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NAT. REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES
NATIONAL PARK SERVICE

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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 **New York, Ontario & Western Railway Company Middletown Station**

other names/site number O&W Station

2. Location

street & number 2 Low Avenue ☐ not for publication

city or town Middletown ☐ vicinity

state New York code NY county Orange code 071 zip code 10940

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

Robert J. Pierpont DSHPO — 2/10/14
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:) _____

for Edson H. Beall — 4.7.14
Signature of the Keeper — Date of Action

New York, Ontario & Western Middletown Station | **Orange 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	
2	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
2	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.)

TRANSPORTATION: rail-related
COMMERCE/TRADE: warehouse (records storage)

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

VACANT/not in use
COMMERCE/TRADE: business office

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN/Romanesque
OTHER (1920 addition)

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: STONE
walls: STONE, BRICK
roof: SLATE, OTHER
other: GLASS, METAL, CONCRETE

Narrative Description

Summary Paragraph

The New York, Ontario & Western Middletown Station ("O&W Middletown Station" hereafter) is located near the intersection of Low and Wickham avenues in the City of Middletown, Orange County. The first section was constructed between 1892 and 1893 as a Richardsonian Romanesque-style building with load-bearing masonry walls consisting of common and pressed brick contrasted with sandstone dressings. The interior was designed to accommodate the business functions of a prosperous railway company and to provide comfort and services to passengers travelling on the New York, Ontario & Western line. Subsequent additions and alterations, dating to 1904 and 1920, aggrandized this original 1890s construct; the 1920 addition introduced a more modern aesthetic defined by flat roofs and metal casement windows and created an unusual hybrid of architectural styles. Nevertheless, the building continues to exhibit many of its earlier Richardsonian Romanesque features, among them the large arched openings, contrasting stone and brick masonry components, and the hip-roofed south tower, a principal character-defining feature and focal point of the exterior composition.

The interior, like the exterior, displays elements portraying the multi-phased construction chronology, though the contrast there is less dramatic than it is on the outside. Plaster ceilings replaced wood beadboard in the restaurant space on the first floor in 1920, and the second and third floor spaces from that period lack the moulded wood casings used to finish window and door openings in the original 1890s and 1904 portions. The current condition of the O&W Middletown Station is poor, following a period of vacancy and a fire in the north tower in 2004, conditions which have left the building exposed to the elements and vandalism. The north tower, except for the fireproof vault, was all but gutted by the fire, and plaster in the remaining areas of the building is badly deteriorated and in many instances beyond repair. However, much of the original woodwork, including mouldings and interior doors, remain in place, as do principal historic-era spatial divisions. The covered waiting platform runs parallel to the now-disused train tracks; the platform roof is also deteriorated, but this feature nevertheless retains a significant amount of original material.

In addition to the station, this nomination includes the adjacent New York, Ontario & Western Railroad records storage building. Built ca. 1915, this two-story brick building was erected to house the records of the company. It currently functions in a commercial capacity in association with a restaurant supply business.

Narrative Description

Location & Setting

The building is located on the east side of Low Avenue, immediately north of Wickham Avenue, and was built adjacent to what was at one time a broad railroad right-of-way accommodating six tracks. To the east, across the tracks, was an associated O&W freight house which has since been demolished. To the immediate north, on Low Avenue, is an associated building, still extant, which housed the business records of the O&W and which is now under separate ownership. A large rail service yard, complete with round table and repair and machine shops, was located further north of the nominated station, beyond Wisner Avenue. The immediate neighborhood is characterized by a mix of residential and commercial properties, with Wickham Avenue forming the principal thoroughfare. The building is oriented on a roughly north-south axis, tending slightly northwest to southeast, and was built so as to be parallel to the train tracks and not the adjacent street.

Exterior

The O&W Middletown Station as presently constituted is a result of two major additions post-dating the completion of the original construct in 1893. A 1904 addition added the north tower and extended the second floor, while work undertaken in 1920 significantly altered the appearance and character of the building as it existed

at that time. The building has a linear footprint terminated on the north and south sides by the octagonal-plan towers, and additionally has an extension with square footprint on the west elevation.

The building is approximately 237' long from north to south. The north and south towers measure roughly 44' wide from east to west; the center part of the building, which joins the towers, is approximately 34' wide. All these sections are three stories high, with the hipped roof of the south tower rising above the central portion of the building. The north tower roof was destroyed by fire. The attached original kitchen extension on the west side is roughly 29' (along north-south line) by 29' (east-west side).

The foundation is constructed of stone, 1'-8" thick, and rests on 2'-8" footings. Three boiler rooms, which have 7' high walls, constitute the finished areas of the basement.

The exterior load-bearing walls are formed of 1'-thick masonry. Tan and pink-hued Pennsylvania sandstone, formed into ashlar units, forms the lower portion of the exterior walls and is present along the perimeter of the building. The rock-faced ashlar decreases in size with each regular course, with the largest blocks forming the lowest course. The ashlar part of the wall rises about 3'-10" above grade. The voussoirs that form the arches of the larger apertures are crafted from the same sandstone. Both the smaller trabeated and larger arched openings have low-relief carved Romanesque work which is incorporated into the stone portion of the wall; in the case of the arched openings these carved blocks are at impost level. Windows and doors on the first floor without arched surrounds have heavy lintels crafted from Pennsylvania sandstone. Most of the remaining walls on all stories are formed of common red brick laid in a Flemish stretcher bond pattern; some pressed brick was used to form door jambs at first-story level. Stone belt courses run the circumference of the towers at both the second and third stories.

A shed-roofed pentice extends from the north, south and west sides of the building at first-story level, except on the kitchen extension on the west elevation; it is sustained by large curved wood brackets which rest on stone corbels incorporated into the brick wall. Along the east elevation is the hip-roofed train platform, which is supported by regularly-spaced and curved brackets. The platform is engaged with the building and extends a distance beyond the station on the north and south sides.

