

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

**National Register of Historic Places
Registration Form**

DRAFT

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 TATLER CLUB
 other names/site number Peter A. Porter Mansion
 name of related multiple property listing N/A

Location

street & number 6 Fourth Street not for publication
 city or town Niagara Falls vicinity
 state New York code NY county Niagara code 040 zip code 14303

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

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:) _____

Signature of the Keeper _____ Date of Action _____

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5. Classification

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

- private
- public - Local
- public - State
- public - Federal

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

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
1	0	buildings
		sites
		structures
		objects
1	0	Total

DRAFT

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.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

SOCIAL/clubhouse

Current Functions
(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/single dwelling

SOCIAL/clubhouse

7. Description

Architectural Classification
(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN/Italianate

Materials
(Enter categories from instructions.)

foundation: Stone, Concrete

walls: Wood, Brick

roof: Asphalt Shingle

other:

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Narrative Description

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

Summary Paragraph

The Tatler Club is a two-story frame Italianate clubhouse located at 6 Fourth Street in the city of Niagara Falls, Niagara County, New York (Figure 1). The building was constructed in 1876 as a residence but was converted into the Tatler Club's meeting place in 1956 and has served as the organization's home since. The clubhouse is highly intact to its 1876 construction on the exterior and second floor, but was sensitively altered to accommodate club activities during the mid-twentieth century, with the installation of a commercial kitchen, coat room, restroom, library, and garage, as well as the widening of doorways and removal of partitions to create larger and more accessible meeting spaces. The property has strong integrity within the period of significance, which extends from 1956 to 1974.

Narrative Description

Location and Setting

The Tatler Club is situated on a 220-foot by 132-foot lot on the west side of Fourth Street in downtown Niagara Falls. The nominated building is on fairly level ground at the northern half of the site; however, the land slopes sharply down towards the Niagara River and Riverway (a.k.a. Riverside Drive) within the southern half. A driveway from Fourth Street runs along the north side of the building to access a parking lot on the west elevation. The grounds to the east and south are grassy, with trees and shrubs along the road and the slope to the river. To the east, across Fourth Street, there is a large non-historic hotel, and to the north and west, there are several late-nineteenth and early-twentieth-century residences that have been converted into professional offices. The larger neighborhood is heavily populated by hotel chains and large surface parking lots serving the local tourism industry. To the south, the property overlooks the upper rapids of the river, a half-mile east of Niagara Falls.

The Tatler Club was built in 1876 in an Italianate style. The architect and/or builder are unknown. The frame building is composed of a main two-story rectangular block with a shorter two-story kitchen block to the north. The building has a raised stone basement and hipped roof. Windows are a combination of single or paired one-over-one, two-over-two wood, or four-over-four wood sash with some aluminum replacement windows. At the roofline, the cornice features raised wood panels below the ghosts of brackets and dentils that have been removed. Eight brick chimneys with decorative corbelling project from the roof at irregular locations. After 1955, a flat-roofed one-story garage was constructed and attached to the north of the kitchen.

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Figure 1: The Tatler Club.

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Exterior

Facade (East Elevation)

The facade faces east on a rise overlooking Fourth Street. This elevation is eight bays wide, with three bays located in the main two-story block, three bays located in the shorter two-story northern kitchen block, and two bays located in the garage addition (Photograph 1). All bays on the main block are paired within shallow box bays. The kitchen and garage are recessed from the main block. A shallow cross-gable projects from the middle bay of the main block (Photograph 2). The first-story walls are shiplap siding with wood quoining at the corners, while the second floor is clapboard, matching both stories of the northern kitchen block. The garage is fashioned after the main block, with shiplap and wood quoining.

At the first story, the main entrance is located in the central bay of the main block, within the shallow cross gable. It is accessed by a wood stair and covered by an elaborately carved wood porch cover with square posts, a turned balustrade, and modillions at the cornice. Fluted pilasters flank the original paired wood doors and leaded-glass transom. At the second story, the windows of the middle bay are covered by a concave metal awning. Above the awning, in the cross gable, there is a Palladian-style window with a segmental-arched center sash.

To the north a second entrance is located in the kitchen block at the northernmost bay up a short concrete stair and under a flat porch cover supported by wrought iron. To the north of the entrance, there is a third ground-level entrance in the garage addition. A modern vinyl ribbon window is located in the northernmost bay of the garage. There are no vehicle bays on this elevation.

South (side) Elevation

The south elevation is four bays wide, where the three eastern bays open out onto a large one-story semi-circular wood porch that spans the width of the main block (Photograph 3). The fourth bay is located in a two-story porte-cochere that projects from the west elevation. At the first floor, the middle of the three eastern bays contains French doors. The bays to either side contain paired windows. The porch cover features highly decorated supports and retains many of the original modillions along the cornice. The first story of the porte-cochere is entirely open for vehicles.

At the second floor, the three eastern bays contain paired windows. To the west, the bay above the porte-cochere is centered in a wall with clapboard siding divided by several vertical members, as in half-timbering. These vertical elements originally terminated in brackets at the roofline, which have been removed.

North (side) Elevation

The north elevation is three bays wide. The garage wall has no openings on this elevation; however, the two-story blocks rise beyond and project slightly past the garage to the east and west. At the first story, a pair of

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windows are located in the easternmost bay within a box bay in the main block. At the second story, a single window is located above. The middle bay is located in the shorter northern kitchen block, centered in the wall, and contains a single window. The westernmost bay is located within the port-cochere and is centered in the wall with clapboard siding divided by several vertical members, as in half-timbering. These vertical elements originally terminated in brackets at the roofline, which have been removed.

West (rear) Elevation

The rear west elevation is ten bays wide, where the two northernmost vehicle bays are located within the garage, four bays are located within the shorter kitchen block, and four bays are located within the main block (Photographs 4 and 5). The porte-cochere projects west from the cross gable of the main block and features a hipped roof with a skylight. Unlike the other elevations, none of the openings north of the porte-cochere are located within box bays. There are three entrances on this elevation: two in the northern kitchen block and a formal entrance centered in the main wing, beneath the porte-cochere.

At the basement level, a below-grade entrance is accessed by stone steps within the northern kitchen wing. The modern door is flanked by two-light wood windows. To the north, at the first floor, a second entrance is located south of the two garage bays, at the north end of the kitchen block, up a wood stair with iron railings. The sash door is covered by a gabled awning with drop pendants. The two bays to the south are two-over-two wood sash that likely replaced the original windows in 1957, which were taller. A small window directly south of these bays marks the location of a restroom. To the south, the two adjacent bays are located within the main block, which projects slightly farther west. To the south of these windows is the formal entrance under the porte-cochere. The entrance features paired sash doors up a wood stair with iron railings. The porch landing has pairs of square columns to either side of the doorway. The supporting wall of the port-cochere is brick with a stone base and the east and west sides of the brick wall feature corbeling and rosettes. The southernmost bay contains a pair of windows within a two-story box bay.

