

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form

For NPS use only
received **SEP 30** 1982
date entered

See instructions in *How to Complete National Register Forms*
Type all entries—complete applicable sections

1. Name

historic Van Ornam & Murdock Block

and/or common Lee House Block

2. Location

street & number Main Street ___ not for publication

city, town Port Henry ___ vicinity of ~~Congressional district~~

state New York code 36 county Essex code 31

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use	
<input type="checkbox"/> district	<input type="checkbox"/> public	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> occupied	<input type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> museum
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> building(s)	<input type="checkbox"/> private	<input type="checkbox"/> unoccupied	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> commercial	<input type="checkbox"/> park
<input type="checkbox"/> structure	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> both	<input type="checkbox"/> work in progress	<input type="checkbox"/> educational	<input type="checkbox"/> private residence
<input type="checkbox"/> site	Public Acquisition	Accessible	<input type="checkbox"/> entertainment	<input type="checkbox"/> religious
<input type="checkbox"/> object	NA in process	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> yes: restricted	<input type="checkbox"/> government	<input type="checkbox"/> scientific
	NA being considered	<input type="checkbox"/> yes: unrestricted	<input type="checkbox"/> industrial	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
		<input type="checkbox"/> no	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> other:

4. Owner of Property

name See continuation sheet

street & number

city, town ___ vicinity of state

5. Location of Legal Description

courthouse, registry of deeds, etc. Office of the Essex County Clerk

street & number Court Street

city, town Elizabethtown state New York

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

title None has this property been determined eligible? ___ yes no

date ___ federal ___ state ___ county ___ local

depository for survey records

city, town state

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> original site
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date <u>NA</u>
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Van Ornam and Murdock Block is the focal point of the business district of Port Henry, New York. Located on the east side of South Main Street, the four attached Italianate style commercial structures were built between 1874 and ca. 1880. Despite slight deterioration and minor storefront alterations, the architectural integrity of the original buildings has generally been maintained. Because of fires and unsympathetic alterations to surrounding structures, no other commercial buildings possess sufficient integrity to be included in the nomination.

On the northernmost corner of the block is the Van Ornam building. This three and one-half story brick structure was built in 1874. It has a flat roof and an ornately bracketed wood cornice. The facade is eleven bays wide with regular and symmetrical fenestration. The round arched windows of the second and third stories are characterized by molded brick lintels with elaborate brick keystones. The lintels are connected horizontally by a decorative, corbelled brick belt course. The stone sills beneath the third story windows are also joined to create a belt course separating the stories.

South of the Van Ornam building is the four-story brick Lee House Hotel, also built in 1874. The Lee House has a cornice line level with that of the neighboring Van Ornam building. The southern portion of the hotel and the fourth story extending across the entire building were added in 1911. The wood cornice atop the hotel is simply ornamented with modillions. The fourth story has twelve irregularly spaced windows. The third and second stories have thirteen and fourteen windows, respectively, also irregularly spaced. A broad porch characterized by round columns, balustrades and modillions extends the full length of the hotel front. All windows have simple wood lintels and sills. The facade of the earlier section of the Lee House is ornamented with star-shaped anchors. Very few of the original interior fixtures are intact.

The next building to the south, built in approximately 1880, is presently occupied by the National Bell Store. It is a two-story, wood frame structure with a stamped metal facade. The stamped cornice is decorated with festoons and a fleur-de-lis design. Panels above the storefront are stamped with ornate patterns. Slender engaged columns decorate the storefront, which remains intact.

The southernmost structure on the block is the Harlan building, the last structure built on the block shortly after the completion of the National Bell Store. The cornice line of the flat roofed, two-story brick building is slightly higher than that of the neighboring National Bell Store. The second story is eight bays wide and divided by a brick pilaster into two sections. The northern section is two bays wide and has a central entrance at the street level. A wide limestone stairway with ornate wrought-iron rails leads to the door. The southern section is six bays wide and has two entrances with rough hewn stone stairways at the street levels.