The first story of the south tower has wide arched apertures on the south, east, and west sides. The arch on the south side is flanked by two more conventional and trabeated openings, which are fitted with paneled doors with a transom; these smaller openings are spanned by dressed sandstone lintels. The angled portions of the tower have rectangular door openings spanned by sandstone lintels. The first story of the north tower has regularly-spaced rectangular doors and windows on all sides except the east side, where two arched window openings flank a center door. The second story of the south tower has regularly-spaced arched windows on the north, east, and west elevations and rectangular windows corresponding with the angled sections. The second floor of the north tower has a mix of arched and rectangular windows.

The first story of the east elevation, that portion of the building which is situated between the towers and faces the railroad tracks, has five large arched doorways with double wood-paneled doors and corresponding transoms and sidelights. Immediately north of the tower is a rectangular doorway and a bay fitted with four rectangular windows, breaking the pattern established with the arches. Some doors have been replaced with more contemporary doors of varying materials. Each doorway is nevertheless called to notice by the low-relief Romanesque carved work that is incorporated into the top course of the stone.

The first floor of the original kitchen extension on the west side has arched windows on all sides and one rectangular window on the south side. The arched windows are a mix of single and double width. All of the first floor windows, except one fixed window on the north elevation, are wood, one-over-one, double-sash windows. Some glass remains.

The second story of the east and west elevations, between the towers and including the kitchen extension, has a mix of rectangular windows, including single, double and tripartite units, in addition to a bay window and the remains of a bay window destroyed by fire. Some windows are double-hung wood, one-over-one, while others are metal casement windows with transoms, corresponding with the 1920 addition and renovation.

The third-floor windows of the south tower are rectangular in profile and treated as pairs; they are shorter than those on the other floors and fitted with double-hung one-over-one wood sash. The roofline of the tower is pierced by a central dormer which accommodates a circular aperture below which is a paired window; a clock once occupied the now-empty circular opening. The third-floor windows of the north tower were destroyed by fire though their jambs remain. The third-floor windows on all of the east and west elevations, as well as the original kitchen extension, are a mix of double-hung wood sash, one-over-one, and metal casement windows with corresponding transoms. Most are double windows, though some are singles.

The first-floor windows of the original 1892-93 building and the 1904 addition were French plate glass. The remaining windows were American sheet glass.

The roof of the south tower consists of a steeply pitched hip laid with slate and has a modillioned cornice. Two finials once graced the ridge of tower but no longer remain. The center of the building, between the towers, has a flat roof.

Three brick chimneys are evident, one on the south side of the north tower, another on the north side of the south tower, and the third along the north wall of the original kitchen extension.

Interior

The interior plan, following the 1920 building campaign, accommodated business functions with rail-related services for passengers. At first floor level, the south tower functioned as the baggage room, north of which extended the ticket office and waiting room. The central part of the main section was given over to a large restaurant and kitchen area, beyond which, in the north tower, was more office space. The second and third stories also provided office space for the New York, Ontario & Western. It should be noted that the nominated building was one of three buildings which formed a complex of sorts at this location. Across the tracks, to the east, was a freight house and office, which is no longer extant; a record storage building, still extant, is located on Low Avenue to the immediate north. There was additionally a large rail yard, complete with turntable and service shops, north of the station complex, beyond Wisner Avenue.

The first floor of the south tower contains six rooms, one of which is a bathroom with only an exterior entrance. These rooms were originally used for baggage, the station master's office, and an area where the trainmen got their schedules and had lockers. There is no communication between the first floor tower and the rest of the building. The first floor of the north tower also had a bathroom accessible only from the exterior and, except for a storage room, was closed off from the rest of the building. The first floor has a large masonry vault room, next to which is a staircase.

The east side of the center section of the first floor has a staircase adjacent to the south tower, providing for vertical circulation. This vestibule opens into the former ticket office. This space used to be divided by east-west partitioning, with the ladies waiting room and bathroom on the west side; this former dividing wall is no longer in place. North of the ticket office is the waiting room and, beyond that, the expansive restaurant space that ended at the north tower. About a third of the length of the west wall the restaurant opens to what used to be the kitchen.

On the second floor, a center hall spans most of the length of the space between the towers. Offices of varying sizes, along with bathrooms, line the corridor on both east and west sides and office space extends out over the

former kitchen. The hall ends at the point where the 1904 addition started, and this area leading to the north tower is open, lacking as it does a corridor. The second floor spaces of both towers are divided into several offices and work spaces, and the south tower contains a vault room. However, due to a fire in the north tower, only the outlines of these spaces are visible there.

The third floor south tower has five rooms off a small hallway leading from the staircase landing. Across the staircase landing and adjacent to the tower is another vault. Offices of varying sizes and bathrooms line the corridor, which extends about one-third the length of the space between the towers. The remaining space up to the north tower is empty and had been reserved for future needs that failed to materialize. The third floor of the north tower was completely destroyed by fire. It used to have two large offices and a bathroom.

There are three stairways: one on the east side adjacent to the south tower; one in the original kitchen space; and one in the north tower. Each leads downwards to a boiler room. The stairway in the kitchen was a secondary staircase used for workers. After a fire in 1919 the section of stairs between the first and second floors was removed. However, the stairs down to the boiler room remained and stairs between the second floor and new third floor were added in 1920. The main staircase was the east-side stairway. The one in the north tower was built to resemble the first. The stairways have ornate turned-wood newel posts and balusters to the second floor, and a floor-to-ceiling, turned-wood newel post and square balusters to the third floor.

The original flooring was 7/8" comb-grained Georgia pine, 3" boards layed on spruce underflooring. The planks in the towers ran east-west, as observed in historic photos. The current flooring material is covered in thick debris and not easily visible, though it is highly likely that original materials remain in situ.

