NPS Form 10-900 OMB No. 1024-0018 (Expires 5/31/2012)

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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

447

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 National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form.* If any 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 certification comments, entries, and narrative items on continuation sheets if needed (NPS Form 10-900a).**

1. Name of Property

historic name Community of True Inspiration Residence

other names/site number West Seneca Historical Society

2. Location

street & number 919 Mill Road — N/A not for publication

city or town West Seneca — N/A vicinity

state New York code NY county Erie code 029 zip code 14224

3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended,

I hereby certify that this _x_ 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 _x_ meets ___ does not meet the National Register Criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant at the following level(s) of significance:

___ **national** ___ **statewide** _x_ **local**

Ruth A Pierpont DSHPO — 5/1/13
Signature of certifying official/Title — Date

State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.

Signature of commenting official — Date

Title — State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government

4. National Park Service Certification

I hereby certify that this property is:

✓ entered in the National Register — ___ determined eligible for the National Register

___ determined not eligible for the National Register — ___ removed from the National Register

___ other (explain:)

Joe Edson Beall — 6-25-13
Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

Community of True Inspiration Residence
Name of Property

Erie County, NY
County and State

5. Classification

Ownership of Property
(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- [ ] private
- [x] public - Local
- [ ] public - State
- [ ] public - Federal

Category of Property
(Check only **one** box.)

- [x] 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.)

DOMESTIC/residence

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

RECREATION & CULTURE/museum

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

No style

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: concrete and brick
walls: wood
roof: asphalt
other:

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance of the property. Explain contributing and noncontributing resources if necessary. Begin with **a summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, setting, size, and significant features.)

Summary Paragraph

West Seneca is a township located southeast section of Erie County, south of the city of Buffalo and east of the city of Lackawanna. The house is in a section of the town known as Ebenezer, named after the Community of True Inspiration, commonly known as the Ebenezer Society, which settled the area in the 1840s. German immigrants formed the communal society, building several shared homes, mills and common buildings (stores, kitchens, dining halls, etc.). The Community of True Inspiration residence, located at 919 Mill Road in West Seneca, is one of a handful of buildings surviving from this period of West Seneca's history. The house is a simple, wood vernacular building. It retains its plain design and floor plan reflecting the lifestyle of the religious community for which it was built. The interior and exterior are characterized by simple design with minimal ornamentation. The original c. 1850 building, which is one-and-one-half stories in height with a gable roof, was extended to the rear by later additions in the late-nineteenth and mid-twentieth centuries; the original form and floor plan remain readily distinguishable.

Narrative Description

Setting

The Ebenezer (historically Lower Ebenezer) area of the town of West Seneca, where the building is located, originated as a hamlet established by the Community of True Inspiration in the 1840s and retains a small collection of buildings which, despite alterations and subsequent infill development, share distinctive forms and massing typical of the society's architecture. Streets in this area are laid out in an irregular grid, typical of nineteenth-century villages and hamlets in western New York. The building is located on the east side of Mill Road, a block and a half north of Seneca Street and a block east of Union Street. These streets are two of the town's commercial thoroughfares, characterized mainly by mid- to late-twentieth century auto-oriented development.[1] This section of Mill Road is primarily residential in character, with houses on the east side of the street and a three-story brick school on the west side.

The property encompasses approximately one-quarter acre on Mill Road, measuring 70 feet across the front (Mill Road) by 200 feet deep. The lot is nearly rectangular, with a portion of the northeast corner cut off. The terrain in this area slopes downward from north to south; most of this property has been regraded and is relatively level in comparison to the pronounced slope of neighboring properties. The building is set back about fifty feet from Mill Road. A strip of the front yard is adjacent to the street. It is about twenty feet deep, covers the full width of the property and is paved as a parking area. A faux split-rail fence separates the parking area from the front yard. A straight concrete walk leads from the parking area to the front door. Items in the yard north of the walk include a sign for the West Seneca Historical Society, a tree with a memorial plaque, and a historic millstone. South of the walk there are several stone markers from other historic sites and a flagpole. All of these objects are associated with various events in West Seneca's history but none are directly related to

[1]The house was moved from its original location, which was on Main Street about 500 feet west of the current location, in 1956; see Section 8.

the Community of True Inspiration. The front walk continues around the south side of the house; the yard is otherwise grassy. There are trees along the north and south property lines (most of these appear to be on the neighboring properties); the east property line is marked by low shrubs and young trees. There are no outbuildings on the property.

