

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

# National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations of eligibility for individual properties or districts. See instructions in *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories listed in the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

### 1. Name of Property

historic name Brighton Town Hall  
other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

### 2. Location

street & number 12 County Route 31  not for publication  
city or town Brighton  vicinity  
state New York code NY county Franklin code 033 zip code 12970

### 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I certify that this  nomination  request for determination of eligibility meets the documentation standards for registering properties in the National Register of Historic Places and meets the procedural and professional requirements set forth in 36 CFR Part 60. In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally.  See continuation sheet for additional comments.

[Signature] SAPPO 9/7/03  
Commissioner / State Historic Preservation Officer  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date

New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation  
State or Federal agency and bureau

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria.  See continuation sheet for additional comments.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature of certifying official/Title Date  
\_\_\_\_\_  
State or Federal agency and bureau

### 4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:	Signature of the Keeper	Date of Action
<input type="checkbox"/> entered in the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined eligible for the National Register. <input type="checkbox"/> See continuation sheet.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> determined not eligible for the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> removed from the National Register.	_____	_____
<input type="checkbox"/> other, (explain:) _____	_____	_____

**Brighton Town Hall**

Name of Property

**Franklin County, New York**

County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

- private
- public-local
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

- building(s)
- district
- site
- structure
- object

**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1		buildings
		sites
		structures
1		objects
2		Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

(Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing.)

N/A

**Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register**

0

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/town hall

SOCIAL/meeting hall

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

GOVERNMENT/town hall

SOCIAL/meeting hall

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Bungalow/Craftsman

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation fieldstone

walls Cedar shingles

roof metal

other

**Narrative Description**

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

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NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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Brighton Town Hall  
Franklin County, NY

Section number 7 Page 1

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### **Narrative Description**

The Brighton Town Hall is located on a one-third acre lot on the southeast corner of the intersection of State Rte. 86 and County Rte. 31 in the town of Brighton. The rural town of Brighton lies within the Adirondack Mountains and the Adirondack State Park in one of the most northern of New York's counties, Franklin, which reaches to the Canadian border. The town has no villages, only one hamlet, and four small settlements. The nearest village is Saranac Lake, 10 miles to the south.

### **Site**

Looking west from the front of the town hall is the front lawn with flagpole, a granite war memorial (a contributing resource), and a rail fence separating the lawn from a parking area. The western boundary of the property is marked by NY Rte. 86. Behind the building, to the east, is another parking area, and beyond that forestland. North of the building is County Rte 31. To the south of the building is Weller Brook, which runs south toward Lower St. Regis Lake. A little further south along NY Rte. 86 is the community of "Easy Street" where the guides of the famous Paul Smith's Hotel built their homes, many prior to the building of the town hall. They felt that they had such a good life guiding that their neighborhood became known as "Easy Street."

### **Exterior**

The Brighton Town Hall is a modest one-story shingled Craftsman/Bungalow Style building of a modified rectangular plan designed and built by Ben Muncil in 1914. The exterior of the rectangular building measures 58 feet in length and 35 feet at the widest (in the midsection) and rests on a fieldstone (from glacial till) foundation with an accessible crawl space beneath. One of the building's most striking features is the front and rear three telescoping (or graduating) gables with exposed rafters and decorative braces. There are three such gables at the front and four at the back of the building. These graduating gables account for the variation in the width of interior spaces, and are a signature feature of many of the local master builder, Ben Muncil's other bungalows. The exterior walls are of dark brown stained cedar shingles, as was probably once the roof (according to building specifications) which is now of dark green metal. On the roof ridge are two barn style metal vents and a cobblestone chimney. Cobblestone piers at the front of the building are another distinctive feature of the building. Two tall cobblestone piers support the porch floor and roof and appear in good condition. Two cobblestone piers anchoring the front stairs are in need of rebuilding according to a local stonemason, as are two additional short piers under the stairs also supporting the porch floor. Two large double hung windows, with six across and three horizontal panes in the upper sash and one large pane in the lower sash, flank the double glazed front doors that have four horizontal and seven vertical panes. There is also a nine-paned horizontal transom over the doors. There is a band of five windows identical to those on the front along the north side of the building and a band of

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*Brighton Town Hall*  
Franklin County, NY

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four windows plus an additional small window along the south side. In the back there are two very small windows. A short stairway at the rear of the building on the north side leads up to a small gable roofed entryway porch with a side door into the kitchen.

