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

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United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
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 **BUILDING AT 44 CENTRAL AVENUE**

other names/site number J.R. PETER'S & SONS

2. Location

street & number 44 CENTRAL AVENUE ☐ not for publication

city or town ALBANY ☐ vicinity

state NEW YORK code NY county ALBANY code 001 zip code 12206

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 12/23/13
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:

X 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:) _____

Alan Alexander 2/14/14
Signature of the Keeper Date of Action

BUILDING AT 44 CENTRAL AVENUE | **ALBANY COUNTY, NEW YORK**

Name of Property | County and State

5. Classification

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

X	private
	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

N/A

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: warehouse

DOMESTIC: single dwelling

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMERCE/TRADE: business, professional

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

EARLY REPUBLIC

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: STONE

walls: BRICK

roof: SLATE

other: METAL, GLASS

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

Forty-four Central Avenue, the westernmost of two buildings located at a prominent intersection known at one time as Robison's Point, is an important example of early nineteenth century commercial architecture in Albany, New York. It is a load-bearing brick building erected to accommodate commercial and storage functions and it was built on a wedge-shaped parcel where two major roads diverged. Few buildings of this type and period are extant in Albany; as such, it remains a rare example of commercial architecture chronicling the city's growth and westward development in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. The building retains a fairly high degree of physical integrity and retains many exterior features as well as interior components dating to the building's construction ca. 1817 and subsequent periods of historic use. Interior features illustrate how the building functioned in the storage and sale of grain and feed. Forty-four Central Avenue is being nominated independently from adjacent 40 Central Avenue, which has been significantly altered from its early nineteenth century appearance in a way that the nominated building has not.

Narrative Description

The nominated building, 44 Central Avenue, is one of two attached buildings—along with 40 Central Avenue—situated at the intersection of Washington and Central Avenues and Henry Johnson Boulevard in the City of Albany. This distinctive intersection creates a triangular site with Washington Avenue on the south side, Henry Johnson Boulevard on the east side and Central Avenue to the north. A wedge-shaped building is the product of these intersecting roads. There is currently a parking lot to the west. Townsend Park occupies an adjacent parcel to the east, between Washington and Central avenues. The buildings are situated west of Albany's downtown business district, north of the Washington Park neighborhood and just outside the southern boundary of the Arbor Hill neighborhood. As an urban site, the building is built to the property line with no landscaping between the buildings and the street.

These two buildings, erected at a site known as Robison's Point in the early nineteenth century, are brick structures both of which pre-date 1820. Forty Central Avenue shows up on the tax assessment rolls in 1819 as lot one of Robison's Point, while 44 Central Avenue, the second lot of the subdivision and the subject of this nomination, has a construction date prior to 1817. Both were built largely with utility in mind and do not present many decorative components from this era as a result of it, save for their Flemish bond brickwork. Rather, these buildings are strong examples of the simple features characterizing commercial and light industrial building from this period. Both were modified later in the century to include Late Victorian-era details; of the two, 40 Central Avenue is the more heavily modified from its original exterior appearance.

Forty-four Central Avenue has an uncoursed rubble stone foundation. Below grade is a full-height basement running the entire length and width of the building. Openings in the stone foundation are infilled with brick and concrete masonry. Both the north and south sides have the remnants of entrances at this level that are now inaccessible from grade. Street improvement campaigns in 1864 and/or 1878-9 raised the street level to above the water table height. On the north side there is a single door with four panes over three raised panels. The south side has a pair of doors with two panes above two recessed panels.

A rail line was developed in 1864 that created a new road along Central Avenue from downtown.[1] Extending from the newly created Washington Park, Northern Boulevard (now Henry Johnson Boulevard) was completed in 1878

[1] "The Albany Railway Company was organized and incorporated September 14, 1863 with the capital of $100,000…In the winter of 1863-1864, work upon the new road was commenced on what is known as the State Street route – extending from Broadway thorough State, Washington, and Central Avenue to Knox street – and completed in February of this year, the first car running over this route February 22, 1864. In 1865 this line was extended to West Albany." Morris Gerber, *Old Albany* vol. 3, 93.

and involved a dramatic change to the characteristics of what was Knox Street.[2] Western Avenue had noted street improvements from 1878-1879.[3]

Both buildings of Robison's Point have exterior load-bearing brick walls laid in Flemish bond on the Central Avenue and Washington Avenue facades.[4] Common bond is used on the west side facing the parking lot. Here the brick is soft and low-fired.[5] Soft brick was used on this less important face because it was built with the assumption that a similar sized building would take the adjacent lot; however, nothing substantial in size or quality of construction was ever built in this third lot. The brick for both 40 and 44 Central Avenue is smaller than a typical common brick. This narrow characteristic helps to date the buildings prior to the middle of the nineteenth century, when standardized brick manufacturing became more common. The mortar is a mix of lime-based and Portland cement; the latter would not have been original to the period of construction and was probably used in the 1983 restoration.[6] Forty-four Central Avenue has signs painted for previous business owners ghosted on all three facades rather than an overall continuous color. At the time of the buildings rehabilitation in 1983 there was still clear evidence of the J.H. Peter's & Sons sign on the south façade, under the cornice line, as well as on the west parking lot elevation. During the 1983 rehabilitation a conscious effort was made retain these signs as relics of past businesses.

