



371

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 for individual properties and 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 from 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 Knights of the Maccabees Hall

other name/site number Cheshire Meeting Hall

2. Location

street & number 4270 STATE ROUTE 21  not for publication

city or town CHESHIRE N/A vicinity

state New York code NY county ONTARIO code 069 zip code 14424

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby 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.)

Ruth A. Purpant DSHPD 4/19/13  
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 the property is:
- 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:) \_\_\_\_\_

Edson H. Beall 6-22-13  
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

CHESHIRE MEETING HALL  
Name of Property

Ontario County, New York  
County and State

**5. Classification**

**Ownership of Property**  
(check as many boxes as apply)

**Category of Property**  
(check only one box)

**Number of Resources within Property**  
(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

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

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

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.)

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

N/A

N/A

**6. Function or Use**

**Historic Function**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Current Function**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL/meeting hall

RECREATION & CULTURE/hall

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

RECREATION & CULTURE/hall

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

**7. Description**

**Architectural Classification**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

**Materials**  
(Enter categories from instructions)

No style

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

foundation stone & concrete

walls wood

roof asphalt

other \_\_\_\_\_

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

Knights of the Maccabees Hall  
Ontario County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 1

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**DESCRIPTION**

Cheshire is a hamlet in Ontario County, New York, south of the city of Canandaigua and west of Canandaigua Lake on State Route 21. The Knights of the Maccabees Hall, also known as the Cheshire Meeting Hall, is located on the west side of the road near the north end of the hamlet, approximately 75 feet south of the intersection of NYS Route 21 and Goodale Road. The building faces east with the state highway right-of-way only a few inches from the front steps of the building. The building stands on a rectangular plot that slopes to the west. A narrow lawn is between the building and a parking lot along the north and west sides of the building. On the south side of the hall, a gravel filled space is between the building and its neighbor, which is described in the deed as being only twenty inches wide. This adjacent building is a two-story wood frame store dating from about 1870 and is not part of this nomination, being on a separate property and predating the meeting hall. To the northwest stand several modern one-story modern ranch-style homes.

The building is a one-and-a-half story wood-frame structure built in 1898 and is rectangular in shape, measuring 34.6 feet wide by 65 feet long. It has a front gabled roof that is clad in asphalt shingles. The hall was built into the side of a hill and has a stone foundation supporting the front half of the building and a concrete foundation supporting the west end. The entire building is clad in wooden clapboard siding, which is painted yellow on the north, white on the east and unpainted on the west. The south elevation appears to have been painted yellow, which can be seen showing through a thin topcoat of white paint. Trim is painted green on the east façade and brown on the north elevation. Due to the close proximity of the building to the south, it is impossible to see the exterior trim of the one double-hung window located roughly near the middle of the elevation.

When viewed from the road, the most recognizable feature of the building is its flat façade with center gable and the two parapets extending beyond the roofline. A main entrance is in the center of the street level and currently has a double non-historic door (a temporary replacement). To the north is a wood and glass door and to the south is a one-over-one aluminum sash window. Three faux windows are in the upper level. The gable peak has scallop-edge shingles. Metal hardware for a sign projects from the center of the second story. The sign has been temporarily removed. It has the words "Cheshire Meeting Hall 1874 Restoration Project" printed on it, which is incorrect since the extant building was built in 1898.

Knights of the Maccabees Hall  
Ontario County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 2

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The east facade of the building contains a non-historic window on the south end and two entrances at street level. The main entrance in the center has temporary non-historic doors and the plan is to reproduce the missing historic doors based on photographic evidence. The entrance at the north end of the facade has a wood paneled replacement door, similar to the original. This entrance provides access directly to the interior basement stairs. Another wood door provides direct access to the basement and is located in the west end of the north elevation at ground level.

Wood siding is of drop-style boards on the north, east and south elevations. The stone foundation is clearly visible on the east end of the north elevation. Three evenly spaced two-over-two double hung windows are in the main level. Two more window openings are visible in the basement level, but these are in-filled with wood. The south elevation has the same drop siding but only one window. The west elevation is also drop-style boards, but unpainted. Three windows in the main level are boarded. A large opening in the ground level is in-filled with wood boards. This section covers part of the wall that was removed by a previous owner to accommodate kitchen appliances.

The first floor interior is largely original and consists of a large auditorium or meeting room that has also served as a dance floor. The flooring is the original maple boards. The interior space measures 33 feet wide by 55 feet long with a thirteen-foot high ceiling. All four walls and the ceiling are covered with varnished fir wainscoting. At the west end of the building is a theatrical stage measuring twenty feet wide by ten feet deep, together with the backstage area. The stage, itself rises 48 inches from the auditorium floor. There are enclosed wooden stairs at the north side of the stage by which the backstage area and the meeting hall are connected. A painted fabric backdrop, completed about 1950, still hangs at the rear of the stage. In the absence of records, the backdrop was dated by investigating the dates of the businesses and associated pre-dial telephone numbers advertised in the design. The space between the ceiling wainscoting and the roof is unused.

The walls and ceiling are completely covered with varnished wainscoting except for the west wall behind the stage, where no interior wall boards remain. The wainscoting was applied vertically up to the chair rail. It was applied at an angle along the north and south walls up to the top of the window frames, and horizontally at the sides of the proscenium arch. Above the windows on each side, the wainscoting is vertical. The stage projects

Knights of the Maccabees Hall  
Ontario County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 7 Page 3

---

slightly forward of the arch with a low curve. The proscenium is framed by wooden pilasters. The ceiling wainscoting is applied so that the lengths of the boards align with the length of the auditorium. The wainscoting on the east (front) wall was removed by a previous owner, exposing the studs. This wall is in the process of being restored with wainscoting recovered on site.