Exterior

The building consists of two parts with consistent siding but distinct rooflines: the front portion is one and one-half stories in height with a side-facing gable roof clad in asphalt shingles, and the rear portion (an addition, built in two stages although with a continuous roofline and siding) is one story with a low-pitched membrane-covered pent roof. Vernacular in character, the building is composed of simple forms with virtually no ornamentation. The entire building is clad in wood clapboard siding with a wide reveal; most windows are six-over-six double-hung wood sash. The foundation is concrete block, the upper portion faced with brick, and dates to the building's move to this location in 1956.

The original, gable-roofed portion of the house had a strictly rectangular footprint measuring 28 feet wide by 21.5 feet deep. The rear, pent-roofed wing (encompassing both the c. 1870s and 1956 additions) is approximately 34 feet deep and 32 feet wide and is flush with the building's south wall. It projects by about four-feet to the north to create a slightly L-shaped footprint. There is also a small projecting pent-roofed shed attached to the south side near the rear of the building, measuring five-feet wide (north-south) by twelve-feet deep. A single brick chimney is located near the west end of the rear addition and appears roughly centered with respect to the original building. This location corresponds to the wall between the dining room and kitchen; there is currently no fireplace or stove in that location.

The primary (west) façade is symmetrical and has three openings: a central door with a six-over-six double-hung window to each side. A set of concrete and brick steps lead to the entrance, which is sheltered by a pent-roofed overhang supported by fluted Doric columns (not original). The hemi-tympanum between the pent roof and building wall features a pierced wheel and vine design. The door is wood, with a glass upper panel above two vertical panels. A door knocker and one of the two door handles are wrought iron, possibly original; a secondary metal door handle, below the wrought-iron handle, is non-historic.

The south side of the building consists of two sections, differentiated by a change in roofline: the front, gable-roofed section (the original building) and the rear, pent-roofed section (the two additions). There are four windows in the original section on this side of the building: three on the first story and one centered in the gable. The window farthest to the right (east), which disrupts the symmetry of this wall, was inserted after the 1956 move. The pent-roofed addition has one-pair of casement windows and, near the east corner, a blocked window. The pent-roofed shed that extends near the middle of the addition has one window (blocked) and a six-paneled contemporary door.

The east side (rear) elevation has three regularly spaced window openings, all covered with wood boards, painted white to match the siding. Near the north corner, a six-paneled modern door is accessed from a pressure-treated wood stoop. Two basement windows are in-filled with wood board. The north side mirrors the south in general configuration, although

lacking the shed addition. On this side, the rear addition projects about four feet north from the original building. There are five windows on the addition on this side: two are covered, while the remaining three, which are visible, are more narrowly spaced. The north side of the original building is symmetrically organized, with two first-story windows and one window centered in the gable.

Interior

Original Building: The building's original floor plan remains clearly discernible, as is the sequence of additions, as each building phase corresponds to distinct rooms. The portion of the building that corresponds to the original house has a central hall, single-pile plan on the first and second stories. Originally there were four rooms: matching parlors to either side of the central stair hall, with matching bedrooms on the second story. The central hall has a straight-run, enclosed stair, with wood treads and risers. A narrow hallway on the first floor runs to the back of the house north of the stair. Because members of the Community of True Inspiration cooked and ate in communal facilities, there was no kitchen or dining room in the house when it was built.

North of the hall is the north parlor, a rectangular room with one window on the west wall and two on the north. Walls are plain with a simple baseboard and no crown molding. A wide arched doorway, with no casing or trim, leads to the dining room to the east. The former south parlor has been divided into two areas: an office, to the west, and restroom area, to the east; these two rooms are not connected. The office is roughly square with one window on the west wall and one on the south wall; there are modern built-in shelves on the east wall. The restroom area, east of the office, is accessed from the central hall and has a doorway to the east, connecting to the dining room. There are two modern toilet rooms along the south wall, each of which has a window.

