

NPS Form 10-900

OMB No. 1024-0018

NPS Form 10-900
(Oct. 1990)

OMB No. 1024-0018

United States Department of the Interior
National Park ServiceNational 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 Skene Memorial Library

other names/site number _____

2. Location

street & number Main Street (Old NY 28)☐ not for publicationcity or town Fleischmanns☐ vicinitystate New Yorkcode NYcounty Delawarecode 025zip code 12430

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 of certifying official/Title

4/11/01

Date

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

☐ entered in the National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined eligible for the
National Register.
☐ See continuation sheet.

☐ determined not eligible for the
National Register.

☐ removed from the National
Register.

☐ other, (explain:) _____

Skene Memorial Library

Name of Property

Delaware County, New York

Delaware 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	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
1	0	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)

EDUCATION/library

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions)

EDUCATION/library

7. Description**Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

Shingle Style

Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation stone

walls wood

roof asbestos

other

Narrative Description

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

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The Skene Memorial Library is located in the Delaware County village of Fleischmanns. The village is sited on both sides of NY 28, a major transportation route running northwest to southeast through the county.

Fleischmanns is located in the easternmost portion of the county, near the Ulster County line. This area of Delaware and Ulster counties is within the Catskill Mountain region of the state and its landscape is characterized by a combination of steep mountain slopes and narrow river and stream valleys, which provided settings for numerous resort villages such as Fleischmanns. The Bush Kill, one of numerous small tributaries of the Delaware River, passes through the southern edge of the village, paralleling Main Street (Old NY 28). The library occupies a small parcel on the north side of Main Street. The less than one acre property is the original parcel conveyed for construction of the building. The library is set fairly close to the sidewalk, behind a modest lawn. There is a walk leading to the main entrance and a driveway on the west side leading to a rear parking lot. There are two small non-historic markers commemorating World Wars I, II and the Korean War on the lawn, west of the entrance.

The library is a one-story wood-frame building on a stone foundation. It is L-shaped in plan; the large rectangular mass is parallel to the street, while the perpendicular wing extends north from the east end of the rear elevation. Both components are surmounted by tall hipped roofs with broad overhanging eaves supported on narrow wooden brackets. The facade is distinguished by an engaged octagonal tower just west of center and a broad gable roofed porch spanning the middle of the building. There are two interior stone chimneys: one on the west side elevation of the main block and one at the rear corner of the east side. Walls are clad in wood shingles and roof surfaces in asbestos. Four narrow wooden moldings encircle the building at the eave, lintel, sill and watertable, dividing the elevations into three horizontal bands. The lowest band flares slightly to the foundation. Window openings are rectangular or square in various sizes and groupings. Windows are set within wooden frames and include both double-hung and fixed sash. Glazing includes combinations of square and diamond panes. The main entrance is in the center section of the facade, sheltered by a broad porch set on a high stone foundation. It is supported on Doric posts and features a wide frieze with triglyph and dentil

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moldings. Like the rest of the building, the porch roof features a deep overhang supported on narrow brackets. The porch also features a decorative wooden balustrade and three wide stone steps with wrought-iron railings. Entrance is through double wood and glass doors into a small vestibule, which provides access to the tower and the cellar. Another set of doors leads to the interior. The tower features rectangular windows on the first floor and narrow round-arched windows with keystone moldings above. The top stage of the tower is defined by louvered openings on all sides. The octagonal roof also features broad overhanging eaves on narrow brackets. On the front face of the octagon, a dormer-like projection is sheltered by a gabled hood with decorative ornament.

There are two additional entrances to the building, both on the north end of the rear wing. The entrances are narrow with replacement doors surmounted by diamond-paned transoms. A non-historic wooden ramp provides handicapped access to these entrances from the parking lot. There is also a bulkhead entrance to the basement on the rear elevation. Several small rectangular windows in the foundation light the basement. Other than the addition of the ramp, the exterior retains almost complete integrity to its original design.

The interior of the library retains its original plan. The space is divided into three functional components. A large reading room in the center is flanked by two smaller spaces of identical size: a reading room to the west and a stage area to the east. The rear wing is divided into two small rooms of equal size. The main reading room is rectangular in shape under an elliptically arched ceiling. Heavy oak and chestnut moldings define windows, doors and cornice. The plaster walls have been covered in contemporary paneling; however, original hardwood floors survive.