The basement follows the same layout with a large space for a dining room in the center and a kitchen in the rear (west end) with associated storage, much of the shelving extant. Sanitary plumbing was installed in the early twentieth century and two small restrooms are located on the north end. The serving area along the west side consists of a plywood booth measuring sixteen-feet wide by eight-feet deep. A large horizontal serving window and two doors were cut into the booth. According to the personal notes of former grange member, Evelyn Read, the basement kitchen was remodeled in 1937.

Much of the basement floor has been removed because of deterioration of the joists under the concrete and plumbing issues. It is in the process of being restored. The bead boards that comprised the walls in the basement were also removed and stored for future restoration. Each board was numbered so that it could be replaced in the original location. The two cellar windows on the north and south sides have been boarded over to prevent unauthorized access to the building. Near the foot of the east end stairs case, a pine board hat check and storage area was constructed, probably in the 1940s. In the absence of records, reliable memories of present community members place the storage area construction as no later than 1947. In spite of the issues with the basement, the building retains a high degree of integrity, especially in terms of location, design, workmanship, feeling and association.

Name of Property

County and State

8. Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- Criteria A, B, C, D with checkboxes and descriptions.

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- Criteria A through G with checkboxes and descriptions.

Narrative Statement of Significance

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

Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

SOCIAL HISTORY

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1898-1947

Significant Dates

1898, 1947

Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

UNKNOWN

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):

- Documentation checkboxes: preliminary determination, previously listed, designated landmark, recorded by Historic American Buildings Survey, recorded by Historic American Engineering Record.

Primary location of additional data:

- Location checkboxes: State Historic Preservation Office, Other State agency, Federal agency, Local government, University, Other Name of repository.

OFFICE OF THE ONTARIO COUNTY HISTORIAN

Knights of the Maccabees Hall  
Ontario County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 1

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**STATEMENT OF SIGNIFICANCE**

Significant under Criterion A in the area of social history, the Knights of the Maccabees (KOTM) Hall provided an important gathering place for the rural hamlet of Cheshire in Ontario County, New York, initially for the Knights of the Maccabees, one of the many fraternal organizations that existed in America in the late-nineteenth century. The Cheshire Grange organization also met in the building before purchasing it from the Maccabees in 1920. It was also used by the Cheshire Amusement Company, a local theatrical group founded in 1911. Like many fraternal and grange halls, the building included a stage located in the west end of the building, making it a natural place for the company to stage its productions. The building is also significant under Criterion C in architecture for following the typical design found in many other similar grange halls built in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries of a large open meeting space, stage at one end of the meeting hall and a dining area. The one feature rarely seen with the KOTM Hall was the flat front east wall that projected past the roofline, which made the building stand out amongst the other gable fronted commercial buildings in the hamlet. Since its construction, the building hosted countless community sponsored events and the community group that currently owns the building intends to restore the building for this function for the residents of Cheshire.

**Historical Context**

Cheshire's location at the junction of several main roads along the west side of Canandaigua Lake made it a natural gathering place for the local, rural community. First known as Rowley's School House, the site of the hamlet was quickly chosen for settlement by several settlers in 1812. The first store opened that year in part of a house. By 1814-15 several additional settlers were erecting houses in the hamlet. A saw mill was built in 1814 followed by several more stores, a blacksmith shop and a tavern by 1818. The school that gave the early community its first name was also erected during this period. In 1834, the first grist mill and a carding mill were built along the creek just south of the hamlet. Also in the 1830s, Baptist and Methodist societies were organized and the first church was built in 1832. A second Baptist society was organized in 1840. It later united with another congregation and worshipped in a different church until 1870.

Several of the original settlers were veterans of the American Revolution and the War of 1812. Records are vague about how many Cheshire men served in the Civil War, but the Pine Bank Cemetery monument at the

Knights of the Maccabees Hall  
Ontario County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 2

south end of the hamlet lists nine men who were buried in unknown southern graves. By 1910, the cemetery at the south end of town contained more than 140 veterans' graves from all wars up to that time.

Later settlement entered what an 1876 county history called a "dormant season" that lasted for many years. Re-invigorated by commerce and industry around 1870, the hamlet had three stores, two blacksmith shops, two carriage shops, a steam custom mill, and a combined spoke factory and saw mill.<sup>1</sup> In 1874, a letter to the editor of the *Ontario County Times* proudly stated that "Cheshire is still above ground and flourishing. It may yet out-strip Canandaigua. We are proud of our little village. It is prospering finely. We...are doing a good business. Mr. Wilbur is what we call our 'Merchant Prince.' He is doing a large business. Our mechanics seem to have all that they can do. Hutchen's carriage factory is in full blast, and also that of Mr. Curtis. Our spoke factory and saw mill is doing well. Spokes are being shipped to all parts of the state. The Ketchum brothers understand buying timber and making it up in the best manner."

In 1911, the editor of the *Ontario County Times* published a history of Ontario County and summed up the story of the Cheshire settlement by saying "it is evident from the foregoing that No. 9 [the Cheshire area] took a prominent part in the early days in the making of the history of the township of Canandaigua."<sup>2</sup> The importance of Cheshire as a local agricultural, social, and commercial center was also evident from the fact that a post office was established in the hamlet in 1835. It was discontinued in 1908 largely due to the comprehensive road improvement program begun by the county as part of the "good roads" movement after 1890 and the reliance on Rural Free Delivery (RFD) service made possible by the road improvements.<sup>3</sup> In 1900, the U.S. Postal Service established a contract ("Star") mail route linking Canandaigua and Naples, passing through Cheshire.<sup>4</sup> The main road (now NYS Route 21) linking Canandaigua, Cheshire, Academy, South Bristol and Naples was made part of a state and county system of highways under the provisions of a state law passed in 1907.<sup>5</sup> After September 1, 1908, RFD service to the Cheshire area was provided by a rural carrier from the Canandaigua post office.<sup>6</sup> Cheshire remained a thriving commercial center for its neighborhood for nearly half a century more.