**Interior**

The interior contains a large meeting room, 30 feet by 34 feet, and four small spaces in back. The meeting room has walls of oak stained and varnished pine horizontal tongue and groove wainscoting from floor to ceiling. It has a drop tile ceiling which upon inspection above shows the historic wainscoted ceiling. The linoleum tile floor presumably covers a birchwood flooring (according to building specifications). Behind the meeting room are a small kitchen, toilet room, brick lined vault, and the furnace room. Interior walls of the kitchen and toilet are painted wainscoting. There is drywall in the furnace room. A closet built into the meeting room has the same wainscoting as the main room on two interior walls (probably original to the meeting room), which is also on the walls facing the main room now. There is a small area partitioned from the meeting room with plywood to house a computer and copier. The large windows of the meeting room and the one in the kitchen, as well as the front and side doors, have wide molding surrounds with decorative corners on the lintels: a bas relief round in a square.

**Alterations**

Alterations to the town hall have been minimal over the years. Plans for the 1914 town hall found in the town hall vault show that the building was to have three telescoping gables in the front and three in the back. The building now has three in the front and four in the back. The fourth encloses the furnace room, which we think was added early on for storage. The plans also show a covered front porch with two stone piers supporting the porch up to the roof, two more stone piers anchoring a flight of stairs to the raised porch floor, all of which the building currently has. It was to have a large main room, which is the current meeting room, and behind that two small rooms, one labeled "clerk's office" and the other for three voting booths. Apparently, early on a decision was made to include a vault, which partially replaced the planned clerk's office. On November 6, 1914, the town board resolved to raise \$350 to complete the vault in the town hall. The rest of what was to be the clerk's office probably became a closet for storage. Some time later the closet became a toilet, and a new closet was built into the main room. Also, at some time the voting booths became a small kitchen (remains today). In 1973, according to town board minutes, the floor was braced up and ceiling and floor tiling was added. Later a metal roof was put on. A small room for computer and copier later was partitioned from the main room. In the 1990's, the old windows were replaced with double pane windows with faux panes in the same number and arrangement as the originals. During this time also, a 4-1/2 foot square was cut out of the porch floor to install a lift for handicap access. This is the extent of changes over the years, none major, leaving the building essentially as it was originally designed and built.

Brighton Town Hall

Franklin County, New York

Name of Property

County and State

8 Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

(Mark "x" in one or more boxes for the criteria qualifying the property for National Register listing.)

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria considerations

(mark "x" in all the boxes that apply.)

Property is:

- A owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
B removed from its original location.
C a birthplace or grave.
D a cemetery.
E a reconstructed building, object or structure.
F a commemorative property.
G less than 50 years of age or achieved significance within the past 50 years.

Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

(cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

Previous documentation on file (NPS):

- preliminary determination of individual listing (36 CFR 67) has been requested
previously listed in the National Register
previously determined eligible by the National Register
designated a National Historic Landmark
recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey
recorded by Historic American Engineering Record

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions)

- Politics/Government
Architecture
Social History

Period of Significance

1914 - 1953

Significant Dates

1914

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Muncil, Benjamin A.

Primary location of additional data

- x State Historic Preservation Office
Other State agency
Federal agency
Local government
University
Other

Name of repository:

United States Department of the Interior  
National Park Service

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Brighton Town Hall  
Franklin County, NY

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### **Statement of Significance**

The Brighton Town Hall is historically significant in the areas of architecture, social history and government/politics. Designed and built by master builder Ben Muncil in 1914, the town hall is a highly intact example of early 20th century Craftsman/Bungalow Style architecture adapted for use as a civic building. Locally, the Brighton Town Hall is an important and beloved historic resource, the only historic building owned by the people of the town. This town hall, representative of the work of a local master builder, has been the seat of the town governing body as well as the center for many social activities over the years.

### **Historic Context**

The Brighton Town Hall is located in the northern section of the approximately six million-acre Adirondack Park (Adirondack Forest Preserve). Unlike other parks, the Adirondack Park is a patchwork of private and state lands protected under state law. Before 1815, the area that became Brighton was traversed by Mohawk and Abenaki Indians, hunting, fishing, and harvesting wild berries and plants. By 1815, white people began settling in the area. The terrain is composed of forested mountains, flat plains, and many lakes. The forests lent themselves to logging, the flat lands to farming, and the lakes to sports and tourism. By 1851, a lumber mill had been established in Keeses Mills, and James Wardner had begun farming in Rainbow Lake and soon built the Rainbow Inn, taking in tourists.

