

United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service

National Register of Historic Places Registration Form

This form is for use in nominating or requesting determinations for individual properties and districts. See instructions in National Register Bulletin, *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form*. If any item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions.

1. Name of Property

Historic name: Van Rensselaer, Alexander House

Other names/site number: Villalou, Restmere

Name of related multiple property listing: N/A

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

2. Location

Street & number: 1 Ichabod Lane

City or town: Middletown State: Rhode Island County: Newport

Not For Publication: Vicinity:

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

Applicable National Register Criteria:

X A ___ B **X** C ___ D

<p>_____ Signature of certifying official/Title: <u>Rhode Island Historical Preservation & Heritage Commission</u> State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
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<p>In my opinion, the property ___ meets ___ does not meet the National Register criteria.</p>	
<p>_____ Signature of commenting official:</p>	<p>_____ Date</p>
<p>_____ Title :</p>	<p>_____ State or Federal agency/bureau or Tribal Government</p>

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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

5. Classification

Ownership of Property

(Check as many boxes as apply.)

- Private:
- Public – Local
- Public – State
- Public – Federal

Category of Property

(Check only **one** box.)

- Building(s)
- District
- Site
- Structure
- Object

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Number of Resources within Property

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count)

Contributing	Noncontributing	
<u>1</u>	_____	buildings
_____	_____	sites
_____	_____	structures
_____	_____	objects
<u>1</u>	_____	Total

Number of contributing resources previously listed in the National Register 0

6. Function or Use

Historic Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/Single Family Dwelling

DOMESTIC/Multiple Family Dwelling

Current Functions

(Enter categories from instructions.)

DOMESTIC/Multiple Family Dwelling

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7. Description

Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions.)

LATE VICTORIAN/Italianate

Materials: (enter categories from instructions.)

Principal exterior materials of the property: BRICK; WOOD/Clapboard; ASPHALT

Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current physical appearance and condition of the property. Describe contributing and noncontributing resources if applicable. Begin with a **summary paragraph** that briefly describes the general characteristics of the property, such as its location, type, style, method of construction, setting, size, and significant features. Indicate whether the property has historic integrity.)

Summary Paragraph

The Alexander Van Rensselaer House, also known as Villalou and Restmere, was designed by noted American architect Richard Upjohn and constructed in 1857 as a summer residence for Alexander Van Rensselaer of New York. It is an Italianate-style, three-story, wood-frame building with transitional Stick Style elements. The property is located at 1 Ichabod Lane, off Miantonomi Avenue, in the southwest end of Middletown, Rhode Island, in what is now a dense residential area, close to the boundary with Newport. The Van Rensselaer House sits at the northwest corner of the intersection of Restmere Terrace and Ichabod Lane, which are developed with small-scale, mid-twentieth-century, one- and two-story single-family residences. The building is in the center of a small rectangular lot with the remaining portions of the lot consisting of manicured lawn and a gravel parking area. The front yard has an approximately four-foot-tall semicircular stone retaining wall along Ichabod Lane, with manicured lawn between the house and wall and gravel at-grade parking along the street edge, to the east of the house. A semicircular gravel walkway leads from the street edge to the façade, and small-scale shrubs line the western property boundary. The Van Rensselaer House has a companion house, the Hamilton Hoppin House, 120 Miantonomi Avenue (NR 1996) set to the west and built in 1856. Richard Upjohn designed this house for Van Rensselaer's brother-in-law, Hamilton Hoppin. Upjohn incorporated many of the architectural elements from the Hoppin House into the design of the Van Rensselaer House.

The Van Rensselaer House retains a high degree of integrity. The exterior is intact, including its Italianate arcaded porch, faux timbering in the third story, ornamental wood trim and most of its original wood window sash. The original floor plan is largely intact, as are interior finish materials, including hardwood floors and decorative elements. The building's present appearance reflects its original mid-nineteenth-century design, as well as a number of early-twentieth-century alterations that have gained architectural

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significance in their own right. As designed by Upjohn in 1857, the Van Rensselaer House consisted of a rectangular-plan main block with porches across the front and rear elevations (Figure 1). By 1895, two-story, angled bays had been added to the east and west elevations, and an ell off the north (Figures 2–4). Several exterior changes were likely executed during the period when Adolph Audrain owned the property, between 1904 and 1919, including alterations to the porch, the front stairs, the primary door and the windows on the first floor of the façade; the addition of a one-story, bowed bay on the west elevation; the addition of a two-story, angled bay on the north elevation; and changes to the two-story bays (originally the same depth at the first and second floors, the bays are now shallower at the second floor, creating a “staggered” effect). Classical Revival-style interior alterations were also likely completed under Audrain’s ownership. Few other alterations have occurred in the intervening years, with the exception of some window replacements and the conversion of the rear ell to townhouse units in the mid-twentieth century. The primary change to the setting has been the loss of the surrounding landscape from land subdivision and construction of houses and a new road in the 1960s.