<sup>1</sup> William McIntosh, *History of Ontario Co., New York*, (Philadelphia: Everts, Ensign and Everts, 1876) 119.

<sup>2</sup> Charles F. Milliken, *A History of Ontario County, New York and Its People Volume I*, (New York: Lewis Historical Pub. Co., 1911), 262-264.

<sup>3</sup> Emma G. Koberg, *Collected Postal History Notes of Ontario County, New York Stat* (n. p.: Empire State Postal History Society, 1978, 50-51.

<sup>4</sup> "Star Route Contracts," *Ontario County Times*, Sep. 26, 1900, 3.

<sup>5</sup> Ch. 715. Laws of New York 1907. A map showing the system of highways was printed in the Proceedings of the Ontario County Board of Supervisors for 1907.

<sup>6</sup> "At Home and About," *Ontario County Times*, Aug. 26, 1908, 7; *Naples Record*. Aug. 28, 1908, 3.

Knights of the Maccabees Hall  
Ontario County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 3

In the 1870s, Cheshire was a thriving rural hamlet nine miles south of the village of Canandaigua (the county seat). The community looked for ways to compete with its more prosperous neighbors to the north and decided that a theater would provide entertainment while serving as a community center and meeting hall. Around 1874, the Union Church (built in 1870) was converted into Lincoln Hall after it was purchased by C. H. Wilbur and J. W. Hutchens and moved up the street closer to Wilbur's property in the north end of Cheshire. The main tenant of the hall was the Cheshire Dramatic Club, providing several seasons worth of dramatic entertainment and often donating the proceeds to some worthwhile community group. The hall became a popular place to hold events and in the long run, became a victim of its own success, as more groups competed for use of the space.

Both the Knights of the Maccabees (KOTM) and the Grand Army of the Republic (GAR) post regularly met in Lincoln Hall. Due to scheduling conflicts, the Maccabees and other community organizations, supported by a handful of local entrepreneurs, began considering the construction of a larger meeting hall to accommodate the community's ever expanding needs. Some groups even looked to building their own, separate meeting halls. In the late 1890s, the KOTM decided to build a larger meeting hall across the street from Lincoln Hall.<sup>7</sup> The KOTM was part of an international fraternal organization with a local chapter in Cheshire and secured property from Lewis M. and Carrie E. Johnson, formally purchasing the property on Feb. 25, 1898. During the purchase negotiations, construction began on the new hall, which was completed two weeks after the organization closed on the purchase.<sup>8</sup> Apparently the Johnsons were actively involved in promoting the interests of the KOTM to allow construction on land they still owned. The KOTM sponsored dances, suppers, concerts and a wide variety of public events in the theatre-meeting hall.

**Fraternal Groups in Cheshire and the Knights of the Maccabees (KOTM), Tent #262**

Many Cheshire residents joined fraternal groups in the late-nineteenth century as did other Americans in communities across the country. The Civil War years witnessed the popularity of military lodges that served "as a haven for soldiers far from home."<sup>9</sup> The popularity of those lodges, combined with the growing desire for providing mutual benefits such as insurance coverage, set the stage for the expansion of both the fraternal lodges and the benefits most of them eventually provided. In the decades immediately following the Civil War,

<sup>7</sup> "New Church," *Ontario County Times*, Nov. 9 1870, p. 3.; Kevin Andrew Cotter, *An Experiment in Tolerance: The History of Christianity in Southern Canandaigua 1796-1926* (Canandaigua, NY: published by the author, 1998), 103.

<sup>8</sup> Ontario County Clerk, Land Records, *Liber 217*, page 337.

<sup>9</sup> Barbara Franco, "Many Fraternal Groups Grew From Masonic Seed," available online at [http://www.phoenixmasonry.org/many\\_fraternal\\_groups\\_grew\\_from\\_masonic\\_seed\\_part\\_2.htm](http://www.phoenixmasonry.org/many_fraternal_groups_grew_from_masonic_seed_part_2.htm).

Knights of the Maccabees Hall  
Ontario County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 4

many new fraternal orders were established. Among them were the Knights of Pythias (1864); the Benevolent and Protective Order of Elks (1866); the Ancient Order of United Workmen (1868); the Ancient Arabic Order of the Nobles of the Mystic Shrine (1871); the Knights of Honor (1873); the Royal Arcanum (1877); the Knights of the Maccabees (1878); and the Modern Woodmen of America (1883).<sup>10</sup>

Older fraternal groups, like the Masons and Odd Fellows, were practicing forms of mutual aid for generations. The Odd Fellows eventually systematized their mutual aid practices into an assessment and stipend system that was very like an insurance arrangement. High mortality rates around the turn-of-the-twentieth century, the lack of government assistance to widows and orphans, and the increasing frequency of workplace accidents were the moving forces that created a growing desire for both urban and rural residents to have life and income protection insurance.<sup>11</sup> Yet, the commercial insurance industry faced several obstacles to meeting the needs of the emerging market. Many insurance companies sustained great losses in the financial panics of the 1870s and 1890s, as well as in 1907, making them unable to meet the growing demand.<sup>12</sup>

In 1868, the Ancient Order of United Workmen became the first fraternal group to offer mutual insurance benefits to its members. Before long hundreds of fraternal groups followed suit. By 1920, the National Fraternal Congress (NFC), an association of fraternal societies, listed 200 membership societies. Those societies insured nine million members with over 9.5 billion dollars of life insurance. In 1918, there were 313 non-NFC organizations providing insurance to the immigrant poor in Chicago alone. In short order, fraternal insurance programs began offering sickness, accident, and income protection insurance, as well as life insurance.<sup>13</sup> As early as 1874, the *Ontario County Times* reported that people in Cheshire were considering a way of providing a mutual insurance plan to those who joined an association.<sup>14</sup>

Active during the 1890s, the Independent Order of Good Templars (IOGT) established a lodge in Cheshire on August 7, 1880.<sup>15</sup> Called the "United Ones of Cheshire" by one newspaper, membership in the Templars overlapped with the KOTM, admitting both men and women to membership and strongly advocated temperance and abstaining from the use of tobacco. Advertisements in the *Official Organ* of the New York

<sup>10</sup> "The Incorporation of Mutual Aid," available online at <http://xroads.virginia.edu/~ma04/mccain/fraternalorders/page2b.htm>.

