

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

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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 St. Lawrence County Government Complex

other names/site number _____

related multiple property listing N/A

2. Location

street & number 48 Court Street not for publication

city or town Canton vicinity

state NY code NY county St. Lawrence code 089 zip code 13617

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.)

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

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

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

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

Contributing	Noncontributing	
5	0	buildings
0	0	sites
0	0	structures
0	0	objects
5	0	Total

Name of related multiple property listing
 (Enter "N/A" if property is not part of a multiple property listing)

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register

 N/A

 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

Current Functions
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

 GOVERNMENT: County Courthouse,
 Government Office, Correctional Facility

 GOVERNMENT: County Courthouse,
 Government Office

7. Description

Architectural Classification
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

Materials
 (Enter categories from instructions.)

 LATE VICTORIAN: Romanesque

foundation: STONE: Sandstone, Granite

walls: STONE: Sandstone, Marble,
WOOD; BRICK, Limestone

roof: METAL; ASPHALT

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 St. Lawrence County Government Complex, located in the Village of Canton, NY, is the county seat of St. Lawrence County. The village has a population of 11,155 as of the 2022 census and it is located twenty minutes from the Canadian border in the St. Lawrence River Valley just north of the Adirondack Mountains. The village was incorporated in 1845 and encompasses 3.3 square miles.¹ Main Street (NY Route 11) bisects the village east-west, and the Grass River north-south. Both SUNY Canton on the west side of the river and St. Lawrence University to the east are within the town of Canton and a mile from the St. Lawrence Government Complex. The surrounding area outside the village center is predominantly rural in character, boasting farms, open meadows, woodlands, and open spaces.

The current St. Lawrence County Government Complex occupies 4.95 acres at the corner of Court Street (west) and Judson Street (south), just north of the historic Main Street core. The five contributing buildings exemplify the Richardsonian Romanesque style with their weighty massing, rounded-arch motifs, rough-faced stone, intricately carved stone details, towers, and varied roof forms. The contributing buildings are:

- Sheriff's carriage house (c.1860)
- Surrogate court building, originally the county clerk's office (1877)
- Sheriff's house (1898-1899) with attached jail (1898-1899). This is the third incarceration facility on the site (original ca. 1830, second from ca. 1858).
- Powerhouse (1898-1899), shared wall with jail but no internal passage between them
- County Courthouse (1894, partially reconstructed in 1926) and county clerk's office (1924). This is partially the third courthouse (original 1830, replaced fully in 1894, and largely burned in 1925).

The buildings are set back from the sidewalks with lawns and minimal landscaping in between, although paved walkways connect all buildings. There are two large parking lots – one on the north side of the complex and one on the east side. The 1877 surrogate court building, original 1894 courthouse, and the 1924 clerk's office are particularly outstanding examples of Richardson Romanesque governmental architecture in northern New York State. Although the 1993 addition to the courthouse is substantial in size, it reflects a great effort to preserve the integrity and character of the original architecture. The addition mimics the fenestration and stonework of the original buildings. The overall impression of the complex is a bold, cohesive architectural statement that reflects the ambition and pride of the community.

Narrative Description

From the first courthouse built in 1828-1830, a wood-framed, clapboard Greek Revival, to the structures we see today, the St. Lawrence Government Complex has embodied the aspirations and growth of St. Lawrence County. The current courthouse complex includes the 1877 surrogate court (originally the county clerk's office) and a largely re-built 1894 courthouse following a fire that destroyed the original 1828 courthouse. After the fire, new buildings were erected for the courthouse, jail and attached sheriff's house, with the 1877 county clerk's office remaining in its original location. A ca. 1860 wooden carriage house that was part of an original

¹ <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/cantontownstlawrencecountynewyork/HCN010217>, retrieved 2023.

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sheriff's house remains behind the jail. Apart from the carriage house, noted regional architects James P. Johnston and Samuel D. Williams of Ogdensburg designed all the buildings. The complex reflects bold Richardsonian Romanesque style preferred by Johnston and Williams' firm. The evolution of the site from a single courthouse to a large municipal complex illustrates the community's growth and need to provide expanded services as the county seat of St. Lawrence County.

The St. Lawrence County Government Complex sits prominently two blocks north of Canton's Main Street and dominates the surrounding neighborhood that consists of commercial, residential, and other municipal buildings. The courthouse, clerk's office, and 1993 rear addition are physically connected internally but are distinct externally. This building sits in the northeast quadrant within the nomination boundaries and has the largest building footprint. The St. Lawrence surrogate court sits to the south of the courthouse and hugs the corner of Court and Judson Street. The sheriff's house is connected to a twentieth-century brick ell addition, jail, and former powerhouse, but each structure reads as individual parts. Additionally, the mid-eighteenth-century carriage house sits behind the jail and once supported the original sheriff's house. structures are all located in the southeast quadrant of the property. A walkway runs directly from Court Street on the west through the center of the grassed area to the main entrance of the jail.

Surrogate Court - One Contributing Building

The surrogate court building (1877) was the first in the complex to employ Richardsonian architectural elements, which was only beginning to emerge as a popular style for public buildings. While not fully Romanesque Revival, this building served as a template and launching point for the rest of the buildings in the complex well into the twentieth century.

The building's original footprint remains intact and measures 48 feet by 30 feet with a 34-foot by 40-foot fireproof annex on the east for the purpose of storing county records. The building is a two-story, hip-roof structure with a full basement and constructed of local Gouverneur gray rock-faced ashlar marble, Norwood blue limestone forms the foundation, water table, quoins, belt course, entrance detailing, and window surrounds. The original slate roof has been replaced with green standing seam metal with a large copper lightening rod spire centered on the roof ridgeline.

Exterior: Façade (facing west to Court Street)

The façade of the surrogate court has three bays, with the center bay projecting several feet with a pediment roof. The flanking bays each contain a segmental arch window at the basement level set within the blue limestone foundation. A set of six-foot-wide non-historic concrete steps rise from the sidewalk about five feet to the entry, and a modern accessibility ramp runs along this façade, wrapping around from the north elevation. The entry door is recessed within the bay and includes a panel and glass door with two sidelights and a large transom. The form of this entry appears historic, although the door materials are not. There is a triangular decorative header with a keystone above the entry. Each bay includes a window on the first and second floor; all are sash windows with arch transoms (rounded on floor one and segmented on the second floor), with decorative blue limestone surrounds. The fenestrations are original, although the windows were likely replaced with metal and wood in the mid-twentieth century. Within the frieze above the entry, "COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE" is carved in stone; another carved stone within the pediment bears the date 1877.

Exterior: South Elevation (facing Judson Street)

This elevation maintains all the same detailing and features as seen on the façade such as blue limestone foundation and water table, arched and segmented arch sash windows set symmetrically apart throughout the elevation, segmented arch sliding basement windows, and limestone quoins. The header and sills are simple, honed granite. The annex on the rear/east sits several feet lower and lacks the entablature under the eaves.

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Exterior: East Elevation (Rear)

The rear or east elevation mimics the same construction and details seen throughout the façade and south elevation—the same detailing and features as seen on the façade, such as blue limestone water table and belt course. The elevation contains three sash windows set symmetrically apart on the second floor, two sash windows on the first floor spaced an equal distance apart, and sliding basement windows. The header and sills are simple honed granite on the upper floor. The same Norwood blue limestone quoins seen elsewhere appear here.

Exterior: North Elevation

The north elevation is identical to the south except for a metal escape ladder running parallel to the building from the second floor of the annex and a single-story shed roofed basement access where the annex begins. This is constructed in the same material and style as the building using the same blue limestone foundation, quoins, water table, and gray, rock-faced stone walls in an uncoursed ashlar.

Interior:

The surrogate court building retains much of its original 1877 floor plan configuration and interior finishes. Over the years, there have been minimal additional partition walls to accommodate more office and storage space. Stairs, ceilings, windows, and door details remain intact.

Courthouse/County Clerk's Office - One Contributing Building

The courthouse building (1894, partially rebuilt in 1926 after a fire), including the attached county clerk's office (1924), and the 25,000-square-foot addition added in 1993 anchor the property's northern end. These buildings are connected externally and internally and are built in the Richardsonian Romanesque style, and the 1993 addition illustrates a great effort to reflect the original architecture. In plan, the courthouse section of the building is roughly 120 feet by 70 feet. The facilities are constructed of Gouverneur gray marble, with rock-faced stone in an uncoursed ashlar form. Potsdam's red sandstone forms the water table, several belt courses, entrance, and window ornamentation. The sandstone belt courses run level to the first-floor window lintel, the second-floor windowsill line, and along portions of projecting bay elevations. Throughout the entire building there are both fixed and sash squared windows at the basement level set in the sandstone water table.

Exterior: Façade (facing west to Court Street)

This elevation serves as the front entrances to both the courthouse and county clerk's offices. A forty-foot-wide cascading stairway made of red Potsdam sandstone ascends six feet from grade, bringing you to the grand portico of the courthouse. The entry consists of two massive round entry arches sitting on two squat columns with intricately carved capitals. Above the arches is a decorative balcony with brackets constructed from red Potsdam Sandstone. The balcony hugs a large tripartite double-hung window with three rounded arches made of sandstone. A Potsdam sandstone band near the gable entry's peak reads "18-COURT HOUSE-93". Tripartite round-topped windows with sandstone treatment are present in the gable peak at the attic level. The main section of the building has a hip roof with several projecting front gable bays and a conical roof on the southern bay. The "scales of justice" sit atop the entry gable.