In 1858, the town of Brighton, population 200, was "set off" from the town of Duane, now to its north. In 1859, Apollos (Paul) Smith started what became before the turn of the century the famous Paul Smith's Hotel in Brighton, which eventually accommodated 500 guests. In 1873, Dr. Edward Livingston Trudeau, very sick with tuberculosis (TB), came to stay at Paul Smith's Hotel. It was here that he discovered the "mountain cure" for tuberculosis and established two TB sanatoria in Brighton, and his most famous one in nearby Saranac Lake. During this time, and along with other doctors, Trudeau helped found the Adirondack Park Association, which lobbied for the establishment of the park to preserve the natural beauty and character of the Adirondacks. Dr. Trudeau had a camp on the St. Regis Lakes in Brighton; he and his family are buried in St. John's in the Wilderness Church cemetery in Brighton.

In 1882, Whitelaw Reid I built a camp on the Upper St. Regis Lake in Brighton (which is still in the Reid family and owned by his son Whitelaw Reid II). As editor and publisher of the New York Tribune, Whitelaw Reid I supported preservation of the Adirondack forest and the creation of an

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Brighton Town Hall  
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Adirondack Park. The park, which includes the town of Brighton, was finally created by state legislation in 1892, followed in 1894 by the addition into the state constitution of the "forever wild" clause, thus constitutionally protecting the public lands from exploitation.

By the end of the 19<sup>th</sup> century, the Adirondacks had become a popular vacation resort, now easily accessed by the railroad. Camps were built for the wealthy on the lakes, employing still more people. Paul Smith extended his hotel operation by buying up land and forming a hydroelectric company serving the town of Brighton. Five small settlements developed in the town as the population increased.

Brighton's first town supervisor was James Wardner. For years the town board met in various private buildings and the town officers - the supervisor, clerk, assessor, justice, tax collector - worked out of their own homes. However, by 1912, with the town population now about 700, the owner of the private hall where board meetings and elections had been held, withdrew his offer. The town board then approved \$3,000 for the construction of a town hall. Later, by June 1914, the board accepted a building lot for the hall offered by Phelps Smith, president of the Paul Smith's Hotel Company and son of the then deceased (1912) Paul Smith.

The building's design and construction was awarded to Benjamin (Ben or "B.A.") A. Muncil, a distinguished local master builder and person of great importance in the history of construction in Brighton and the Adirondacks. Muncil rose from a very poor background to become a guide for the famous Paul Smith's Hotel, then a carpenter, then contractor, then very successful builder and designer of buildings. Sometimes using the designs of trained architects, sometimes adding his own design elements or doing the complete design himself, he built many of the famous camps on the St. Regis Lakes in Brighton, including Topridge (now on the National Register of Historic Places) for Marjorie Merriweather Post, chairman of General Foods, and Longwood for George S. Brewster on Spitfire Lake. Muncil was concerned to build structures appropriate to the rustic Adirondack setting. For example, for White Pine Camp (which served as the 1926 "summer White House" for President Coolidge) on Osgood Pond, Muncil invented "brainstorm siding," a rough cut clapboard, still used extensively in Adirondack architecture. Another notable camp that Muncil built on Osgood pond was Northbrook Lodge, now a resort. Muncil was so appreciated by his wealthy clients that they had him build large homes on Long Island, and the east coast of Virginia and South Carolina. He also built many small bungalow style homes for Brighton residents, as well as the Church of the Assumption in Brighton and St. Paul's Church in nearby Bloomingdale, Town of St. Armand, Essex County. Muncil built a large home and a lumber mill office for himself in Brighton, and even a water system complete with fire hydrants, unusual for the time, for the Keeses Mills settlement in Brighton. Adirondack Architectural Heritage (AARCH), the historic preservation organization for the Adirondacks, held a public tour of Ben Muncil buildings in 2002 which included the Brighton Town Hall.

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Since 1914, the Brighton Town Hall, the "people's house, has been associated with town governance and social events. Early activities included town board meetings, at which such issues as highway and cemetery maintenance, compensation for highway employee and town officials, elimination of railroad crossings due to fatalities and determining budgets, were decided. Over time, as town business increased, various town officials moved from doing business at home to working in the town hall, including the clerk, assessor and code enforcement officer. The town justice began holding court in the building, and the supervisor maintains a desk there. The building has served other governmental/political functions including voting, public hearings, political party caucuses, and town board committee meetings.