<sup>11</sup> Ibid.

<sup>12</sup> Ibid.

<sup>13</sup> Leslie Siddeley, "The Rise and Fall of Fraternal Insurance Organizations," *Humane Studies Review*, v. 7. (Spr. 1992), available online at <http://osf1.gmu.edu/~ihs/s92essay.html>.

<sup>14</sup> "I.G. Letter to the Editor," *Ontario County Times*, Feb. 18, 1874, 3.

<sup>15</sup> "I.O.G.T.," *Ontario County Times*, Aug. 18, 1880, 3; "Local Correspondence—Cheshire," *Ontario County Journal*, Aug. 13, 1880, 3. There were many surrounding lodges of the IOGT.

Knights of the Maccabees Hall  
Ontario County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 5

Grand Lodge, IOGT, proclaimed that its insurance program refused to pay benefits for deaths related to alcohol.

Founded in London, Ontario, Canada in 1878, The Knights of the Maccabees (KOTM) had numerous chapters by 1881. Although a fraternal group, the Maccabees were more concerned with being an important provider of mutual insurance to their members. By far, insurance was the single most important topic discussed in their 1896 *Biennial Review*. The fact that the KOTM had a stronger, more comprehensive insurance program and was less strident on social issues, may be the reasons that membership in the IOGT declined in Cheshire.<sup>16</sup> The list of New York lodges published in the *Official Organ* for November 1889 does not list a Cheshire lodge.<sup>17</sup>

The KOTM organized Tent #262 in Cheshire on November 26, 1895. According to the 1896 report of the national organization's biennial review, there were fifteen charter members, with an average age of thirty-two. W. E. Spangle, the KOTM deputy who installed the first members, was responsible for chartering seventeen new tents that year.<sup>18</sup> Installation of the KOTM tent was announced in local papers without mentioning that it was a new organization.<sup>19</sup> By the end of 1896, 170 new tents (with 3,140 new members) had been chartered in New York State. From a total of 700 members in 1881, the national organization grew to 253,555 by the time of the 1896 *Biennial Report*.<sup>20</sup> KOTM life insurance payments began in New York State in 1886.<sup>21</sup>

On February 21, 1898, just three years after their charter was granted, the Knights of the Maccabees belonging to the Cheshire tent took the additional step of incorporating as the KOTM Stock Company of Cheshire under the provisions of Chapter 559 of the laws of 1895 (Chapter 43 of the General Laws). The statute provided general incorporation procedures for charitable fraternal organizations. One of its specific purposes was to assist charitable and fraternal groups in carrying out building projects. The KOTM

<sup>16</sup> "News of the Towns—Naples," *Ontario County Times*, Jun. 7, 1893, 2; "News of the Towns—Cheshire," *Ontario County Times*, Feb. 7, 1894, 2. An examination of *The Official Organ*, the main publication of the IOGT, for the 1880s reveals a great deal of attention paid to abstinence and temperance, and very little to socialization and insurance. It is nearly the reverse of what was true of the KOTM. During the 1880s, the *Official Organ* was published in Syracuse by the Grand Lodge of New York.

<sup>17</sup> International Organization of Good Templars, Grand Lodge of New York, *Official Organ*, Nov. 1889.

<sup>18</sup> *Seventh Biennial Review of the Supreme Tent, Knights of the Maccabee, Official Report, Supreme Record Keeper for the Term Ending December 31, 1896. Exhibit A*, (Port Huron, MI, 1897), 5, 9. Oddly, the tent number of the KOTM lodge (262) was identical to the lodge number of the old IOGT organization. There seems to be no connection between the two. See: *Official Organ*, Jan. 1885, 3.

<sup>19</sup> "News of the Towns—Cheshire," *Ontario County Times*, Dec. 11, 1895, 2; "Ontario County News—Academy," *Ontario County Journal*, Dec. 13, 1895, 2; "Cheshire," *Ontario County Journal*, Oct. 15, 1897, 2. This article states that the KOTM was going to give an oyster supper and dance at Lincoln Hall in Cheshire.

<sup>20</sup> *Seventh Biennial Review*, 24, 71, 80, 95, 135.

<sup>21</sup> *Seventh Biennial Review*, 80.