The second story is subdivided into two identical bedrooms, one to each side of the stair enclosure, with no doors. Each bedroom has a single window centered on the end wall. Because this is a not a full story, the north and south walls are about three-quarters height, then angle up to the flat ceiling. A simple baseboard and flat window casings are the only trim.

The building has hardwood floors on the first and second stories. On the first story, where floors were replaced in-kind when the building was moved in the 1956, floorboards run north-south in the north parlor. Floors in the stair hall, office, and restroom hall are covered in wall-to-wall carpeting. Floors on the second story are wide planks of irregular width running east to west and are original.

First Addition, ca. 1870: The first addition, added in the 1870s, is 32 feet wide, approximately fourteen feet deep and contains the dining room to the north and a kitchen. The dining room, east of the north parlor, is approximately rectangular, with a small projection at the southwest corner where doorways connect to the kitchen and hall. There are three closely spaced windows along the north wall. The dining room has hardwood floors with floorboards running east-west (perpendicular to those in the adjacent north parlor). As in the north parlor, there is no crown molding and a plain baseboard. Wide doorways on the east and west walls connect to the east museum room and north parlor, respectively.

The kitchen is located south of the dining room and is approximately square, with a wood floor. There are two casement windows on the south wall, flanked by built-in cabinets and drawers. Additional built-in shelving is located on the opposite (north) wall. The only entrance to the room is a standard-sized doorway leading to the dining room.

Museum Addition and Basement, 1956 (non contributing): East of the dining room is the second addition (1956), a single open space 32 feet wide by nearly 20 feet deep, containing museum display cases and cabinets. This room has a carpeted floor and an acoustical tile ceiling. There is one square support column near the center of the room. An exterior door is located near the north end of the east wall. A partition creates a separate display area in the northwest corner of the room.

The building has a fully finished basement, excavated when the house was moved to this site in 1956. The basement is divided into several spaces of varied sizes, currently accommodating historical displays. Walls are concrete block and there is an acoustical-tile ceiling.

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.)

- [x] 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.
- [x] 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.
- [x] 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 old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Social History

Architecture

Period of Significance

Ca. 1850-1956

Significant Dates

Ca. 1850, 1864, 1956

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Community of True Inspiration

Period of Significance (justification)

The period reflects the original construction and history of the house from its beginnings as a shared residence (ca. 1850) to a farmhouse (ca. 1870) to its move in 1956.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

The building, moved in 1956, meets Criteria Consideration B since it still retains the distinctive architectural features characteristic of the houses built for members of the Community of True Inspiration.

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Community of True Inspiration residence is significant under Criterion A in the area of social history as the best surviving example of a house built by the Community of True Inspiration (the "Inspirationists" or "Ebenezers"), a Christian group that established a distinctive agricultural settlement in the town of West Seneca in 1842. Its distinctive design reflects the groups' principles of common ownership and plain living. The house's name is derived from the community that built it as housing for two families until 1864 when the entire community relocated to Iowa. It is also significant for its association with the subsequent influx of German immigrants who bought the lands vacated by the Inspirationists. The house is also significant under Criterion C and Criterion Consideration B, as a highly intact example of an "Ebenezer" residence, built circa 1850 that retains its distinctive early character. The building was moved a short distance (500 feet) in 1956 to its present location. It is still within the geographic area in the Town of West Seneca known as Ebenezer, the area settled by the Community of True Inspiration in the 1840s.

Developmental history/additional historic context information. (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

The Community (or Society) of True Inspiration, also known informally as the "Ebenezers," originated in the early-eighteenth century in western Europe, as a Christian sect whose members emphasized spoken testimony and prophecy, refused to take oaths or participate in military service, and declined to send their children to traditional Christian schools. Leaders and most early members came primarily from the German states, the Netherlands, and Switzerland. Initially settling in leased spaces, such as empty monasteries and cloisters, they found themselves targets of persecution and hostility from civic authorities, due to their opposition to war and military service. They were also seen as a threat to religious authority, due to their sometimes-vocal opposition to established church practices, as well as for their promotion of new prophets and prophecies.