The storefronts on both Central and Washington avenues are not original. Major renovations to the building occurred between 1870 and 1890, when there was a significant increase in real estate value.[7] A major rehabilitation in 1983 returned the 44 Central Avenue storefront to its Late Victorian-era appearance. Although taking cues from the time, the storefront is not a precise recreation. The building storefronts were reconstructed to include features typical of the time, but with a different configuration of doors and windows. On the Central Avenue façade, the storefront includes a pair of recessed wooden doors with a large single-pane window and a single panel below. The storefront windows flanking it are single sheets of glass with similar base paneling. Above the storefront windows is a sign reading "The J.R. Peters Sons Building, Est. 1817." Atop the signage is a sheet metal cornice painted to match the woodwork. The cornice breaks just beneath the doorway above. Brackets enclose the sign and terminate the cornice. The door adjacent to the storefront leads directly into a foyer with a staircase to the upper floors. The door is set back with raised wooden paneling on both sides and has a single-pane transom above. The door itself has two panes with rounded tops over two raised panels. The treatment of the exterior entrance paneling suggests it is contemporary to the second floor modifications.

[2] Ibid.; "The Northern Boulevard extends from Western Avenue, east of the toll-gate, to the intersection of Central and Clinton Avenues, a distance of 5,525 feet. It ranges from 150 to 66 feet in width. It is paved with a combination of the Telford and Macadam systems, and is greatly admired by pleasure drivers. This road was completed in 1878. It is intended to carry it on by Dudely Observatory, to connect the fine drives beyond Tivoli Hollow on the Rensselaer Avenue and Loudonville and Shaker roads."

[3] Ibid., 92; "Western Avenue, under the control of the Commissioners, extends from near the northwest corner of the Park to the toll-gate. It is 8,200 feet in length, 99 feet wide, and paved to a width of 40 feet with granite block, curbed and sewered. The sidewalks with grass, and shed by trees 40 feet apart. In owners of horses, and present a lively appearance. The improvement on this avenue was begun November 16, 1878 and completed the following year."

[4] The 1892 Sanborn map shows a four-story building that is a wholesale feed store at that time. No iron chimney is indicated, nor is the roof noted. The 1908 Sanborn map shows exterior wall thickness to be 12 inches and labels the building as "Feed and Grain." The side height of the building is 47. A "French Roof" is indicated as well as an iron chimney at the southeast and southwest corners. The 1934 Sanborn shows an "S" for "store" at 263 and 263 Washington or 42 and 44 Central Avenue. The parking lot sidewall is 20 inches thick. The location of the iron chimney has moved and is now centered south on 44 Central Avenue. A mansard roof is shown on the south side.

[5] Architectural inspection by Robert N. Pierpont, November 27, 1991 and December 2, 1991.

[6] The manufacture of Portland cement in the United States begins in 1865. Robert Whitman Lesley, *History of the Portland Cement Industry in the United States* (Philadelphia, PA: American Cement Company, 1900).

[7] In 1870, the site was listed in tax assessments at $2,500. In 1880 it is valued at $2,800; by 1885 it is $4,500, and by 1890 it is $5,300.

The second floor has double-hung one-over-one windows. On the interior there is a greater attention to detail. The windows have deep interior paneled casings with built-in interior shutters on both the north and south sides. These renovations occurred concurrently with dwelling modifications to this floor. On the Central Avenue façade, the middle opening has a pair of glazed doors on the interior, while receiving the similar single sheet of glass treatment on the exterior. All windows were restored during a building rehabilitation and renovation in 1983.

The upper two stories on the Central Avenue façade illustrate the utilitarian qualities of this historic commercial building. Typically grain would be brought to the top floor, or the "sack floor," via a hoist. The large hoist wheel is intact and a prominent interior feature on the fourth and attic floors. A wood "roller" still remains on this façade and functioned to keep the material from banging against the building while being hoisted upwards. As it was emptied into bins the grain would descend down the hopper and onto the "stone floor" and then the "meal floor" (ground floor) subsequently. The large central bay corresponding with hoist has been glazed with a single pane of glass and is flanked by windows fitted with six-over-six sash. All three have brownstone lintels and sills on the exterior. On the interior, each window has a pair of raised panel half interior shutters and is headed by a wood lintel. The casings and stools are also wood. It is not certain that the shutters are original, but the hardware post-dates the building's earliest construction.

The Washington Avenue storefront is similar to the Central Avenue elevation with a pair of double doors and flanking large plate windows. The first floor façade is a bit simpler with smaller glass windows in the door and no paneling beneath the storefront windows. The cornice is also simplified without brackets or a break in the cornice line. An historic photograph from the 1930s shows a similar cornice along the adjoining building. Rather than a door on the south side, there is a double-hung window with a one-over-one configuration. The window has a sandstone sill and lintel. There are two elements from this window that separate it from the others. The masonry opening is wider and the lintel has a carved pointed arch. This might suggest a former entrance. It does not line up with the oriel above and so one would not suppose that the masonry opening was contemporary with the Late Victorian-era window.