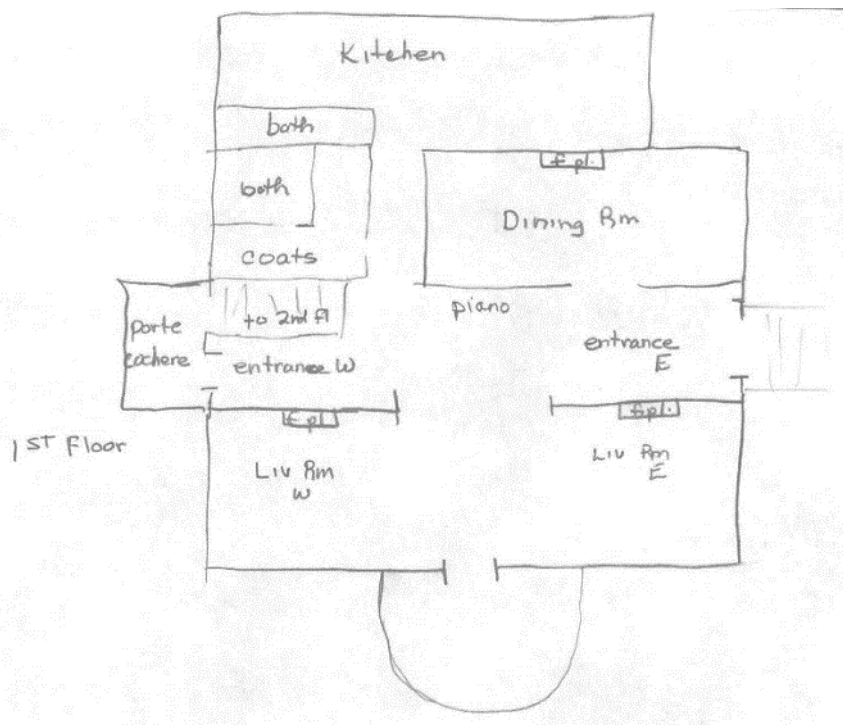
At the second story, the four northernmost bays each contain matching two-over-two sash. To the south, in the port-cochere, there are no openings, but the brick chimney with rosettes projects along the frame wall and through the hipped roof. Rising beyond, in the cross gable, a pair of windows are located in a segmental-arched opening. To the south, there are a pair of windows in the box bay.

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First Floor Sketch Plan

Interior

The Tatler Club was originally constructed as a residence, and as a result, the layout is characteristic of upper-class dwellings at the time. The ground floor contains a wide east-west hall with a sweeping staircase accessed from formal entrances on both the east and west elevations (Photograph 6). To the north and south of the hall, there are communal rooms and a kitchen wing. The second floor contains bedrooms, a study, and a servants' wing over the kitchen. The attic is partially finished. Throughout, the interior has parquet floors, plaster walls, and original window casings with pocket shutters.

At the first floor, the entry hall features the Latin greeting "SALVE" laid in the wooden threshold of the eastern entrance and a wood U-shaped staircase at the northwest corner with turned balustrade and carved stair brackets on both the risers and the landings. To the south, a wide opening leads to a large meeting space that spans the width of the building and appears to have once been two separate rooms (Photograph 7). On either side of the opening, there are fireplaces with marble surrounds and a Greek key parquet border defines the original spaces. An acoustic tile ceiling obscures the original ceiling height and any moldings. This room opens directly onto the large semi-circular porch to the south. To the north of the entry hall, there is a small dining room with wainscoting, crown molding, a plaster ceiling, and a marble fireplace on the north wall (Photograph 8). Paneled doors to the west and north lead to a service corridor and kitchen, respectively. West of the corridor, there is a plain coat room with an attached restroom (Photograph 9).

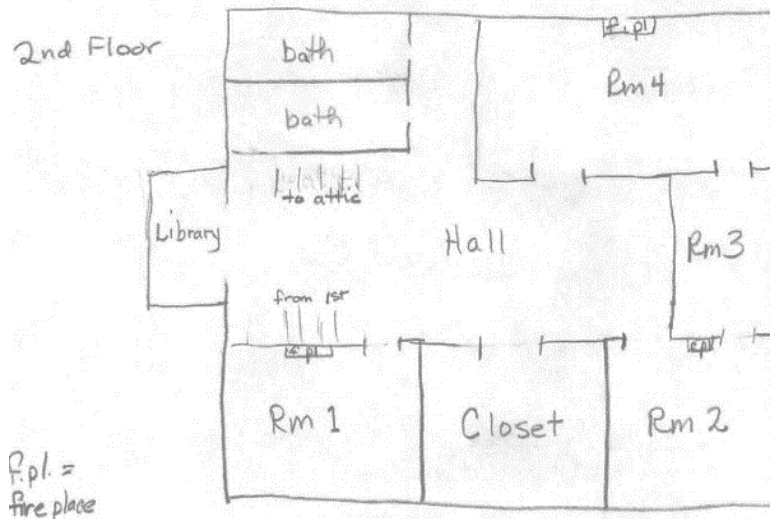
The corridor leads north to a large commercial kitchen that occupies the entire first floor of the shorter northern block (Photograph 10). A service restroom is located in the southwest corner. A partial north-south wall divides

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the cooking and prep area from a large u-shaped pantry area that connects to the dining room. The finishes in the service corridor, coat room, restrooms, and kitchen are much simpler and date to a renovation in 1957. The floors are linoleum tile, and the trim is less ornate, with no crown molding. A door from the kitchen leads to the west elevation. A room in the northeast corner of the kitchen block that served as the cook's quarters leads to a stair hall that accesses the second-floor servants' apartment and a door to the east elevation.



Second Floor Sketch Plan

At the second floor, a mid-level landing accesses the library over the porte-cochere through pocket doors (Photograph 11). The parquet floor is laid with a sawtooth border, and the hipped roof is open above picture rail moldings, terminating in a stained-glass skylight. A fireplace in the west wall features a painted brick surround with a Greek key motif. Built-in shelving from the 1957 renovation can be found on all four walls. At the main second-floor landing, there are paneled doors accessing two bedrooms and a linen closet to the south and a bedroom and secondary corridor to the north. This corridor accesses two restrooms in the main block and the original servants' quarters over the kitchen in the northern wing, which now contains a private apartment. The two bedrooms to the south are similar in size, with the same wood floors, trim, and nearly identical white marble fireplace surrounds on the north walls (Photograph 12). The closets between the two rooms have built-in drawers and appear to have once been adjoined, as a partition divides a window to the north that faces the linen closet.