Interior walls that are adjacent to the towers are 1' load-bearing masonry walls. Walls around the vaults on the second and third floor of the south tower are also 1'. The interior wall around the vault, on the first floor of the north tower, is 1' 4". All these walls were finished with plaster. In addition, there are two other interior masonry walls on the first floor. One is the exposed brick arched wall that was the south wall of the main waiting room.

Other interior partitions vary. All the interior walls in the towers, the original part of the second floor (south half), and the third floor over the original part of the second floor, have wood studding and are plastered; these were finished with wood base moulding, runs of chair rail, and picture-frame moulding. The walls in the second-floor addition, above the restaurant, and the third floor above it are constructed of 4" structural clay tile with plaster finish. These walls do not contain the same level of decorative moldings of the other plaster walls, particularly around windows and doors.

Ceilings on all floors, except the first floor, are plaster. Ceilings on the first floor are covered in many places, but there are places where the original beadboard is exposed. Beadboard was used as the finishing material for almost all of the first floor ceilings. When the restaurant was extended in 1920 the ceiling was refinished with plaster on structural clay tile.

The interior doors and doorways are varied. Most have darkly varnished paneled wood doors. Doors along the second floor corridor are three-paneled, with the top panel being glazed. Some glass is pebbled. Each has an operable transom window above it. The casing is wide and each transom window is topped with an architrave. Plinth blocks are at the base of the casing. The reveal of the casing around the transom windows is deeper than that of the doors, giving the effect of a column capital.

One door on the east side is a divided, or Dutch, door with a transom window set into a wide, arched doorway with a wood paneled door surround. Another east side door is surrounded by two single-pane windows, also with transom windows. In the portion of the hallway from the 1920 section the wood doors are two paneled and

without glazing, but with transom windows. The hallway casing is consistent, though the door casing on the inside of the offices is narrower.

The third floor ceiling height is lower than that on the second floor, so the doors do not have transom windows. They are identical to the second floor doors other than the omission of transom windows. The casing reveal is deeper around the top portion of the door, mimicking that of the casing around the transom windows on the second floor. One office door on the east side in the south tower has two single-pane, fixed windows surrounding it.

There are many different window types employed in the building. The first floor has very large, wide-arched windows corresponding with the former restaurant space. Those are divided, with the side sections being fixed and the center portion being an operable, double-hung, one-over-one wood sash window. Some narrow wood casings still remain, with wider mullions between the operable and non-operable portions. The wood was originally dark, though light paint had been applied to some and that paint is now flaking and peeling, revealing the original color. Other first-floor windows are rectangular, with a mix of beaded and flat casings, though the flat casings are most likely a replacement. Windows with beaded casings have architraves and the casing reveal is deeper at the top.

Second-floor windows in the original portion and in the 1904 addition have dark wood, beaded casings with a deeper top reveal and architraves. In the 1920 portion, the metal casement windows with transom windows have no decorative casings.

Third-floor windows in the south tower are the same as on the second floor but the rest of the third floor contains a mix of re-used wood windows and metal casement windows with transom windows. None of these windows have decorative casings. Because the doors on the third floor do not have transom windows, the hall walls contain fixed windows with wire mesh glass along the ceiling edge on both east and west sides. Wire mesh glass was a fire-safety measure. These are not surrounded by decorative casings.

There are no mechanical systems in operational order. The building was originally heated by cast-iron hot-water radiators. Boilers were in the three basement boiler rooms and hot water pipes ran along the walls to the radiators. This system was used until the railway company closed in 1957. At some point, most likely during the 1970s, when the first-floor restaurant space was used as a night club and restaurant, several gas-fired unit heaters were mounted high on the walls to supplement the original heating system.

The original structure was built with a two-sided fireplace in the brick wall dividing the waiting room and the restaurant. The fireplaces no longer exist.

No original lighting survives and almost all period fixtures have been removed. Some hanging fluorescent fixtures and pendant lamps remain in the former restaurant space, most likely added in the 1970s when the space was used as a night club and restaurant. Some fluorescent lights are mounted to the ceiling on the third floor. Originally, lighting fixtures were a mixture of electric pendants and combination-form fixtures, that is, gas and electric with gas arms and glass bowls facing up and incandescent lighting arms facing down. The number of fixtures and combination of fixtures varied from space to space.

The floor system in the original part of the building is a wood floor system with joists supported by the masonry walls. Portions of the building added or modified in 1920 have a square-arch, structural clay tile floor system with steel reinforcement, whereby 18" I-beams are placed at 14' spans on the second floor and 10' spans on the third.

O&W Records Storage Building, ca. 1915 (contributing building)
The former records storage building is a purpose-built edifice the exterior disposition of which reflects its use as a storage facility. It was erected to the north of the station, on Low Avenue, and was oriented with its principal elevation facing west towards the street. This two-story building was erected on a rectangular plan with a narrow center pavilion corresponding with the front and rear elevations. The exterior walls were laid up in a diaper pattern, the bond pattern having one course of headers for every course of alternating headers and stretchers; the brick is a reddish brown and includes a number of darker clinker bricks. Dressings, including a water table and upper belt course, are cast stone. While the exterior walls were formed of brick concrete was employed on the interior for purposes of fireproofing.

The superstructure is largely devoid of fenestration, with a limited number of windows having been part of the original scheme. Large bays spanned by segmental-arched openings are present in the front and rear pavilions, though altered from their original configuration. A raised parapet wall is present above the upper belt course. An "O" motif, within which is a "W," these letters rendered in buff-colored brick, pays tribute to the company and is present in the upper reaches of the front and rear center pavilion. These, along with the decorative brickwork, show that some level of attention was paid to the exterior aesthetics of the building, regardless of its utilitarian function.

Alterations have been made to the exterior, particularly on the west façade, where, at first story level, windows and an associated pentice have been added. The central bay at first-story level is now occupied by an overhead garage door, while the upper bay has been covered with the same shingles as used on the pentice. On the south elevation a door has been inserted where it does not appear one was located originally, and a window has been closed off with brick. The door is reached by way of a raised platform, not original, with associated metal railing.