The second story highlights the later nineteenth century residential renovation. On this elevation three windows are topped with brownstone lintels and have a similar sandstone sill. The center window has the same sash configuration and size as those adjacent, but the header over the window is wider, matching the size of the door opening. This suggests that at one time prior to the late 1800s renovation there was an additional warehouse type opening on this façade. The most ornate element of this façade is an oriel window east of these three windows. The façade's main horizontal projection has a sheet metal bell-shaped roof. At the window level there is a floral design center panel flanked by two fixed angled windows. Each has cross-bracing in the upper sash/pane. There are decorative strap hinges at all four corners of the window visually connecting it to the brick façade. An engaged panel and a projecting bracket support the oriel.

The upper two stories on the Washington Avenue elevation mirror that of the Central Avenue facade. Each floor has two six-over-six double hung windows flanking a central bay which is now glazed with a single glass panel. According to an architectural assessment in 1991, only two sills remain on this façade that were not replaced in the 1983 rehabilitation; all the others were beyond repair.[8]

The roof shape is unique for its time as a modified gable/shallow-pitched mansard roof. Although it would have been atypical to have a flat roof during this period, the unique shape of the site required a roof geometry that would work for a triangular plan. There is currently multi-colored slate along the steeply sloped portion of the roofs. The

[8] 1991 architectural inspection, Pierpont.

sizes are uniform, but the colors vary from mottled reds, purples, sea green and tan. The slates on 44 Central Avenue have more recently been replaced than on the adjacent 40 Central Avenue, but both seem in good condition. Based on color and geography, one can presume that these slates are from the nearby Vermont/New York border quarries, which are still in existence. The slates on 40 Central Avenue show signs of further aging with some staining (probably from a sheet metal ridge cap), while 44 Central Avenue appears to be newer but matches in color and size. Vermont slate was mined and used for roofing in the late 1840s and took on more popularity in the 1850s and continues through today. It is possible that slates from Wales or England might have been used, as these slates were being made available at the time of the building's construction. It is also possible that the original roof was not slate, but rather wood or tin. The flat part of the roof, not visible from the street, is a bitumen/EPDM material. Before the 1983 rehabilitation this flat portion of the roof was sheathed in tin. Historic-period metal snow guards were restored during the 1983 rehabilitation; iron brackets holding the gutters are also historic.[9] At the center of both the Central Avenue and Washington Avenue facades is a hoist that projects out at the base of the roof. This feature helps to illustrate the commercial and light industrial past of the building. The Central Avenue side hoist was much deteriorated before the 1983 rehabilitation. A skylight originally in the attic space was removed; it was replaced with a new double-pitch skylight in 1983.

In the basement metal columns support an east/west beam in both the north and south rooms. The first floor structure is exposed at this level and reveals joists from two different building campaigns that rest on the exterior foundation, as well as an interior brick wall. The 8-inch-thick interior brick wall has a metal header spanning a break in the wall between the two rooms. The north room has joists with plaster staining. This is probably an indication of lumber reuse rather than an original plaster ceiling at this level. On this side, the joists have been sistered with more contemporary material to increase the strength of the framing. The joists display evidence of both hand-hewn fashioning in addition to reciprocating and circular-sawn kerfs.[10] The floor is a contemporary concrete slab dating to the 1983 rehabilitation. There is the remnant of a brick stove flue that post-dates the earliest construction and which displays penciled mortar joints.

The first floor hall has a stair dating to the late 1800s renovation, intact with balustered handrail and newel post. Prior to the 1983 restoration there was also a narrow stair at the northwest corner, connecting the first floor to the upper levels. This was the original staircase for the building. The stair from the fourth floor to the attic is a remainder of this early stairway. The adjacent room is currently one large open space finished with gypsum wallboard on the walls and ceiling and carpet on the floor. In more recent times the space has been divided for multiple storefront tenants.

The second floor is divided into four rooms off of a main circulation space. Original floorboards are obscured by carpet and the floor framing above is concealed by gypsum wallboard. After the Late Victorian-era renovation, the original floor plan was modified.

On the third floor there are numerous openings in the floor above (currently framed in) that reflect the milling and processing procedure of the flour and feed operation. On the western wall a metal hopper projects down from the ceiling. This would have been used to transfer grain from the sack floor to the stone floor.[11] The attic and fourth floor framing has impressively long beams spanning from Central to Washington avenue. They are both hand-hewn and reciprocating sawn.

[9] Ibid

[10] The reciprocating saw marks date from before 1860, while the circular saw markings date the lumber to 1840s or later.

[11] The sack floor provided storage for grain before it was to be further processed on the lower floors. The stone floor below is where the grain was ground.

One of the more important survivals in the building is the great hoist wheel that extends down from the attic into the fourth floor. In 1982, an inspection by Donald G. Carpenter, architectural historian and proprietor of the Historic Eastfield Foundation, reported: “This fine example of a great wheel hoist is the only one I have seen in situ.” Although the wheel was not part of the original building, it was retrofitted shortly thereafter. The wheel’s diagonal framing in the attic floor cuts against an existing joist, leaving a severed end as a clue to this modification. The winch wheel has hand wrought hardware along its perimeter. There is another floor opening between the attic and fourth floor where a smaller pulley is set into the floor. Other remnants of the building’s past use include a metal hopper (noted earlier), a wrought-iron brake, rope holders, and gudgeons. On the fourth floor is a small grain mill with a label that reads “The Kelly Duplex Grinding Mill manufacturer by The O.S. Kelly Co.” A built-up skidway on both the third and fourth floors was removed in 1983.