The Brighton Town Hall has served social as well as government/political functions over the years. We do not have records of the earliest social functions, but during WWII an Honor Roll listing those who were in service was placed in the hall, prior to the purchase of the memorial stone in 1945. In 1946, the Brighton American Legion Post No. 1397 was formed at a meeting in the town hall, after which the post held Memorial Day services there annually. A resident remembers that in the 1940's the public health service once gave out vaccinations in the hall. Many other groups have held meetings at the hall over the years, such as the Brighton Seniors Club, the 4H Club, The Rainbow Lake Water District, the Rainbow Lake Association, the North Woods Chapter of the Adirondack Mountain Club, the Brighton Architectural Heritage Committee, a quilting club, and Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts. A food co-op once met there, and for several years the Brighton Food Pantry has used the hall to store food and distribute it there to residents twice a month. The town hall is the only public hall in Brighton that can host the variety of organizations in the area. As the only historic building owned by the people, and since it was designed and built by the town's own local master builder, Ben Muncil, Brighton residents prize the town hall as a most important part of their heritage.



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Brighton Town Hall  
Franklin County, NY

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### Bibliography

- Brighton Architectural Heritage Committee (BAHC). *Brighton 2000* (book and CD). Brighton, NY: BAHC, 2000. (In Saranac Lake Library, Adirondack Collection; Paul Smith's College Library; APA Visitor Interpretive Center Library, Paul Smiths; North Country Community College Library.)
- Collins, Geraldine. *The Brighton Story, Being the history of Paul Smiths, Gabriels and Rainbow Lake*. Lakemont, NY: North Country Books, 1977.
- Donaldson, Alfred L. *A History of the Adirondacks*, Harbor Hill Books, 1977 (reprint of 1921 ed.).
- Gallos, Phil. Survey of Brighton Town Hall on a "Building Structure Inventory Form" of the Division of Historic Preservation, New York State Parks and Recreation, 12-30-84.
- Graham, Frank Jr. *The Adirondack Park - A Political History*, Syracuse, NY, Syracuse University Press, 1984.
- Hotaling, Mary. "Ben Muncil, Master Builder" *AARCH Newsletter*, Spring, 1997.
- Jamieson, Paul. *The Adirondack Reader*, Glens Falls, NY, The Adirondack Mountain Club, Inc., 1982.
- Kaiser, Harvey H. *Great Camps of the Adirondacks*. Boston, MA: David R. Godine, 1982.
- Leifheit, Christopher. Survey of the Brighton Town Hall lot to be conveyed to the Town of Brighton from Paul Smith's College, February 28, 2003.
- McGowan, Robert H. *Architecture from the Adirondack Foothills*. Malone, NY. Franklin County Historical Museum Society, 1977.
- Merrill, E.M. Typed description of Town Hall land as surveyed by E.M. Merrill. November 16, 1918. (In Town Hall vault)
- Muncil, Benjamin A. Floor plans and elevation drawings of the Brighton Town Hall. (In Town Hall vault)
- Pilcher, Edith. "Watchdog of the Preserve," printed in the *Conservationist* magazine, Jan-Fed, 1984. Paul Smith's College Museum. Paul Smiths, NY. Picture of Town Hall when first built.
- Smith, Phelps. Copy of a carbon copy of a letter to the Brighton Town Board offering property for a Town Hall.
- Specifications for the Brighton Town Hall. (In the Town Hall vault)
- Surprenant, Neil. "Ben Muncil: Builder of Great Camps." *Adirondac*, the magazine of the Adirondack Mountain Club, July, 1986.
- Town Clerk of Brighton. Minutes of Town Board meetings, November 7<sup>th</sup>, 1912 - April 5<sup>th</sup> 1916; January 11, 1973- May 17, 1973. (In Town Hall vault)

Brighton Town Hall

Name of Property

Franklin County, New York

County and State

**10. Geographical Data**

**Acreage of property** Less than one acre

**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	18	561072	4920910	3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
2				4			

See continuation sheet

**Verbal Boundary Description**

Heavy black outline on attached map defines boundaries of the nominated property

**Boundary Justification**

Boundaries were drawn along current legal lot lines, which are consistent with the property historically associated with the building.

**11. Form Prepared By**

name/title Patricia P. and Thomas M. Willis, Coordinators (Ed. By L. Garofalini, NYSOPRHP, 518-237-8643 ext. 3267)

organization Brighton Architectural Heritage Committee date 4/15/03

street & number 72 Garondah Rd., PO Box 34 telephone 518327-3433

city or town Rainbow Lake state NY zip code 12976

**Additional Documentation**

Submit the following items with the completed form:

**Continuation Sheets**

**Maps**

A **USGS map** (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

**Photographs**

Representative **black and white photographs** of the property.