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Continuation sheet Van Ornam Murdock Block Item number 4 Page 1
Essex County

Property Owners

Lee House Hotel:

Essex County
c/o Wm. Fountain
Clerk, Board of Supervisors
Court Street
Elizabethtown, NY 12932

Van Ornam/Mudock Buildings:

George Sagan
39 Brook Street
Port Henry, NY 12974

and

Edward Weed
P.O. Box 53
Ticonderoga, NY 12883

National Bell Store:

Joseph Abram
Regional Manager
National Bell Stores
25 Margaret St.
Plattsburgh, NY 12901

Harlan Building:

Joan Harlan
9 Grove St.
Prot Henry, NY 12974

8. Significance

Period	Areas of Significance—Check and justify below			
<input type="checkbox"/> prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-prehistoric	<input type="checkbox"/> community planning	<input type="checkbox"/> landscape architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> religion
<input type="checkbox"/> 1400-1499	<input type="checkbox"/> archeology-historic	<input type="checkbox"/> conservation	<input type="checkbox"/> law	<input type="checkbox"/> science
<input type="checkbox"/> 1500-1599	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> agriculture	<input type="checkbox"/> economics	<input type="checkbox"/> literature	<input type="checkbox"/> sculpture
<input type="checkbox"/> 1600-1699	<input type="checkbox"/> architecture	<input type="checkbox"/> education	<input type="checkbox"/> military	<input type="checkbox"/> social/ humanitarian
<input type="checkbox"/> 1700-1799	<input type="checkbox"/> art	<input type="checkbox"/> engineering	<input type="checkbox"/> music	<input type="checkbox"/> theater
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> 1800-1899	<input type="checkbox"/> commerce	<input type="checkbox"/> exploration/settlement	<input type="checkbox"/> philosophy	<input type="checkbox"/> transportation
<input type="checkbox"/> 1900-	<input type="checkbox"/> communications	<input type="checkbox"/> industry	<input type="checkbox"/> politics/government	<input type="checkbox"/> other (specify)
		<input type="checkbox"/> invention		

Specific dates 1874-1899 **Builder/Architect** Unknown

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Van Ornam and Murdock Block, the commercial center of Port Henry, is an unusual surviving example of late nineteenth century commercial architecture in the Adirondack-Champlain region. The attached row of four buildings retains a high degree of architectural integrity. The Lee House Hotel, the most prominent structure of the group, was for many years an important local center of entertainment and social activity. The block reflects Port Henry's prosperity during the last quarter of the nineteenth century.

During the nineteenth century, as the demand for wood and iron increased, lumber camps, mining communities and mill towns were established in the remote wilderness regions of Essex County. Attracted by the unlimited source of hydraulic power and the seemingly unlimited supply of natural resources, settlers established a variety of industries. Port Henry developed in the 1870's at a time when saw mills flourished and the mining of iron ore and the operation of blast furnaces had brought prosperity to the nearby town of Moriah. Two clothing factories, a tannery and a carding mill were also in the area.

In 1874, John A. Lee built the first brick house in the area on Main Street, which was to become the business district of Port Henry. During the building boom period of 1875, more than eighty homes were built in the Lee meadow and surrounding area. After minor alterations and additions to Lee's residence, the Lee House was opened for business as a hotel and restaurant under the management of Charles B. Pease. The Adirondack mountains has recently become the fashionable summer resort for vacationing New Yorkers, and business at the Lee House flourished throughout the remainder of the nineteenth century. Stage coaches, lake steamers and the newly constructed Delaware & Hudson and New York Central railroad lines carried passengers to the previously inaccessible wilderness of northern New York. Sailing regattas, picnic parties, winter harness races on the ice and lively poker and billiard games attracted tourists from distant regions to the popular Lee House. The Lee House also served the local community, frequently offering dances, banquets and musical recitals.

The Van Ornam building, built in the same year as the Lee House, is a structure larger and more elaborate than typically seen in commercial districts in the region. The ornately detailed lintels, belt courses and bracketed cornice remain relatively intact. The Lee House, also unusual for its size, is more simply decorated. A cornice with modillions, simple wood lintels and sills, and star-shaped anchors ornaments the hotel's facade.