The eastern bedroom connects to a small room at the east end of the second floor that is not accessible from the stair hall and adjoins the large master bedroom north of landing. The small room does not have a fireplace and is currently being used as an office. The larger bedroom to the north features a gray marble fireplace surround and paneled built-in cabinetry along the north wall (Photograph 13). A door from this room leads west to the secondary corridor. Both restrooms are located on the west side of the corridor. The southern restroom is carpeted, with a burgundy marble double sink with claw feet and wainscoting. The northern restroom is

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opposite the master bedroom and features matching built-in cabinetry, wainscoting, and a white marble sink (Photograph 14). The floors are recent laminate, and a second non-historic sink is located in a laminate countertop on the south wall. Access to the private caretaker's apartment north of the restrooms was not granted.

The formal stairs continue up to the attic level. A paneled door accesses a finished space with plain wood floors, plaster walls, and a pink marble sink in the northwest corner. A skylight provides additional light to the room. Paneled doors access two finished closets and large unfinished attic space on both the north and south sides of the room.

Integrity Analysis:

The Tatler Club has excellent integrity dating to the original nineteenth-century dwelling and to the conversion of the residence into a club facility during the twentieth century. The majority of the finishes date to the construction of the building and those changes that have been made occurred over the course of the club's occupation of the building during the period of significance from 1956 to 1974, including alterations to the kitchen wing and modifications to the large first-floor meeting room. The exterior features original siding, windows, doors, porches, porch covers, columns, box bays, and chimneys. On the interior, the paneled doors, plaster walls, pocket shutters, moldings, radiators, fireplaces, staircases, carved stair brackets, built-in cabinetry, stained-glass skylight, and parquet floors in a variety of designs, are intact and in excellent condition.

Changes to the property by the Tatler Club include the removal of exterior architectural elements such as the brackets and dentils at the cornice in 1963 when the building was clad in aluminum and the replacement of the two kitchen windows on the west elevation. On the interior, changes include the removal of the partition that once separated the large meeting space, the widening of the opening, and the installation of drop ceilings in this room. The kitchen wing and restrooms feature twentieth-century fixtures and finishes; however, many of these changes occurred during club renovations in 1956 and 1957, within the period of significance, and do not negatively impact the integrity of the nominated property.

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8. Statement of Significance

Applicable National Register Criteria

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

- A Property is associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history.
- B Property is associated with the lives of persons significant in our past.
- C Property embodies the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction or represents the work of a master, or possesses high artistic values, or represents a significant and distinguishable entity whose components lack individual distinction.
- D Property has yielded, or is likely to yield, information important in prehistory or history.

Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

- A Owned by a religious institution or used for religious purposes.
- B removed from its original location.
- C a birthplace or grave.
- D a cemetery.
- E a reconstructed building, object, or structure.
- F a commemorative property.
- G less than 50 years old or achieving significance within the past 50 years.

Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

Social History

Period of Significance

1956-1974

Significant Dates

1956, 1957, 1974

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

N/A

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Wright & Kremers, Inc. (1956-1957 renovations)

Period of Significance (justification)

The period of significance begins with the Tatler Club's ownership and occupation of the building in 1956 and ends in 1974, fifty years before present. This period encompasses all significant alterations and development of the property during its use as a clubhouse for the Tatler Club.

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Criteria Considerations (explanation, if necessary)

Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph

(Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance and applicable criteria.)

The Tatler Club is significant under Criterion A in the area of Social History as a prominent women’s club in the City of Niagara Falls, and for its association with the Women's Club Movement. The Women's Club Movement in the United States began in the late 1860s and continued through the 1920s. The movement provided a platform for women to express opinions, exchange ideas, take progressive community action, and hold leadership roles, unhindered by male influence or interference. The organizations focused on philanthropy, social reform, education, self-improvement, advocacy for women’s rights, and cultural enrichment in the arts. The Tatler Club formed in 1925 as a benevolent social club and served as a place where the most prominent and educated women in Niagara Falls could gather for leisure activities, discuss new ideas, and coordinate on causes that were important to them. Founded with the mission of educational enrichment and the discussion of social problems relevant to members, prominent national and international speakers were regularly invited to present programs at the club, covering important topics such as capital punishment, women’s rights locally and abroad, socialism, and women in the workplace. Originally constructed in 1876, the Tatler Club purchased the former residence of Alice and Peter A. Porter at 6 Fourth Street in 1956, remodeling the building to meet the needs of the organization while respecting the historic fabric. In the sixty-seven years the Tatler Club has continuously occupied the property, speakers have delivered thousands of educational lectures on a wide range of social, political, scientific, and philosophical topics, shaping the role of women in Niagara Falls during the twentieth century. The period of significance begins with the Tatler Club’s ownership and occupation of the building in 1956 and ends in 1974, fifty years before present, as the Tatler Club continues in operation to the present day (2024).

Narrative Statement of Significance

The Women’s Club Movement

The Women's Club Movement was a significant social and political movement in the United States during the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, consisting of the establishment of women's clubs with the aim of addressing a wide range of social, cultural, and political issues. Women’s organizations began to emerge during the eighteenth century in Europe as literary societies, providing educated and intellectual upper-class women with a space to discuss literature, art, culture, and social concerns. Prior to these organizations, almost all women’s groups were either church-sponsored charities or auxiliaries to established men’s groups. One notable example of these literary societies was the Blue Stockings Society, founded in England in the 1750s.¹

¹ Lydia Figs, “Who Were the Bluestockings,” April 26, 2019, Art UK, accessed November 6, 2023, <https://artuk.org/discover/stories/who-were-the-bluestockings>.

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In the United States, the Women's Club Movement began in the late 1860s, driven by a desire for independence and personal development by many women following the Civil War. The first women's club associated with this movement, Sorosis, was established in New York City in 1868 by journalist Jane Cunningham Croly and two colleagues who had experienced professional discrimination due to their gender. The club was described as a place where members could "work for the release of women from the disabilities which debar them from a due participation in the rewards of industrial and professional labour."² Sorosis members also participated in various reform movements such as suffrage, abolitionism, prison reform, and temperance.