Knights of the Maccabees Hall  
Ontario County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 6

incorporation statement was recorded in the office of the Ontario County Clerk and as a stock company, the KOTM was able to negotiate the purchase of land from the Johnsons and build a meeting hall.<sup>22</sup>

The hall was built for the Knights of the Maccabees with local labor, probably by many of the knights themselves. Plans for the construction of a hall of their own were reported in the *Ontario County Journal* in December 1897. Two weeks later, the same paper reported that the basement trenches were being dug and walls started to be constructed. Wood was an economical and readily available construction material that was used in both the exterior and interior of the building. By February, 1898 the *Ontario County Times* reported that "the Maccabees' new hall is nearly done, and presents quite an imposing appearance. It is nicely finished and conveniently arranged throughout," which no doubt referred to the use of stained wood wainscoting and matching beadboard in the ceiling.<sup>23</sup>

With the exception of the main façade, the design of the hall followed the layout and general appearance found in many rural fraternal and grange buildings throughout New York State. Built into the side of a slight hill, the main floor had its entrance facing the main street that ran through Cheshire (State Route 21) with a lower level providing additional space for a kitchen and storage. The meeting area was long and narrow for accommodating rows of benches and movable seating that could easily be moved to the walls or stored during dances. A raised stage was located at the far end of the hall with a slightly projecting proscenium arch that could accommodate a curtain. While most grange and fraternal buildings were simple front gable roofed buildings, the KOTM building featured a false front façade that extended beyond the roofline. The completed KOTM hall opened with a dance that was a "success, both socially and financially," according to news reports. The *Ontario County Times* reported that "in spite of bad roads and a showery evening, a large number of people were in attendance. The dancing began early and continued till the wee small" hours of the morning, and a general good time seemed to prevail." The event raised \$100 for furnishings.<sup>24</sup>

<sup>22</sup> Ontario County Clerk, *Incorporations, Book 2, 1895 N. Y. Laws 559, 103-105*. The incorporation cites Chapter 43 of the General Laws. The 1895 Session Laws state that they are the same.

<sup>23</sup> "Cheshire," *Ontario County Journal*, Dec. 17, 1897, 2; "Cheshire," *Ontario County Times*, Jan. 12, 1898, 2; "Cheshire," *Ontario County Times*, Feb. 2, 1898, 2.

<sup>24</sup> "Cheshire," *Naples Record*, Feb. 9, 1898; "Cheshire," *Ontario County Times*, Feb. 16, 1898, 2.

Knights of the Maccabees Hall  
Ontario County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 7

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**Academy Grange #62, Patrons of Husbandry**

After seventeen years of continuous renting, the Academy Grange purchased the meeting hall from the KOTM Stock Company in 1920.<sup>25</sup> From that point on, the building was widely known as the Cheshire Grange Hall. It became a venue for a wide variety of organizational, regional and public dinners, dances, concerts, plays and celebrations. The Academy Grange was a local chapter of the national organization known as the Patrons of Husbandry, founded in Washington, DC in 1867 and incorporated in 1873. The first working grange was founded in 1868 in Fredonia, Chautauqua County, New York.<sup>26</sup> Seven years (1874) after the founding of the national organization, a local grange was organized by twenty-nine men and women who lived near the small hamlet of Academy, just a few miles south of Cheshire. It was the first of twenty eight granges eventually chartered in Ontario County.<sup>27</sup>

Partly fraternal, the grange (as the organization is better known) provided a social outlet for a largely rural population. Quickly, the grange developed a mutual insurance system, cooperative buying and cooperatively owned grain elevators in many areas. The minutes of the Academy Grange show that they began cooperative buying almost as soon as it was founded. The National Grange and its members also became an effective political lobby for the interests of farmers and the agricultural sector of the economy. The organization was credited with being a major force behind the creation of the Cooperative Extension service and Rural Free Delivery of mail.<sup>28</sup>

As with fraternal groups, mutual insurance arrangements were of great interest to the members and potential members of the Patrons of Husbandry. One of the first grange life insurance companies was the Patron's Mutual Aid Society organized in Elmira, NY in 1874. A simple arrangement, it was only open to patrons (members). They paid an age-related entrance fee to a reserve fund later used to pay death claims. If there was insufficient money in the reserve fund, members would be assessed one dollar. By 1880, the Elmira society had a reported membership of 1,100. It was considered a national model for the organization of local chapters within the national organization of the Patrons of Husbandry.<sup>29</sup> Its widely publicized insurance

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<sup>25</sup> *Ontario County Land Records, Liber 315, Page 314.*

<sup>26</sup> *New York State Grange*, online at <http://www.nysgrange.org/whatsnew.html>.

<sup>27</sup> "Petition to O. H. Kelley, Secretary of National Grange. Jan. 31, 1874," *Grange Notebook*, (collection of the Ontario County Historical Society, Canandaigua, New York).

<sup>28</sup> *The National Grange of the Order of Patrons of Husbandry*, online at <http://www.nationalgrange.org/about/history.html>.

<sup>29</sup> Solon Justus Buck, *The Granger Movement: A Study of Agricultural Organization and its Political, Economic and Social Manifestations 1870-1880* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard Univ. Press, n.d.), 271-273.

Knights of the Maccabees Hall  
Ontario County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 8

arrangement served as the inspiration for other mutual aid programs and undoubtedly was the inspiration for the Academy Grange 1874 insurance proposal.

Academy Grange #62 grew quickly and maintained a robust membership throughout most of its existence. Meeting first in members' homes and local school houses, the Academy Grange began renting the use of the Cheshire KOTM hall for special occasions in 1899. Grange minute books covering the years 1876 and after, showed that the grange was continually looking into the possibility of having its own hall. On January 27, 1899, the minutes recorded that they were even investigating the possibility of forming a stock corporation for the purpose of building a Grange Hall.<sup>30</sup> After several years of renting from the KOTM, the grange bought the hall in 1920. They remained an active group, meeting regularly in the hall until membership began to decline in the mid-twentieth century. In 1978, the Cheshire Grange Hall was sold to a private owner and it became a store.