BUILDING AT 44 CENTRAL AVENUE | **ALBANY COUNTY, NEW YORK**

Name of Property | County and State

8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- [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.
- [ ] 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.)

ARCHITECTURE

COMMERCE

Period of Significance

ca. 1817- 1941

Significant Dates

ca. 1817; ca.

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

unknown

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance for 44 Central Avenue begins ca. 1817 and terminates at 1941. During this period, the space was continuously used for commercial functions, mostly grain and feed storage and sales.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

N/A

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

Built ca. 1817, at a location known in the early nineteenth century as Robison's Point, the building at 44 Central Avenue is a rare example of turnpike-era commercial architecture in the City of Albany, New York. Built at the intersection of two major overland transportation routes—the convergence of which defined a wedge-shaped parcel of land, which in turn defined the footprint of the buildings at Robison's Point—the nominated building functioned from the first quarter of the nineteenth century into the twentieth century as a grain and feed warehouse and store. Physical features of the building, most notably the remarkably rare winch wheel which remains in situ in the attic, attest to this historic use, as does the building's sturdy internal framing, conceived to accommodate significant floor loads. The building is being nominated at the local significance level in association with Criterion A, in the area of commerce, for its association with mercantile and commercial activities in Albany during the first quarter of the nineteenth century. It remains a salient reminder of this era of growth in Albany's history, having been built in the years immediately preceding the completion of the Erie Canal. It is additionally being nominated in association with Criterion C, in the area of architecture, as a locally rare example of early nineteenth century commercial architecture which retains features expressive of this use. Forty-four Central Avenue is being nominated independently from adjacent 40 Central Avenue, the attached building to the immediate east; the latter has been significantly altered, internally and externally, from its early nineteenth century appearance in a way that the nominated building has not.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Historical Context

Both Central and Western avenues, major east-west thoroughfares, were at one time segments of a larger and important turnpike network in New York, which offered a western route to the interior of the state before the completion of the Erie Canal, which opened in 1825. The shape of 44 Central Avenue resulted from its position at the convergence of these two overland transportation routes, the Albany & Schenectady and the Great Western turnpikes. The nominated property was developed during a period when this portion of Albany was considered to be at the western extreme of the city. After initial and continued development along Albany's Hudson River waterfront, commerce and manufacturing began to extend to this western portion of Albany; 44 Central Avenue is an important survivor from this era of growth and development. The two buildings at Robison's Point were built to capitalize on the traffic from these new transportation routes.

Without the funds to maintain the roads themselves, the New York State Legislature approved the Turnpike Law of 1797 to authorize private companies to create and sustain turnpikes. Turnpikes were developed out of a demand for higher quality roads that could be traveled with greater safety and speed for both the transport of goods and travelers. New York State turnpikes were built without any state aid, and instead only used funds generated by independent corporations. By 1821 the state claimed between 3,000 and 4,000 miles of toll road. Prior to the development of the Erie Canal and later yet railroad passage, most travel into the interior of New York was made on turnpikes.[12]

Three turnpikes were developed in the Capital Region; the Albany & Schenectady Turnpike (Central Avenue), the Great Western Turnpike (Western Avenue/U.S. Route 20) and the Albany & Delaware Turnpike (Delaware Avenue). Two of these three turnpikes converged at Robison's Point. The earliest New York State turnpike charter was developed for the Albany & Schenectady Turnpike in 1797. This turnpike, as its name implies, covered the short distance from Albany to Schenectady, and although it was only 14 miles in length, its direct connection to Schenectady allowed it to remain relevant after the completion of the Erie Canal. The turnpike continued to be a much faster route of travel from Albany to Schenectady then the circuitous and stretch of the Erie Canal from the Hudson River to Schenectady. From Schenectady one could take the Erie Canal or continue to travel through to the Mohawk Turnpike and then to the Seneca Turnpike. Through 1849, almost 25 years after the opening of the Erie

[12]Eisenstadt and Moss, *Encyclopedia of New York State.*

Canal, the properties of Robison's Point were still being listed under an Albany & Schenectady Turnpike street address. The turnpike was dissolved in 1852.[13]

Two years after the start of the Albany & Schenectady Turnpike, the Great Western Turnpike, consisting of five branches, was developed. The first branch extended from Watervilet into Schoharie County, and it was extended eastward into Albany in 1802. In *Old Albany, Volume 3,* the significance of this portion of the Great Western Turnpike for commercial functions was noted:

> The eastern end of this turnpike [the Great Western Turnpike], Lion street, now Washington Avenue, from Lark Street, was for a long time known as the Bowery, now Central Avenue. It has undergone many changes. Before the completion of the Erie Canal in 1825, it was the great thorough-fare to and from Western New York. Some of the large store-houses until lately remaining about Townsend Park, attest the commercial character of the street at that time. A continuous line of vehicles crowded its pathway every day. Emigrants from New England to Central and Western New York usually took this in their route.