In 1842, the group's leader, Christian Metz, led a group of four church elders to the United States to search for property where they could establish a community according to their principles. After touring a few possible areas, the group purchased 5,000 acres of what had been the Buffalo Creek Reservation, which the Seneca had been forced to relinquish in the Compromise Treaty of 1842. It was several years before legal issues regarding the property transfer were fully settled, during which time there were periodic conflicts between the Seneca and the settlers. In the view of the Ebenezers, they had purchased the property as a haven from persecution, had been ignorant of any past issues regarding establishment and sale of the reservation, and simply lacked the resources to go elsewhere. The Seneca, on the other hand, believed their right to the land came from the Great Spirit and was therefore inviolable; they also denied the validity of the treaties and transactions by which the society came to settle on the land.[2] After long and complex negotiations and legal actions, the last of the Seneca left the land in 1846, bringing the dispute to an end.

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[2] Frank J. Lankes, *The Ebenezer Society* (West Seneca Historical Society, 1963): 56-58.

Starting in 1842, the Community of True Inspiration established four settlements in the former Buffalo Creek Reservation. The first settlers to arrive occupied former Seneca buildings, but they soon built their own houses and other buildings, establishing hamlets with distinctive architecture and settlement patterns. All four settlements were given variations on the name Ebenezer, taken from the Old Testament: *Then Samuel took a stone and set it up between Mizpah and Shen. He named it Ebenezer, saying, 'Thus far has the Lord helped us.* (1 Samuel 7:12). The largest of the hamlets was Middle (*Mittel)* Ebenezer (later known as Gardenville), near the corner of Union Road and Clinton Street; the others were Upper (*Ober*) Ebenezer (later known as Blossom), near Blossom and Transit roads; Lower (*Nieder*) Ebenezer (later known as Ebenezer), at Main Street and Union Road; and New (*Neu*) Ebenezer, on Clinton Street east of Union Road. Upper Ebenezer is in what is now the town of Elma; the others are in the town of West Seneca. The society also established two settlements in Ontario, Canada.[3]

The society's constitution, adopted in 1846, laid out its guiding principles, which included that all land and buildings were commonly owned. Church elders were in charge of spiritual and temporal matters, which included organizing the community's agriculture and commerce and assigning tasks. Church elders also made housing assignments for all members, with accommodations for families in single and double houses, and unmarried individuals, in dormitory-style buildings. Housing assignments were based on proximity to work. Instead of wages, members of the community were provided with food, shelter, and an additional allowance to support their family's needs.[4]

By 1846, the population of the Community of True Inspiration numbered between 700 and 800. This group cultivated about 1,000 acres of farmland and lived in three communities (Middle, Lower and Upper Ebenezer). Each hamlet was a compact grouping of residential buildings, interspersed with stores, mills, and workshops, as well as buildings housing communal kitchens and dining rooms. Each of the three settlements also had its own church, where services featured singing, readings of the words of the prophet forbears, prayer, scripture readings, sermons and commentary by the elders.

Buildings constructed by the society were simple and practical, with gable roofs, wood siding, and no ornamentation. While not identical, they shared a basic character, as described by Frank Lankes:

> There were a few brick houses in the communities but most dwellings were of timber-frame construction … The mortised, tenoned and pinned timber framing, joists, studding, sills, plates, rafters, sheathing and roof boards were of hemlock- outside trim of white pine, siding of white pine or poplar, shingles of white pine or cedar.
>
> An unusual feature found in many of the old houses was the use of riven lath. Apparently there were times when mills were too occupied for the detail of sawing them.
>
> Ash was used in flooring and boards were of random width as was customary in those days. Doors, sash and inside trim were of white pine, sash being of small-paned sliding type with the larger sash upper-most. On doors all mortices [sic] were cut entirely through the stiles and tenons wedged to prevent backing out and loosening.

[3] For a useful description of the Community of True Inspiration's settlements and lifestyle in West Seneca, see James Pace, "West Seneca's Community of True Inspiration," *Western New York Heritage* 15, No. 1 (Spring 2012): 18-25.
[4] Lankes, 61-67.