The west reading room is divided from the main space by two piers. There were originally doors (removed) between the piers and the end walls. In the space between the piers, two overhead wooden partitions were designed to be pulled down to the floor, thus isolating the smaller space. These survive, but it is not clear if

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they are operational. The west room is especially distinguished by a large stone fireplace with a decorative splayed arch in a stone and brick pattern. The molded wooden mantel is flush with the wall and features a narrow shelf supported by brackets. It is surmounted by a ten-inch-wide wooden overmantel with ornamental carving. The small stage to the east of the main reading room is accessed by three broad stairs, spanning about two thirds of the width of the main reading room. The stage itself is recessed behind a narrow partition with a broad rectangular center opening. There is a door, apparently added, on the north wall of the stage area that allows passage between the stage and the rear hall. Like the main reading room, the west room and stage area also feature heavy wooden moldings and paneled walls. Lighting fixtures throughout the building include original hanging lanterns, contemporary florescent overhead lights and recessed lighting.

At the rear of the main reading room, a large opening provides access to the two small rear rooms and the bathroom. Large oak double doors mark the entrance to the north reading room. This room retains its plaster walls and features a narrow wooden cornice molding. The other small room, now used as the village clerk's office, has been completely re-finished in contemporary materials.

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Skene Memorial Library

Name of Property

Delaware County, New York

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)

social history

architecture

Period of Significance

1901

Significant Dates

1901

Significant Person

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

na

Cultural Affiliation

na

Architect/Builder

H.G. and M. L. Emory, architects

Crosby Kelly, builder

Primary location of additional data

- ☒ State Historic Preservation Office
- ☐ Other State agency
- ☐ Federal agency
- ☐ Local government
- ☐ University
- ☐ Other

Name of repository:

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Summary

The Skene Memorial Library is significant as a distinctive intact example of an early twentieth century public library building and as a center for community life in the village of Fleischmanns for more than a century. Constructed in 1901, the library was conceived by Annette Wilhelmine Lillian Van der Wegen, who had promoted such a project since 1894. The library was dedicated to the memory of her first husband, Dr. Alexander Skene, a noted gynecologist and one of the village's most prominent summer residents. Funding for the library came from a number of sources, including local residents, summer visitors and Andrew Carnegie, who contributed \$5,000 toward the building's construction. The library was designed by architects H.G. and M. L. Emory, a firm with summer connections to the Fleischmanns area. Its eclectic, late Victorian era design combines features from the Queen Anne and Shingle styles and reflects the general character of village architecture in the resort era. As a library, the building is typical in form, plan and decoration of many small public libraries built throughout the country in the early twentieth century. The Skene Memorial Library has played an important role in Fleischmanns since its construction, providing space for fairs, lectures, recitals, theater productions, movies, and town meetings. The building retains an excellent level of integrity and continues to function as originally intended.

Fleischmanns

The village of Fleischmanns is located in the town of Middletown. Middletown is located in a mountainous area of the western Catskills. Its topography is generally characterized by steep, rocky hillsides traversed by numerous narrow river and stream valleys of the Delaware River and its tributaries. Originally part of Ulster County, Middletown was incorporated in 1789. It is one of the oldest towns in Delaware County and once encompassed most of the southern half of the county. The town falls within Great Lots 7, 8, 38, 39 and 40 of the Hardenburgh Patent, a large early eighteenth century land grant (1708) that encompassed much of the land between the Rondout and the Delaware rivers. The earliest documented European settlers in the Middletown area were Dutch farmers who arrived c1763. During the Revolution, the town became a Tory stronghold and

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most of the early settlers were driven off. Many returned after the war, however, and permanent settlement was established by the early 1800s.

The village of Fleischmanns is located on the Bush Kill, one of the town's major streams. The Bush Kill runs east-west, connecting Fleischmanns and Arkville to the Delaware River near Margaretville. Settlers appeared in the vicinity around 1800. A grist mill was established in 1802 and a distillery in 1804. Star Mills, a steam-powered sawmill, was built in 1829 and a carding mill in the same period. The village was known as Griffin's Corners throughout the nineteenth century. The Griffin family was among the village's early and important citizens. Matthew Griffin, a merchant and a prominent lawyer, was especially well known. Griffin ran a store and established Griffin's Corners Hotel in c1848; he also helped to establish a village post office in 1848. He served as postmaster until 1879, when he was succeeded by his son Dewitt Griffin.