John J. McEneny, in *Albany: Capital City on the Hudson, an Illustrated History,* places an even greater importance on the role of these turnpikes in the economic development of the city of Albany:

> Albany soon became the turnpike center of the state. Central Avenue (Route 5) was started in 1797 as the Albany-Schenectady turnpike, linking the commerce of the Hudson and Mohawk rivers while providing safe portage around the Cohoes Falls. As a direct result of this development, the old Kings Highway – which had been strategically placed in the city's Pine Bush to keep the Albany fur trade out of the jurisdiction of the surrounding manor of Rensselaerswyck – now became all but obsolete, condemning the area to the status of an obscure backwater for the next century and a half.
>
> Western Avenue (Route 20), the Great Western Turnpike, was started two years later and eventually carried the bulk of stage and freight traffic through the heart of the state to Buffalo. Great, lumbering stagecoaches were developed that could transport a dozen passengers from Albany to Buffalo in the breakneck speed of six days…The significance of this lively travel to Albany cannot be overstated. All roads led to Albany, not just in a geographic sense but in an economic sense as well. The typical Yankee settler moving with his family from Massachusetts to the fertile valley of the Genesee would not only traverse toll roads owned in part by Albany investors but would often purchase land held by Albany speculators and mortgaged to Albany bankers. Once settled, he would clear his land with Albany tools and supply his farm with provisions ordered from Albany merchants and factories."[14]

Primarily of mercantile functions from the start, the buildings of Robison's Point were perfectly sited to take advantage of the cross current of potential business. Lots one and two of Robison's Point appear on the tax assessment rolls in 1817.[15] Not much has been written about John Robison, the namesake for the subdivision, but it

[13] "The Albany and Schenectady Turnpike company was incorporated in 1797…A daily stagecoach rumbled between Albany and Schenectady by 1799, though the road was not completed until 1802." *Old Albany* vol. 3, 210.

[14] John J. McEneny, *Albany: Capital City on the Hudson: An Illustrated* History (American Historical Press, Sun Valley CA 2006), 75.

[15] The earliest tax assessment available at the Albany County Archives. There is no information for Lot 1, but the westerly lot, Lot 2, owned by Sternbergh & Welsh, is noted as a 25-foot front brick store and lot. The Albany city directory from that year confirms a George W. Welsh residing at 269 Washington and a Jacob Sternbergh at a Washington address as well. Welsh was also noted at this address in 1814.

is known that he was one of the original directors of the New York State Bank and that he owned numerous properties. [16] On June 23, 1813, Robison sold both Lot one and two of his subdivision. Lot one was sold to Jabez Lamb for $3,500. In 1821 Robison took back this lot after a legal dispute with Lamb, and his partners Jeremiah Smith, George A. Smith and Stephen Walker. John Robison sold Lot two on June 23, 1813 to Samuel Phipps at the cost of $2,560.[17] Samuel Phipps promptly sold the site to Jacob F. Sternbergh and George W. Welsh, merchants.

From 1831 to about 1844 the buildings at Robison's Point had a joint owner, Daniel L. Newton, a merchant and produce dealer.[18] Under Newton's ownership the properties at 262, 264 and 266 Albany & Schenectady Turnpike were listed as a flour store in the city directory. Newton's brother-in-law, Cyrus Hawley, worked with Newton and eventually partnered with him in the trade. [19] Although born in Herkimer County, Hawley was a relative of Albany mayor George H. Thatcher and was well known throughout the west Albany community. In 1845, he took over the properties at 261 and 264 Albany & Schenectady Turnpike, which he owned until 1856. That same year, Robert Higgins opened his produce business at 266 Albany & Schenectady Turnpike (currently 40 Central Avenue) and by 1854 was the owner of this second property, now 44 Central Avenue.

After Hawley's departure, the buildings diverged in function. In 1868, Louis Wurker moved in to 261 Knox Street (currently 40 Central Avenue), and there he operated a meat market. Wurker ran this business until the early 1890s. In 1898 Charles Henry Ruhl took ownership and continued the meat market tradition. The property never returned to its use in relation to produce or grain again. By 1950 it had multiple storefront tenants including a cigar and tobacco store run by Carl H. Ruhl, a market, and a stencil company.

In contrast, the westerly building, 44 Central Avenue—the subject of this nomination— continued to function in large measure as it traditionally had. Robert Higgin's store was at this location from 1845 until 1885. Two years later, John H. Peters flour and feed store opened there. It was a family business, with Henry, William F., Nicholas, and John H. all at one point associated it. Members of the family also resided in the building, including a steamfitter named Louis Peters. John H. Peters died in 1905, but the business continued on without him. In 1924 Nicholas Peters assumed the business. It was last listed in the tax assessments as a flour and feed store in 1941.

From 1941-1981, Anastas Demo and his family owned the building. Demo had a shoe store on the first floor and eventually brought in other retail and business tenants, among them Niagara Duplicator Company, Albany Diamond Cab, Inc., and Bernard Jewelers.

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[16] *Bi-centennial History of the County of Albany, 1609-188*6.