Narrative Description

Exterior

The Van Rensselaer House is a south-facing, three-story, three-bay-by-three-bay, wood-frame building designed in a transitional Italianate-Stick Style (Photos 1–8). The main block of the house has a square footprint, measuring approximately 49 feet by 52 feet, with a roughly T-shaped, two-story ell off the north (rear) elevation (described below). The symmetrical façade has a full-width, one-story, Italianate-style, arcaded porch (see Photos 1 and 2). Projecting bays are located on three elevations: a two-story, angled bay on the east; a two-story, angled bay and a one-story, bowed bay on the west; and a two-story, angled bay on the north. The house sits on a brick foundation and has a full basement set above grade at the north and east elevations.

The first and second stories of the house are clad in wood clapboard, and the third story is composed of a continuous panel of diagonal cross timbering on vertical board cladding, between bracketed vertical members and corner boards (see Photo 3). A continuous band of wood trim with dentils runs between the first and second stories on all elevations of the main block (see Photos 4–7). Narrow corner boards and a beveled water table delineate the building edges. The articulation of the building’s exterior with timbering is not reflective of the structural framing within, but, rather, is principally ornamental; it also has the effect of visually reducing the scale of the building. The building has a shallow hip roof surfaced in asphalt shingle with a deep overhang. Eaves brackets are set between square, molded panels (see Photo 3). There are two interior brick chimneys on the main block, one on the east roof slope and one on the west. The angled projecting bays have narrow corner boards and water tables, narrow molded window trim with stepped projecting lintels and sills with dropped corners. The bays have flat roofs with bracketed eaves to match the main roof.

The symmetrical, three-bay façade has a central entrance flanked by windows on the first story (see Photo 1–2). Windows are set above the first story openings in the second and third story. The central entrance has a double-leaf, wood door that appears to be original to the house (see Photo 8). The doors have lower molded panels and elongated upper sashes consisting of wrought iron screens overlaid on single-light casement sash that open from the interior to provide ventilation without opening the door (see Photo 8). Elaborate, sculptural bronze door knockers depicting four mythical figures are set between the upper and lower panels of both the door leaves. Historic photos indicate that the door was originally surmounted by a

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rectangular transom, as at the Hoppin House (see Figure 2). The entry is currently set within a Classical Revival-style door surround with simple pilasters and a semicircular fanlight with multi-light decorative glass, likely added while the property was owned by Adolph Audrain between 1904 and 1919. Bronze sconces flanking the entrance were also likely added at that time. It was probably during this period, too, that the first story windows were altered from elongated openings that almost extended to the floor (as at the Hoppin House) to the current window base height, which creates an opening similar in size to the second story windows. The elongated windows on the first story would have further defined the scale of the building through the use of declining proportions of windows from the first to third story.

The Italianate-style, arcaded porch is the most decorative element on the façade (see Photos 1–2, 8). It is raised approximately 30 inches above grade and supported by rectangular stone piers with a wood lattice apron. The porch is topped by a flat roof with a bracketed overhang and supported by a round-arch arcade of slender Corinthian wood columns. The spaces above the haunches of the arches are filled with wood filigree panels decorated with floral patterns. Semicircular extensions of the porch project east and west beyond the house façade and porch roof. Short, wood railings with a round-arch arcade of Doric columns as the balusters line the porch. The railing system originally served as a balustrade on the porch roof, but was moved and augmented to serve as the railings. The porch is accessed by a central flared staircase (originally straight) with railings in the same style as the porch railings and rectangular newel posts with molded panels. The relocation of the railings, the porch extensions and the flared stair configuration likely date to between 1904 and 1919.

When viewed from the south, the façade and porch are visually framed by matching angled, two-tier projecting bays that extend from the first and second stories of the southern bay on the east and west elevations (see Photos 4–6). The first-story bays have five facets with a window opening in each of the three central panels. The shallower second-story bays consist of three facets, with windows in the outer two panels. The staggered, smaller second-story bay arrangement dates to between 1904 and 1919 (when the bays were added to the house in the late nineteenth century, they were of equal depth on the first and second floors; see Figure 2).

In contrast to the symmetry of the façade, the east, west, and north elevations are each different and asymmetrical, reflecting the arrangement and function of interior spaces. The west elevation, in addition to the two-story bay at its southern end, has a bowed, projecting one-story bay with three windows at its north end; it was likely added between 1904 and 1919 (see Figure 4 and Photo 7). There are two windows in the second story, north of the two-story bay, and two windows in the third story. The barely exposed brick basement has four small horizontal windows in the projecting bays.