Attached to the left (north) side of the entrance, a 100-foot tower dominates the courthouse. The tower includes the same marble facing and sandstone foundation. There are a variety of window styles on the tower, including two-over-two fixed pairs of windows on the first floor with decorative sandstone below and heavy mullions dividing the lights. The sandstone belt courses encompassing the courthouse's exterior continue through the tower. The second floor includes a pair of one-over-one double-hung windows with leaded glass transoms. The upper third of the tower includes large vertical double windows on each visible side of the tower. These windows are divided into six parts by heavy sandstone mullions. Each part includes sixteen fixed lights

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reminiscent of prison bars visible on the jail within the complex. A decorative sandstone balcony is below the windows, identical to the one above the entrance. The windows include rounded arch transoms with a large sandstone arch over the entire fenestration. The top of the tower includes a wide decorative sandstone entablature and dentils, sandstone finials on each corner, and an asphalt shingle mansard roof capped with a finial.

A subordinate side gable hyphen connects the courthouse with the 1924 county clerk's office on the same eastern facade. The clerk's office is constructed of the same gray Gouverneur marble and Potsdam sandstone found in the courthouse, and this section of the building is roughly 65 feet by 50 feet. The hip-roof two-story clerk's office building is symmetrical with a front gable, two-and-one-half-story center bay similar to the courthouse. The bay has five equally spaced one-over-one sash windows with transoms above on both the first and second floors. A band of Potsdam sandstone near the peak of the gable entry reads "19-COUNTY CLERK'S OFFICE-24". A tripartite fully divided window with sandstone detailing and a rounded arch motif is present in the gable peek at the attic level. The building has flanking setback wings on either side of the primary bay, and the southern setback includes an off-center entrance. This entrance has a single arched portico with detailing to match the courthouse, such as an identical sandstone balcony with decorative balustrade. A rounded metal awning projects from this entrance onto the walkway.

In addition, a small portion of the 1924 building faces north. This elevation has six equally spaced, one-over-one sash windows with transoms above all. The sandstone detailing present on the façade wraps around.

Exterior: Modern Addition facing west to Court Street

The 1993 two-story addition projects to the north and east from the county clerk building. The primary entrance of the addition is facing Court Street. The three-story arched entryway has a broken arch that is glass-filled and reflects post-modernist ideas but takes cues from historical precedent. The entrance has a gable front and arched portico using the same locally quarried stone as the older courthouse and county clerk's office, but with scaled-down detailing. A central three-story hip-roofed core anchors the various flat-roofed additions to each other. Along the north elevation, the building runs east-west for over 100 feet. The addition fits nicely into the complex by reduced scale, setback orientation, and by using stamped and dyed concrete to mimic the historic marble and sandstone used elsewhere on site. The addition includes a sandstone-colored foundation, belt course, and a denticulated cornice. Additionally, the windows include sandstone-colored lintels and sills. It appears complementary and diminutive next to the courthouse despite the addition being 25,000 square feet.

Exterior: Modern Addition, North Elevation

The two-story north elevation is set back next to the west-facing portico entry and consists of paired sash windows. The primary block consists of eleven window bays with a narrow projecting three-story front gable extending from the building's centered hipped roof. All the windows are paired four-light windows with sandstone lintels. The entire east runs approximately 200 feet from north to south.

Exterior: Modern Addition Rear (East Elevation)

The east elevation is the rear of the addition and follows the same detailing and coursing as we see on the north. A three-story front gable bay runs from the western entry of the building to the rear, projecting from the rest of the elevation about two feet. Immediately to the south of the bay is an enclosed loading dock 20 feet wide and projecting 16 feet to the east with garage doors on the south and north. The two-story building continues for five bays with paired four-light windows on the first and second floors. The southeast corner is marked by a second loading dock similar to the one adjacent to the three-story gable. The entire east runs approximately 200 feet from north to south.

Exterior: Modern Addition South Elevation

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The addition comprises the bulk of the south elevation. The same materials and detailing continue on this side. This is a two-story elevation with multiple window bays along the entire façade. Like other elevations the windows here are paired four-light windows. There is a sandstone dentil cornice recalling the older structures, and the western portion of the elevation has a parapet. The southwest corner of the elevation rises to a simple block tower with a pyramidal glass roof.

Exterior: Courthouse Rear (East Elevation)

The rear of the historic courthouse consists of the same sandstone water table with four belt courses between the first and second floors and again between the second floor and cornice. The elevation consists primarily of one large projecting hipped roof bay with a small setback on the north. All the windows are sash, most paired. All the windows have transoms, and on the second floor they consist of double transoms transected by the belt courses. The dentil cornice continues. There is a one-story vestibule entry on the southernmost portion of the elevation hugging the semicircular bay described below. This appears to be a later addition, but its date is unknown. The cross-gable entry appears made of sandstone with a revolving glazed door and a pediment above.

Exterior: Courthouse South Elevation

A large semicircular bay with a conical roof on the southern elevation of the courthouse houses the supervisors' room and part of the courtroom. The heavy sandstone foundation, sandstone belt courses, and sandstone cornice with dentil detailing continue through to this elevation. Paired double-hung tall and narrow windows have transoms above with multi-paned stained glass punctuating the façade along with various round-topped and other windows. The roof above this large bay comes to a conical point. As seen here, using multiple window forms and rounded elevations is another typical trait of the Richardsonian Romanesque style.

Courthouse/County Clerk Interior:

The interiors of the courthouse and county clerk match the same level of integrity and craftsmanship found on the exterior, although they now serve various other functions as well. The floor plan of the courthouse today remains somewhat similar as when originally built in 1894, and the exterior only received minor alterations after the 1926 reconstruction. The semicircular end of the building housing the supervisors' room was slightly enlarged, but otherwise retained its shape and distinctive features. Originally, the north end of the first floor accommodated a courtroom and the superintendent of poor office, today the ornate county supreme courtroom is located on the second floor in the northeast portion of the courthouse. Otherwise, the first-floor layout remained relatively unchanged and became home to the offices of the treasurer, district attorney, and the motor vehicle department. The walls of the hallway and staircase leading upstairs are covered with historic glazed green and gold tiles.

In 1894 the second floor was primarily devoted to a large ornate courtroom measuring 50 feet by 65 feet. Two trial jury rooms, a judge's room, a lawyers' room, and a library were also indicated on the plans. During the 1926 reconstruction, the second floor was rearranged to expand and embellish the grand courtroom. The highly decorated courtroom still boasts numerous decorative features including a railing made of white Vermont marble with green veins. The wainscoting in the room is of the same type of marble. Ten feet above the wainscoting, the wall is faced with Italian travertine marble. Marble beams support the twenty-three-foot-high ceiling. Between the columns, the walls are covered with elaborate tile decorations. The room is adorned with gilded detailing along the top of the walls, circumscribing the room. A striking portrayal of Lady Justice - "Justitia" - sits high above the judge's bench, and each wall is inscribed with a notable legal maxim.

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Sheriff's House/Jail, and Powerhouse – Two Contributing Buildings

In early 1898, a fire destroyed the original jail, leading to the quick construction of a new sheriff's house, a power plant for lighting and heating the county buildings, and a new jail with steel-constructed cells.² The jail and the sheriff's house are connected internally but read as distinct and separate buildings with very different uses. The powerhouse shares a wall with the jail but cannot be reached by the jail internally. The largest structure is the jail, running north to south about 130 feet. The sheriff's house is located on the north side of Judson Street with a south-facing entrance. It was constructed in 1898-1899 as the southern portion of the new county jail to which it was physically attached.

Exterior: Sheriff's house

The following description of the sheriff's house is reused with permission from Crawford & Stearns Architects and Preservation Planners, PLLC:

The house is two stories with a full basement beneath and an attic above. The exterior footprint of the house measures 39'-0" by 35' – 0" plus a 9' -0" front porch. The exterior walls are approximately 23" thick, and the interior floor area is 1,095 square feet.

Grade slopes down gradually from the rear, and the first-floor ranges from four to six feet above grade. The primary entrance is on the first floor from Judson Street, and there is a secondary one from the drive at the west side of the buildings. There are also direct interior connections to the Jail at the basement and first-floor levels.

A one-story porch extends nearly the full width of the front of the house. As originally constructed, a wide set of steps descended from this level to the street grade, but those have been replaced by a less dramatic version at the west end of the porch. The primary roof is hipped, with the centers of the west and south building faces extended upward above the eave line with gables behind them.

The exterior walls are constructed of a gray, rock-faced stone in an uncoursed ashlar form with Potsdam sandstone foundation and dressed water table matching the Jail. The wall stone is said to be a local form of marble which is referred to by multiple names (Canton Grey Stone, Gouverneur Marble, etc.), and historic, probably original, red mortar is present but mostly has been replaced with common gray. The masonry openings have rock-faced stone headers at the exterior. On the west side of the house, towards the rear, there is an original triple window assembly in a larger masonry.