The idea of women's clubs spread rapidly across the country and the Women's Club Movement became a firmly established progressive force in American life. The initial focus of each individual association varied, from purely social, cultural, and recreational, to political and social activism on issues such as the advancement of equality in education, economic opportunity, and suffrage.³ Without the supervision or interference of men, women had the opportunity to exercise independent decision-making powers as a collective in a way that had not been accessible before, and because many clubs addressed issues directly related to systemic inequality administered by men, places to meet apart from them was essential.⁴ Clubs also allowed women the ability to acquire skills similar to those possessed by professional men, where women could serve on boards of directors, learn to keep accounts, and participate in formal systems of governance.⁵

Women's clubs, like men's clubs, originated within the educated, white upper class; however, the social issues that motivated the Women's Club Movement were attractive to women of all classes and ethnicities. In 1890, sixty-three organizations formed the General Federation of Women's Clubs (GFWC), followed by the National Association of Colored Women (NACW) six years later. Both institutions served as national umbrella organizations to unite various women's clubs across the country and to provide a platform for women's clubs to share ideas, coordinate efforts, and engage in larger-scale social and political initiatives, such as child labor regulation, juvenile court law, the eight-hour workday, and other legislation in favor of family well-being.⁶

States also created their own club federations; New York's Federation of Women's Clubs (NYFWC) was established in 1894 and the Empire State Federation of Women's Clubs was founded in 1908. Within two years of its founding, 186 organizations in New York were members of the NYFWC, among them the Twentieth Century Club (extant; 1894) in Buffalo.⁷ The effect of the Women's Club Movement on American culture was

² Emily Faithfull, *Three Visits to America* (New York: Fowler & Wells Co., 1884), 18–21.

³ Tatler Historic Preservation Foundation, "Importance of the Women's Social Club Movement," 501(c)(3) Application, IRS Form 1023, Attachment I, Part IV, 5-6.

⁴ Tatler Historic Preservation Foundation, "Importance of the Women's Social Club Movement," 5-6.

⁵ Frank Kowsky and Martin Wachadlo, "20th Century Club," National Register of Historic Places Nomination Form (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 2010), Section 8, Page 1-2.

⁶ Linda D. Wilson, "Women's Club Movement," Oklahoma Historical Society, accessed November 6, 2023, <https://www.okhistory.org/publications/enc/entry?entry=WO002>; Kowsky and Wachadlo, "20th Century Club," Section 8, Page 1-2.

⁷ New York Heritage, Digital Collections, "Suffrage Documents of the New York State Federation of Women's Clubs," Elmira College - Gannett-Tripp Library, accessed November 6, 2023, <https://nyheritage.org/collections/suffrage-documents-new-york-state-federation-womens-clubs>.

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exemplified by the prominence of the Women's Pavilion at the 1892 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago and the Pan American Exhibition in Buffalo in 1901. These exhibits gave physical expression to the transformation of the role of women that had taken place in society.⁸

The early-twentieth-century Progressive Era witnessed an acceleration of club formation. In 1905, the Buffalo Federation of Women's Clubs was founded with twenty-five charter organizations.⁹ In 1910, the year Rochester's Century Club was founded, there were over a million women's clubs in the United States. Interest and membership in women's clubs saw another surge in the 1920s after World War I and the passage of the Nineteenth Amendment, as women gained access to professional and civic arenas once reserved only for men.¹⁰

Formation of the Tatler

Early in the spring of 1925, forty-year-old Gertrude Wright Porter, an influential woman from a prominent Niagara Falls family, invited twenty-five women to her home with the intent of forming a benevolent social club. Gertrude Porter's mother had been a founding member of the Twentieth Century Club in Buffalo in 1894, and Gertrude herself had promoted the formation of another women's club, the Garret Club, in Buffalo in 1902.¹¹ Interest was strong at the February 3rd meeting. The name Tatler Club was chosen on February 25th and a constitution was drafted using those of the Garret Club and the Niagara Club (the city's foremost men's club) as a foundation and presented at a follow-up meeting on February 28th. The chosen name likely originated from a popular British magazine, *The Tatler*, which claimed to present wit, style, satire, and social commentary to its female readers.¹²

The Tatler Club was officially incorporated on June 6, 1925. The by-laws stated, "the purpose of this club shall be to own real estate and maintain thereon a clubhouse and club rooms suitable for meetings of the members, for discussion of problems of interest to the membership, to provide lectures and discourses for the educational and literary development and improvement of the members."¹³ The forty-five founding members hosted a formal opening tea on June 17, 1925 at a house the new club rented at 619 Buffalo Avenue (extant), where they announced a series of lectures planned for the fall, among social activities such as bridge.¹⁴

⁸ Tatler Historic Preservation Foundation, "Importance of the Women's Social Club Movement," 5-6; Kowsky and Wachadlo, "20th Century Club," Section 8, Page 1-2.

⁹ Susan J. Eck, "805 Delaware: the Kelloggs, Town Club, & Temple Beth Zion," Western New York History, 2016, accessed November 6, 2023, https://www.wnyhistory.org/portfolios/whowhere/kellogg_805_delaware/kellogg_delaware.html#:~:text=The%20Town%20Club%20occupied%20805,were%20active%20in%20bond%20drives.

¹⁰ Wilson, "Women's Club Movement"; Kowsky and Wachadlo, "20th Century Club," Section 8, Page 1-2.

¹¹ Marion H. Anthony, "Historic Highlights of the Tatler, 1925-1977," n.d., Tatler private collection.

¹² Gail A. Hays, "Tatler May 2005 Program," May 2005, Tatler private collection.

¹³ Hays, "Tatler May 2005 Program."

¹⁴ "The Tatler Club Opening Tea," *Niagara Falls Gazette*, June 18, 1925, 10.

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The Alice and Peter A. Porter Mansion

Membership quickly surpassed one hundred women, and by 1931, the club had outgrown 619 Buffalo Avenue. Gertrude Porter's brother-in-law had come into possession of the Peter A. Porter Mansion at 6 Fourth Street and the Tatler arranged to lease it from him.¹⁵ The property was initially constructed in 1876 by Peter Porter as a wedding gift for his wife Alice. Porter was a notable man from a notable local family. He was a lawyer and civic leader for the Village of Niagara Falls, president of the Cataract Bank, and owner of the *Niagara Falls Gazette*, as well as a member of both the New York State Assembly and Congress. Porter authored *The Niagara Region in History* in 1895 and organized the Niagara Frontier Historical Society in 1897.¹⁶

In 1900, Porter sold the property to Henry D. Perky, president and founder of the Natural Food Company (subsequently Shredded Wheat Company), an important local business and one of the first users of hydroelectricity for manufacturing. In 1921, the property was transferred to Alexander J. Porter, Gertrude's brother-in-law and Chairman of the Shredded Wheat Company.¹⁷

Shortly after the move in 1931, the Tatler Club celebrated its new clubhouse with a tea at the mansion attended by 400 people, including a viscount and viscountess from Paris. A newspaper article describing the event explained, "while the social side of the Club has been a delightful feature, more stress has been laid on the lectures which have largely been of an educational nature."¹⁸

The financial hardship of the Great Depression left its mark on the Tatler. As local industrial leaders struggled, their spouses were impacted, and so did club membership. At the annual club meeting in 1932, twenty-four women resigned.¹⁹ Membership dipped to seventy-seven, the wages of the cook and maids were reduced, and the club negotiated a lower rent, but it was still operating at a deficit in 1933.²⁰ But the largest blow to the club came in 1935, when the house's owner Alexander Porter, who had long been looking to unload the property at 6 Fourth Street, finally found a buyer and the club lost their home. The group settled on the Schoellkopf House at 105 Jefferson Avenue (now Rainbow Boulevard; demolished). The building was purchased in 1936 for \$18,000 and was the first property the Tatler owned, fulfilling the original by-laws. It was a significant downsizing and needed substantial repairs, but the seventy remaining members made the property suitable for the next twenty years.²¹

¹⁵ Hays, "Tatler May 2005 Program."