The east elevation has an above-grade basement level and the projecting bay in its southern end (see Photo 6). There are two windows in the first story and two, one of which is square, in the second story, all north of the projecting bay. The third story has three windows and the basement level contains four segmental-arch windows. A secondary entrance is set in the northernmost bay of the first story and accessed via a staircase and porch that extends across the south bay of the rear ell, which contains an entrance to the ell. These entrances replaced windows and were added, along with the porch, in 2016–2017. They consist of wood panel doors with nine-light upper sashes topped by fixed, rectangular, three-light transoms with a rectangular lintel that echoes the historic window surrounds.

The north (rear) elevation is dominated by the ell (described below) that extends from the eastern bay and a two-story angled bay that extends from the west end (see Photo 7). The angled bay has five facets, with windows in the three center facets. The two windows in the central bay of the elevation are stained glass,

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one on the first floor and one between the first and second floors, lighting the stair landing. The third floor has three windows. The rear entrance is recessed and centered beneath a curved porch with a flat roof between the rear ell and the angled bay. The entrance, which consists of a wood panel door with a nine-light upper sash, was added in 2016–2017, replacing an entrance in the west elevation of the ell; the porch was not altered.

The fenestration pattern throughout the main block, except for in the two northernmost bays of the first story on the east elevation, is unaltered. The windows are set in wood surrounds with rectangular, molded crown lintels and simple, rectangular sills with dropped tabs at the corners. The window openings on the first and second floors of the façade and in the angled bays on the east and west elevations are wider than those found elsewhere. The façade retains louvered, wood shutters on the first and second stories that are operable on the first story and fixed on the second story. The third-story windows on all elevations of the main block are punched openings recessed in the applied timber-framing. The basement windows are all punched openings, either rectangular or segmental-arched.

Windows consist primarily of original, two-over-two-light, double-hung, wood sash. One-over-one-light, double-hung, replacement wood sash are found in the one-story, bowed bay on the west elevation and the two-story projecting bay on the north elevation. The third story windows consist of small, three-over-three-light, casement and fixed, wood sash. The basement retains original windows consisting of segmental-arch, eight-over-eight- and six-over-six-light, double-hung and three- and six-light, fixed wood sash. The east elevation first story contains four, one-over-one-light, double-hung, wood sash set in pairs within two reconfigured original window openings. Stained-glass windows in the north (rear) elevation light a first-floor bathroom and the staircase landing, and one in the center bay of the east elevation lights a second-floor bathroom. The stained-glass windows in the bathrooms are small, rectangular, casement windows, and the window in the stairwell is a large, rectangular, fixed sash. The stained-glass windows were most likely installed between 1904 and 1919.

The rear ell is a two-story, two-bay-by-two-bay, slightly T-shaped wing that extends from the eastern bay of the north elevation (see Photo 7). As depicted in 1870 (see Figure 1), the house included a porch that extended across nearly the full width of the rear elevation. The porch would likely have been elevated with a passageway below to a door (extant) in the above-grade basement level. It appears that sometime between 1870 and 1895 (see Figure 3), the porch was removed (portions of its foundation remain visible on the interior) and the ell and projecting bay were constructed, connected by a smaller porch. The ell's low hip roof is clad in asphalt shingles, and an interior brick chimney pierces the north roof slope. Like the main block, the ell rests on a brick foundation and has clapboard sheathing with narrow corner board trim. Two entrances are located in the south bay of the east elevation, one at the basement level and one at the first floor. The basement entrance is historic with an original round-arch, wood panel door with a six-light upper sash. As noted above, the first-floor entrance was added in 2016–2017, replacing a window. Window openings in the rear ell feature original wood surrounds that mimic the style of the main block and are filled with narrow, four-over-four-light, double-hung, wood sash installed in the mid-to-late twentieth century. Basement-level round-arch windows are present on the east elevation, but are infilled with brick on the north elevation.

Interior

The interior of the Van Rensselaer House follows a symmetrical plan arranged around a central double-loaded hall with a staircase running along the east side of the north end of the hall, from the first through third stories. On each level, the central hall runs north-to-south with large rooms to the east and west. The

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first story is the most decorative and formal, consisting of a foyer, living room, dining room, study, and kitchen (Photos 11–19). The second floor consists of three bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms (Photos 20–24). The third floor has three bedrooms with en-suite bathrooms and a kitchen (Photos 25–26). The rear ell is a separate living space with its own kitchen, living room, bedrooms, and bathrooms.

Original finishes throughout the main block of the house include hardwood flooring in varying patterns and wood types; plaster walls and ceilings; painted wood wainscoting, crown molding, ceiling beams, brackets, baseboards, and window surrounds; marble and brick fireplace surrounds, some including inlaid mirrors with hand-carved wood frames set above the mantels and with original decorative metal grates; a massive hand-carved limestone fireplace surround; bronze and crystal lighting fixtures; and wood panel doors with original hardware. Many of the interior finish materials and fixtures were installed between 1904 and 1919, while Adolph Audrain owned the property, and consist primarily of French antiques.