The upper roof was originally clad with slate (over wood decking) trimmed with decorative fired clay tile hip covers, and the gutters were open, where the exterior face forms the somewhat classical cornice survives. At the present, the roof and gutters have been covered over with three-tab asphalt shingles.

Most windows are historic double-hung two-over-one. The front porch is wood framed with 5/4 tongue and groove wood decking. The space under the porch is vented with lattice skirting. At some point, the original railings and front steps were removed. The remains of the iron fence are evidence that the original stairs spanned the width between the stone supporting piers. At some point, steps were added at the west end of the porch.

The Four flared masonry piers supporting the front porch columns are constructed of Potsdam sandstone in uncoursed ashlar and sit on stone foundations. The cornice of the front porch is wood articulated with a crown molding, bed molding, dentils, and other details. The porch included a raised gable at the center to direct water

² Perkins and St. Lawrence County Historical Association, "Temple of Justice," 7.

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southwesterly and southeasterly away from the former steps below. Within the triangle formed by this gable is a decorative feature (tympanum). The perimeter of the porch assembly is supported by an entablature beam, which is itself supported by short wood posts or columns in the Roman Corinthian style sitting on top of the stone piers.³

A two-bay gable-roofed dormer with double-hung windows is centered on the west and south of the building. The dormers are constructed of the same grey granite as the rest of the building. The south dormer has a grey granite chimney projecting from the ridge.

A single-story, hip-roofed 1986 addition along the south and east boundary of the property abuts the Sheriff's house on by means of a single-story flat roofed garage; a covered entryway is accessed on the east. This building contains a brick soldier course, engaged piers, and a metal cornice throughout. The windows are all fixed single light, and the east elevation contains no fenestrations except a double-glazed door covered entry with a concrete loading ramp.

Exterior: Jail (West Elevation)

The jail façade faces the courtyard, looking at the rear of the courthouse and surrogate court. The building is three stories with a seventy-two-foot-wide projecting center bay. The center bay is flanked by two thirty-foot set back wings set back story wings. The exterior walls are constructed of a gray, rock-faced stone in an uncoursed ashlar form with Potsdam sandstone foundation and dressed water table matching the sheriff's house. Though obscured by the 1986 addition, the original center bay extended far to the east, creating a T-shaped plan. This form can be observed in late nineteenth century Sanborn maps, and Google Earth views today.

The rounded, arched, recessed entry is centered on the center bay and has modest Potsdam sandstone steps leading from the parking lot to the entry. The original entry doors were replaced at some point with a non-historic glass entry. To the left of the entry is a double-hung wood tripartite window, and the other side includes a pair of double-hung wood windows. 1898 is carved in the stone above the paired second-floor windows. Three two-over-two windows align on all three floors at the wings. All window lintels are rough-faced limestone with smooth limestone sills, and the windows are all equipped with iron bars. The entirety of the building has a flat roof and a metal chimney projects from the interior of the Powerhouse running up the upper floor of the Jail's northern elevation. The overall integrity of the jail portion of the building is excellent, and it conveys the original intent of appearing formidable and severe.

Exterior: Powerhouse (West Elevation)

Built in 1898-1899 to supply heat and power, the powerhouse is connected to the jail on the northern elevation. It is a single-story gable-on-hip building. The west elevation is constructed to match the appearance of the jail and continues the same foundation, water table, and granite facing. A pair of modern metal and glass double entry doors is centered on the bay, but the original rock-faced header above the door remains. Flanking the entry are two double-hung windows with rough-faced lintels and smooth sills. The roof includes a small gable peak at the ridgeline with a double vent under the gable.

Exterior: Powerhouse (north elevation):

The north side of the powerhouse section is built of red Potsdam sandstone. The massive, rusticated chimney remains on the shoulders of the base where the brick chimney funnel originally emerged. When constructed, the chimney rose 90 feet, but it was removed in 1988. A single double-hung replacement window remains and appears to have been the only window on the north. A brick, shed-roof addition with a tripartite center window

³ Crawford & Stearns, Building Conditions Assessment Report for the St. Lawrence County Sheriff's House, January 3, 2023.

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was added to the right of the chimney base possibly in the mid-to-late twentieth century. The powerhouse now serves as offices for the building and grounds office.

Exterior: Jail/Powerhouse (East)

The east elevation is dominated by a modern windowless two-story brick wall with a railing surrounding the prison yard. A narrow, long, one-story concrete block flat-roofed building begins at the prison yard wall and runs north for approximately 200+ feet. This building is for mechanicals and utilities for the jail. A single-story concrete block two-bay garage projects twenty feet to the east at the north end. Nestled between the prison yard wall and the garage bay is the ca. 1860 sheriff's carriage House.

Sheriff's Carriage House - One Contributing Building

The sheriff's carriage house (ca. 1860) is a one-and-a-half side gabled wood framed building and the oldest extant structure on the site. The building is tucked in between some of the twentieth-century additions at the rear of the Jail. The building is approximately 26 feet by 42 feet, with a tin roof. The original siding has been replaced with vertical board siding although the original form and footprint appear to be original.

Exterior: Carriage House (North and South)

The north and south gable ends are the same: two double-hung, two-over-two on the first floor, and one two-over-two double-hung window centered in the gable. A single-story, shed-roof addition runs almost the entire length of the building on the east elevation and the building entry door is enclosed within the shed addition. There are no other windows on this side. The west exterior butts against the concrete block wall attached to the jail and is not visible.

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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.)

POLITICS

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

Ca. 1860-1974

Significant Dates

ca. 1860, 1877, 1893-1894, 1898-1899, 1924-1926

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

Architect/Builder

Builders: Munn & Shea; Evans & Ackerman

Architects: J.P. Johnston, Porter Johnston, S.D.

Williams

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The St. Lawrence County Government Complex, located in the Village of Canton, NY, St. Lawrence County, is significant under NRHP Criterion A, in the area of Politics/Government for its longstanding association with St. Lawrence County government dating to the early nineteenth century. From its establishment in 1828 to today, the St. Lawrence Government Complex has played a critical role in administering the essential legal and administrative duties required for the village, town, and county government to function. In particular, the continuous presence of a jail on the site proved to be an integral part of keeping the county seat in Canton, and the complex is important both socially and economically to the downtown core. The nominated complex represents the growth and establishment of the facilities established at Canton, inclusive of the original 1877 county clerk's office and subsequent building episodes undertaken between 1893-1894, 1898-1899, and 1924-1926. The extant collection of buildings reflects the increased need for services as St. Lawrence County grew in the nineteenth and twentieth centuries.

The complex is also significant under Criteria C: Architecture as an outstanding example of Richardson Romanesque architecture in northern New York State. All remaining buildings (except for a ca. 1860 carriage house and modern additions from 1986 and 1993) were designed by regionally prolific architects J.P. Johnston, his son Robert P. Johnston (R. Porter Johnston) and later Samuel D.P. Williams (S.D.P. Williams). The Johnstons and Williams implemented many emblematic Romanesque details such as rounded-arch motifs, intricately carved stone details, a heavy massive tower, and varied roof forms. The buildings were constructed with locally sourced materials: Gouverneur marble from Canton, Potsdam sandstone, and Norwood blue limestone. The prominent location of the complex and the use of striking Romanesque architectural elements employed throughout reflect Canton's desire to solidify their position as the county seat during a time when this designation was questionable.

Contributing buildings include the original sheriff's house carriage house (ca. 1860), county clerk's office (1877, now the surrogate court building, sheriff's house with attached jail and powerhouse (1898-1899, 1926, 1960s, and addition in 1986), and the county courthouse and county clerk's office (1893, 1924-1926; addition 1993). The period of significance begins ca. 1860 with the construction of the earliest extant structure within the government complex and ends in 1974 representing the continued use of the St. Lawrence government complex into the twentieth century while also adhering to the general fifty-year guidelines of the National Register program.

Narrative Statement of Significance

The St. Lawrence County Government Complex is an outstanding representative of the growth and history of St. Lawrence County from the early nineteenth century to the present. The collection of buildings illustrates the county's response to the growing governmental needs of its citizens, and visually reiterated Canton's oft-disputed claim as the legitimate seat of government through the use of striking Romanesque Revival architecture. Additionally, the jail building reflects re-conceptualized practices of incarceration in the nineteenth century. Elements such as the imposing jail, Romanesque courthouse/ county clerk office, and the sheriff's house survive, and the overall integrity of the government complex is excellent, particularly in the areas of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, and association. The complex is notable because it continues to operate as government facility, although portions of the jail building has been temporarily converted to storage.

Criterion A: Politics/Government

St. Lawrence County occupies the traditional lands of the Haudenosaunee/Iroquois Nations. St. Lawrence County, established in 1802 and situated in northeastern New York, shares its northwestern border with Canada

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along its namesake, the St. Lawrence River. Franklin County further bounds it to the east and the counties of Jefferson, Lewis, Herkimer, and Hamilton to the southwest and south. St. Lawrence County is over 2600 square miles, making it the greatest county by area in the state, and larger than the states of Delaware and Rhode Island. It is also one of the most rural, with only 40.5 people per square mile.⁴ From the time of its establishment St. Lawrence County has consisted of a mix of farms, forests, and small towns.