¹⁶ Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission and City of Niagara Falls Planning Office, "6 4th Street –Tatler House," 2004.

¹⁷ Alexander J. Porter and Peter A. Porter were related by blood as descendants of brothers Judge Augustus S. Porter and General Peter Buehl Porter, respectively, among the earliest white settlers of Niagara Falls. Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission, "6 4th Street –Tatler House."

¹⁸ Hays, "Tatler May 2005 Program."

¹⁹ Hays, "Tatler May 2005 Program."

²⁰ Anthony, "Historic Highlights of the Tatler, 1925-1977."

²¹ Anthony, "Historic Highlights of the Tatler, 1925-1977."

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With the depression and war years behind them, the 1950s and 1960s were among the most prosperous years of the organization. The Tatler's ranks soared and club membership, which had long included the most prominent women in Niagara Falls, became even more exclusive. As with many women's clubs, finite meeting space necessitated a waiting list and the institution of a sponsorship requirement for prospective members.²²

In early 1956, the city of Niagara Falls offered \$73,000 for the Jefferson Avenue clubhouse in order to build a parking lot. The offer ended up being a boon for the Tatler. The club considered several other sites, even entering into a purchase agreement for a house at 331 Buffalo Avenue that fell apart when the city refused the necessary rezoning, but providence struck when their beloved former home, the Porter Mansion, became available.²³ The house, which had changed hands several times in the intervening years, was purchased by the Tatler Club on September 7, 1956. The building needed significant improvements to serve the club properly, so renovations occurred throughout 1957. Niagara Falls contractors Wright & Kremers, Inc., completely remodeled the kitchen wing, added the coat room and restroom, installed acoustical tile ceilings in the living room, a telephone booth under the stairs, and bookshelves in the library, and created a parking lot on the west elevation.²⁴ The club officially moved in March of 1957.²⁵

In 1963, another round of renovations occurred, with the widening of the entrance to the living room and cosmetic improvements to the main hall ceiling and walls. The following year, the entire exterior was covered in aluminum siding and aluminum storm windows were installed.²⁶ Club membership continued to be strong into the 1970s, both at the Tatler and nationally, as a second wave of feminism spread across the country. This women's rights movement was influenced by the earlier groundwork of women's clubs and generated new interest as women once again felt the need for spaces apart from men to discuss ideas and coordinate action.²⁷

Club Interests and Activities Over the Years

The club has hosted both social and educational events throughout its history. On the social side, the most popular leisure activity for the first few years of the organization was bridge. Women would play in large inter-club sessions, sometimes lasting entire seasons, with neighboring clubs in Niagara Falls, Lockport, the Tonawandas, and Buffalo (which surpassed ninety federated women's clubs in 1927).²⁸ These activities connected members to women across a broader region and could serve as social occasions to discuss important or new ideas. Musical programs were also well-attended.²⁹ Several annual traditions were established in these

²² Lori Caso, "Tatler Historic Preservation Foundation's Niagara Greenway Application," 2022.

²³ Marie Thibaudeau, Letter to John V. Hogan, Office of Corporate Counsel, Niagara Falls City Hall, May 5, 1956, Tatler private collection.

²⁴ Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission, "6 4th Street –Tatler House."

²⁵ Virginia M. Howard, "The Tatler House and Porter Family," November 1, 1977, Tatler private collection; Wright & Kramers, Inc., "Alterations to Fourth Street House, Tatler Club, Inc.," Job #3723, October 9, 1956.

²⁶ Niagara Falls Historic Preservation Commission, "6 4th Street –Tatler House."

²⁷ Melissa Estes Blair, "'A Dynamic Force in Our Community,' Women's Clubs and Second-Wave Feminism at the Grassroots," in *Frontiers: A Journal of Women Studies* 30, no. 3, (2009): 30-51.

²⁸ Anthony, "Historic Highlights of the Tatler, 1925-1977"; Eck, "805 Delaware," 2016.

²⁹ "Entertainments," *Niagara Falls Gazette*, June 30, 1926, 10; "Entertainments," *Niagara Falls Gazette*, June 7, 1927, 10.

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years including New Year's Day Open House in 1927, the first Spring Tea in 1928, and the first Christmas party in 1929.³⁰ Sunday tea at the club was enjoyed by both women and men.³¹

In the tradition of the Women's Club Movement, although the Tatler was a social club, it also had deeper educational and philanthropic goals. Fashioned after the Twentieth Century Club's custom, the Tatler offered weekly educational programs on a wide variety of topics, including social reform.³² In 1927, for example, American journalist and women's rights advocate Ruth Hale delivered a speech on the abolition of capital punishment to a large audience and a local pastor gave a talk on the new novel *Elmer Gantry*, a book banned in numerous cities due to its satirical representation of evangelical Christianity.³³

The club library was started in 1931 for the education and amusement of members. The Tatler provided regular magazines on style, current events, and social issues and women donated books on other topics of interest.³⁴ In 1935, one of the most anticipated speakers was Melinda Alexander, an accomplished lawyer, feminist, and political and social activist who addressed the Tatler about her year traveling to seventeen countries in Africa and Asia covering international front-page events.³⁵ In the 1930s, nine members performed in the Tatler Band.³⁶

After the austerity of the Great Depression, there were picnics at member's summer houses. A bingo party marked the fifteenth anniversary of the club's founding in 1940 and a tea was held for the twenty-fifth anniversary in 1950.³⁷ Upon their return to the Porter Mansion, in the fall of 1957, the club maintained the tradition of weekly Tuesday lectures. The October program that year included a discussion of the Niagara Falls government by the city manager, a local Young Women's Christian Association advocate, a speech about Korea from Korean native Madam Induk Pakh, and the ever-popular bridge tournament.³⁸ Programs in subsequent years were just as varied, with discussions of opera, a talk by a newspaper correspondent who was exiled from Germany, and the "exciting thrills and narrow escapes" a speaker experienced aboard a 34,000-mile schooner trip with her husband and child.³⁹ Several Tatler members during this era were highly involved in establishing and supporting local chapters of the YWCA. Sundays were family night, when children and husbands joined their wives for dinner.⁴⁰

Each year at 6 Fourth Street brought dozens of new lecture topics and guest speakers. In 1958, Harold Crawford of the Bell Telephone Company described solar power's potential in home heating and machinery. In 1959, Sezen Ziyal, a Turkish sociologist, gave a speech about Turkey and the repressed role of women there, while

³⁰ Anthony, "Historic Highlights of the Tatler, 1925-1977."