Two other important groups that used the hall were the Charles R. Lilly Post #303, Grand Army of the Republic and the Cheshire Amusement Company. The Charles R. Lilly Post #303, GAR was formed in 1882 and often met in the KOTM Hall, which served as a gathering place for indoor exercises, mostly around the Memorial Day holiday. On Memorial Day 1930, local residents and many visitors gathered at the hall. Then the larger-than-usual crowd paraded through the hamlet from the hall to Pine Bank Cemetery at the south end of the hamlet, nearly a mile away where a Civil War memorial was dedicated to nine local men buried in unknown southern graves. The publisher of the *Ontario County Times-Journal* published a special booklet to commemorate the event and described the event in the hall.<sup>31</sup> The post disbanded in 1928 after its last member, Sibley E. Nott, passed away.<sup>32</sup>

Founded around 1911, the Cheshire Amusement Company was composed of area residents who enjoyed putting on plays and organizing charitable events that benefited local churches, schools, small public libraries, and other fraternal groups. On September 1, 1911 the Cheshire Amusement Company was reported as holding an initial meeting at the Cheshire school house, followed by subsequent meetings. The *Ontario County Journal* reported on September 22, 1911 that an all-male "Amusement Club" was planning for a "theatrical entertainment to be given soon." On December 1, 1911, the company presented what was probably its first

<sup>30</sup> *Academy Grange Ledger. 1917-1923*, Ledgers Box 21; *Academy Grange Minute Book 1895-1905*, Meeting of Dec. 22, 1899, Minute Book Box 14; *Academy Grange Minute Book, Box 14 1895-1905*, 186. All in the collection of the Ontario County Historical Society, Canandaigua, New York.

<sup>31</sup> *Ontario County Times-Journal*, Jun. 4, 1930, 1.

<sup>32</sup> "Charles R. Lilly Post No. 303," *Ontario County Journal*, . Nov. 17, 1882, 2; "Aged Veteran Passed Away," *Ontario County Journal*, Jul. 27, 1928, 4. This post should not be confused by the Lilly Post #66 in Syracuse, NY. The post in Cheshire never had a meeting hall of its own. When the hall was being cleared several years ago, a retouched photographic portrait of an unknown GAR member was found in a storage closet.

Knights of the Maccabees Hall  
Ontario County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 9

production, *In Old New England*, which included women in the cast.<sup>33</sup> During the first quarter of the twentieth century, local newspapers frequently carried announcements and articles about the activities of the Cheshire Amusement Company. At times, the Amusement Company would contract with musical groups from beyond the immediate area for performances in the KOTM and later, the Grange Hall. A reorganization of the Cheshire Amusement Company was noted by the theatrical publication, *The Billboard*, in 1922, indicating that the company was struggling.<sup>34</sup> Extant newspaper announcements of their plays and other events date from between 1911 and the early 1920s and it is not known when the Cheshire Amusement Company ceased to exist.

The 1920 sale of the KOTM hall to the grange may have played a role in those difficulties of the Amusement Company, or reflected them. The Grange continued active use of the hall as a theatre and concert venue, even hosting annual play competitions among area Granges, which received wide regional news coverage.<sup>35</sup> Several posters promoting Amusement Company productions were still affixed to the walls of the hall when it was purchased by the Cheshire Community Action Team (CCAT) in 2009.<sup>36</sup> Many more have been found in storage closets around the building. Three have been reproduced and sold to raise money for the restoration of the hall.

Formed in 2003, the Cheshire Community Action Team works to improve the day-to-day living environment of the hamlet by raising awareness of community issues, fostering better communication between neighbors and youth development and providing an informed, effective voice that links Cheshire residents to local government. The organization is open to anyone interested in preserving the history, rural character and tranquil charm of the hamlet. The CCAT includes a history committee that gathers information, which included documenting the historic buildings in the community. One of CCAT's major projects is the restoration and preservation of the meeting hall. It sees the hall as the future venue for its other meetings and projects as well as some new ones in keeping with the historic use of the building. Since acquiring the hall in 2009, the CCAT has been planning for the continued preservation and restoration of the building.

<sup>33</sup> "Cheshire-- *Ontario County Journal*, Aug. 11, 1911, 2; "The Village of Cheshire.--The Settlement South of Canandaigua, New York." Typescript in possession of Fred and Nancy Goodnow of Cheshire, c. 1928, 7. The typescript called the organization the Young Men's Amusement Club and dated its formation in 1911.

<sup>34</sup> "Theatrical Briefs," *The Billboard*, Feb. 25, 1922, 45.

<sup>35</sup> A few examples include: "Academy," *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*. Jan. 9, 1917. p. 10 [This article details plans for a concert in the Meeting Hall by the Ithaca Conservatory of Music.]; "Plans Play Contest." *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*. Apr. 22, 1930; "First Prize Went to Grange Actors at Reeds Corners." *Geneva Daily Times*. May 11, 1932. p. 6

<sup>36</sup> Ontario County Land Records, Liber 1223, page 730. The building had three private owners between 1969 when it was sold by the Academy Grange and the time it was purchased by CCAT.

Knights of the Maccabees Hall  
Ontario County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 8 Page 10

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**Conclusion**

Grange halls, churches, lodge halls and even schools typically included a stage, some with moveable backdrops and a staging area like that found in the KOTM Hall. These buildings often functioned as community centers, especially in a small community like Cheshire. The Cheshire Amusement Company provided an outlet for the interest in music and drama shown by Cheshire residents and the KOTM provided a needed venue for the company's performances and other home-grown entertainment. Interest in continued use of the meeting hall for theatrical productions, music recitals, and community events has also been expressed in the recent community business plan drawn up for the building by the Cheshire Community Action Team, the present owners of the hall.

The KOTM Hall was constructed to meet a variety of local needs more than a century ago. For Cheshire and the surrounding countryside, the meeting hall was the focus of meetings and community activities, including continuous theatre productions on a fully appointed stage. Its current owner hopes to reprise its use for community entertainment, cultural events, education, and for promoting a sense of community. Restoration of the hall will make it usable again for the public under current building and health codes. The hall represents the juncture of local efforts to provide life and disability insurance for working people, the joining together to promote social activities and the interests of farmers and veterans; the production of local theatrical events; and in providing a place for the community to gather. After a thirty year period of use as a store, it is now being readied to fulfill those roles again.