A turnpike had been built connecting the village to Pine Hill in 1834, and the Delaware and Arkville Turnpike, chartered in 1840, was completed in 1849. However, it was the arrival of the Ulster and Delaware Railroad in the 1870s that had the most significant effect on the village's future. The U&D originated in Kingston and traveled northwest through the Catskills to Oneonta. One of its largest stations was at Phoenicia (in nearby Ulster County), from whence the line ran to Pine Hill, Fleischmanns and Arkville, where it turned north towards Kelly's Corners, Halcottville and Grand Gorge. The railroad was in part intended to provide a route for coal from Pennsylvania to the Hudson; however, it proved more important in transporting fresh milk and other local products to urban markets. Most significant, the railroad was perhaps the single most important factor in opening the Catskills to tourists and effecting the region's transition into one of the country's major resort regions. After the Fleischmanns station was completed in 1871, the area became a popular tourist destination. As more vacationers arrived, different types of accommodations were developed to serve tourists from different classes and income levels: homes were enlarged to take in borders; bungalow colonies were developed and hotels were built. The influx of summer visitors also sparked development in the village; farmers and

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merchants were busy meeting the summer demand and new businesses included restaurants, casinos, bowling alleys and other entertainment related facilities. Fleischmanns attracted a number of very wealthy people who built larger, more elaborate summer homes in the hills above the village. By the early 1920s, the village was one of the fastest growing resort communities in the Catskills, and, in its heyday, Fleischmanns boasted more than one hundred hotels.

In 1883, Charles F. Fleischmann, a Hungarian immigrant who founded the Fleischmann Company (famous for its yeast and whiskey), purchased property west of the village near the Fleischmanns Railroad Station. The Fleischmann estate was lavish, including a deer park, riding stable, heated pool, and trout pond. The Fleischmanns were followed by other well-known and/or wealthy vacationers, including New York Governor Herbert Lehman, the Liebman family (owners of Liebman Brewery), Anton Seidel, a conductor at the Metropolitan Opera, coloratura soprano Ameilta Galli Curci, and Shakespearean actress Julia Marlowe. The village of Fleischmanns was also home to Gertrude Berg, popularly known as Molly Goldberg, of radio and television fame. Berg reportedly based much of her material on life in the village.

The Fleischmann family began to take an active interest in village life shortly after its arrival. Julius F. Fleischmann, son of Charles, was the village's greatest benefactor. In 1914, the younger Fleischmann donated Fleischmanns Park, on the north side of Wagner Street, to the village. Among the Fleischmanns family's interests was major league baseball and the park attracted some major league players during training season. Among them was John Peter "Honus" Wagner, known as the Flying Dutchman, who was later inducted into the Hall of Fame. The park was given to the village with the stipulation that it always be used as a park and athletic grounds and never be sold or sublet. In 1913, the village name was changed to honor Julius F. Fleischmann. At that time, the community was thriving and prosperous, serving Catskills vacationers of every economic status.

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Other important summer visitors included Dr. Alexander Johnston Chalmers Skene (1837-1900) and his wife, Annette Wilhelmine Lillian Van der Wegen, a native of Brussels, Belgium. Dr. Skene was a Scottish immigrant who arrived in America at the age of nineteen. He became a surgeon and contributed to the theory, practice and teaching of gynecology. By the end of his career, Skene had founded the American Gynecological Society and opened his own sanatorium in Brooklyn. His county home in Highmont, above Fleischmanns, was designed to recall a Scottish castle and named Bonnie Em.

Skene Memorial Library

Annette Skene had been interested in building a library in Fleischmanns since 1894. Although she offered to donate at least five hundred books from her personal collection, her idea was apparently not well received. A 1901 local newspaper article recounting the new library's history noted that Skene had entreated the community to accept her offer for two years before a library association was formed on 28 November 1896, with DeWitt Griffin as chair. On October 1901 Herbert and Augusta Vermilyea conveyed a small piece of land to the library association and, five days later, John and Frances Scudder conveyed an adjacent parcel. The corner stone was laid on 25 November 1901 and work began shortly thereafter. The library received its charter on 19 December 1901.