**Additional items**

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

**Property Owner**

(Complete this item at the request of the SHPO or FPO.)

name \_\_\_\_\_

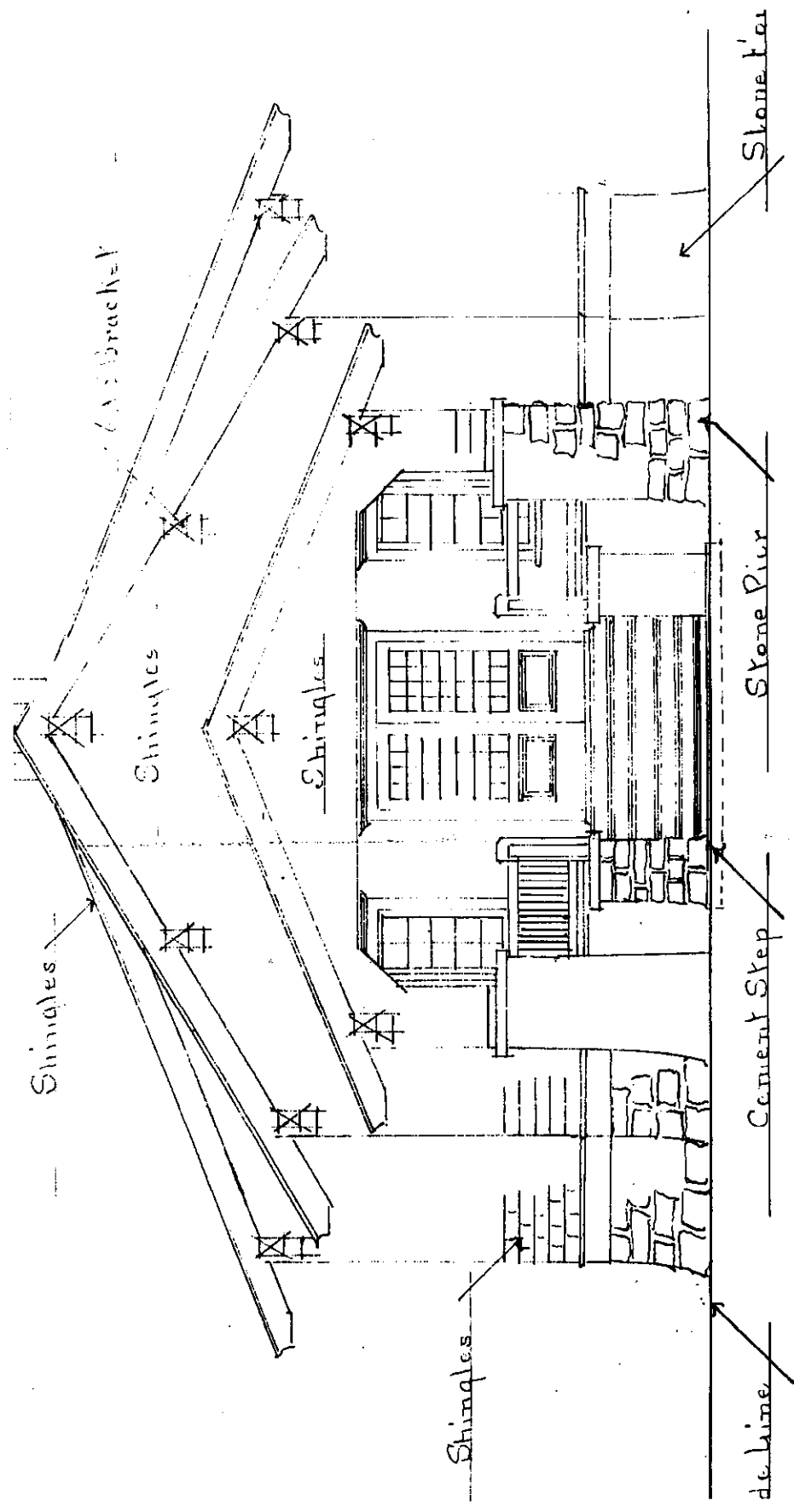
street & number \_\_\_\_\_ telephone \_\_\_\_\_