Knights of the Maccabees Hall  
Ontario County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 9 Page 1

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Knights of the Maccabees Hall  
Ontario County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 9 Page 2

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Also, various issues of the

*Geneva Times*, Geneva, NY.

*Naples Record*, Naples, NY.

*Ontario County Journal*. Canandaigua, NY.

*Ontario County Times*. Canandaigua, NY.

CHESHIRE MEETING HALL  
Name of Property

Ontario County, New York  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property less than one acre

### UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 18N 3097717 4743673  
Zone Easting Northing

2 18  
Zone Easting Northing

3 18  
Zone Easting Northing

4 18  
Zone Easting Northing

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 By

name/title Dr. Preston Pierce, Ontario County Historian

organization Ontario County Dept. of Records, Archives & Information Management Services date 3/21/2013

street & number 3051 County Complex Drive telephone (585) 396-4376

city or town Canandaigua state NY zip code 14424

### 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 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 SHPO or FPO.)

name/title Cheshire Community Action Team

street & number 4338 Labrador Lane telephone N/A

city or town Canandaigua state NY zip code 14424

**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.*).

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Knights of the Maccabees Hall  
Ontario County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number 10 Page 1

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VERBAL BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed map with scale.

BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION

The property boundary is the same as during the period of significance.

Knights of the Maccabees Hall  
Ontario County, New York

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
CONTINUATION SHEET**

Section number Page 1

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**PHOTOGRAPH LIST**

Knights of the Maccabees Hall, 4270 SR 21, Cheshire (Canandaigua) NY 14424

Digital photographs taken by the Cheshire Community Action Team on 11 December 2012. Copy of CD-R with images on file in the offices of the Field Services Bureau of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, Peebles Island State Park, Waterford, New York.

**Photo # 1:** East and north elevations of hall viewed from SR 21 looking southwest.

**Photo #2:** North elevation, view looking southwest.

**Photo #3:** South elevation, view looking west from SR21, showing close proximity of neighboring building.

**Photo #4:** Detail view of foundation, north elevation.

**Photo #5:** Interior view of southwest corner showing wall surfaces and edge of stage.

**Photo #6:** North end of stage (northwest corner of interior).

**Photo #7:** Interior view of basement undergoing repairs/restoration.

**Photo #8:** Detail view of booth area in basement.

**Photo #9:** View of one of the historic stage backdrops.

**Photo #10:** Detail view of interior south wall.

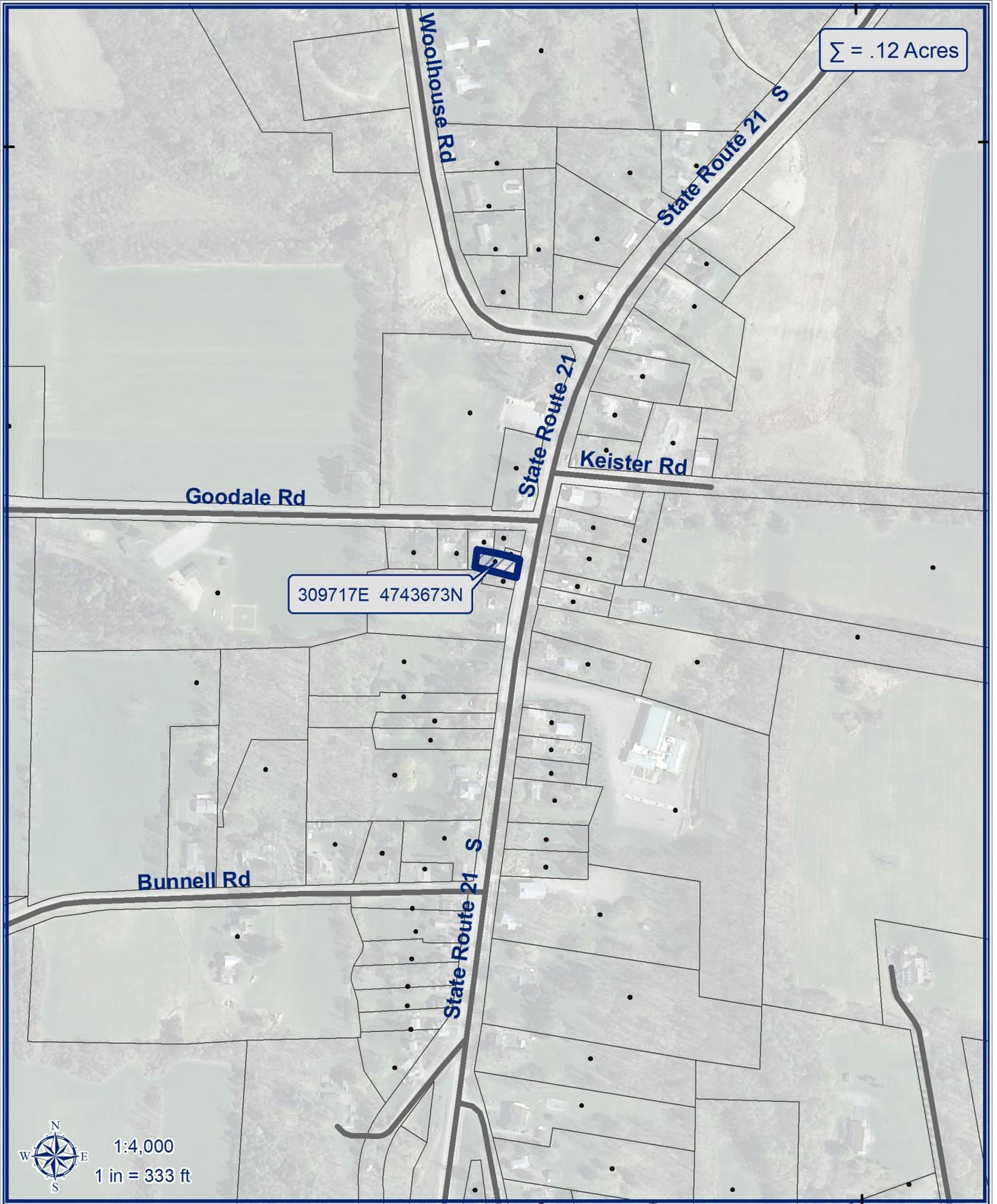
**Supplemental image:** Interior view of hall main floor