The initial subscribers included members of both the permanent and summer communities, with amounts starting as low as a dollar. Among the contributors were Crosby Kelly, the library's builder, and M.L. and H.E. Emery, its architects. In addition to local subscribers, Annette Skene also secured a \$5,000 donation from Andrew Carnegie. Carnegie, who had amassed a great fortune in the iron and steel industries, began funding construction of free community libraries in 1882, with a gift to his own birthplace in Scotland. By the time of his death in 1919, he had donated funds for nearly 3,000 libraries across America, Canada, Great Britain, even New Zealand. Dedicated to promoting self-improvement, Carnegie had strong personal feelings about libraries, and he was closely involved in reviewing requests, which were sent directly to his home. Communities were required to acquire the building sites and they were encouraged to locate buildings near the center of town;

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additionally, each community had to pledge at least 10 percent of the amount of Carnegie's donation annually for maintenance and support. The Fleischmanns community met this goal, raising more than \$1,000 and securing donations of all the original books. Originally, Carnegie had very little involvement with the design and construction of the libraries he funded; once the pledge had been signed, communities (such as Fleischmanns) had complete control over the building process. However, after 1908, all plans required review and approval by James Bertram, Carnegie's private secretary, who later headed the library program. Later, the foundation even began to supply plans to applicants.

The Skene library was designed by Henry George Emery and Marshall Lansing Emery. Marshall Emery opened his practice in New York City in 1894; five years later, his brother Henry joined the firm after working in the offices of Richard Morris Hunt and Warren and Wetmore. Over the next two decades, Emery and Emery designed a number of buildings in Nyack, and after Marshall Emery's death in 1921, Henry moved the practice to that Hudson River village. Although the Emerys are represented by a sizable body of work in Nyack, few of the firm's other commissions have been identified. Their Nyack buildings include residences, several churches and a Carnegie library, constructed in 1903. Other attributions include a chapel for St. George's Episcopal Church in Manhattan and the Elks Lodge in Albany, both in 1911. The latter is a four-story Renaissance Revival style building in an urban setting. The firm's other known work is the Polhemus Memorial Library, an eight-story Beaux Arts building at Long Island College Hospital in Brooklyn. Most of the firm's works are considerably larger in scale and embody a more "high style" design aesthetic than the Skene library, which seems to have been crafted to blend in with other period architecture in the region.

The Emerys appear to have been summer residents of Fleischmanns, as their names appear in local records over a period of at least five years. There was also a personal connection; after Dr. Skene died in 1900 Annette Skene married M.L. Emery. The two seemed to have continued their commitment to the library, and in 1905, the library association thanked the Emerys for the gift of a heater. Although there is currently no information

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about other Emery and Emery commissions in Fleischmanns, it is certainly possible that the firm designed some of the larger village residences and/or nearby seasonal residences constructed in the early twentieth century.

The builders and crafts people responsible for the library were local. The builder, Crosby Kelly, was well known for the many residences he constructed in the region. Kelly operated a lumber mill in Fleischmanns and turned out building parts as well. He lived in the village, and in 1905 he sat on a committee of the library association that extended borrowing privileges to the summer residents. Two other local men were credited with painting the library (Sol Myers) and interior work (George Mayes).

The design of the Skene Memorial Library combines features of the Queen Anne and Shingle styles in an eclectic, late Victorian period design. Its design is similar to other resort era buildings in the village, such as some of the larger village residences, summer homes and small hotels. Interestingly, the library's form and some of its details are also characteristic of the designs used for some of the region's many resort era railroad stations. The low rectangular form, broad hipped roof, overhanging eaves and shingle cladding are typical of the type, while the broad, sheltering porch and distinctive octagonal tower suggest functions such as providing shelter and identifying locations. On the interior, the library's plan is typical of other period libraries, featuring a hierarchy of public spaces and the ability to define spaces for public and private functions.

The library association's original collection included 875 books; today, there are more than 15,000. Over the last century, the building has also played a significant role in the community as a public gathering place, hosting a wide variety of events. A 1904 donation of \$130 from the local Ladies Aid Society, "as per a working agreement on the fair, etc.," appears to refer to the use of the library for an annual fair. There were many performances, including theater productions and recitals, and a grand piano (now missing) was installed on the platform. One local resident, a former historian, recalls seeing her first movie, a Tom Mix film, in the library (Mabel West, interview). One of the small rear rooms was previously used as a kitchen. In 1928, the building was deeded to the village of Fleischmanns. Today, it houses the village offices and functions as the town

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meeting hall. The library continues to have an active program of lectures, language and computer classes, children's programs, and exhibits, still serving both the year round and seasonal populations.