After the Revolutionary War, the state of New York offered nearly five million acres of land for sale to help offset financial debt it had incurred. In 1791 wealthy speculator Alexander Macomb purchased nearly 4 million acres from the state. His creditors appointed agent William Constable to then sell the parcels to land speculators, particularly French elites who sought to escape the turmoil of the French Revolution in Europe.⁵ This transfer was one of the largest in New York State's history, spread over six "Great Tracts" and covered parts present-day Franklin, Lewis, Jefferson, Oswego, and all of St. Lawrence County. Subsequently known as Macomb Purchase, the land encompasses what is now St. Lawrence County and ten towns along the St. Lawrence River - Louisville, Stockholm, Potsdam, Madrid, Lisbon, Canton, DeKalb, Hague, Cambray, and Oswegatchie.⁶ In 1801, these ten towns along the St. Lawrence River were formed into a singular town called Lisbon and annexed to Clinton County, whose county seat was Plattsburg. However, Plattsburg was more than 100 miles away with no road, making it very difficult and inconvenient for residents of Lisbon. Only a year later, the residents of the ten towns petitioned the New York State Legislature to form a new county with its county seat at Old Oswegatchie Fort (formerly Fort La Presentation) in present-day Ogdensburg. The legislature agreed and formally established St. Lawrence County on March 3, 1802.

Establishment of the County Seat

In 1804 Ogdensburg was designated the county seat and a courthouse was erected there.⁷ Ogdensburg is somewhat centralized on the banks of the St. Lawrence River, but residents in the outer reaches of St. Lawrence County still faced difficulty traveling there, especially in the winter months. Discussions began again about relocating the county seat to a more inland central location such as Potsdam. Those discussions became more urgent after the British destroyed the courthouse with cannonballs during the Battle of Ogdensburg and captured the village in 1913.⁸ However, the first official attempt to move the county seat didn't happen until 1818, when it was defeated in the state legislature. The legislature rejected a second attempt in 1827, but bitter debate continued, particularly between lobbyists for Ogdensburg and Potsdam. In 1828 the state made a compromise between the two by choosing neither – the county seat would be relocated to Canton. Over the next two decades there were times when county politics and continued inter-town hostilities threatened Canton's role as the county seat. But the town's role was solidified in the New York State Constitution in 1846 with the establishment of a distinct County Court in each county outside of New York City.⁹

⁴ "Quick Facts: St. Lawrence County, New York." *United States Census Bureau*. U.S. Department of Commerce. Accessed December 5, 2023, <https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/stlawrencecountynewyork/POP060220#POP060220>

⁵ Jane A., Barlow, *Big Moose Lake in the Adirondacks: The Story of the Lake, the Land, and the People*. (Syracuse, N.Y.: Syracuse University Press, 2004) 2-3.

⁶ Paul Schneider, *The Adirondacks: A History of America's First Wilderness*. (New York: Henry Holt and Co., 1997), 90.

⁷ "Saint Lawrence County," *American Courthouses*, accessed January 16, 2023, <http://www.courthouses.co/us-states/n/new-york/saint-lawrence-county>

⁸ "The Battle of Ogdensburg," *The Canadian Encyclopedia*, Historic Canada, accessed January 16, 2023, https://owl.purdue.edu/owl/research_and_citation/chicago_manual_17th_edition/cmos_formatting_and_style_guide/web_sources.html

⁹ Historical Society of New York Courts, "The Third Constitution of New York, 1846", https://history.nycourts.gov/wp-content/uploads/2019/01/Publications_1846-NY-Constitution-compressed.pdf, accessed online June 2023

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During the time Canton was designated as the county seat it was emerging as the commercial and social center for the surrounding area. The region was attractive to settlers primarily due to its abundant farmlands and ample timber. The first New York settlers began arriving after the signing of the Jay Treaty in 1796, attracted by farming, manufacturing, and ship building; the latter made possible due to its excellent water transportation system via the St. Lawrence River. These industries led to an explosion of population particularly between 1820 and 1830 when the county grew from 16,037 people to over 36,000¹⁰. Other industries included mining and tourism, and the region became a notable educational hub throughout the nineteenth century. Education centered around the State University of New York at Potsdam and Canton (originally St. Lawrence Academy, founded 1816), the Gouverneur Wesleyan Seminary (1828), St. Lawrence University(1856), the world-famous Crane School of Music(1886), and Clarkson University(1896).

Canton was not incorporated until 1845, but logging, mining, education, and later recreational tourism brought various groups into the region, spurring village settlement throughout the nineteenth century and well into the twentieth. Several famous village individuals, including artist Frederic Remington(1861-1909), renowned Adirondack boatbuilder Henry Rushton(1843-1906), Stillman Foote (17663-1834), and most notably Silas Wright(1795-1847), called the village home and played a role in bringing attention and recognition to the village. In 1820, Wright began a law practice in Canton and was soon involved in politics as a Democratic-Republican and served in local offices such as justice of the peace, overseer of roads, town clerk, and school inspector. For several years, he served as Canton's postmaster. He was a surrogate of St. Lawrence County from 1821 to 1824. Wright was elected to represent New York in the United States House of Representatives from 1827 to 1830, elected as a Senator from New York to the United States Senate, serving from 1832 to 1834, and served as Governor of New York from 1845 to 1847. Silas Wright lived on Main Street in what is now National Register listed Village Park Historic District (NR ref#75002087). Wright is credited with much of the early planning and development of Village Park and was an early proponent of establishing Canton as the county seat.

First Government Buildings

From the time it was established, the St. Lawrence Government Complex played a critical role in administering the essential legal and administrative duties required for the region during this time of rapid growth. Between 1828 and 1830, the original courthouse, first jail, and original clerk's office were erected on lands donated by wealthy banker and real estate developer David Judson (the southern boundary of the complex bears his name). The original 44-foot by 40-foot Greek Revival style courthouse was two stories tall and built of unknown stone. The clerk's office was the same construction as the courthouse but smaller. The jail was 36 feet by 40 feet and clad in the same stone as the other buildings. The buildings were originally in close proximity, with all the buildings gables fronting Court Street.

¹⁰ U.S. Census Bureau

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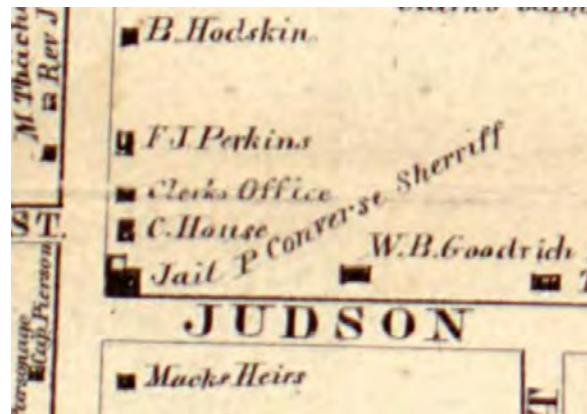


Figure 1: This 1858 map shows the original government complex layout in Canton.¹¹



Figure 2 : Original St. Lawrence County Courthouse in Canton, NY. Constructed 1828-1830, photo courtesy of St. Lawrence County

No buildings from this time are extant, but with its relocation to Canton St. Lawrence County had established a location and contiguous orientation for the government buildings that survives to this day. By centralizing county services not just in a geographically accessible town, but also within a clearly bound complex, St. Lawrence County officials could emphasize the county's role as both a respectable authority and service provider. Centering government buildings close together made sense from a financial and practical standpoint as well. Sanborn maps from the 1890s show neighboring counties such as Franklin, Clinton, Jefferson, and Essex also clustered their government buildings in similar arrangements. Throughout the nineteenth and early

¹¹ Rogerson, A. E. *Map of St. Lawrence Co. New York*. Philadelphia: J.B. Shields Publisher, 1858. Map. <https://www.loc.gov/item/2006626022/>.

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twentieth centuries government complexes often contained jails, sheriff's quarters, courthouses, and other legislative offices adjacent to one another. It wasn't until the mid-twentieth century when larger incarceration facilities were built off campus to accommodate overcrowding that government complexes became more fluid.

The County Jail

The centralization of government services wasn't without issues. No sooner had the St. Lawrence Government Complex been completed then calls to expand the first jail began. This was in part due to the county's rapidly growing population, but also because shifting concepts of imprisonment that developed in America in the 1820s led to more centralized housing of convicts. During prior centuries American jails were localized, and communities relied heavily on the widespread use of corporal punishment, public shaming, or indentured servitude. With the widespread dissemination of Enlightenment ideals in the late eighteenth century, the seeds of the penitentiary system and incarceration developed.

In the 1820s two ideological concepts of imprisonment were introduced in New York and Pennsylvania, with shared goals of reform based on the idea that corruption and crime was the result of negative societal influences instead of inherent personal flaws within individuals.¹² However, the ways in which these ideals differed dictated how jailhouses and prisons were designed and operated. Auburn Prison in New York was established in 1823 in Western New York and was predicated on the concept of industry, obedience, structure, and silence. Prisoners were housed in solitary cells but worked and dined aside one another. The day was strictly regimented, and inmates were required to march in lockstep –“close order and single file, each looking over the shoulder of the man in front, faces inclined to the right, feet moving in unison.”¹³ The idea to use inmates for day labor was one of the most lasting legacies of this system we see in many forms today.

