward School
8 Washington Street
Seneca Falls, Seneca Co., NY
Photo: N. Todd, 1986
Neg: Div. for Historic Preservation
View: 3 south and east (rear) elevations
Fourth Ward School
8 Washington Street
Seneca Falls, Seneca Co., NY
Photo: N. Todd, 1986
Neg: Div. for Historic Preservation
View: 4 front entrance detail
Fourth Ward School
8 Washington Street
Seneca Falls, Seneca Co., NY
Photo: N. Todd, 1986
Neg: Div. for Historic Preservation
View: 5 cupola detail