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Skene Memorial Library

Name of Property

Delaware County, New York

County and State

10. Geographical DataAcreage of property less than one acre**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	18	538887	4666897
	Zone	Easting	Northing

2

3

	Zone	Easting	Northing
--	------	---------	----------

4

☐ See continuation sheet**Verbal Boundary Description**

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

11. Form Prepared Byname/title Kathleen LaFrank, Program Analyst - see also continuation sheetorganization New York State Historic Preservation Office date January 2001street & number Peebles Island State Park, Box 189 telephone 518-237-8643 x 3261city or town Waterford state New York zip code 12188**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 Village of Fleischmanns

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 Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Verbal Boundary Description

The nomination boundary is indicated by a heavy line of the enclosed tax map with scale.

Boundary Justification

The boundary was drawn to include a small parcel 95' wide by 95' deep. This is the original parcel donated for library construction in 1901 and it is the parcel associated with the library today.

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**Skene Memorial Library
Fleischmanns, Delaware County, NY**

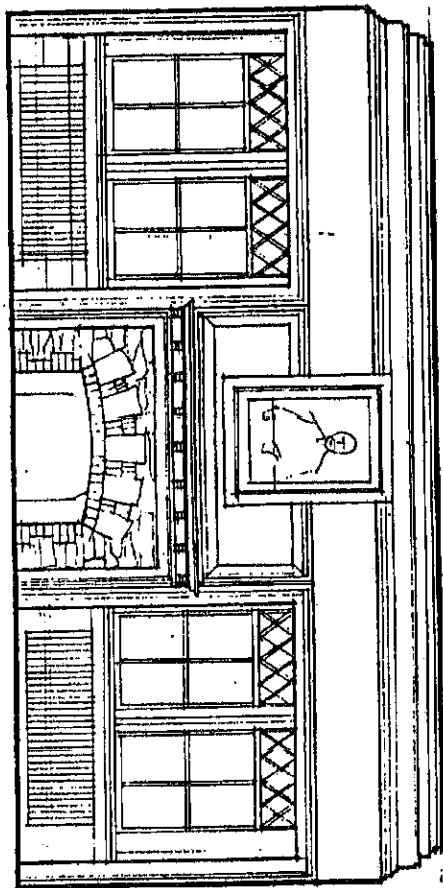
National Register of Historic Places Continuation Sheet

Section number 11 Page 1

Research and documentation provided by:

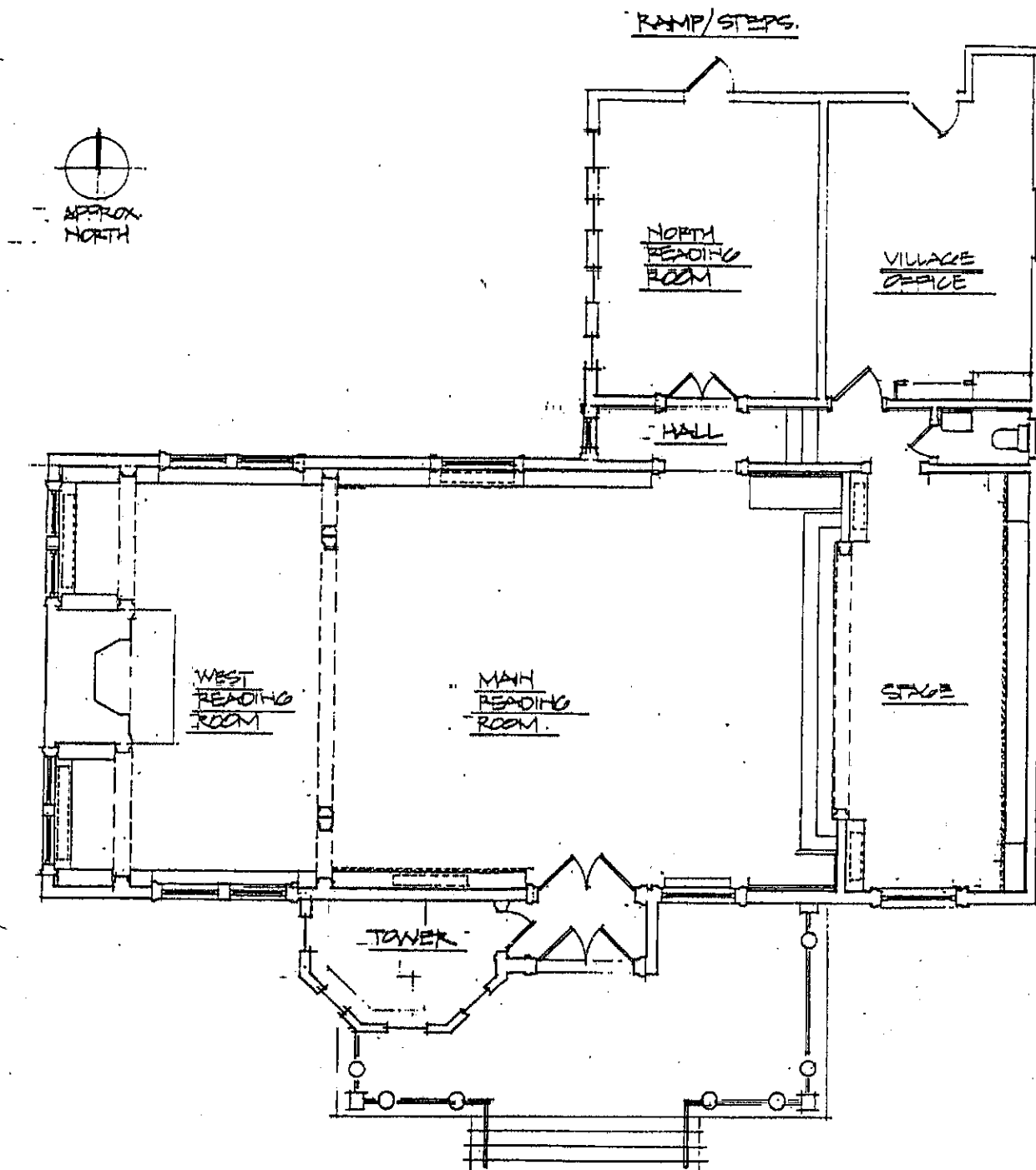
Innes Kasanof
President, Board of Trustees
Skene Memorial Library
PO Box C3
Fleischmanns, New York 12430

☐ See continuation sheet



ELEVATION OF WEST FIREPLACE WALL. EXISTING

Skene Memorial Library
Fleischmanns
Delaware County, New York
courtesy of Stauffer and Stearns
Architects and
Preservation Planners
c.2000



First Floor Plan: Schematic / Not to scale.
(Based on partial plan provided by Library)