> Some houses were insulated. That was done by laying a false floor between lower joists and by packing wet clay mixed with straw into boxes thus formed. Outer walls were insulated by laying common brick from sill to plate between studding.[5]

Distinctive features of Ebenezer houses were a sitting room and bedroom provided for families, but no kitchen or dining room, as all meals were prepared and eaten in communal kitchens and dining halls. The residence built by the Community of True Inspiration for the Zuber and Burgy families (the nominated property) was a two story timber framed house with clapboard siding produced by one of the group's saw mills.[6] A center staircase divided the house and each family had a sitting room on the first floor and a bedroom on the second floor. Floors had random width boards, which were replaced in the first floor with narrow width boards by subsequent owners. The original windows were also replaced with six-by-six sash at a later date, presumably by the Mayer family who bought the house from the Ebenezers. No evidence existed as to the brick insulation or a false floor, which would have been discovered during the building's move. This house was the most simple, plain design for the two families with all trim being limited to plain sash and moldings.

Used by the Zuber and Burgy families, the house is the best surviving example of an Ebenezer residence and continues to convey the original layout and design character of the community. The original, symmetrically organized floor plan consisted of a central stair hall, two first-story parlors and two second-story bedrooms. This floor plan remains substantially intact, altered only by the partition of one sitting room into an office and two restrooms. The two bedrooms have not been altered and retain original varied-width flooring. The exterior appearance remains plain and unadorned; the present porch columns are not original (replaced after 1956) and the decorative cut-out detail in the hemi-tympanum below the pent roof over the porch most likely is a late-nineteenth century decoration.

Although the society was successful in creating a self-sustaining community and even produced surplus commodities sold in local markets, by the 1850s, society elders were increasingly concerned that the group would not be able to sustain its way of life in the West Seneca location. Several factors influenced their growing resolve to leave: rapid growth of nearby Buffalo brought more settlement to the area and also provided worldly temptations, threatening their pious lifestyle; a railroad was planned through their tract that would have divided Lower from Middle Ebenezer; and rising land prices made future expansion appear difficult.

In 1854, the society designated a committee of four men to look for a new site in the west. They selected a tract in Iowa that became known as Amana. The first group of Ebenezer settlers left West Seneca to move to Amana in 1855; other groups followed gradually, as their lands were sold, until finally by the mid-1860s the entire community had left. The communities they established in Iowa were similar to those created in West Seneca, with a similar constitution, governing structure, material culture, and lifestyle. The Amana Colonies are still in existence and have been designated a National Historic Landmark (1965).[7]

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[5] Lankes, 88-89.
[6] The house was originally located on the south side of what is now Main Street east of Union Street (its original site is now the location of a parking lot; see below).
[7] National Register of Historic Places Inventory – Nomination Form, "Amana Colonies," 1978.

Most of the former Ebenezer lands and buildings in West Seneca were purchased by other German immigrants and the town remained primarily an agricultural community. The Community of True Inspiration-residence exemplified this transition: in 1864 Frederick Mayer, a farmer, and his wife, Rosina Fredericka Mayer, purchased the house from the Ebenezer representatives who were handling the sale of the remaining properties. Both Mayers were born in Württemberg, in what is now Germany, and immigrated separately in the 1850s. During the lengthy period when the Mayers lived in the house, they constructed the first addition, containing a dining room and kitchen. The pent roof over the front entry may also have been added or embellished during this time; this is speculation based on the decorative detail, which is inconsistent with the simplicity of Ebenezer architecture.

A photograph displayed in the West Seneca Historical Society shows the Mayers and their four adult children on the occasion of the couple's 50th wedding anniversary in 1904.[8] By 1910, census records indicated that Mrs. Mayer was a widow, remaining in her home on what was then known as Ridge Road (now Main Street). In 1917, presumably after Mrs. Mayer's death, her four children conveyed the property to Minnie Pleister. According to the 1920 census, Minnie Pleister was a widow, then age 56, born in Ontario, Canada, who moved to the United States as an infant. Her parents (like the Mayers) were German immigrants born in Württemberg. The census indicated that William Casey, a 34-year-old Irish immigrant and superintendent of a construction company, boarded with her. By 1930, Mrs. Pleister was living in New Jersey with her daughter and son-in-law.