The Pennsylvania System was implemented at Eastern State Penitentiary in 1829. Proponents believed the key to reform was through total isolation. Prisoners were led blindfolded to and from their solitary cells, with small individual yards leading directly from each ground-floor cell. Initial experiments the Pennsylvania System required inmates to remain in their quarters with no work, although over time this evolved into requiring prisoners to complete small solitary labor projects within their cells. Absolutely no contact was made between the prisoners, and the design was based on cell block corridors radiating from a center rotunda where guards were stationed.¹⁴

For economic reasons, most American jails and prisons came to be patterned after Auburn, which turned a profit in the early years of its existence.¹⁵ The cells in the Auburn System (or congregate-style, as it came to be called) could be made smaller than those in the Pennsylvania System as they were only used for sleeping. The stacked cell block architecture of the Auburn System was easier and more compact than the radial design of the Pennsylvania plan, and easier to adapt for county and municipal jails, not just long-term incarceration facilities. As such, St. Lawrence County's jail was designed and influenced by the Auburn principles, with inmates providing farm labor, unloading coal, and breaking up field stone to be used in various road improvements.^{16 17} The county adopted this work model throughout the nineteenth and into the twentieth centuries.

¹² David J. Rothman, *The Discovery of the Asylum* (Boston: Little, Brown & Company, 1990), 82-83

¹³ Rothman, *The Discover of the Asylum*, 154.

¹⁴ Emily Ramsey and Lara Ramsey, National Register Draft Nomination, Illinois State Penitentiary-Joliet Historic District, 2023.

¹⁵ <https://www.correctionhistory.org/html/chronicl/state/html/nyprisons.html>

¹⁶ "History of St. Lawrence County Correctional Facility," document provided by the St. Lawrence County Historian's Office, 3.

¹⁷ In 1913, the County purchased a 64-acre farm about a mile from the jail. The inmates and a team of horses provided all the labor. The farm provided most of the food for the inmates back at the jail and was sold in 1949. While not working at the farm, prisoners were

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INTERIOR OF SHED, WITH FIFTEEN MEN, ELEVEN OF THEM TRAMPS BREAKING STONE, WITH A SINGLE GUARD, ST. LAWRENCE COUNTY.

Figure 3: St. Lawrence County inmates provide labor off-site in 1899. Via St. Lawrence County Historian's Office

When the first jail was replaced in 1860 it was constructed and operated with the Auburn System in mind. Like the multi-tiered corridor designs popularized earlier in the century, the second jail measured 24 feet by 72 feet, contained twenty-four cells, four debtor's rooms, a parlor, a chamber, and two bedrooms for the sheriff and his family. Built of Potsdam Sandstone, it cost \$13,637 when completed in 1860.¹⁸ A wooden carriage house on the eastern edge of the property is the only extant structure from this construction period. Thirteen years later, jail liberties were set up across the village, stretching roughly a half mile in each direction from the jail itself.¹⁹ Prisoners imprisoned for nonviolent crimes, such as debt, or were deemed to have good behavior were allowed to roam the village so long as they stayed within the boundaries of the liberties established.²⁰ If a prisoner was caught outside the liberties, they were thrown back into jail to serve another term.²¹

Post-Civil War Buildings

Prior to the Civil War, Canton saw its population quickly increase over 58% between 1845 and 1860.²² But like many semi-rural communities throughout northern New York, Canton's growth slowed during and immediately after the war. Approximately 6,700 men from St. Lawrence County served in the Civil War; predominately,

kept busy unloading all the coal at the railroad siding, bringing it to the jail or the Country Home. St. Lawrence County would also purchase fieldstone that the prisoners would break up.

¹⁸ "History of St. Lawrence County Correctional Facility", 3.

¹⁹ St. Lawrence County Sheriff's Office, "Jail Liberties" PowerPoint presentation.

²⁰ Liscum and Student, *Canton: The Town*, 81.

²¹ Sheriff's Office, "Jail Liberties."

²² Durant, Samuel W, and H. B. Joint Author Peirce. *History of St. Lawrence Co., New York*. Philadelphia, L. H. Everts & Co, 1878. Pdf. <https://www.loc.gov/item/01014241/>. Canton increased from 4,035 people in 1845 to 6,379 in 1860.

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these men came from the largest population centers, Ogdensburg, Potsdam, and Canton.²³ But by the latter quarter of the nineteenth century the United States saw an increase in immigration and industry leading to growth once again in urban areas. From 1866 till 1898, the U.S. economy was driven by new inventions in communication and transportation that closed the distance from coast to coast, and the resulting labor force that could be sustained by the massive influx of immigration. People increasingly turned to areas that offered better working opportunities, and St. Lawrence County once again saw rapid growth with the discovery of rich mineral deposits such as pyrite and iron ore, abundant fertile farmland and forests, and increased access to transportation infrastructure via railroads and waterways.²⁴ Canton's significance to local and regional government increased, and the new county clerk's office (converted to the surrogate court building in 1921) was constructed to meet this need.

The 1877 county clerk's building is particularly notable because it was the first in the complex to employ Richardsonian architectural elements, which was only beginning to emerge as a popular style for public buildings. Designed by architect James Porter Johnston (J.P. Johnston, 1841-1893) this building served as a template and launching point for the rest of the buildings in the complex. While not fully formed Romanesque architecture, the building and fire-proof annex were constructed of rustic Romanesque-style blue limestone from Norwood and gray granite from Gouverneur. The use of these specific materials, arched window fenestrations, stone detailing set an early precedent for the design styles that would represent St. Lawrence County.

New York State's 1827 decision to select the small village of Canton for the county seat over larger communities remained controversial for decades. Ogdensburg, Potsdam, and other more prosperous towns felt better suited to serve the county and wanted the prestige and economic opportunities that came with being the county seat. By adopting the striking Romanesque architecture for its government buildings going forward, it is possible that St. Lawrence County was aesthetically projecting that Canton was a stable and permanent choice as the county seat. Yet controversy persisted. The original Greek Revival courthouse stood for over fifty years until tragedy struck in the winter of 1893 when the courthouse was destroyed by fire. Immediately afterward, the citizens of Norwood, Potsdam, Gouverneur, and Ogdensburg looked for ways to wrestle the country seat away from Canton once again. However, Canton retained the seat by a single vote in an emergency Board of Supervisors meeting.²⁵

²³ Austin, John, *Tis All the Brave Can Do- Some Civil War Soldiers From St. Lawrence County, NY* (De Kalb, NY: John M. Austin, 2011).

²⁴ Durant, Samuel W, and H. B. Joint Author Peirce. *History of St. Lawrence Co., New York*.

²⁵ "History of St. Lawrence County Correctional Facility", 3.

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Figure 4 and 5: Original courthouse remains after 1893 fire (St. Lawrence County Bar) and J.P. Johnston's replacement courthouse, 1894 postcard (Historical Society of the New York Courts)

J.P. Johnston once again was hired and designed a highly decorative Richardsonian Romanesque replacement courthouse. Unfortunately, Johnston died in 1893 on the day St. Lawrence County supervisors approved his design. Johnston's son and successor R. Porter Johnston (1873-1923) saw the completion of the courthouse in 1894 along with Ogdensburg architect Samuel D.P. Williams (1866-1958), with builders Evans & Ackerman of Binghamton as contractors. The architects applied the same marble from Gouverneur and blue limestone from Norwood, with red Potsdam sandstone accents. A 120-foot tower and two large arches greeted all who entered the new courthouse. Situated above the entrance were the scales of justice. The north end of the first floor accommodated the surrogate courtroom and the superintendent of poor office. The semi-circular south end housed the supervisors' room, which doubled as a grand jury room. Connected to this was a multipurpose room used for committees and the District Attorney's office during terms of the court.²⁶

In March 1898, fire broke out at the complex once again, destroying the second (1858) jail, leading the Board of Supervisors to immediately call for the construction of the third jail building that stands at the current site today.²⁷ After the fire there was a full removal of the wood structure where the sheriff had been living prior, although the wood carriage house remained. The third jail was also designed by R. Porter Johnston and built near the same spot as its predecessor. It was completed in 1899 at a cost of \$24,500 and consisted of three extant buildings attached to each other: the sheriff's house on the south, jail as the center block, and a power plant at the northern end. The third jail was constructed with fourteen to sixteen steel-constructed cells on the first and second floors, with two separate cells for inebriated individuals.²⁸ Like the second jail, this design was derived from the Auburn System popularized earlier in the century. These buildings were built in the Richardsonian Romanesque style with Gouverneur marble and trimmed with Potsdam Sandstone, reflecting the design of the surrogate court and new courthouse.

²⁶ *The Ogdensburg Advance and St. Lawrence Weekly Democrat*, June 22, 1893.

²⁷ "History of St. Lawrence County Correctional Facility", 3.

²⁸ Wendell Perkins, "Temple of Justice," *The St. Lawrence Quarterly*, volume XXVIII, No. 2, April (1983): 3-10.