9. Major Bibliographical References

See Continuation Sheet

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property $\frac{+}{-}$ 1 acre

Quadrangle name Port Henry, NY-VT

Quadrangle scale 1:24,000

UMT References

A

1	8	6	2	3	3	8	0	4	8	7	8	1	8	0
Zone		Easting				Northing								

B

Zone		Easting				Northing								

C

Zone		Easting				Northing								

D

Zone		Easting				Northing								

E

Zone		Easting				Northing								

F

Zone		Easting				Northing								

G

Zone		Easting				Northing								

H

Zone		Easting				Northing								

Verbal boundary description and justification Boundaries of nominated property conform to current legal boundaries and are delineated on the enclosed tax map.

List all states and counties for properties overlapping state or county boundaries

state N/A code county code

state code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Raymond W. Smith Program Analyst

organization New York Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation date Sept. 1982

street & number Agency Bldg. 1 Empire State Plaza telephone 518-474-0479

city or town Albany state NY

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

As the designated State Historic Preservation Officer for the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 (Public Law 89-665), I hereby nominate this property for inclusion in the National Register and certify that it has been evaluated according to the criteria and procedures set forth by the National Park Service.

State Historic Preservation Officer signature Ann Webster Donahue

title Deputy Commissioner for Historic Preservation date 9/27/82

For NPS use only	
I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register	
<i>Bruce M. Boyd</i>	date 11/19/82
Keeper of the National Register	
Attest:	date
Chief of Registration	

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National Park Service**

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date entered

Continuation sheet Van Ornam and Murdock Block
Port Henry, Essex County item number 8

Page 2

Port Henry quickly became a thriving community. Two commercial buildings south of the Lee House were constructed around 1880. Less elaborate and smaller than the Van Ornam building and the Lee House, these two buildings are typical examples of late nineteenth century commercial architecture. The opening of a shirt factory in the last decade of the nineteenth century stimulated the further economic development of Port Henry's business district. Early in the twentieth century, Port Henry served as a center for political rallies and, for a brief period, the site of the production of three movies. Prominent political figures as well as popular movie stars were housed at the Lee House.

In 1911, J.E. McNaulty purchased the Lee House from Oscar Sprague. He added a fourth story and a south extension. At this time, one of the first Otis elevators in the nation was installed. The Lee House continued to enjoy its reputation as one of the finest hotels north of Albany.

The years of the Depression brought hardship to the Lee House and downtown Port Henry. The old shirt factory burned in the early 1920's. Business and industries continued to decline after World War II. This decline was accelerated by the closing of the iron ore mills in July, 1971. Recently, several unsuccessful attempts were made to revive the hotel and restaurant. The building was seized by the county in 1981 for nonpayment of taxes and presently stands vacant.

The buildings of the Van Ornam and Murdock Block are well preserved, substantial commercial structures once typical in the Adirondack and Champlain region. Devastating fires have destroyed numerous examples of such buildings and the fact that the core of Port Henry's business district has survived intact contributes to the significance of the block.