New York, Ontario & Western Middletown Station | **Orange 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
TRANSPORTATION

Period of Significance
1892- 1957

Significant Dates
1892-93; 1904; ca. 1915; 1920; 1957

Significant Person
(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation
N/A

Architect/Builder
Gilbert, Bradford Lee
Canfield, David H. (1904 and 1920 additions)

Period of Significance (justification)
The New York, Ontario and Western Railway Company opened its Low Avenue building in Middletown in 1893. This original construct was expanded twice, in 1904 and again in 1920. In 1957, the railway company completed bankruptcy proceedings and abruptly shut down. The cited period of significance, 1892-1957, encompasses all three building campaigns and terminates with the closure of the facility by the O&W railroad.

Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)
N/A

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

The New York, Ontario & Western Middletown Station, or O&W Middletown Station, is a historically and architecturally significant transportation-related resource in Orange County, New York. Built 1892-93 in the Richardsonian Romanesque style, and augmented in 1904 and again in 1920, the nominated building fulfilled two principal functions. First, it served as a passenger station for the O&W line, and as such employed typical train station features, such as a trackside covered platform on the exterior and, on the interior, a baggage area, waiting room, ticket and stationmaster's offices, and restrooms. A restaurant and associated kitchen were also part of the initial interior scheme. Additionally, the building served as the principal offices of the O&W, and as such fulfilled this business function in relation to the railroad's operation. It was part of a larger O&W complex that included, among other features, a freight house, since demolished, and a record storage building, which is extant and included as part of this nomination. The original 1890s station was designed by architect Bradford Lee Gilbert, whose career was closely associated with railroad architecture. The later additions, rendered in 1904 and 1920, were built to the plans of David Canfield, a prominent Middletown architect in the early twentieth century. As presently constituted the building displays a mix of original Romanesque-inspired features and later, more progressive modern features. It is being nominated in the local context, in association with Criterion A, in the area of transportation, given its direct association with the O&W and its relationship with this railroad for over six decades. Additional significance is being claimed in association with Criterion C, in the area of architecture, as the O&W Middletown Station remains an important example of Late Victorian-era railroad design augmented subsequently in the first decades of the twentieth century. Though deteriorated and suffering the effects of extended vacancy, the station remains an important and highly visible manifestation of the New York, Ontario & Western Railroad's presence in Middletown—a city the identity and development of which shares salient ties to the railroad industry—and it retains its character-defining features and sufficient overall physical integrity to justify its nomination.

Narrative Statement of Significance

Criterion A – *Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.*
Middletown's development in the second half of the nineteenth century was spurred by its evolution into a major regional rail hub. The New York, Ontario & Western and New York & Erie railroads figured prominently in this development. Middletown's growth in the nineteenth century was in large measure a consequence of the establishment of overland transportation arteries, most notably the completion of the New York & Erie Railroad at the mid-century point. The New York & Erie was drawn to Middletown in 1841 on account of the savvy of some of its leading businessmen, who ensured the financing of the line, which had been initially proposed to bypass that location. By doing so they assured Middletown a period of robust growth. Between 1843 and 1848 Middletown drew much of the freight business that had previously gone to Newburgh via the Cochecton Turnpike, thereby making it the preeminent shipping center in Orange County. The O&W built the nominated building in the early 1890s to serve as both a station and its general offices, and it continued in this capacity until 1957, at which time the company ceased to exist.

Criterion 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.*
At one time six railroads lines bisected Middletown, requiring related infrastructure to sustain passenger and freight service. The New York & Erie and O&W railways demonstrated their preeminence in the city by building impressive structures. The O&W established Middletown as the center of its operations and as such had the nominated building erected; it was the largest of Middletown's stations. For this endeavor the O&W selected an architect well-known for railroad station design, Bradford Lee Gilbert, who offered an iconic Richardsonian Romanesque design that included spacious waiting areas, elegantly appointed. Its restaurant became a highlight for travelers along the route as well as for Middletown residents and workers. The O&W Middletown Station, which

recalls the height of railroad travel and influence in Middletown, is an important example of railroad station and office design, and was developed during three distinctive construction campaigns, 1892-93, 1904, and 1920.

Historical Context

Following the Revolutionary War, Americans turned their attention to developing new transportation infrastructure, which centered on expanding and improving its overland roads and subsequently the building of canals. In 1817, New York started an eight-year project to build the Erie Canal. At the start of construction, only about 100 miles of canals existed in the country. The immediate success of the Erie Canal spawned more canal projects. By 1830, 10,000 miles of canals were proposed and 1,277 were already constructed. Canal construction was expensive, and left some states in debt. While canals were largely successful in improving transportation they were limited by natural obstacles, such as rivers and mountains. In addition, canal service was closed during winter months.[1]

By 1828, New York City was responsible for almost half the foreign trade in the United States. Other cities began to compete for western trade, but also faced the limitations and inconveniences of turnpikes and canals. Focus soon turned to railroads, and nearly every state built railroad lines in the 1830s.[2] The introduction of the railroad bolstered the industrialization of many American cities and offered a means of expanding the nation's boundaries into unsettled areas. Railroads populated disparate, fledgling, and often landlocked communities and connected them to established population centers or waterways. The railroad offered more reliable and faster transportation with fewer obstacles than previous modes of travel, and the industry significantly influenced the American economy.