In 1936, Minnie Pleister's son and daughter sold the property to Charles C. Brown, who owned a number of properties in West Seneca, but he does not appear to have lived in the house. The 1940 census (the last one publicly accessible at this time) shows Iva Elliott, a 72-year-old widow, and her 39-year-old daughter, Marion, living in the house (then known as 623 Main Street) as renters. Charles C. Brown sold the property to Stacy Leech in 1942. Stacy Leech also owned a number of properties in the town and likely did not live in this one.

According to historical society records, the last occupant of the house was Henry Scheuneman, who must have been a renter. The property was transferred from Stacy Leech to the Ebenezer United Church of Christ in 1955. Although the deed shows the property being conveyed directly from Stacy Leech to the church for one dollar, church and historical society records indicate an intermediary, William Schaller, facilitated the transfer by purchasing the property from Leech and donating it to the church to provide a parking lot. An arrangement was made to donate the house to the West Seneca Historical Society and move it around the corner to a lot on Mill Street, which was purchased for this purpose and donated to the historical society by James and Carol Ehinger. Frank Slade, a former town supervisor, was also involved in the transaction, owning the property briefly while the historical society was in the process of finalizing its legal incorporation to allow it to accept the donation. The new site was about 500 feet from the original site and still within the original hamlet of Lower Ebenezer laid out by the Community of True Inspiration on one of the hamlet's original streets.

[8] Census records variously list Mrs. Mayer's name as Rosina or Fredericka, while 1864 the deed lists her as Rosina Fredericka; a label on the photograph gives her name as Anna.

Photographs of the house in the process of being moved show it consisted of the original Ebenezer house plus the Mayer kitchen and dining room addition. The front and sides of the structure were clad in what appears to be cement-asbestos siding. When the house was placed in its new location, the West Seneca Historical Society built a second addition to provide space for its exhibits; the house's new footprint with both additions is shown on a survey of the property dated November 10, 1956. The second addition is directly behind the first; the two have a continuous roofline and continuous siding. Photographs taken soon after the move also show that the asbestos siding was removed; whether the current wood siding was discovered under the asbestos or was added at this time to restore the house's original appearance is unknown.

The present site of the house is about 500 feet nearly due east from its original site when it was moved in 1956. It is completely within the area settled by the Community of True Inspiration in the hamlet of Lower Ebenezer; the house therefore remains in close proximity to other surviving buildings associated with the society, including other houses that retain characteristic scale and massing (although extensively altered). Both the original and new sites are within sight of one of the community's common buildings, the *Glockenhaus* or bell tower near the southeast corner of Main and Union streets, as well as the more prominent building at the southwest corner of Main and Union that was built as the society's store. Mill Road was the location of several original Ebenezer buildings, including the cabinet shop at the corner of Main Street, the blacksmith shop just south of Center Street, and several houses. A cluster of mills and related buildings were built near the creek in Lower Ebenezer. The house's setting therefore remained much the same when it was moved around the corner within the same historic context.

Since 1956, the house has operated as a museum, office, and archive for the Historical Society, displaying artifacts and dioramas that interpret the town's history from the Seneca to the twentieth century, with an emphasis on the Community of True Inspiration. Most interior changes that post-date the Ebenezer and Mayer periods likely took place when the house was moved or shortly thereafter. For example, the current first-story wood floor boards are replacements and presumably were installed as part of the process of settling the house on its new foundation. The date of the partition of one of the parlors to create an office and restroom area is unknown but may have taken place when the house was moved as well.

The exterior of the house appears to have changed very little since it was rehabilitated after the move. The columns at the front entry have been replaced; photographs of the house before and soon after the move show the columns at that time were fluted only from about the midpoint up, whereas the columns in place today are fluted from capital to base. In addition, a third window was added to the south side of the original house after the move, possibly when one or more bathrooms were added.

The Community of True Inspiration-Mayer House is part of a notable architectural legacy left by the Ebenezers when they vacated their settlements to move to Iowa. Remnants of all of their hamlets can still be discerned, as the buildings generally retain their distinctive massing and tend to occur in clusters. Nearly all, however, have been extensively altered with the addition of artificial siding, changes to fenestration, addition of porches, or other changes that diminish their

integrity. Of the surviving "Ebenezer" properties in West Seneca, the house at 919 Mill Road best exemplifies the distinctive character of the community's buildings, retaining nearly all of its original plan and architectural features.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography (Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form.)