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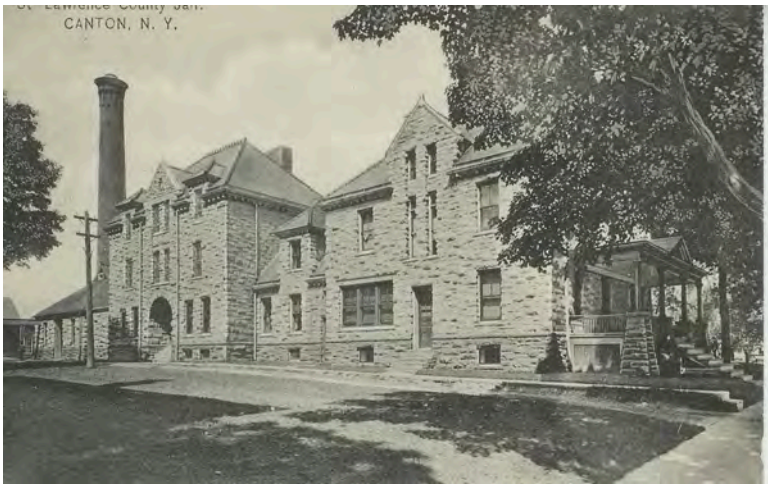


Figure 6: 1898-1899 sheriff's house, jail, and powerhouse, postcard ca. 1900. Via St. Lawrence County Historian.

The attached Romanesque-style sheriff's house was built in a seamless continuation of the third jail and retains excellent integrity. The sheriff's house is a 37-foot by 51-foot stone house attached to the south side of the jail, facing Judson Street.²⁹ Adjoining sheriff's houses were not unusual during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, and often made of the same materials as the other government buildings, although applied in clearly a residential style. Neighboring Essex County Municipal Complex (NR Listing 16000224, 2016) includes a 1911 jail and attached sheriff's cottage. By 1898 Franklin County also had a sheriff's house attached to its jail in its courthouse complex in Malone (both since demolished).³⁰ The latter was likely designed by J.P. Johnston, as he was also the architect for the 1883 Franklin County Courthouse dating from the same time.

The Twentieth Century

By the early 1920s, St. Lawrence County's population was nearly 90,000 people, justifying a new building expansion.³¹ Construction began in the summer of 1923 on a new county clerk's office which would be seamlessly connected to the existing courthouse. The clerk's office was nearly complete when on February 19, 1925, fire struck once again. The courthouse was engulfed in flames within thirty minutes, but the new clerk's office survived with only minor damage.³² Five days after the fire, the Board of Supervisors appointed a committee to oversee reconstruction efforts. New York State Supreme Court Justice J.C. Crapser and St. Lawrence County Judge J.C. Dolan were among those on the committee. The original 120-foot Romanesque tower had to be lowered due to fire damage, and the semi-circular end of the building housing the Supervisors' room was enlarged. Otherwise, the first-floor layout remained relatively unchanged and became home to the offices of the Treasurer, District Attorney, and the Motor Vehicle Department. Reconstruction was completed in 1926 for \$226,360 by the Canadian building firm Munn & Shea, who also constructed the old Canton Fire House nearby, Gunnison Memorial Chapel at St. Lawrence University, the Roman Catholic Church in Massena,

²⁹ Wendell Perkins, "Temple of Justice"

³⁰ Sanborn Map Company. Malone, Franklin County, New York, Dec. 1898. Library of Congress.

³¹ "St. Lawrence Population Characteristics", St. Lawrence County Website, stlawco.gov.

³² Wendell Perkins, "Temple of Justice"

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and various other projects in St. Lawrence County³³ The use of tiled walls and floors throughout suggest increased attention to fire resistance through the use of improved materials.³⁴



Figure 7: Photos of the re-built 1926 courthouse with fireproof tile. Via St. Lawrence County Historian.

Another fire broke out in 1925, which severely damaged the interior of the jail. From 1927 to 1928 the jail was substantially remodeled to increase capacity inmate quarters, fireproof the building, and improve window security guards. County representatives framed the renovation as an opportunity to improve inmate conditions. Commissioner Colbert Bennett stated in the Republican-Journal, "Sheriff Shaver is making many innovations which will be fore the material advantage of the institution as well as the morale of the prisoners."³⁵ The jail project was undertaken by architect S.D.P. Williams (R. Porter Johnston had passed away in 1923) and builders Munn & Shea, the same architect and builders who had reconstructed the courthouse.³⁶ As photos show (see figure 6 and photo 0030), the first and second stories of the jail remained much the same externally, but the original third story with hipped roof was entirely re-built with the flat roof we see today. It is likely that the wings were also expanded at this time to flank the powerhouse and the sheriff's house. Once the remodeling was completed, the State Commission of Corrections lauded the jail as "one of the finest jails in the state...[it] will be a model for other counties of the Empire State."³⁷ The jail would not see any additional changes or renovation until 1984.

The 1920s were not just a tumultuous period for the jail building, but for the people it housed as well. During this time, Chinese immigrants and their American-born families remained ineligible for citizenship under the Chinese Exclusion Act of 1882. The Immigration Act of 1924 (also known as the Johnson-Reed Act and the National Origins Act) further limited residency to two percent of any one nationality; this included people already living in the United States.³⁸ Many people of Chinese descent who were born the United States to parents who had worked on federally-funded railroad projects in the American West were vulnerable, but these

³³ Wendell Perkins, "Temple of Justice"

³⁴ <https://www.stlawrencecountybar.com/history>

³⁵ Colbert Bennett, "Inspection of the County Jail", The Republican-Journal, February 27, 1928, pp. 12.

³⁶ "History of St. Lawrence County Correctional Facility," 3.

³⁷ "History of St. Lawrence County Correctional Facility,"3.

³⁸ Chinese Immigration and the Chinese Exclusion Acts. <https://history.state.gov/milestones/1866-1898/chinese-immigration>

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exclusion laws also created a hidden network of immigration from China, to Canada, and over into Northern New York. As legal historian Brianna Nofil says, this created a “detention economy” in the area, where “thousands of Chinese migrants who had been apprehended by immigration authorities crossing the U.S.-Canada border.”³⁹ With no federal detention facilities in the region at that time, the federal immigration service contracted with county jails, boarding detainees at a nightly rate. St. Lawrence County jail was among a handful of facilities in Clinton, Essex, and Franklin Counties who detained migrants as they awaited deportation or habeas corpus hearings. Overcrowding became an issue, with upwards of thirty migrants at a time held in the jail, including in the attic of the sheriff's house. Yet the federal government paid the county a dollar a day to hold the migrants, creating a source of funding and profitability during a time when the county needed it to rebuild several structures on the complex. By the late 1930s, the St. Lawrence County jail ceased to hold any more Chinese immigrants.⁴⁰

Through the twentieth century the complex continued to evolve to fit the needs of residents in St. Lawrence County. A 1957 addition was added to the rear of the county clerk office to house family court and the District Attorney, although this building was replaced entirely by the non-contributing 1993 addition. In 1986 a non-contributing brick one-story addition was built along Judson Street to the east of the sheriff's house and wrapping behind the jail. In 2003, it was determined that the current St. Lawrence County Correctional Facility located on Judson St. in Canton, had become inadequate, outdated, and in some cases, non-compliant with NY State mandated requirements for jails. In April 2007 the St. Lawrence County Board of Legislatures unanimously voted to build the St. Lawrence County Correctional Facility at 17 Commerce Lane in Canton. The new incarceration facility opened in 2009, replacing the aging facility located in the St. Lawrence Government Complex.

The St. Lawrence County Government Complex is an integral part of the history of the village of Canton and St. Lawrence County. Since 1828, Canton has served the people as the county seat and the jail, despite the tumultuous decision to relocate there. The establishment and later expansions of the complex reflects the growth of St. Lawrence County as settlers flocked to the area throughout the nineteenth century due to increased opportunities in agriculture, logging, and transportation. Like other newly formed counties in northern New York, St. Lawrence County made services more accessible in a geographically expansive territory by centralizing buildings in a single area. Additionally, the jail building is an unusual remaining resource that particular reflects shifting norms regarding incarceration methods in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, and dark period of American foreign policy regarding Chinese migration.

Criterion C: Architecture

From the very first courthouse in 1828 to the structures we see today, the St. Lawrence Government buildings have embodied the success and aspiration of the village and the county. The feeling expressed in an 1893 article in the St. Lawrence Herald states,

"The feeling throughout the County, even among those generally against taxation, is that St. Lawrence is large, prosperous, and rich and that it is fit that such a public structure as a courthouse should be of corresponding proportions and beauty. No one wants to scrip the appropriation for it, Such a public sentiment is creditable to the

³⁹ Brianna Nofil, "Policing, Profits, and the Rise of Immigration Detention in New York's 'Chinese Jails'", Law and History Review, Vol. 39, Issue 4, November 2021, pp. 649.

⁴⁰ Office of the Sheriff of St. Lawrence County, "History of St. Lawrence," St. Lawrence County sheriff.

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County. It reflects the spirit of progress and proper pride in the County and has regard for the future as well as the present."⁴¹

The St. Lawrence Government complex reads as a grand and cohesive architectural expression due to the work of architects James Porter Johnston (J.P. Johnston 1841-1893), Robert Porter Johnston (R. Porter Johnston, 1873-1923), and Samuel D.P. Williams (1866-1958). J.P. Johnston, a master carpenter by trade, gradually grew his skills to achieve professional status as an architect. Johnston was a member of the Western Association of Architects New York Chapter and was made a Fellow of the American Institute of Architects when the two merged in 1884. By 1871, he was well established as an accomplished architect, setting up his architectural practice in Ogdensburg, NY.