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National Park Service**

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date entered

Continuation sheet Van Ornam and Murdock Block Item number 9
Essex County

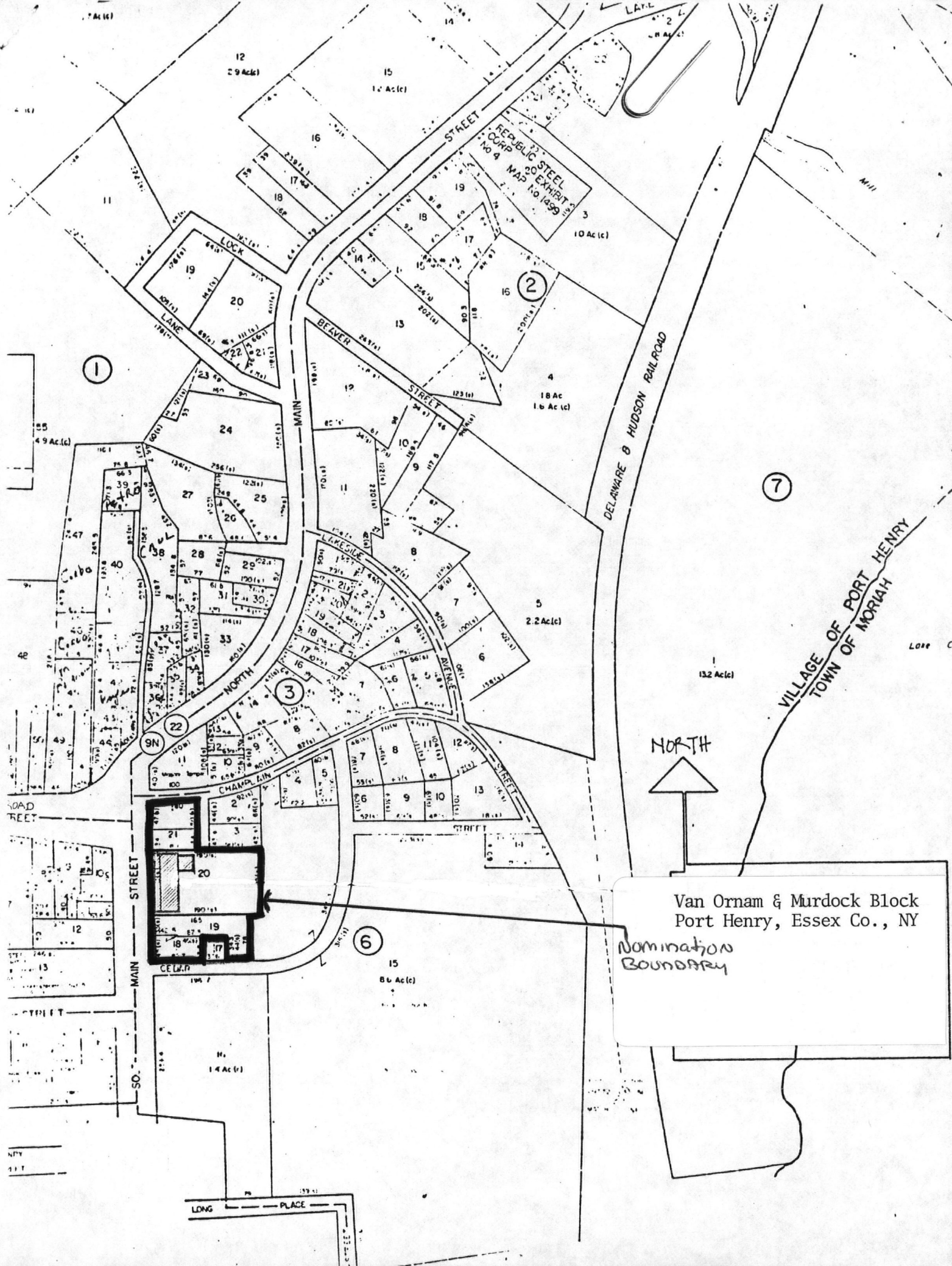
Page 2

BIBLIOGRAPHY

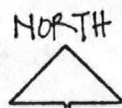
Ladies Aid Society of the Presbyterian Church, Port Henry Souvenir Book.
1902.

Valley News, February 10, 17, 1972; November 18, 1981.

Warner, Dr. Charles B. & Hall, C. Elanor. History of Port Henry New York.
The Tuttle Company.