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Perkins, William Rufus, and Barthinius L. Wick. *History of the Amana Society or Community of True Inspiration.* State University of Iowa Publications, Historical Monograph No. 1. Iowa City: State University of Iowa, 1891.

Sanborn Fire Insurance Maps, West Seneca, New York, 1920-1943. Accessed online at http://sanborn.umi.com/.

Smith, Henry Perry. *History of the City of Buffalo and Erie County.* Volume 1. Syracuse: D. Mason & Co., 1884.

United States Census Records, accessed online at www.ancestry.com.

West Seneca Historical Society, West Seneca, New York. Vertical Files, Map Collection, and Photograph Collection.

White, Truman C. *Our County and its People: A Descriptive Work on Erie County, New York.* Volume 1. Boston History Company, 1989.

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 # _____
____recorded by Historic American Landscape Survey # _____

Primary location of additional data:

____State Historic Preservation Office
____Other State agency
____Federal agency
____Local government
____University
_x_Other
Name of repository: **West Seneca Historical Society**

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References
(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	18N	193476	4749121	3			
2				4			

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)

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

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundaries reflect the current property occupied by the West Seneca Historical Society since 1956.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Katie Eggers Comeau
organization Bero Architecture PLLC date 21 March 2013
street & number 32 Winthrop St telephone (585) 262-2035
city or town Rochester state NY zip code 14607
e-mail kcomeau@beroarchitecture.com

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **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. Key all photographs to this map.

- **Continuation Sheets**

- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items.)

Community of True Inspiration Residence
Name of Property

Erie County, NY
County and State

Photographs:

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map.

Name of Property: Community of True Inspiration Residence

City or Vicinity: West Seneca

County: Erie County State: New York

Photographer: #s 1-2 by Katie Eggers Comeau, Bero Architecture PLLC; #s 4-17 by Virginia L. Bartos, NYS OPRHP
Supplemental photos # 18 courtesy of the West Seneca Historical Society

Date Photographed: All images June 2012

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

0001 of 0018. West façade of house viewed looking east from Mill Rd.
0002 of 0018. West and North elevations, view looking southeast from Mill Rd.
0003 of 0018. Mill Road looking south in front of house.
0004 of 0018. Mill Road looking north from front of house. Fire house in background marks approximate distance building was moved.
0005 of 0018. Detail view of main entrance.
0006 of 0018. South elevation, view looking northwest.
0007 of 0018. Detail view of window in south elevation.
0008 of 0018. North elevation, view looking southwest.
0009 of 0018. Detail view of interior side of main door.
0010 of 0018. Stairs and hall immediately opposite main entrance.
0011 of 0018. North parlor, view looking northeast.
0012 of 0018. North parlor looking east into dining room.
0013 of 0018. South bedroom (second floor).
0014 of 0018. Detail view of south bedroom.
0015 of 0018. North bedroom (second floor).
0016 of 0018. Detail view of north bedroom.
0017 of 0018. View of basement exhibit area.
0018 of 0018. Supplemental photo showing house in process of being relocated 1956.

Property Owner:

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

name Town of West Seneca

street & number 1250 Union Rd telephone (716) 674-5600

city or town West Seneca state NY zip code 14224

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.460 et seq.).

Estimated Burden Statement: Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18 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 Office of Planning and Performance Management. U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.

Community of True Inspiration Residence (W. Seneca Hist. Soc.)
Weat Seneca, Erie Co., NY