J.P. Johnston contributed several significant works to the towns and villages of the St. Lawrence River valley and Ontario, although his most influential work was the St. Lawrence County Clerk's building (1877, now the surrogate court) and the neighboring Franklin County Courthouse (1882). The work that Johnston executed with the county clerk's office largely dictated the materials, designs, and Romanesque style implemented at the St. Lawrence Government Complex for the next five decades. Johnston primarily focused on public and ecclesiastical buildings, including: The Academy, Congregational Church, and Ogdensburg Club House (all in Ogdensburg); the State Deaf Institute at Malone; and the Cox Block, the Potsdam Episcopal Church and the Ives Block, all in Potsdam. Johnston appears to have been a remarkably prolific architect; his obituary published in 1893 states that during his career, "....the number of churches alone reaches sixty-five."⁴²

Johnston's work on both sides of the St. Lawrence River exhibits a deep understanding and appreciation of the work of American Architect Henry Hobson Richardson, FAIA (1838 –1886), and through his work on the 1877 clerk/surrogate court building in Canton we can see he was one of the earliest adopters of this style in northern New York. Richardson was an immensely innovative source of inspiration for Johnston's generation and those who immediately followed. His was one of the first distinctly American architectural styles, marking a departure from European models. As such, his designs that were based on the use of rock-faced stone, squat and heavy proportions, and round arches were quickly adapted for a variety of buildings across the country in the late nineteenth century.⁴³ This style became particularly popular for civic buildings, replacing designs derived from Classical Antiquity as a means to convey importance, a thriving economy, and authority.

In Johnston's work at both St. Lawrence and on the Franklin County Courthouse (1892, replaced in 1930), we see his assimilation of early Richardsonian Romanesque style and how it transitioned from light ornamental Richardsonian touches alongside other styles to exemplary examples of Richardson's ideals. H.H. Richardson's first notable work was the Brattle Square Church in Boston (1873), only four years before Johnston built the county clerk's office (now surrogate court) in Canton. Yet even this early on Johnston was applying this style, becoming one of earliest surviving government buildings in the region where we see the use of heavy rock-faced, locally sourced stone and rounded arches, although Johnston chose to keep classical elements such as a pedimented roof and quoins as well. This illustrates an interesting transition from the old means of conveying governmental authority and permanence via Greek Revival to a brand new, fully American model. Johnston's later work in 1882 at the Franklin County Courthouse in Malone had furthered that transition, eschewing the classical for Second Empire and Richardsonian Romanesque styles. By the late 1880s the Richardson's

⁴¹ "St. Lawrence County Court House," *The St. Lawrence herald* April 7, 1893.

⁴² "A Deserved Tribute to the work of the late J. P. Johnston, and his Successors," *The Ogdensburg Journal*, (May 15, 1895): 3.

⁴³ Stephen Calloway, Elizabeth Cromley ed., *The Elements of Style*, updated by Alan Powers (Buffalo: Firefly Books, 2005), 560.

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influence in Northern New York was complete, as the surviving 1889 Clinton County Courthouse (designed by M.F. Cummings of Troy, National Register Listing 82001101) illustrates.



Figure 8: J.P. Johnston's Franklin County Courthouse, Malone, NY 1882. Via Historical Society of New York Courts.

In the latter half of the nineteenth century St. Lawrence County was thriving due to its proximity to plentiful lumber, navigable waterways, and fertile land. Johnston's work on the 1877 county clerk's office conveyed the stability of the county government so well that it served as a template and launching point for the rest of the buildings in the complex. After fires destroyed the first county courthouse in 1893, J.P. Johnston was again selected as the architect to design the replacement. Newspaper reports indicate that the building committee board members and Johnston visited his earlier Franklin County Courthouse, as well as buildings in Albany such as the lauded Albany City Hall, designed by H.H. Richardson in 1883.⁴⁴ The direct influence Richardson had on Johnston's buildings is apparent when one compares images from the St. Lawrence and Franklin County courthouses with Richardson's Albany City Hall. Most notably, both courthouses boasted a large, engaged tower next to the entrances, nearly identical in shape, size, and fenestration to Albany's City Hall. Heavily arched entries, contrasting stone from nearby quarries, and the use of unique window detailing on each floor are other elements Johnston adopted directly from Richardson's work. Unfortunately, the day Johnston finished the drawings and delivered them to the building committee, he passed away, never seeing the completion of his fully mature and expressed design of his career. Architect Samuel D.P. Williams (1866-1958) and Johnston's son, Robert P. Johnston (1873-1923), using J.P. Johnston's drawings, would see the building through its completion in 1894, as well as a jail and sheriff's house re-design after a fire destroyed the 1858 building in 1898.

Williams was a prolific architect in his own right. In Ogdensburg alone he designed the A. Barton Hepburn Hospital, the Old Century Club (now the Elks Club), the rectory of St. John's Church, the Masonic Temple, the City Market, and numerous residences. Other examples of his work in St. Lawrence County include the

⁴⁴ "St. Lawrence County Court House," *The St. Lawrence Herald*., (April 7, 1893):2

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Edwards Town Hall (1896) and the Russell Town Hall, both of which are listed on the National Register of Historic Places (N.R. #04000752, N.R. #95001492). In these buildings, we also see the use of local Potsdam sandstone and Gouverneur Marble, towers, arches, prominent locations, and aspirational forms which dominate the heart of the villages within their respective towns. While these buildings bear many elements found at the St. Lawrence Courthouse, the courthouse in Canton has a much grander scale and ornamentation.

For decades, Samuel D.P. Williams became the preferred architect within the St. Lawrence Government Complex to carry on J.P. Johnston's vision and the Richardsonian Romanesque ideals that united all the buildings on the site. Using the same Gouverneur marble used on the county clerk/surrogate court building, he started construction on the new county clerk's office in 1923-1924. When the 1925 fire destroyed much of the attached courthouse, Williams used J.P. Johnston's 1893 design to reconstruct it in a similar, and in some places, identical manner to the prior version. This ensured a compatible and harmonious design throughout the entire government complex long after the Richardsonian Romanesque style had waned in favor of Beaux Arts and a return to classical revival architecture on government buildings. Although St. Lawrence County was presented with the opportunity to modernize their facilities after the 1925 fire, they choose instead to make minimal changes to the established Romanesque style. The 120-foot tower was lowered, the south rounded bay enlarged, but the distinctive design elements and interior plan remained the same as before. William's use of decorative tiles, Vermont marble, and Italian Travertine was not seen in his other known works and reflected the concerns for fire. The ornate interior finishes had the advantage of showing off the financial health and success of the county, and they remain intact today.

The jail expansion project after the fire of 1925 was approached much the same way, by keeping the lower two stories unaltered and incorporating in the same stone as before for the upper story and wings. In the mid-1980s a large, two-story brick cell block was added to the east side of the jail, as well as a one-story brick administrative building to the east of the sheriff's house. These projects were part of a \$1.7 million renovation to accommodate a growing number of inmates on site. In 2003 it was determined that the current St. Lawrence County correctional facility in the government complex had become inadequate, and in some cases, non-compliant with New York state-mandated requirements. On April 2, 2007, the St. Lawrence County Board of Legislatures unanimously votes to build an entirely new facility off site and close the jail on Judson Street. The old jail is now used for storage.

Other alterations to the site in the twentieth century included the 1957 addition on the north side of the county clerk office, replaced in the 1993 with the setback addition. Additions made after the 1920s eschewed Richardsonian designs in favor of more economical choices, although the 1993 addition marks a return to aesthetic concerns about architectural compatibility with the site.

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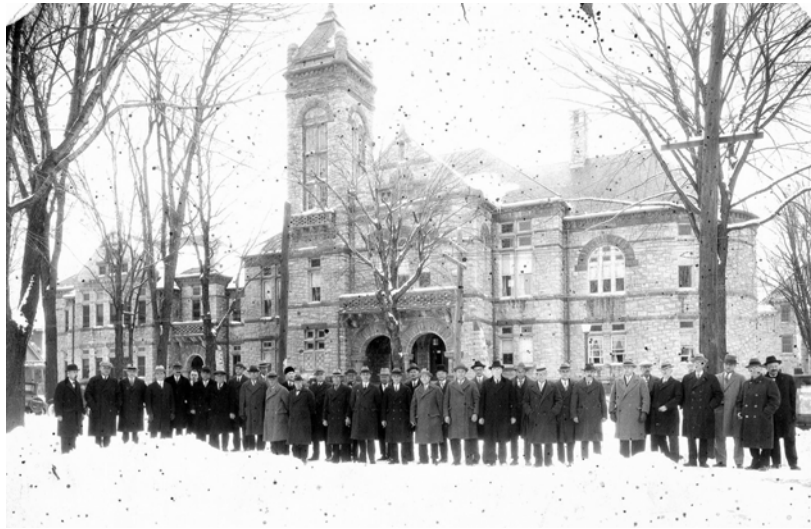


Figure 9: Courthouse and county clerk's office in the 1940s. Via St. Lawrence County Historian.