city or town \_\_\_\_\_ state \_\_\_\_\_ zip code \_\_\_\_\_

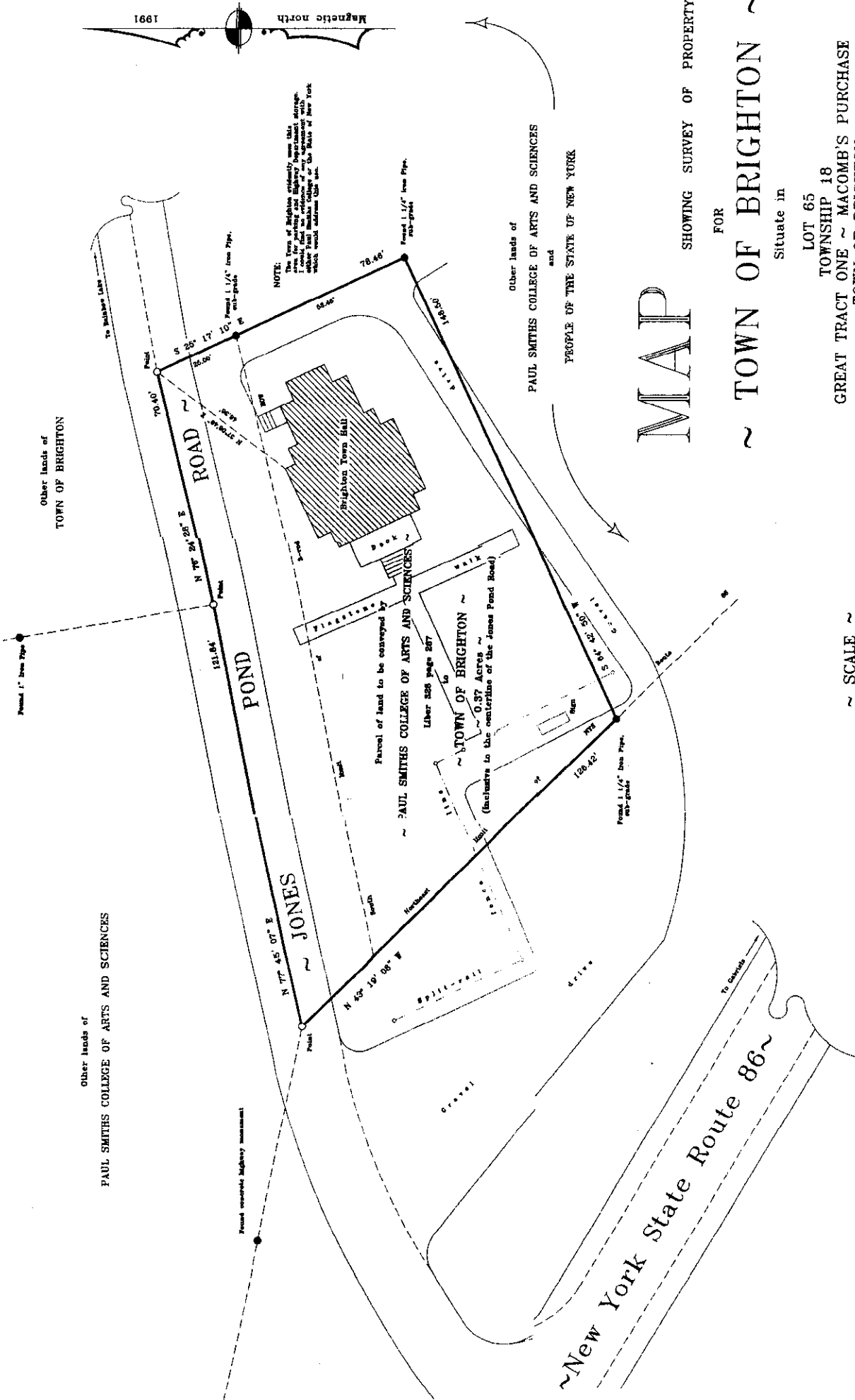
**Paperwork Reduction Act Statement:** This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.470 *et seq.*)

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

Copy of drawing found in  
 Brighton Town Hall vault:  
 Design for Town Hall



Front Elevation of "Town Hall"  
 Town of Brighton  
 S. 1/4 - 1-5"



Other lands of  
PAUL SMITHS COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES

Other lands of  
TOWN OF BRIGHTON



NOTE:  
The Town of Brighton officially was this  
Parish, and the reference to any agreement with  
which Parish address is not correct.

Other lands of  
PAUL SMITHS COLLEGE OF ARTS AND SCIENCES  
and  
PEOPLE OF THE STATE OF NEW YORK

# MAP

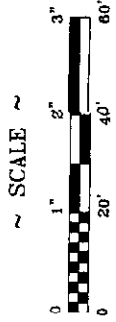
SHOWING SURVEY OF PROPERTY

FOR

## ~ TOWN OF BRIGHTON ~

Situate in

LOT 65  
TOWNSHIP 18  
GREAT TRACT ONE ~ MACOMB'S PURCHASE  
TOWN OF BRIGHTON  
COUNTY OF FRANKLIN  
STATE OF NEW YORK



I HEREBY CERTIFY to TOWN OF BRIGHTON that this map was prepared from a field survey of the premises shown hereon and was completed on February 28, 2003.