In 1807, Middletown was a modest village of relatively few inhabitants and a small number of businesses. The village at that time was populated by nine families and was comprised of a church, school, tannery, hat shop, and a couple of stores.[3] In 1809, the Montgomery Turnpike was started, following the line of the current Wickham Avenue. It was the principal means of travel and was shortly followed by other roads, including a road to Newburgh. That road was funded by the Mount Hope and Lumberland Turnpike Company, and was conceived so that its lumber could be shipped from the docks at Newburgh to New York City. Construction of roads improved business opportunities and the population expanded to 150 inhabitants between 1815 and 1825. However, business operators still found it difficult to obtain and sell goods because the twenty-mile wagon ride to Newburgh was too long and difficult to make frequent trips.[4]

The decade of the 1840s wrought considerable change to Middletown. The New York & Erie Railroad began operations in Middletown in 1843, but preparation for it began when it opened in nearby Goshen, in 1841.[5] Almost overnight Middletown's population swelled as new jobs were created, and the village started down its path to becoming a city. This period was attended to by the construction of new schools, hotels, stores, the establishment of churches, cemeteries, and banks, and the formalization of village government and ordinances. Middletown leaders expected to run the New York & Erie line through Middletown and Otisville, but lack of money slowed the laying of the line. However, citizens raised the money to finish the line and required that it be purchased and operated by the New York & Erie. The first depot was located on James Street; daily passenger and freight service began in June, 1843. In 1851, the New York & Erie Railroad became the first railroad company in the United States to use telegraph messages to communicate the movement of its trains.[6]

[1] John F. Stover, *American Railroads* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1997, Second Edition), Nook ebook file, 19-20.
[2] Ibid, 23, 28.
[3] Franklin B. Williams, *Middletown: A Biography* (Middletown: Lawrence A. Toepp, 1928), 19.
[4] Ibid, 27, 30.
[5] Ibid, 38.
[6] Ibid, 42-43, 39, 40.

Goods reaching Middletown by railroad still had to be carried by wagon to Newburgh to be shipped to New York City for wider distribution. Road improvement was thus still a necessary. By the 1850s, the expansion of both the railroad and plank roads established Middletown as a shipping point for milk and other Orange and Sullivan County products.[7]

After the Civil War, railroad construction in America increased to a fever pitch, and Middletown participated in that activity. Businesses expanded, services were added and a water system established, all promoting an increase in manufacturing interests. New rail lines were proposed, including one to Newburgh; however, that line was never built. In 1868, the Middletown, Unionville & Water Gap Railroad built a line connecting Middletown to Sussex, New Jersey. The New York & Erie leased this line.[8] The building boom continued with the establishment of the New York & Oswego Midland Railroad. In 1867, a route was identified with its terminal point in Middletown. In 1869, the Midland constructed a tunnel to expand its tracks north of Middletown, proving that railroads no longer needed to follow the contours of the land. The tunnel encouraged other railroad lines so that by 1872, two lines connected Middletown with New York City, bypassing the plank road and stage coach route to Newburgh.[9]

Freight service brought in raw materials and machinery for manufacturing and fuel for power and heat, and provided a means to distribute manufactured goods. Factories were constructed alongside tracks to make loading and unloading efficient. Small businesses also benefitted, as railroad companies provided service for small loads to be dropped off or picked up at a freight house. Middletown factories were densely concentrated along tracks dedicated to loading and unloading.[10]

The New York, Ontario & Western Railway Company was incorporated in 1880, at which time it purchased the failed New York & Oswego Midland Railroad. The Midland had served only local communities and did service major population centers. Though it had been on the decline, it recognized that areas of the Catskills were turning from agricultural centers to resort areas, particularly for people from New York City. The company had started advertising to entice both vacationers and prospective home builders to use its railroad lines, even to carry building materials to home sites. The O&W capitalized on this start and also expanded the Midland's dairy shipping business. It transported coal from Pennsylvania and even financed mining operations of coal to secure this freight business; a coal storage facility was erected by the O&W in Middletown. The O&W also built creameries in locations close to its railroad stops and rented them to people who would ship their products on their lines. Refrigerated cars, an important development in the transportation of fluid milk, were housed in Middletown. Within 10 years of operation, the company's income increased from $500,000 to $2 million. The fortunes of the O&W were rising and the company was developing plans for further expansion. It employed hundreds of workers in Middletown alone and it would eventually extend its service from New York City west to Chicago. In 1891, the O&W hired well-established railroad architect Bradford Lee Gilbert to design its Middletown station and headquarters, a statement of the railway's stability and success. The station housed Seeholzer's Restaurant, a convenience to travelers and a social spot for locals.

By 1904, the O&W needed to expand its Middletown operations. It hired local architect David H. Canfield to extend the restaurant space on the first floor and add a tower to the north end of the extension, mirroring the original south tower. Canfield's design also added a partial second floor over the restaurant. He carefully matched

[7] Ibid, 40.
[8] Ibid, 67.
[9] Ibid, 68.
[10] Jeff Otto, *Steel Rails and Brick Smokestacks: How Middletown's six railroads energized its growth and prosperity* (The Ontario & Western Railway Historical Society, 2013), 34-35.

all materials and finishes of the original building, keeping the architectural integrity and style intact and ensuring a cohesive and unified appearance.

In 1918, at the request of the O&W Railway Company, Canfield designed a major addition and alterations to the O&W Middletown Station with the intention of not only adding space but adding fireproof space. The project was delayed due to the federal government's seizure of railroads during the First World War. In 1919, Seeholzer's Restaurant kitchen suffered a fire, leaving the kitchen and restaurant unusable. Plans to repair the kitchen were added to the construction work, which began in 1920 when the government returned railroads to their owners and the O&W received compensation under the Transportation Act of 1920. The design added a third floor between the two towers and removed the porte cochere from the west facade. The original plans from 1918 offered no alterations to the kitchen space. However, as a result of the fire, Canfield added another floor above the kitchen, removed the hipped slate roof, and added a flat roof to match that of the rest of the addition. This brick addition, with a flat roof and metal casement windows, is the current configuration.