The St. Lawrence County Government Complex is a rare example of a cohesive architectural design and style applied to a government complex in northern New York, impervious to shifting design trends in dedication to the Richardsonian Romanesque style. The architecture embodies the qualities that reflect the popularity of architect Henry Hobson Richardson remarkably early in his career, and continuously long after his popularity had waned. Architecturally, the buildings are of the highest integrity, and great care and thought have been made to make any later additions marry the historic fabric. The entire complex reads as a cohesive, intact expression of civic architecture.

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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 4.95 Acres
(Do not include previously listed resource acreage.)

UTM References

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1 18T 486590 4938410
Zone Easting Northing

3 _____
Zone Easting Northing

2 _____
Zone Easting Northing

4 _____
Zone Easting Northing

Verbal Boundary Description

The boundary coincides with the legal lot lines of the nominated parcel, as identified on the county tax map (88.035-1-21.11). The total nominated boundary is 4.95 acres.

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Name of Property

County and State

Boundary Justification

The boundary encompasses all the buildings associated with the nomination and the extent of the property associated with the site.

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Christine Bush (AARCH) and Leslie Krupa (NY OPRHP)

organization Adirondack Architectural Heritage

date January 12, 2024

street & number 1745 Main Street

telephone 518.834.9328

city or town Keeseville

state NY

zip code 12944

e-mail christine@aarch.org

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.

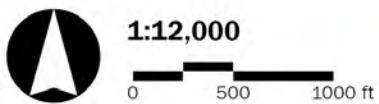
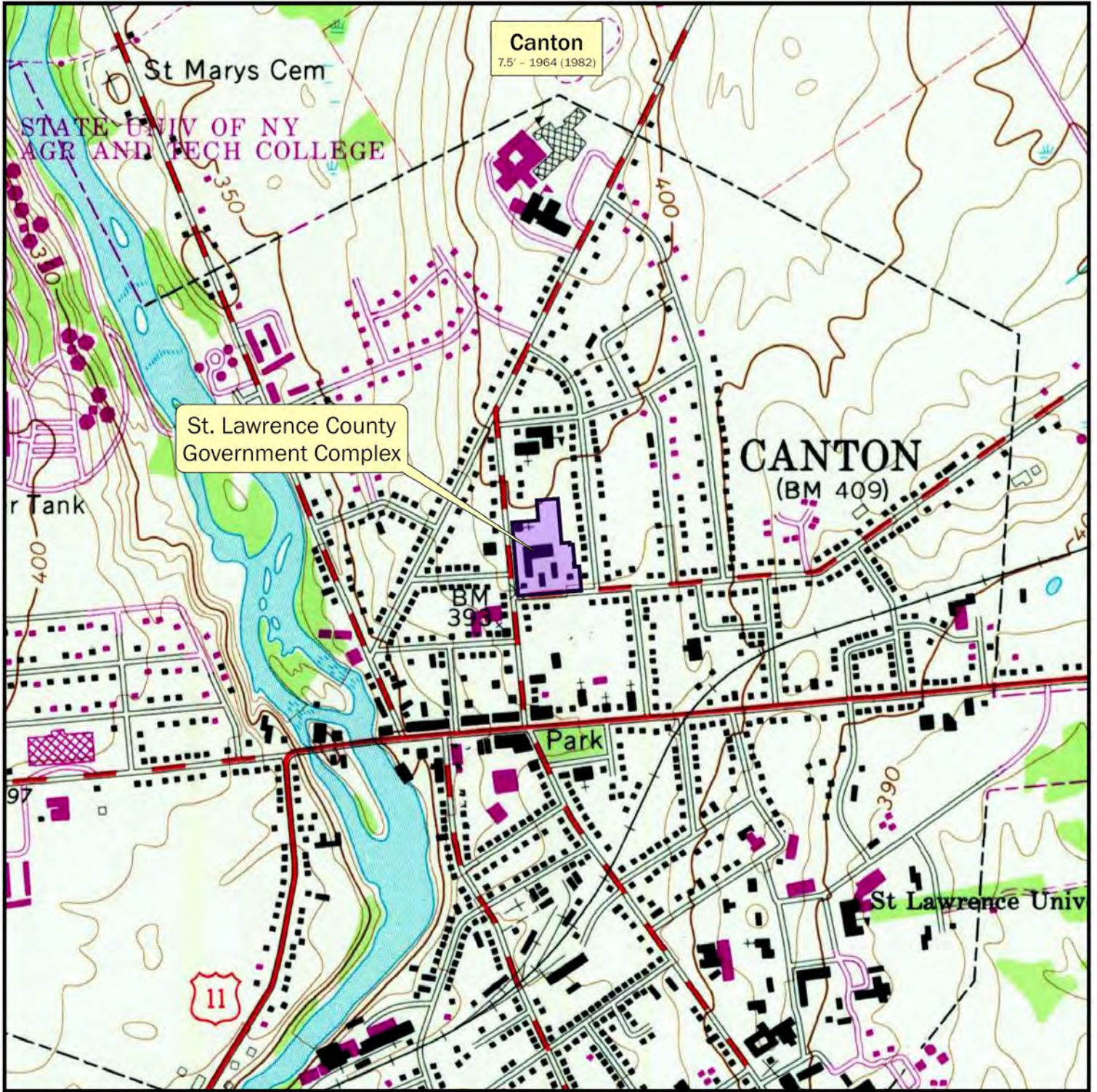
A **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.


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

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County and State _____



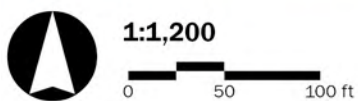
 St. Lawrence County Government Complex



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County and State _____



 Nomination Boundary (4.95 ac)



Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 18N

New York State Orthoimagery Year: 2020

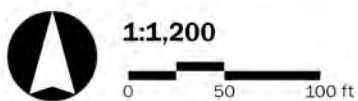
Mapped 01/08/2024 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO

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Name of Property _____

County and State _____

Note: The St. Lawrence County tax parcel boundaries appear to be inaccurate at this location.
Parcel 88.035-1-21.11 has been offset 1.99 m S 14° 2' 13" E to approximate the correct parcel boundary.



Projection: WGS 1984 UTM Zone 18N

 Nomination Boundary (4.95 ac)  Tax Parcels

StLawrence County Parcel Year: 2021

Mapped 01/08/2024 by Matthew W. Shepherd, NYSHPO



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Name of Property

County and State

Photographs:

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

Name of Property: St. Lawrence County Government Complex

City or Vicinity: Canton

County: St. Lawrence State: New York

Photographer: Christine Bush

Date Photographed: December 2022

Description of Photograph(s) and number:

1 of 37: View of courthouse west elevation (facing east)

2 of 37: Court Street facing east towards courthouse and surrogate court

3 of 37: Courthouse main entry closeup, west elevation (facing east)

4 of 37: Courthouse main entryway, west elevation(facing east)

5 of 37: County clerk's office, west elevation (facing east)

6 of 37: County clerk and courthouse, facing southeast

7 of 37: Non-historic courthouse addition facing south

8 of 37: Non-historic addition, east elevation (facing northwest)

9 of 37: Non-historic addition, south elevation with original courthouse in distance

10 of 37: Courthouse looking at meeting junction of 1894 and 1993 non-historic addition, facing northwest

11 of 37: Courthouse east elevation

12 of 37: Courthouse south elevation

13 of 37: View of courthouse south and west elevation, looking north from Judson Street.

14 of 37: Courthouse interior with historic fireproof tile trim

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15 of 37: Courthouse interior hall with historic fireproof tile trim

16 of 37: Interior of courthouse tower showing jail-inspired window detailing

17 of 37: Historic second floor courtroom

18 of 37: View of surrogate court and courthouse on right, sheriff's house and jail on left. From Judson Street looking north.

19 of 37: Corner of Court and Judson Streets, facing northeast towards surrogate court building

20 of 37: Surrogate court northwest corner from Court Street, facing southeast. Jail can be seen in background.

21 of 37: Surrogate court north elevation, facing south

22 of 37: Surrogate court northwest corner, facing southwest.

23 of 37: Surrogate court rear (east) elevation, facing west

24 of 37: Surrogate court south elevation, facing northwest from Judson Street.

25 of 37: Sheriff's house southwest corner as seen from Judson Street, surrogate court on left.

26 of 37: Sheriff's house south elevation from Judson Street.

27 of 37: Sheriff's house and jail from Judson Street, facing northeast.

28 of 37: Jail west elevation from Court Street, facing east.

29 of 37: West elevation of jail and attached sheriff's house, facing east.

30 of 37: West elevation of jail, northern end.

31 of 37: West elevation of jail facing southeast, sheriff's house visible in background.

32 of 37: Powerhouse west elevation with jail on right.

33 of 37: Powerhouse north elevation looking southeast toward former smokestack.

34 of 37: Original ca. 1860 sheriff's carriage house on eastern edge of complex, behind jail.

35 of 37: Carriage house and 1986 brick addition, east elevation, facing north.

36 of 37: Southeast corner of 1986 brick addition looking west toward sheriff's house fronting Judson Street.

37 of 37: South elevation of 1986 addition and sheriff's house fronting Judson Street.

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PHOTO KEY



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Name of Property _____

County and State _____



Property Owner:

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

name St. Lawrence County

street & number 48 Court Street

telephone 315-379-2237

city or town Canton

state NY

zip code 13617

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 Perf