**CHRISTOPHER HUNT LEIFHEIT**  
Licensed Land Surveyor, Reg. no. 49699  
Paul Smiths - Gabriels, New York

**MAP REFERENCES:**

"TOWN HOUSE AND LOT OF THE TOWN OF BRIGHTON", by E. M. Merrill, dated November 16, 1918.

"MAP SHOWING LAND TO BE ACQUIRED BY N.Y.S.D.E.C., Project E-APP (4) Franklin 208.5", by Christopher H. Leifheit, Land Surveyor, dated November 29, 1991 and revised on December 2, 1992.

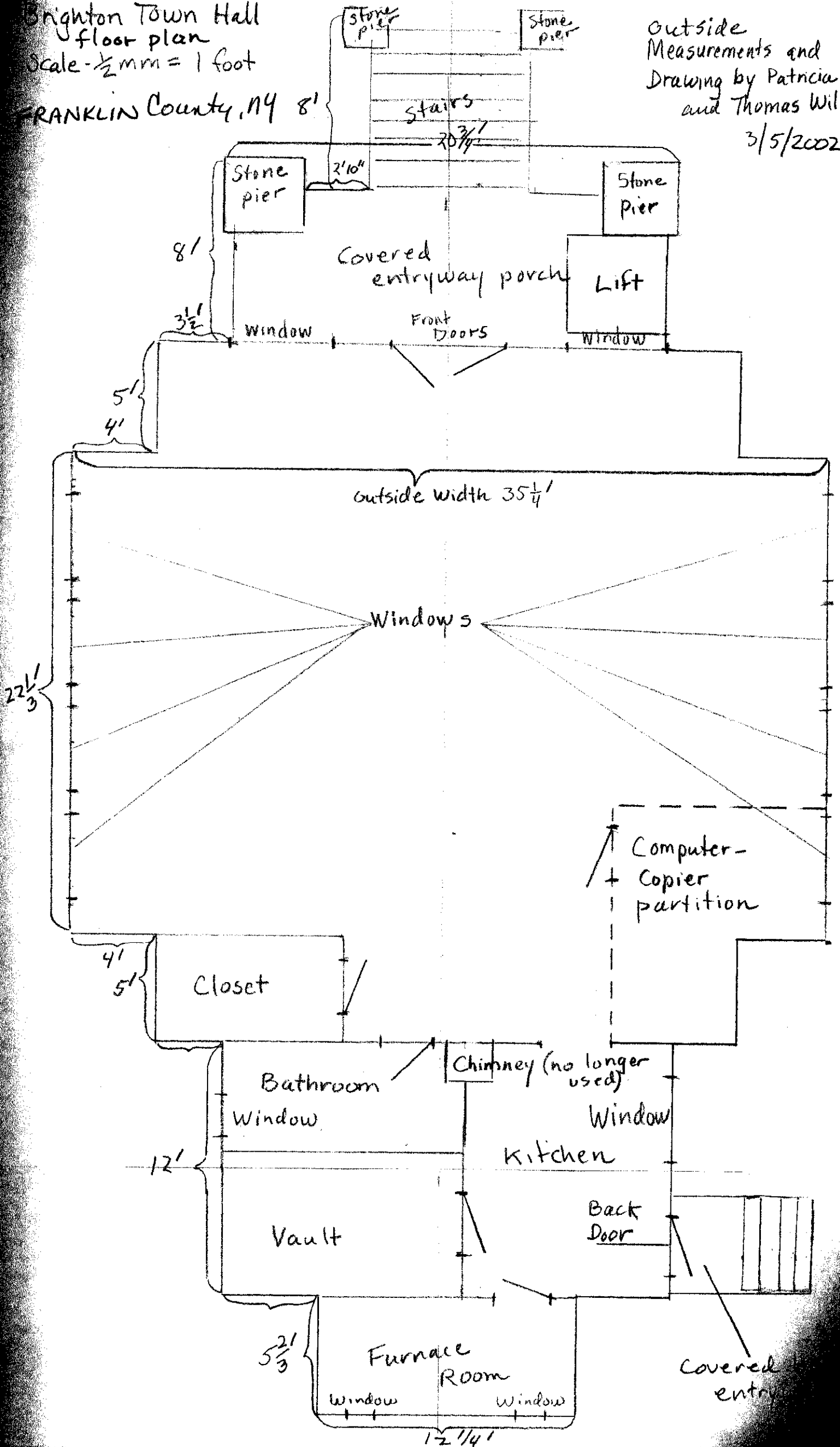
**NOTE:**

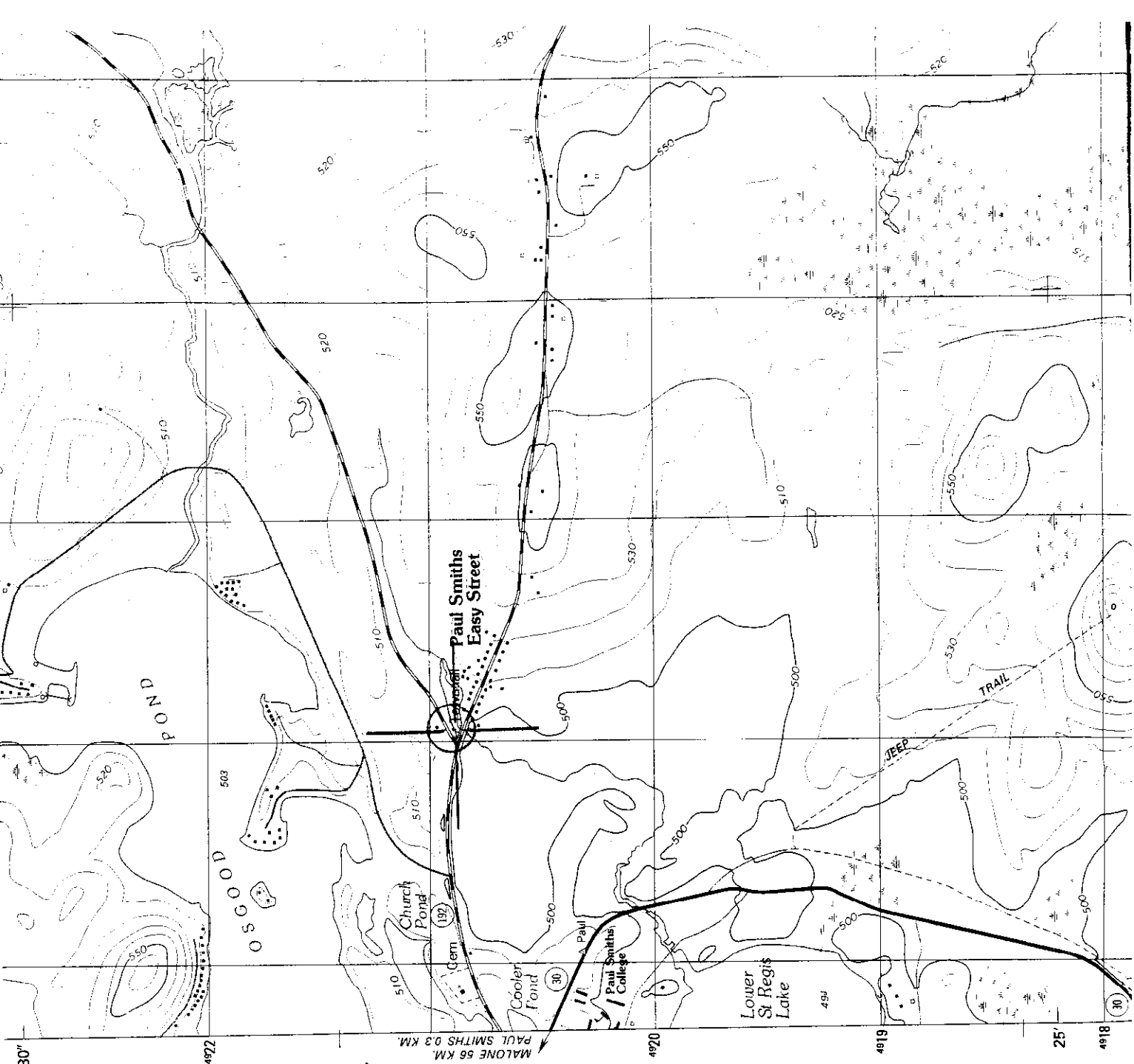
Unauthorized alteration of, or addition to a survey map bearing the seal of a licensed Land Surveyor is a violation of Section 7208, subdivision 2, of the New York State Education Law.

Brighton Town Hall  
floor plan  
Scale -  $\frac{1}{2}$  mm = 1 foot

FRANKLIN County, NY 8'

Outside  
Measurements and  
Drawing by Patricia  
and Thomas Willis  
3/5/2002





BRIGHTON TOWN HALL  
 12 County Route 31  
 BRIGHTON, FRANKLIN COUNTY  
 NY

BLOOMINGDALE QUAD  
 ZONE: 18  
 E: 561072  
 N: 4920910