The ascendance of the railroad was an indicator of a new and popular method of transportation in the United States. Newspaper articles from the late 1800s discussed the demise of the stagecoach industry, due to the increasing popularity and expediency of railroads such as the O&W. The O&W never fully recovered from a 1937 bankruptcy, though it did struggled on. After World War Two, the O&W saw its own demise as transportation trends and technology once again shifted in America, this time in favor of the automobile and an expanding network of highways. The O&W ceased operations in 1957.

Architectural Context

The original section of the O&W Middletown Station is still largely interpretable, notwithstanding the 1904 and 1920 additions, and remains an excellent example of a Richardsonian Romanesque-style railroad building. It was designed by a nationally renowned New York architect, Bradford Lee Gilbert, and augmented to plans provided by Middletown architect David H. Canfield. The three-story building represents an era where railroads connected isolated communities, promoted commerce, and created a travel and tourism industry. By the 1880s, areas of the Catskills, just north of Middletown, as well as Sylvan Beach at Oneida Lake, became vacation resort spots for people in New York City and beyond, and passenger service was expanding.[11] In addition, multiple milk collection points along the O&W route, as well as coal shipping from Pennsylvania increased the demand for rail service in Middletown. The physical development of the building encompasses the period ca. 1893-1920, during which time the O&W was a highly successful and recognized railroad which at its peak had lines extending as far west as Chicago.

Bradford Lee Gilbert was born in New York in 1853 and by the age of 23 was appointed the official architect of the New York, Lake Erie & Western Railroad. Gilbert's experience in designing railroad buildings earned him a reputation as a driving force in the railroad industry. He was a consultant to well over a dozen railroads in the United States and Mexico, including the Boston & Maine; the Northern Pacific; the Missouri, Kansas & Texas; the New York, Ontario & Western; the New York Central & Hudson River Railroad Company; and the Georgia Railroad Company.

Middletown, New York was the southern terminus of the O&W, and as such the Middletown station became a main servicing location. The site expanded in 1888 to include railway shops, an additional seven stalls in the roundhouse, an enlarged machine shop, a new blacksmith shop, and other necessary structures for servicing a growing railway company. In 1891, the O&W hired Gilbert to design a larger and more full-service passenger

[11]William F. Helmer, *O&W: The long life and slow death of the New York, Ontario, and Western Railway* (San Diego: Howell-North Books, 1959), 51.

station and railway offices to replace a station that no longer fit the railway's needs. Construction started in 1892.[12] Gilbert favored a Richardsonian Romanesque treatment for railroad buildings and the Middletown O&W station and office building is a fitting example of this architectural idiom. This style was named for Henry Hobson Richardson, who developed his own personal interpretation of Romanesque design vocabulary and authored designs for a number of train stations, including nine built for the Boston & Albany Railroad. Since O&W trains lacked food service or dining cars, Gilbert included a restaurant in the station where people travelling could dine as they changed trains or disembarked. He strove for creating a pleasant and comfortable passenger experience in spaces where much time was spent waiting.

At the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago, Gilbert submitted for exhibition a number of railroad station sketches, including some for the Middletown O&W station. The drawings earned him a medal for railroad architecture and a request to create a sketchbook of railroad architecture to be made available to railroad officials. This compilation, *Sketch Portfolio of Railroad Stations*, helped affirm Gilbert's prominent position in the area of station design.[13] It was also in 1893 that the Illinois Central Station, also designed by Gilbert, opened in Chicago. Like the recently-completed Middletown O&W station it was cast in the Richardsonian Romanesque style and constructed of brick and stone masonry; the interior also included a restaurant for travelers. It was nevertheless of much more imposing scale than the Middletown station, though built on a much more compact plan, its main block rising eight stories, this height further extended by a prominent corner tower. The height of the Chicago building allowed for a fuller articulation of round-arched bays in the Richardsonian manner.

As he continued a prolific career in railroad architecture, Gilbert expanded his work into other areas of design; New York City's first skyscraper, the 13-story Tower Building, was built to his plans in 1889. Designing for a lot too narrow to accommodate thick brick outer walls on the lower floors—which was the common construction technique of the day—Gilbert designed what may have been the world's first steel skeleton, curtain-wall structure. Gilbert arrived at this solution by envisioning an iron bridge truss standing on its end.[14] While the building was demolished only 24 years later it nevertheless created a wave of skyscraper construction, resulting in 30 such buildings being completed by 1900.[15] Continuing his railroad architecture career amidst his new-found fame, Gilbert redesigned the New York City Grand Central Depot in 1898. However, it was demolished when the current Grand Central Station was built.

Gilbert's influential architectural career continued until his death in 1911. During his career he designed numerous prominent buildings, among them office buildings, including the Flatiron Building in Atlanta; international exposition buildings; churches; residences; and inns, among them Albemarle Park in Asheville, North Carolina. But the staple of his practice was buildings designed for the railroad industry. Unfortunately most of Gilbert's buildings have been demolished, marking the Middletown O&W station as an important legacy of his work.

As for David Hastings Canfield, he was the preeminent architect active in Middletown in the early twentieth century. Canfield was responsible for the design of many important buildings locally, in addition to his work on the O&W station, among them the Hotel Brown, ca. 1910; Middletown City Hall, 1912; service buildings for the Webb Horton estate, ca. 1918; and Horton Memorial Hospital, 1924.

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[12] The Ontario & Western Railway Historical Society, Inc., "Middletown: Home of the O&W and the O&WRHS," *O&W Observer* XXVI, no. Nos. 1 to 9 (January-September 1991), 3.

[13] Bradford L. Gilbert, *Sketch Portfolio of Railroad Stations* (New York: The Railroad Gazette, 1895).

[14] "The Birth of the New York Skyscraper - A Romance of Architecture," *The New York Times,* May 21, 1905.

[15] "Plaque for First Skyscraper, Gone Now, but Not With Wind," *The New York Times,* October 28, 1962.