Skene Memorial Library
~~Skene Memorial Library~~

Fleischmanns
Delaware County
New York

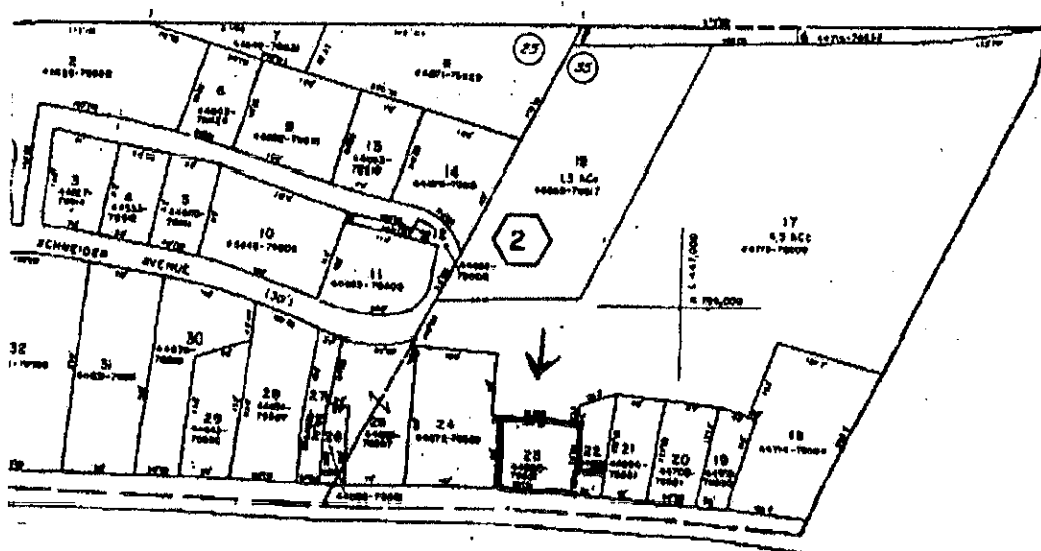
TAX MAP #

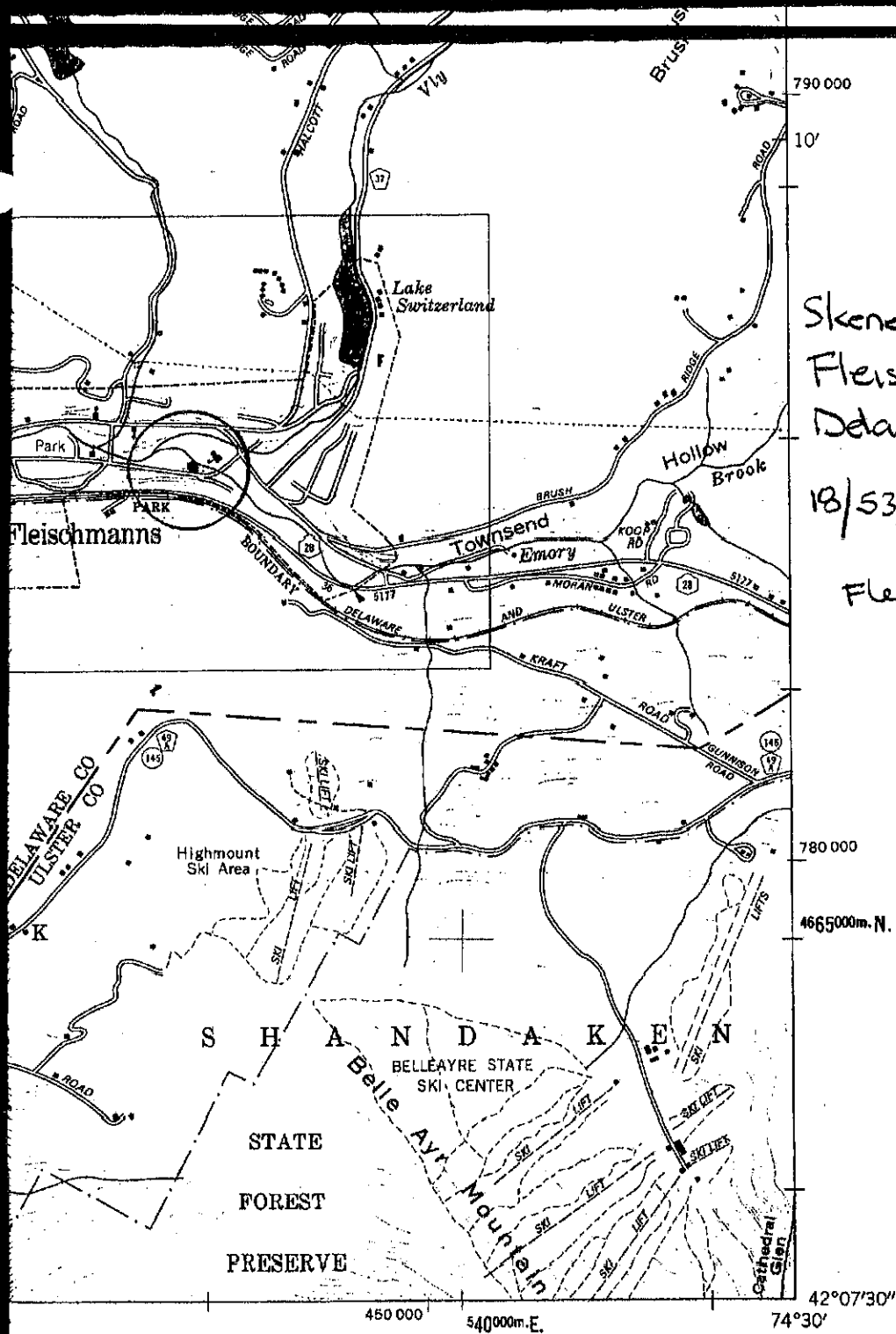
287.13 - 2 - 23

95' frontage

93' depth

$\frac{1}{4}" = 100'$





Skene Memorial Library
Fleischmanns
Delaware Co. NY

18/538887/4666897

Fleischmanns Quad

BOUNDARIES:

State.....	_____
County.....	_____
Town or City.....	_____
Incorporated Village.....	_____

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