919 Mill Rd.
W. Seneca, NY 14224

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

0 95 190 380 Feet

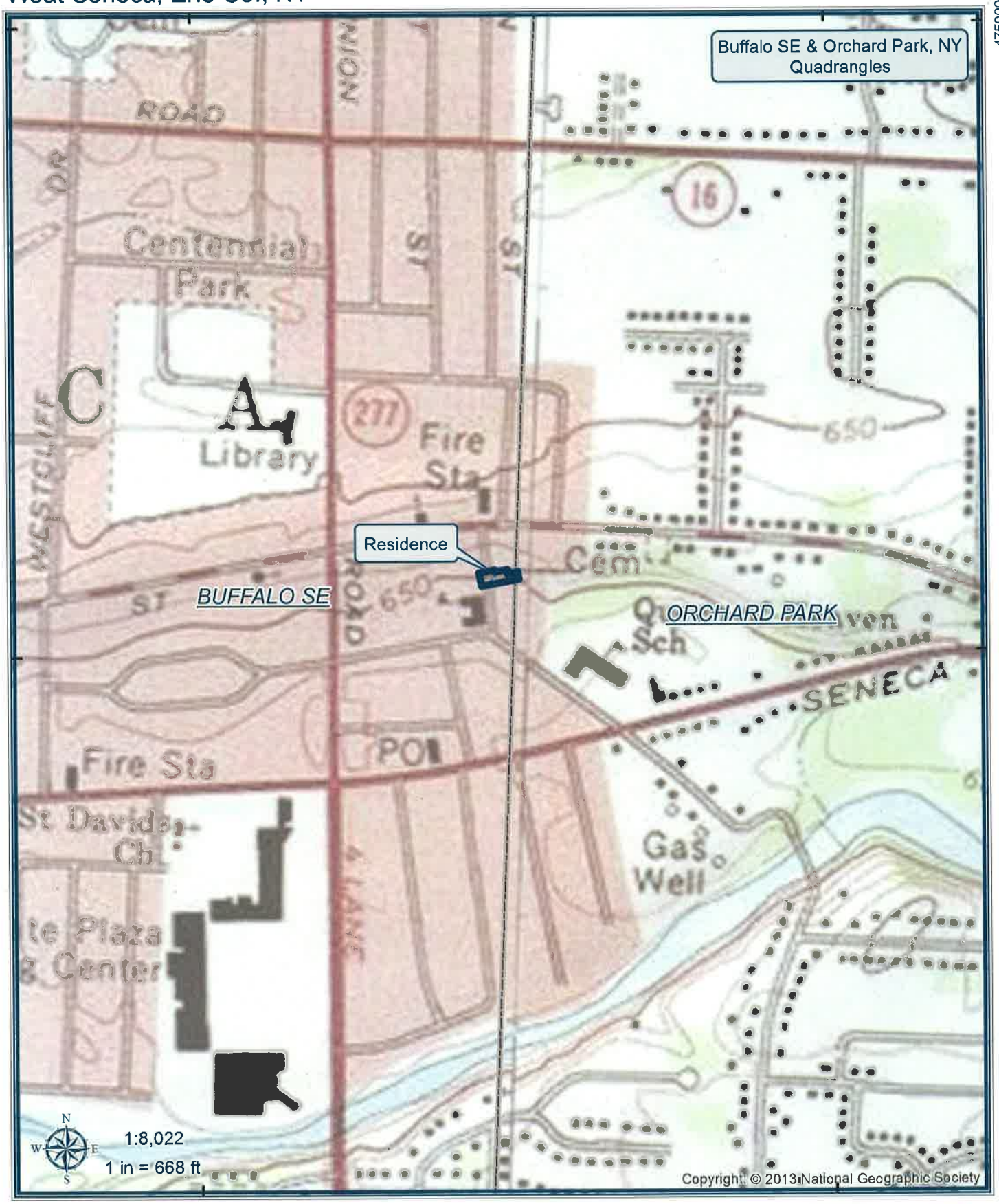
Residence

Tax Parcel Data:
Erie Co. RPS
http://gis1.erie.gov/GC/

OFFICE OF PARKS · RECREATION · HISTORIC PRESERVATION
NEW YORK STATE

Community of True Inspiration Residence (W. Seneca Hist. Soc.)
Weat Seneca, Erie Co., NY

919 Mill Rd.
W. Seneca, NY 14224



193000 194000

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

0 255 510 1,020 Feet

Residence
USGS quad index

Tax Parcel Data:
Erie Co. RPS
http://gis1.erie.gov/GC/

HOURS
Tuesday 10-4 pm
First Sunday of the Month 2-4 pm
AND BY APPOINTMENT

WEST SENECA
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY
AND
MUSEUM

STOP

919

WARNING

WARNING
protected by
Eastern States
Sentinel
Alarm Services
commercial - residential
(716) 675-4344

Supervisors of the Town of West Seneca
THE EBENEZER SOCIETY
E PURSUIT OF RELIGIOUS

WHITE

Ebene