Developmental history/additional historic context information (if appropriate)
N/A

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New York, Ontario & Western Middletown Station | **Orange County, New York**
Name of Property | County and State

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 1.06 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**	**549017**	**4589145**	3			
2				4			

Verbal Boundary Description (Describe the boundaries of the property.)
The boundary for the nominated resource is depicted on the two enclosed maps, which were drawn at a scale of 1:24,000 and 1:3,000.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)
The boundary was drawn to include two adjacent tax parcels, consisting of a total of 1.06 acres, both of which are historically associated with the development of this property by the New York, Ontario & Western Railroad during the cited period of significance, 1892-1957.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Carolyn M. Coppola/Historic Preservationist
organization Coppola Associates date
street & number 6 Old North Plank Road telephone 845-561-3559 x204
city or town Newburgh state New York zip code 12550
e-mail ccoppola@coppola-associates.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, January 2012, July 2013, October 2013
PHOTOGRAPHERS: Carolyn M. Coppola and William E. Krattinger
LOCATION OF ORIGINAL DIGITAL FILES: NYS Division for Historic Preservation, Peebles Island State Park, Waterford NY, 12188

NY_OrangeCo_O&WMiddletownStation_0001
Exterior, view showing south and east elevations, camera facing north

NY_OrangeCo_O&WMiddletownStation_0002
Exterior, view showing east elevation, camera facing to northwest

NY_OrangeCo_O&WMiddletownStation_0003
Exterior, view showing north tower, camera facing to southwest

NY_OrangeCo_O&WMiddletownStation_0004
Exterior, detail view showing arch and benches, west elevation

NY_OrangeCo_O&WMiddletownStation_0005
Exterior, detail view of carved stonework, east elevation

NY_OrangeCo_O&WMiddletownStation_0006
Interior, first floor, viewing showing post-fire damage, camera facing to northeast

NY_OrangeCo_O&WMiddletownStation_0007
Interior, second floor, view showing post-fire damage, camera facing north

NY_OrangeCo_O&WMiddletownStation_0008
Interior, second floor, view showing woodwork

NY_OrangeCo_O&WMiddletownStation_0009
Interior, staircase between second and third floor, view showing balustered handrail and newel post

NY_OrangeCo_O&WMiddletownStation_0010
Interior, third floor, view showing vault

NY_OrangeCo_O&WMiddletownStation_0011
Interior, view showing room in south tower, third floor

NY_OrangeCo_O&WMiddletownStation_0012
Exterior, records storage building, view showing west and south elevations, camera facing to northeast

NY_OrangeCo_O&WMiddletownStation_0013
Exterior, records storage building, view showing east elevation, camera facing roughly north

Property Owner:

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

name Various (2 owners)

street & number _____ telephone _____

city or town _____ state _____ zip code _____

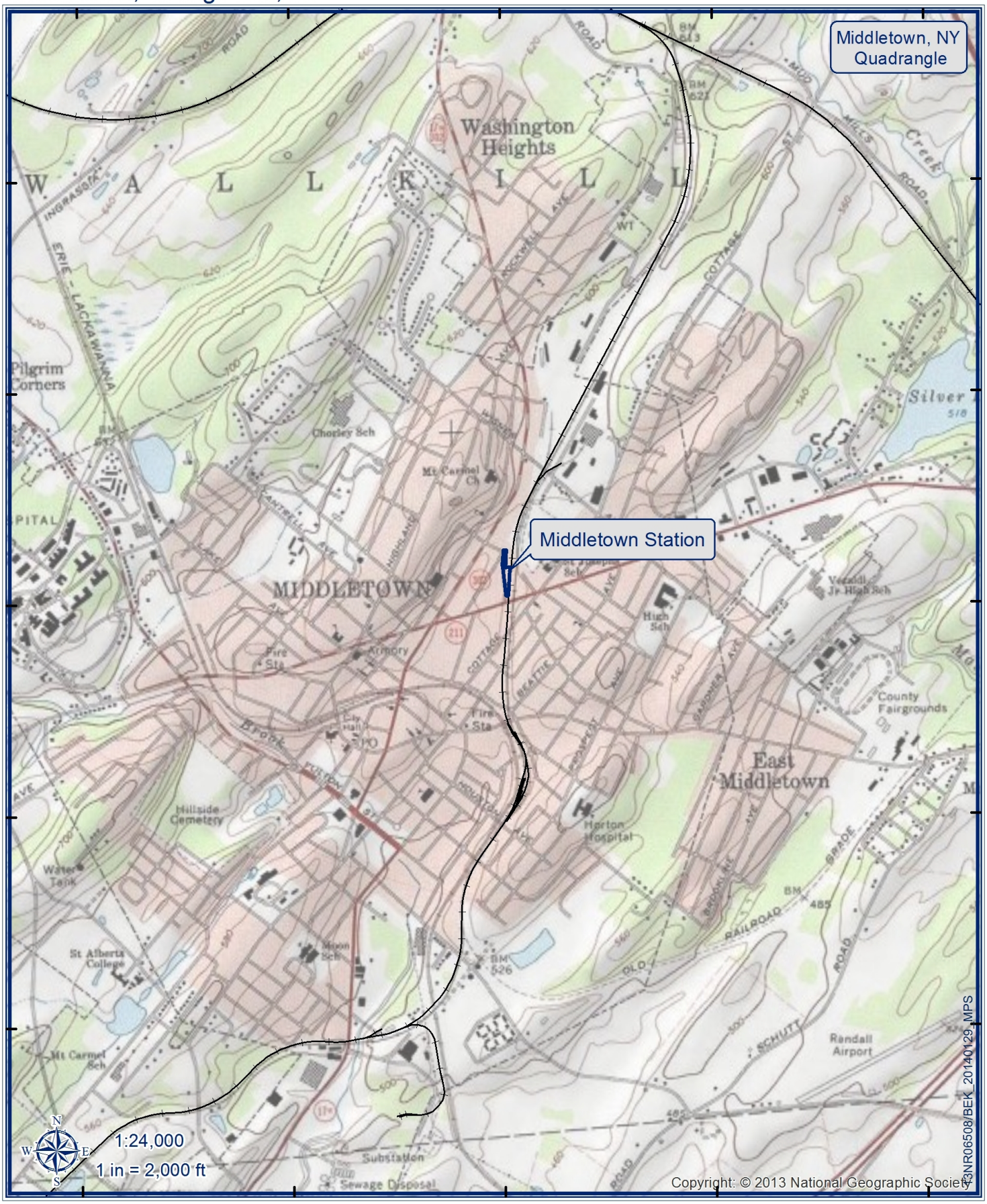
Paperwork Reduction Act Statement: This information is being collected for applications to the National Register of Historic Places to nominate properties for listing or determine eligibility for listing, to list properties, and to amend existing listings. Response to this request is required to obtain a benefit in accordance with the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended (16 U.S.C.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, undated early view of station, prior to additions; BELOW, postcard view, ca. 1909, showing south tower.