[17] The *Albany Argus* from 16 April 1813 and 17 June 1813 shows lots for sale at Robison's Point.

[18] He purchases Lot 1 from Hugh R. Martin in 1828 for $1600. Three years later April 8 1831 Newton purchases the second lot from Jacob F. Sternbergh for $2000.

[19] "We add this morning to the mournful catalogue the name of Cyrus Hawley, a name especially familiar to the residents of the western portion of our city, but wherever known, regarded with esteem and honor. Mr. Hawley was born in Herkimer County, New York, in the month of March 1800. He came to Albany in the year 1814, and was employed as a clerk in the produce store of the late Daniel L. Newton. He remained with Mr. Newton, who was his brother-in-law, until about 1821, when he became a dealer in grains, seeds and country produce and for a short time, about the year 1830, was a partner of Mr. Newton's. Their store was situated on the hill near the Brick point, and was well known many years before the Erie Canal was completed, and before railroads were thought of. The Great Western turnpike in those days, and until the Erie Canal offered greater facilities for transportation, was the grand thoroughfare to and from the West. All country produce was then brought to the Albany market by teams, and merchandize was carried to villages and country stores by wagons or sleighs, even to Rochester, which was then the far west. Real estate on Washington street, now dignified as Washington avenue, was greatly valued, and at one period went up to almost fabulous prices…The deceased was a relative of ex-Mayor George H. Thatcher, from whose residence the funeral took place." from "Collections on the History of Albany, From Its Discovery to the Present Time; with Notices of its Public Institutions, and Biographical Sketches of Citizens Deceased, Volume IV." Albany, NY; J. Munsell,1871. P. 54-55.

In 1982 Matthew Bender IV purchased the site and oversaw an extensive rehabilitation. By 1985 the non-profit organization, Historic Albany Foundation, was occupying the building. In 1990 Rosemary Lazaro opened an antique goods and services shop on the first floor. In 1992, the Preservation League of New York State joined Historic Albany Foundation and the antique shop as a tenant. In 1998, each floor was occupied by a different organization: Bytner Travel Agency, New York Planning Federation, the Preservation League of New York State, and the New York Main Street Alliance. By 2003, the Preservation League of New York State occupied the top three floors and Bytner Travel Agency maintained offices at street level. At the time of this report, the Preservation League continues to occupy the top three floors, while the first floor is vacant.

Architectural Context

Forty-four Central Avenue exhibits traits that are expressive of early nineteenth century commercial/warehouse design. Notable is the arrangement of bays on the two principal exterior elevations, conceived so as to accommodate the hoisting of materials from street-level to the upper floors; the stout framing; and features specifically conceived to allow the building to function as a grain and feed store. Although commercial feed stores and granaries were a common architectural typology in Albany and other urban areas at the time 44 Central Avenue was built, today there are few buildings of this type and age remaining in Albany. Of those still in existence, arguably none have maintained the level of integrity present at 44 Central Avenue. In its scale, materials, construction, and industrial-commercial elements, the building is an excellent representation of its type and a conspicuously rare one in the city.

The size and shape of 44 Central Avenue is in part a product of its function as both a commercial and light industrial building. Based on the Albany tax assessment rolls, 44 Central Avenue was built prior to adjacent 40 Central Avenue, but the similar treatment of their facades and continuous brickwork suggests that the building campaigns may have been planned concurrently. The proximity of the building to the termination of the Albany & Schenectady Turnpike and the Great Western Turnpike made this location particularly desirable for commercial needs. Functional space requirements necessitated a multi-storied structure, and the work of sorting grain required different levels. The bottom floor was for sales. These needs dictated that 44 Central Avenue would be erected as a four-and-one-half story building with room for the equipment, including a large winch wheel, in the half-story attic space.

Forty-four Central Avenue was constructed with load-bearing brick walls with wood floor and roof framing running in the north/south or longitudinal direction. The deep size of the floor joists and their spacing reflects the functional load requirements of an industrial building. With flour and feed moving vertically between floors, more load capacity was required than needed for a residential structure. The use of Flemish bond brickwork on the exterior offered a more attractive appearance than common bond, and also required more brick to construct. By erecting the building with brick masonry a more durable construct was achieved and one which offered a more fire retardant load-bearing envelope.

The movement of materials from the street level to the upper, working floors necessitated a hoist wheel. Typically, a staircase would be laid out adjacent to the hoist wheel; the remains of this original stair can be seen from the fourth floor as it connects to the attic. To accommodate this massive wheel, which was an early retrofit to the building, the floor framing needed to be adjusted. Given the direction of the floor joists, only small structural modifications were needed to make the attic floor framing accommodate the wheel. The existing hoisting mechanisms are an important interpretive element of 44 Central Avenue; these include the larger wheel in the attic and fourth floor space, the hoist projection on the exterior façade, and the smaller hoisting wheel on the south side of the building. This secondary hoisting wheel required only a small, framed opening in the floor, as it was just about flush with the top and bottom of the attic-framing joists.