³¹ Anthony, "Historic Highlights of the Tatler, 1925-1977."

³² Caso, "Tatler Historic Preservation Foundation's Niagara Greenway Application."

³³ "Entertainments," *Niagara Falls Gazette*, November 11, 1927, 12.

³⁴ Anthony, "Historic Highlights of the Tatler, 1925-1977."

³⁵ Hays, "Tatler May 2005 Program."

³⁶ "The Tatler Inc. in Days of Yore, 1931-1972," n.d., Tatler private collection.

³⁷ Anthony, "Historic Highlights of the Tatler, 1925-1977."

³⁸ "The Tatler Inc. in Days of Yore, 1931-1972," n.d., Tatler private collection.

³⁹ Hays, "Tatler May 2005 Program."

⁴⁰ "The Tatler Inc. in Days of Yore, 1931-1972," n.d., Tatler private collection.

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Nazi resistance fighter, accomplished military diplomat, and FBI intelligence specialist J. Jaroslav Sustar discussed contemporary freedom fighters. Dan Kurzman, a well-known foreign correspondent for Washington Post, NBC, and ABC, spoke at the club in 1961 about current events in Africa.⁴¹ The specific issues may have changed over the decades, but lecture topics were broad, the speakers were often nationally or internationally known, and the programs likely influenced members who were some of the most prominent and educated women in the city. Both men and women were invited to speak at the club, with the men tending to be specialists in their academic, professional, or theological fields, while the women were often pioneers, social reformers, or cultural icons.

Subsequent History (1974-Present)

The Porter Mansion has remained in continuous use by the Tatler organization since 1956. The club celebrated their fiftieth anniversary in 1975 for the entire year, with a fashion show, golden Christmas party, and Founder's Day events that looked back on the history and contributions of the club. Mirrors in the house were redone in gold leaf to commemorate the occasion.⁴² In addition to speakers, the club continued to serve dinner for members every other Thursday, luncheon every Tuesday, and hosted annual charity balls and Christmas parties.⁴³

In recent years, the Tatler has focused intently on being good stewards to their clubhouse and its history, creating a foundation to "study, preserve, and protect the historically significant Peter A. Porter Mansion."⁴⁴ In 2004, the building was designated a Landmarked Residence by the Niagara Preservation Commission, and in 2011, The Tatler Club received Preservation Buffalo Niagara's annual award for Stewardship of the property.⁴⁵

Except for regular maintenance, painting, and re-papering, the interior of the building has remained largely unchanged since the major renovations of 1956 and 1957 when the Tatler made the property their permanent home. In 2023, the aluminum siding added in 1963 was removed from all elevations, exposing many of the original details of the Porter Mansion, and substantial structural repairs were made to the southern porch. As they approach their one hundredth anniversary, the club continues its mission of education. Lecture luncheons are offered for members on a bi-weekly basis and guest speakers hail from a variety of backgrounds.⁴⁶

Summary

For nearly a century the Tatler Club in Niagara Falls has enriched and expanded the influence of local women through education, philanthropy, and the sharing of ideas. Motivated by the Women's Club Movement, the

⁴¹ "The Tatler Inc. in Days of Yore, 1931-1972," n.d., Tatler private collection.

⁴² Anthony, "Historic Highlights of the Tatler, 1925-1977."

⁴³ Anthony, "Historic Highlights of the Tatler, 1925-1977."

⁴⁴ Caso, "Tatler Historic Preservation Foundation's Niagara Greenway Application."

⁴⁵ Caso, "Tatler Historic Preservation Foundation's Niagara Greenway Application."; Tatler Historic Preservation Foundation, "Importance of the Women's Social Club Movement," 5-6.

⁴⁶ Caso, "Tatler Historic Preservation Foundation's Niagara Greenway Application."

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Tatler helped pave the way for women's increased involvement in public life and politics, fostering a sense of civic responsibility, professional advancement, and community engagement among members. Since their inception, clubs like the Tatler have provided women with a platform for networking, education, philanthropy, and advocacy. They have played a crucial role in social reforms, especially in the area of women's rights, and offered members opportunities for intellectual growth through lectures, discussions, and the exchange of ideas. The Tatler is part of this legacy, hosting thousands of women and men from all corners of the globe to discuss new ideas and advocate for change. Through their dedicated stewardship, the clubhouse at 6 Fourth Street has retained excellent integrity dating from both the initial construction of the building in 1876 and the conversion of the property into a clubhouse in 1956.

9. Major Bibliographical References

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Niagara Falls Gazette. "Entertainments." June 7, 1927. 10.

Niagara Falls Gazette. "Entertainments." November 11, 1927. 12.

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Wright & Kramers, Inc. "Alterations to Fourth Street House, Tatler Club, Inc." Job #3723. October 9, 1956. Tatler Club private collection, 6 Fourth Street, Niagara Falls, New York.

Sanborn Map Co. "Niagara Falls, N.Y." 1897.

Sanborn Map Co. "Niagara Falls, N.Y." 1914, revised to 1955.

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

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Acreage of Property 0.67 acres

(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____
(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|------------------------|-----------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 43.081587 | Longitude: -79.057767 |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

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

The boundary is indicated by a heavy line on the enclosed maps.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