Van Ornam & Murdock Block
 Port Henry, Essex Co., NY
 Nomination
 Boundary



1

2

7

9N

3

6

NY
 11.7

LONG PLACE

Van Ornam & Murdock Block
 Port Henry, Essex Co., NY

Nomination
 Boundary

NORTH

VILLAGE OF PORT HENRY
 TOWN OF MORIAH

REPUBLIC STEEL
 CORP
 No 4
 MAP No 1099

LOCK

BEAVER STREET

MAIN STREET

LAKEVILLE STREET

NORTH STREET

MAIN STREET

CELESTINE

DELAWARE & HUDSON RAILROAD

7 Ac(c)

12
 2.9 Ac(c)

15
 1.4 Ac(c)

LAKEVILLE
 2.4
 1.8 Ac(c)

10 Ac(c)

4
 1.8 Ac
 1.6 Ac(c)

5
 2.2 Ac(c)

1
 1.2 Ac(c)

15
 8.6 Ac(c)

1.4 Ac(c)

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

Substantive Review

Van Ornam & Murdock Block
Essex County
NEW YORK

Working No. 9/30/82-2473
Fed. Reg. Date: 2.1.83
Date Due: 10/29/82 - 11/14/82
Action: ACCEPT 11/14/82
 RETURN _____
 REJECT _____
Federal Agency: _____

- resubmission
- nomination by person or local government
- owner objection
- appeal

Substantive Review: sample request appeal NR decision

Reviewer's comments:

Recom./Criteria A, C / ACCEPT
Reviewer MAR DOUGAN
Discipline A-H
Date 11.14.82
see continuation sheet

Nomination returned for: technical corrections cited below
 substantive reasons discussed below

1. Name

2. Location

3. Classification

Category	Ownership	Status	Present Use
	Public Acquisition	Accessible	

4. Owner of Property

5. Location of Legal Description

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

has this property been determined eligible? yes no

7. Description

Condition		Check one	Check one
<input type="checkbox"/> excellent	<input type="checkbox"/> deteriorated	<input type="checkbox"/> unaltered	<input type="checkbox"/> original site
<input type="checkbox"/> good	<input type="checkbox"/> ruins	<input type="checkbox"/> altered	<input type="checkbox"/> moved date _____
<input type="checkbox"/> fair	<input type="checkbox"/> unexposed		

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- alterations/integrity
- dates
- boundary selection

8. Significance

Period _____ Area of Significance—Check and justify below

Specific dates _____ Builder/Architect _____

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

- summary paragraph
- completeness
- clarity
- applicable criteria
- justification of areas checked
- relating significance to the resource
- context
- relationship of integrity to significance
- justification of exception
- other

9. Major Bibliographical References

10. Geographical Data

Acres of nominated property _____

Quadrangle name _____

USGS References _____

Verbal boundary description and justification _____

11. Form Prepared By

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

____ national ____ state ____ local

State Historic Preservation Officer signature _____

title _____ date _____

13. Other

- Maps
- Photographs
- Other

Questions concerning this nomination may be directed to _____

Signed _____ Date _____ Phone: 202 272-3504

Comments for any item may be continued on an attached sheet



Van Ornam & Murdock Block
Port Henry, Essex Co., New York
Photo: Colin Fink, April 1982
Neg: Office of Colin Fink, Yellow
Hotel, Essex, N.Y.
View: Entire block, looking south

#1 of 6



NO
U
TURN

LEE HOUSE
HOTEL
DINING ROOM
EST 1873

NATIONAL BELL STORES
The "N" Place
FORMERLY NATIONAL BERRY STORES

Van Ornam & Murdock Block
Port Henry, Essex Co., New York
Photo: Colin Fink, April 1982
Neg: Office of Colin Fink, Yellow
Hotel, Essex, N.Y.
View: Southern Portion of Block

#2 of 6



Van Ornam & Murdock Block
Port Henry, Essex Co., New York
Photo: Colin Fink
Neg: Office of Colin Fink, Yellow
Hotel, Essex, N.Y.
View: Streetscape, looking north

#3 of 6



Van Ornam & Murdock Block
Port Henry, Essex Co., New York
Photo: Colin Fink, April 1982
Neg: Office of Colin Fink, Yellow
Hotel, Essex, N.Y.
View: Van Ornam Building

#4 of 6



AGAN'S

YIELD

RESERVED FOR POLICE CARS

THE HOUSE HOTEL
DANCE ROOM
10-12-14

NATIONAL
The
Pharmacy

Van Ornam & Murdock Block
Port Henry, Essex Co., New York

Photo: R.W. SMITH, 1979 1982

Neg: Office of Colin Fink, Yellow
Hotel, Essex, N.Y.