GRANGE RESTORATION PROJECT  
CHESHIRE COMMUNITY ACTION TEAM  
THANKS FOR YOUR SUPPORT



CHESHIRE COMMUNITY ACTION TEAM  
www.cheshirecommunityactionteam.org.uk





309717E 4743673N

$\Sigma = .12$  Acres



1:4,000  
1 in = 333 ft

Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N  
Projection: Transverse Mercator  
Datum: North American 1983  
Units: Meter



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<http://oncor.co.ontario.ny.us>



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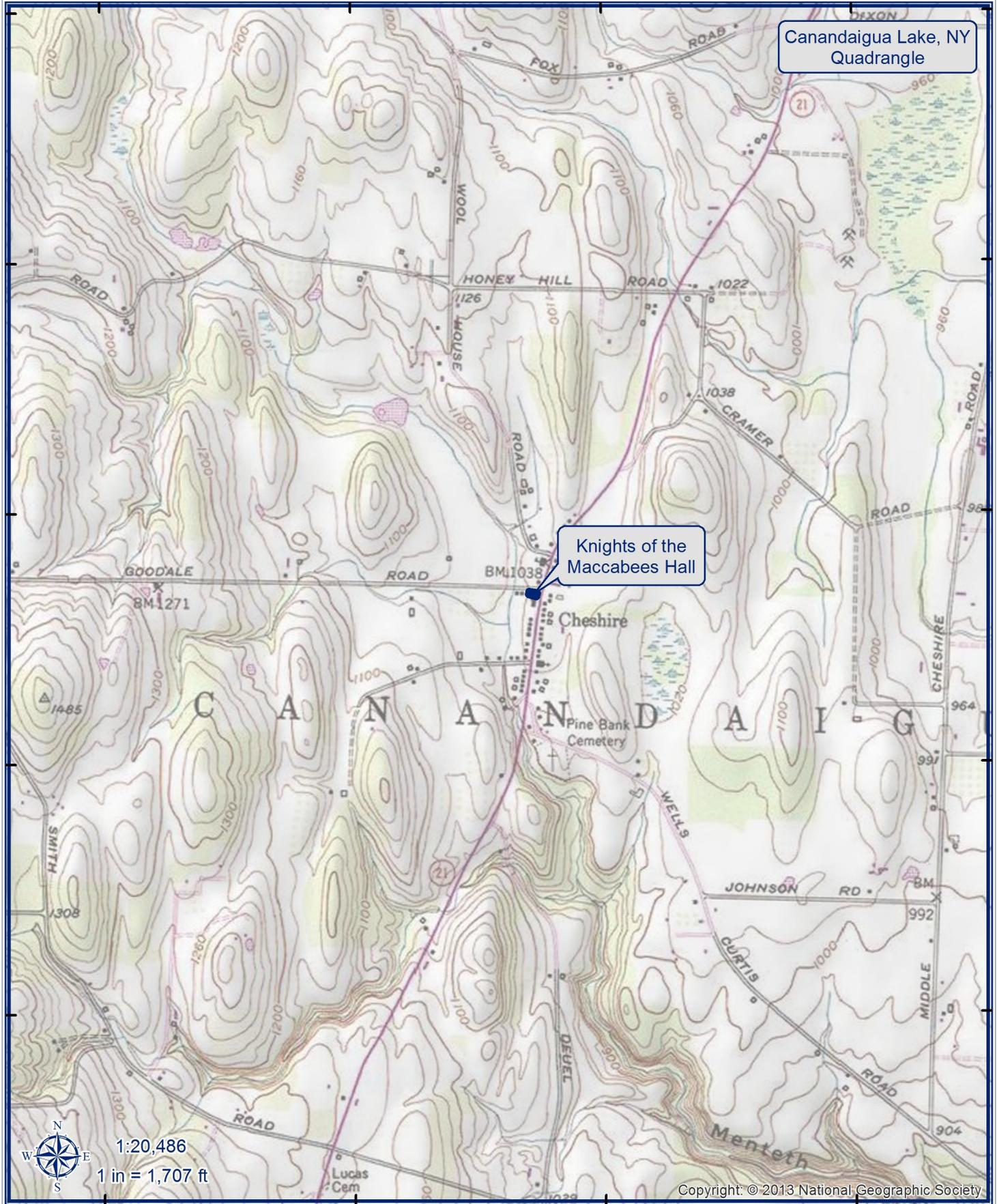
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Canandaigua Lake, NY  
Quadrangle

Knights of the  
Maccabees Hall

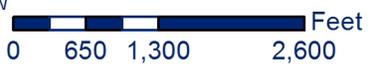


1:20,486  
1 in = 1,707 ft

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Coordinate System: NAD 1983 UTM Zone 18N  
Projection: Transverse Mercator  
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Down ↑  
Up ↓











# GAR



GRAND ARMY OF THE REPUBLIC



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CHESHIRE  
MEETING HALL  
1874  
Residence Point

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