NY, Ontario & Western RR Middletown Station
Middletown, Orange Co., NY

2 Low Avenue
Middletown, NY 10940



4591000
4590000
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4588000
4587000

547000 548000 549000 550000 551000

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

0 650 1,300 2,600 Feet

RR Station

Railroad Line

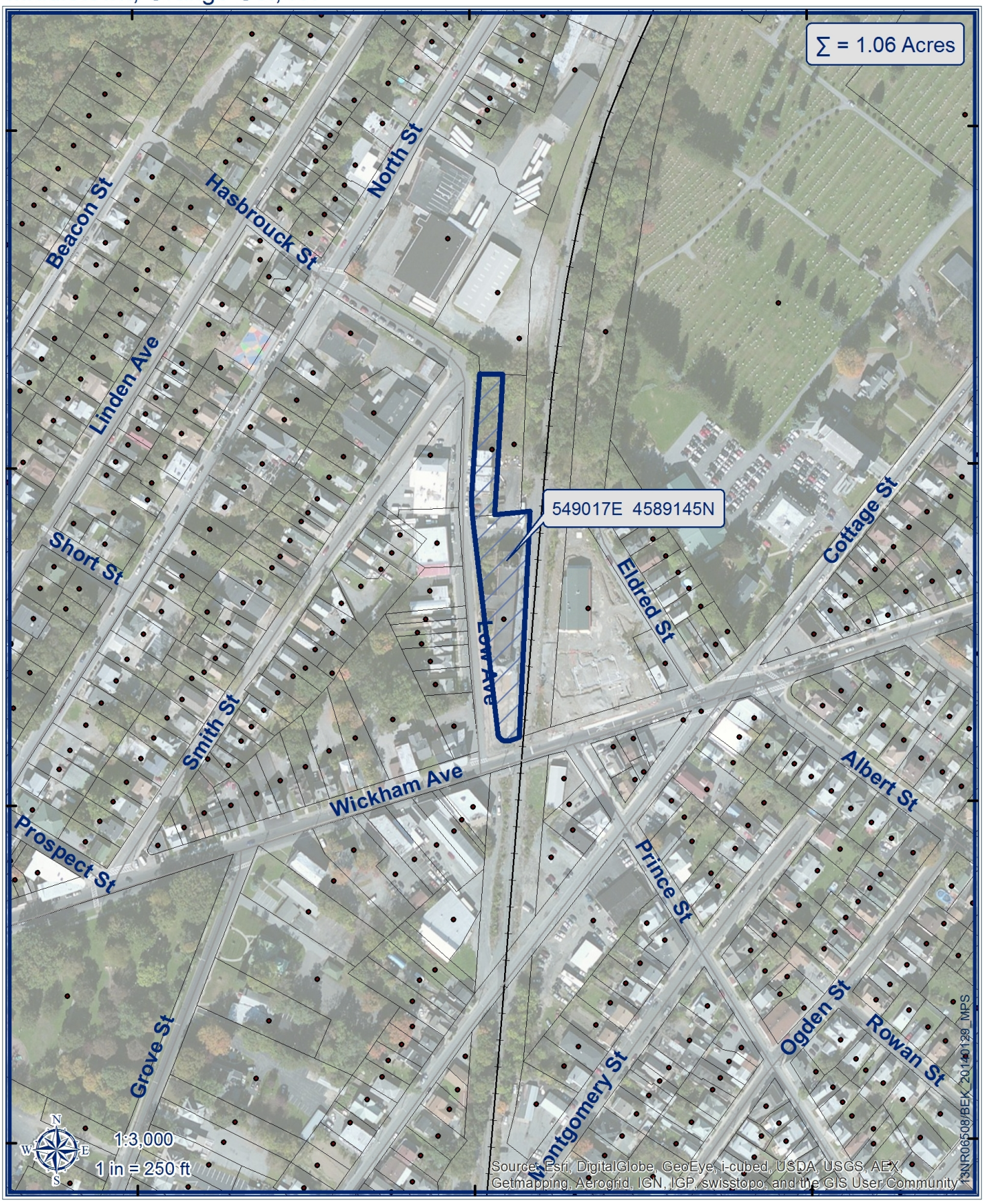
Tax Parcel Data:
Orange Co. RPS
propertydata.orangecountygov.com

OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION & HISTORIC PRESERVATION
NEW YORK STATE

13NR06508/BEK_20140129_MPS

NY, Ontario & Western RR Middletown Station
Middletown, Orange Co., NY

2 Low Avenue
Middletown, NY 10940



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

0 80 160 320 Feet

RR Station

Railroad Line

Tax Parcel Data:
Orange Co. RPS
propertydata.orangecountygov.com

OFFICE OF PARKS, RECREATION & HISTORIC PRESERVATION
NEW YORK STATE

O&W STATION

O·W STATION

EXIT

THE
MACNEALE & URBAN
SAFE & LOCK CO.
HAMILTON, O.