View: Lee House Hotel

#5 of 6

NATIONAL BELL STORES
"The IN Place"
FORMERLY NATIONAL ARMY STORES

WESTERN
CLOTHING

PRINTERS
PANTS
CARPENTER
JEANS

PRINTERS
PANTS
CARPENTER
JEANS

WORK
CLOTHES

THE IN PLACE

WORK
CLOTHES

WINNING
AGENCY
1940 - 1942
2nd PLACE
1st PLACE

LITTER

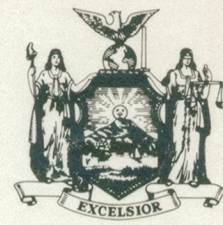


Van Ornam & Murdock Block
Port Henry, Essex Co., New York
Photo: Colin Fink, April 1982
Neg: Office of Colin Fink, Yellow
Hotel, Essex, N.Y.
View: National Bell Store

#6 of 6

ELIZABETHTOWN

NEW YORK STATE DEPARTMENT OF TRANSPORTATION



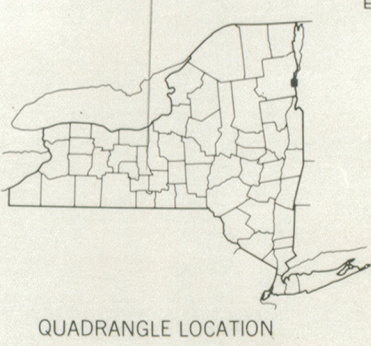
PORT HENRY QUADRANGLE NEW YORK - VERMONT 7.5 MINUTE SERIES PLANIMETRIC

440733 DP

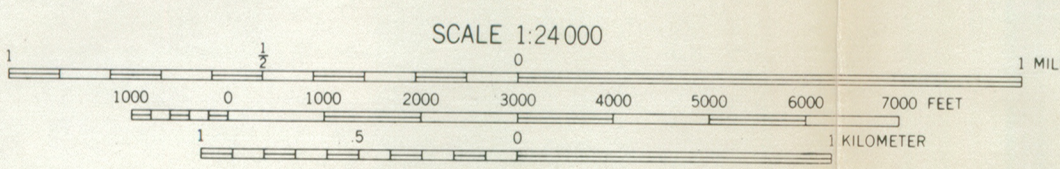


PORT HENRY, N.Y.-VT. QUADRANGLE Van Ornam & Murdock Block Port Henry Essex Co., New York U.T.M. Ref. Zone 18 E: 623380 N: 4878180

Prepared and published by the New York State Department of Transportation in cooperation with the U.S. Department of Transportation, Federal Highway Administration, Bureau of Public Roads. Map base, physical and cultural details compiled from U.S. Geological Survey 15-minute quadrangle, edition of 1945; highways and drainage related to highway construction compiled in 1969 from construction plans, aerial photography dated 1969, and various other sources; road and street names and boundaries compiled from D.O.T. surveys and public records. Map does not necessarily comply with National Map Accuracy Standards. Official changes in boundaries, names and planimetric features should be reported to: Map Information, New York State Department of Transportation, State Campus, Albany, N.Y. 12226



QUADRANGLE LOCATION



Polyconic projection. 1927 North American datum. 5,000-meter graticule based on U.T.M. grid, Zone 18. 10,000-foot ticks based on New York State Plane Coordinate System, East Zone

INDEX TO ENLARGEMENTS 25 Village & Hamlet Enlargement Maps No. 440733 25

- BOUNDARIES: State, County, Town, City or Incorporated Village, Federal-aid approved Urban Area, Supplemental map enlargement limit. ROADS: Interstate route, U.S. route, State route, County Road, State Highway number and limit. Divided highways: Main more than 25 feet, Main 25 feet or less, Undivided highways: 4 or more lanes, 2 or 3 lanes, Private roads.

440733 DP