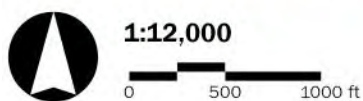
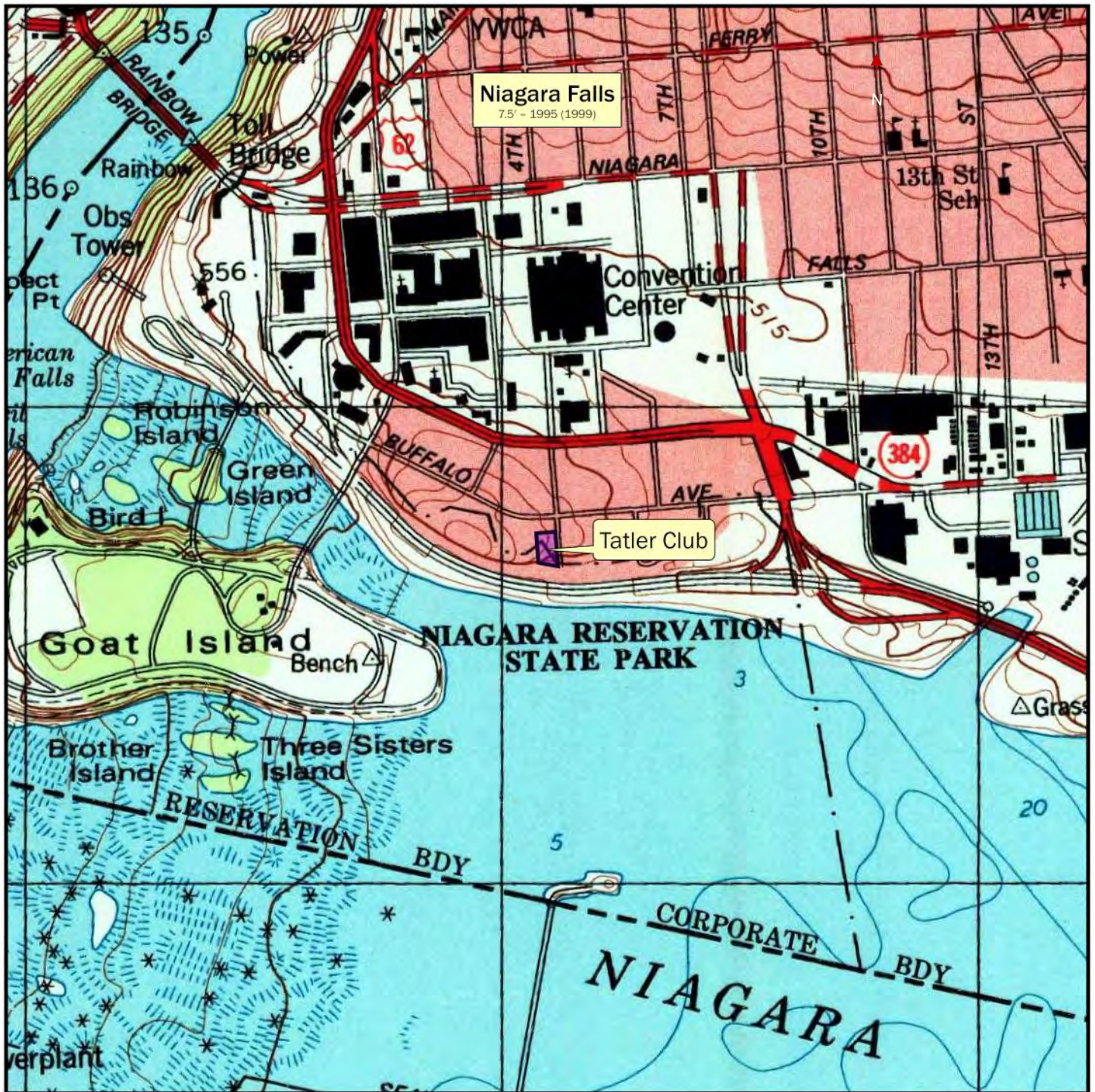
This boundary was chosen because it encompasses the entire property at 6 Fourth Street historically associated with the Tatler Club (Parcel # **159.13-2-28**).

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Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 17N

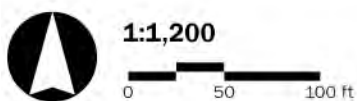
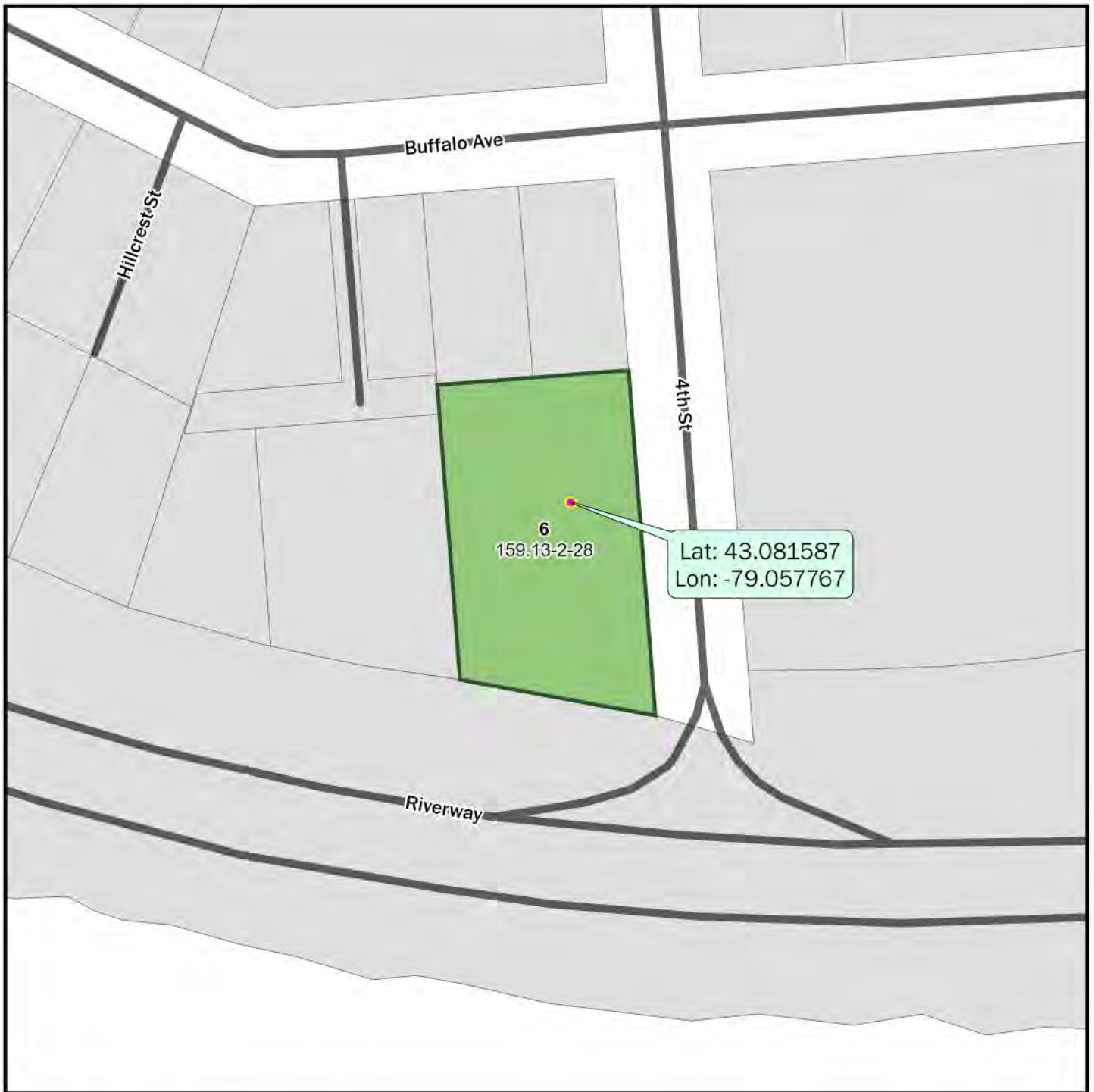
Mapped 01/24/2024 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO

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Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 17N

 Nomination Boundary (0.67 ac)  Tax Parcels

Niagara County Parcel Year: 2021



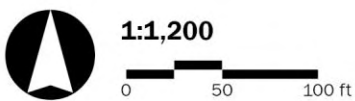
Mapped 01/24/2024 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO

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 Nomination Boundary (0.67 ac)



Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 17N

New York State Orthoimagery Year: 2021

Mapped 01/24/2024 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO

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11. Form Prepared By

name/title Katy Stuck, M.S., Associate Architectural Historian [Edited by Jennifer Walkowski, NYSHPO]
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street & number 170 Florida Street telephone (716) 725-6410
city or town Buffalo state NY zip code 14208
e-mail Katystuck@preservationstudios.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.)

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Additional Information



Figure 2. Niagara County GIS image showing the Tatler Club (black dot) in relation to the Niagara River, Goat Island, and Niagara Falls State Park.

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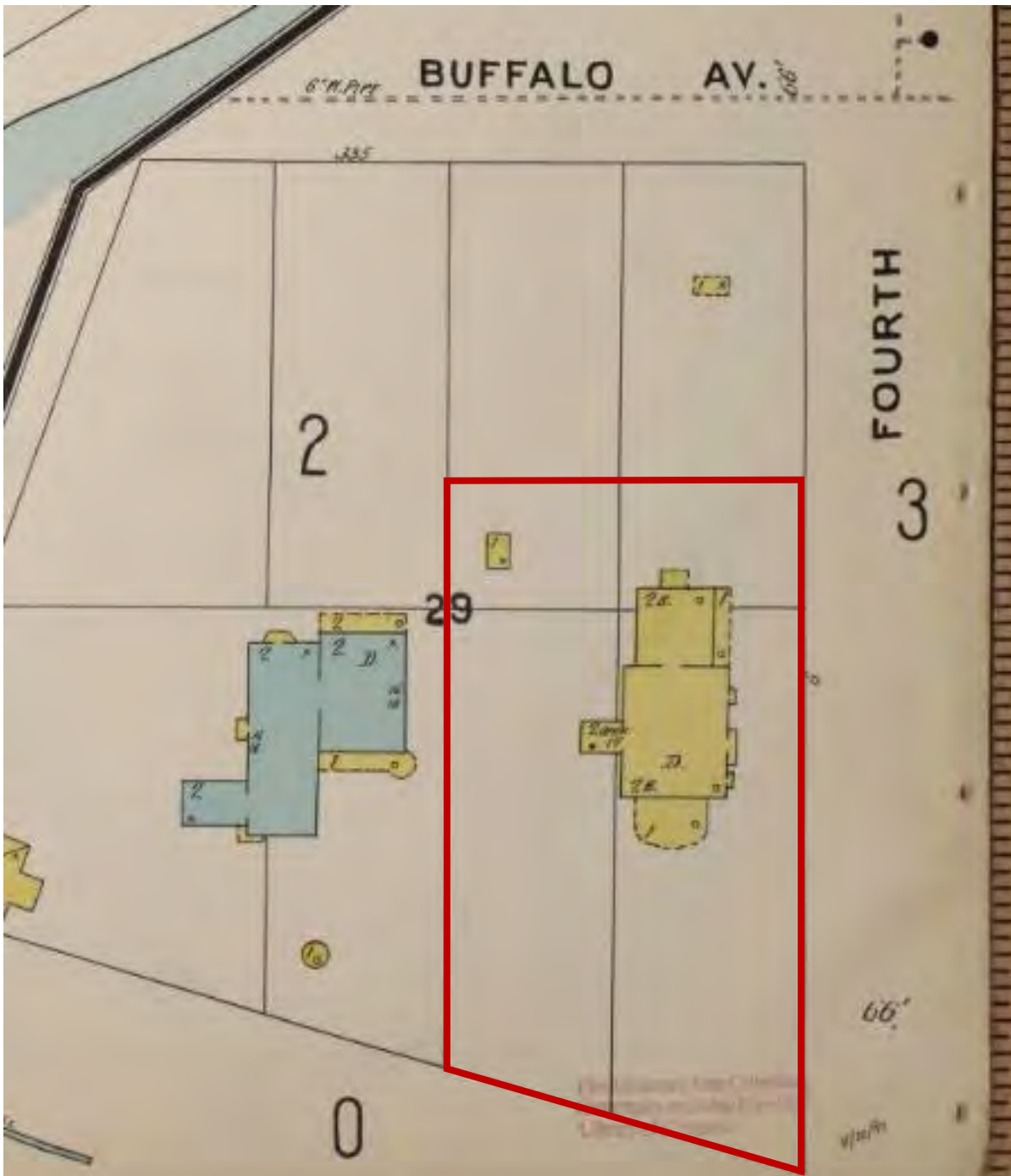


Figure 3. 1897 Sanborn Map showing the Porter Mansion as it existed during the nineteenth century (Sanborn Map Co., “Niagara Falls, N.Y.,” 1897, Sheet 3).

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Figure 4. 1955 Sanborn Map showing 6 Fourth Street shortly before the Tatler Club purchased the building in 1956 (Sanborn Map Co., “Niagara Falls, N.Y.,” 1914, revised to 1955,” Sheet 23).

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Figure 5. Undated photograph of the Porter Mansion and future Tatler Club (Tatler Club private collection). Facing northwest.

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Figure 6. Undated photograph of the Tatler Club prior to the installation of aluminum siding in 1963 (Tatler Club private collection). Facing Southwest.

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Figure 7. Undated photograph of the Tatler Club prior to the installation of aluminum siding in 1963 (Tatler Club private collection). Facing west.

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Figure 8. The 1935 Tatler Club Christmas celebration, held in the Porter Mansion the first time the club occupied the property, was “Bachelor Party” themed. Dressing as men may have been fun, but it was also subversive (Tatler Club yearbook collection, 6 Fourth Street).

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Figure 9. A Tatler Club Halloween party in the living room of the clubhouse at 6 Fourth Street in the 1960s (Tatler Club yearbook collection, 6 Fourth Street).

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Figure 10. Photo of the Tatler Club, ca. 2014, showing aluminum siding, prior to removal

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Photographs:

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

Name of Property:

City or Vicinity:

County:

State:

Photographer:

Date Photographed:

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1 of ____.

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.



