The thoroughly documented and researched Schermerhorn Row Block in New York City verifies the building's placement within this architectural type. Documented by the New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Bureau of Historic Sites, "The Schermerhorn Row Block: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Building Technology in New York City"

lays a typological framework for the commercial/warehouse building of the era.[20] The Schermerhorn Row Block is a grouping of multiple commercial properties in one block along the New York City waterfront. As at 44 Central Avenue, the buildings share party walls with their neighbors, which often times had a similar function. The interconnectedness of the two facades at 40 and 44 Central Avenue in Albany can also be seen in the Schermerhorn Row: "All exterior and interior walls, save one, are interbonded, indicating that distinct parts of the Block were built systematically from the ground up, and not as single building units."[21] However, it is not impossible that two buildings erected at different times were subsequently unified behind a single, continuous brick façade. At the scale of the individual building, the street frontage was often much less than the depth of the lot and the height was typically four-and-one-half stories. This, too, is the case at 44 Central Avenue.

The choice of materials for the Schermerhorn Row was a reflection of the functional needs of the industry housed within and also the contemporary concern of urban fire. Brick was used for its fire-resistant qualities. The concern for urban fire could have motivated this material choice in Albany as well. Coincidentally, at the Schermerhorn Row Block the exterior street facing walls were laid in Flemish bond, just as with 44 Central Avenue. Window openings with six-over-six double hung windows were trimmed with brownstone for both as well. [22]

The Schermerhorn report describes: "Actual architectural requirements of the stores were modest. Hoistways and hoist mechanisms were necessary to transport merchandise to the upper floors from the street, while strong floor framing was needed to store heavy loads."[23] All of these conditions are present at 44 Central Avenue. Both locations have reinforced structural connections and bar straps,[24] which were used to tie the walls and floor framing together.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)

N/A

9. Major Bibliographical References

Bibliography

Collections on the History of Albany, From Its Discovery to the Present Time; with Notices of its Public Institutions, and Biographical Sketches of Citizens Deceased, volume IV. Albany, NY; J. Munsell, 1871.

Eisenstadt, Peter R. and Laura-Eve Moss. *The Encyclopedia of New York State*. Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2005.

Gerber, Morris. *Old Albany volume* 3. Albany, NY: Morris Gerber, 1971.

Lesley, Robert Whitman. *History of the Portland Cement Industry in the United States*. Philadelphia, PA: American Cement Company, 1900.

McEneny, John J. *Albany: Capital City on the Hudson, an Illustrated History*. Windsor Publications, 1981.

[20]Stewart, Pieper, Devonshire, Langham, Rosen and Simon, *The Schermerhorn Row Block: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Building Technology in New York City* (Waterford, NY: New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Bureau of Historic Sites, 1981).

[21]Ibid., 39.

[22]Ibid., 26.

[23]Ibid., 23.

[24]Ibid., 64; "Metal hardware also joined façade walls to the joists placed adjacent to them. In this case, a bar…was anchored into the brick masonry, projected out and over the joist with a small lip. Fastening was achieved by means of a spike driven through a hole in the lip."

BUILDING AT 44 CENTRAL AVENUE | **ALBANY COUNTY, NEW YORK**

Name of Property | County and State

Stewart, Pieper, Devonshire, Langham, Rosen and Simon. *The Schermerhorn Row Block: A Study in Nineteenth-Century Building Technology in New York City*. Waterford, NY: New York State Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation Bureau of Historic Sites, 1981.

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
____Other
Name of repository: _____

Historic Resources Survey Number (if assigned): _____

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property .02 acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

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

	Zone	Easting	Northing		Zone	Easting	Northing
1	**18**	**601180**	**4723611**	3			
2				4			

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)
The boundary for this NRHP nomination is shown on the enclosed maps (2); one shows the boundary at 1:24,000 scale, the other at 1:2,000 scale.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)
The NRHP boundary corresponds with the original boundary 1810s boundary for the parcel.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Amanda Lewkowicz
organization _____ date 07/01/2013
street & number 280 State Street Apt. 7 telephone 518-250-8853
city or town Albany state NY zip code 12210
e-mail Amanda.lewkowicz@gmail.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.)

Photographs

PHOTOGRAPHS: TIFF format, March 2013
PHOTOGRAPHER: Amanda Lewkowicz
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL DIGITAL FILES: NYS Division for Historic Preservation, Peebles Island State Park, Waterford NY, 12188

NY_AlbanyCo_44CentralAvenue_0001
Exterior, north and west elevations, camera facing to southeast

NY_AlbanyCo_44CentralAvenue_0002
Exterior, south elevation, camera facing to northwest

NY_AlbanyCo_44CentralAvenue_0003
Exterior, north elevation, camera facing south

NY_AlbanyCo_44CentralAvenue_0004
Exterior, south elevation, camera facing north

NY_AlbanyCo_44CentralAvenue_0005
Interior, first floor, camera facing south

NY_AlbanyCo_44CentralAvenue_0006
Interior, third floor, camera facing north

NY_AlbanyCo_44CentralAvenue_0007
Interior, third floor, camera facing south

NY_AlbanyCo_44CentralAvenue_0008
Interior, third floor, view showing metal hopper

NY_AlbanyCo_44CentralAvenue_0009
Interior, fourth floor, view showing winch wheel

Property Owner:

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

name Preservation League of New York State

street & number 44 Central Avenue telephone 518-462-5658

city or town Albany state NY zip code

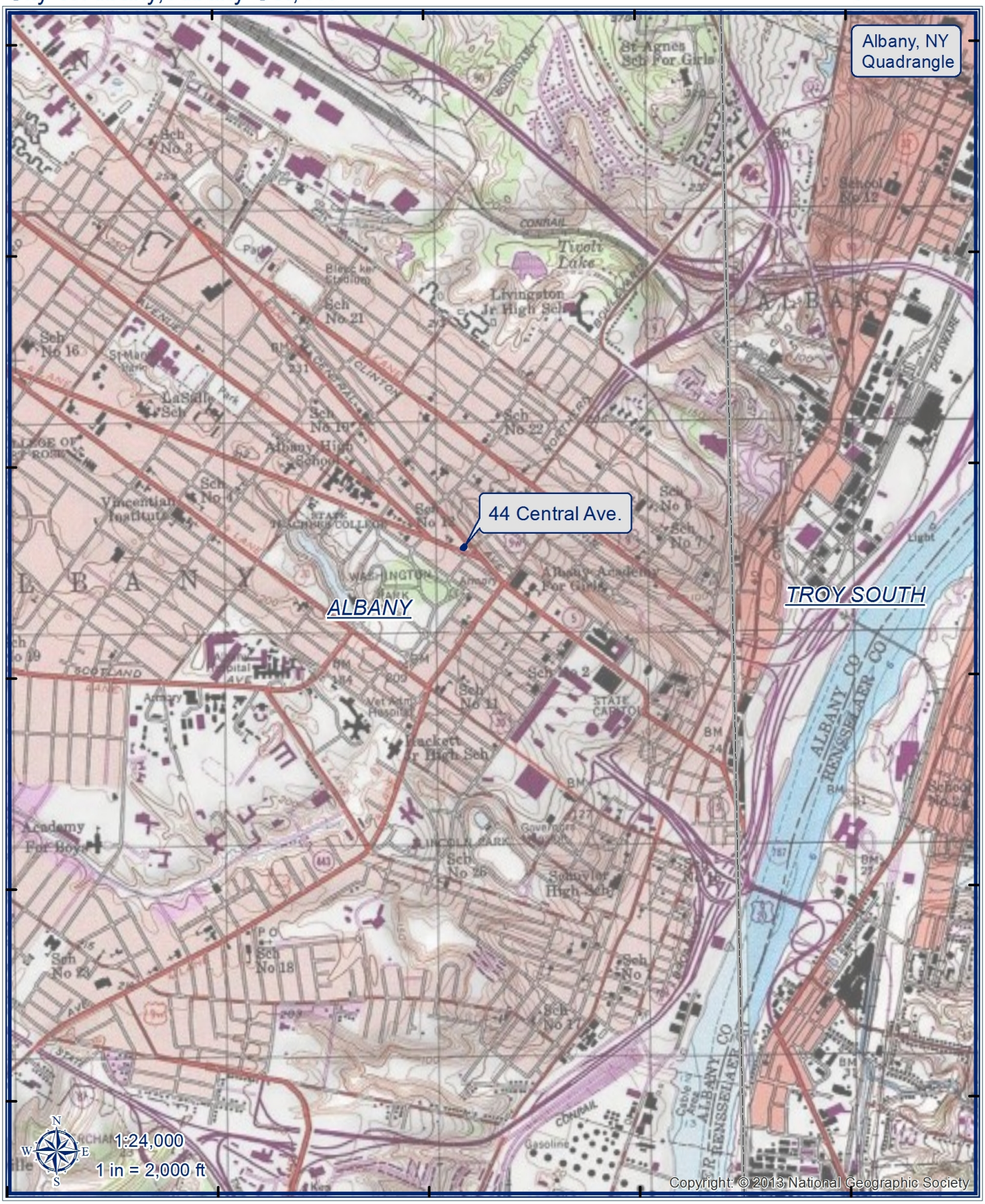
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain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

HISTORIC IMAGES

Above, historic image, ca. 1940, showing 40 and 44 Central Avenue; the nominated building, 44 Central, is at the left.

Building at 44 Central Avenue
City of Albany, Albany Co., NY

44 Central Avenue
Albany, NY 12206



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

0 650 1,300 2,600 Feet

44CentralAve

USGS quad index

Tax Parcel Data:
City of Albany
albanyny.org/Government/Departments/AssessmentAndTaxation

OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION & HISTORIC PRESERVATION
NEW YORK STATE

Building at 44 Central Avenue
City of Albany, Albany Co., NY

44 Central Avenue
Albany, NY 12206

601000

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

0 50 100 200 Feet

44Central Ave.

Tax Parcel Data:
City of Albany
albanyny.org/Government/Departments/AssessmentAndTaxation

OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION, HISTORIC PRESERVATION
NEW YORK STATE

Preservation League of New York State
THE J.R. PETERS SONS BUILDING EST 1917
TRUSTCO BA
Free Interest Checking!
40

TRUSTCO BAN

Preservation
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of
New York
State

THE J.R. PETERS SONS BUILDING EST. 1817

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FOOD MART

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Medium Box
FedEx
Medium Box

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New Yo
Historic

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