The first floor has a small foyer at the main entrance, which separates the entrance from the stair hall to the north. The living room and study are west of the hall, and the dining room and kitchen are east of the hall. At the north end of the first floor is a small half-bathroom and east-to-west corridor that provides access to the rear exterior door, kitchen, and basement stairwell in the northeast corner. The staircase to the basement was closed off from the center of the main block and a new stair was built in the northeast corner in 2016–2017.

The hall is the focal point of the first floor with 12-foot ceilings, paneled wainscoting, ornate door surrounds, an alternating red oak and black walnut striped hardwood floor, and main staircase (see Photos 11–12). The foyer and hall are separated by a Dutch door, with a wood panel lower sash and multi-light upper sash (see Photo 13). The door is set in a French-style door surround and is flanked by pilasters and wide, multi-light sidelights set above molded wood panels. The door surround has a wide entablature, decorated with floral motif medallions, swags, and a denticulated cornice. The entry ways to the living room and dining room consist of French-style double-leaf doors with multi-light glass sash and wood door surrounds (see Photo 13). The doors are flanked by fluted pilasters with Corinthian capitals and topped by a wide entablature with egg-and-dart and beaded pattern molding, floral swags, and a denticulated cornice. The door surrounds are likely French antique pieces imported and installed between 1904 and 1919.

The staircase is a dog leg configuration with two runs and a landing with black walnut stair treads. The wood balustrade has turned spindles, fluted newel posts, and a heavy black walnut railing (see Photo 12, 20). The staircase has paneled wainscoting from the first through third floors and the underside of the stair run is paneled in wood. Applied filigree ornament is inset along the stair stringers from the first to third floor. A stained-glass window depicting a knight's helmet flanked by torches, with a floral motif border in varying shades of orange and light blue glass, is set in the north wall of the landing (see Photos 17–18).

The living room, dining room, and study feature original oak hardwood floors, laid in a parquet design (see Photos 14–19). The living room fireplace has an elaborate segmental-arch surround of white marble with molded panels consisting of Doric pilasters with denticulated capitals; a wide, rectangular lintel supporting a slab mantel with a molded edge; and a segmental-arch opening with buff-brick trim and a small decorative marble keystone. An antique French crystal chandelier hangs in the center of the room. The dining room has paneled wainscoting throughout and boxed ceiling beams laid in an east-west direction. The dining room may have once had a fireplace in the north wall, where a chimney is located for the kitchen oven. However, if there was a fireplace, it was removed at an unknown time prior to the current ownership. The study features a massive, ornate, limestone fireplace surround and a bronze chandelier. The fireplace consists of a round-arch opening with buff-brick trim set beneath the heavy fireplace surround with a brick

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hearth laid in a herringbone pattern. The surround has a wide mantel with a molded edge, carved trefoils cornice, and inset quatrefoils and rectangular panels. The mantel is supported by elaborately carved Corinthian columns with mixed floral patterns along the shafts and ivy-patterned capitals with beaded trim. Behind the Corinthian columns, engaged columns flank the fireplace opening. They have rounded bases, carved leaf capitals, and carved trefoils set above. The entry to the study consists of original, tall, double-leaf, paneled wood doors set in a simple door surround. The bath, located at the north end of the stair hall, features a stained-glass window with a geometric pattern in opal, blue, pink, and amber colors. The kitchen is in the northeast portion of the main block, with a central island and cabinets and counters set along the east and west walls. The kitchen is accessed from the east-west hallway along the north portion of the main block and through a swinging, paneled wood door that connects the southwest corner of the kitchen and the dining room. An original segmental-arch brick-lined oven with a buff-brick surround and granite sill is in the south wall. During the 2016–2017 alterations to the house, the kitchen was shifted south to accommodate the construction of the secondary staircase in the northeast corner of the main block; at the same time, the former butler's pantry, which was located between the kitchen and dining room, was incorporated into the kitchen. The secondary staircase, created to provide a separate access route to the third floor from the exterior of the house, extends from the first through third floors. It is accessed via the entrance in the first story of the east elevation of the main block.

The second floor is characterized by a central hallway, with paneled wainscoting, and three bedrooms with wide plank oak floors, plaster walls and ceilings, and original wood panel doors (see Photos 20–23). The two southern bedrooms mirror one another and include white marble fireplace surrounds. The fireplaces are simple in design in comparison to the first-floor fireplaces, with round-arch openings with simple keystones and a simple slab mantel piece supported by shallow Doric pilasters. Round-arch, inlaid mirrors are set just above the mantels, within hand-carved wood frames with floral motifs and swags set along the trim and above the haunches of the arch, along with floral motif keystones. The mirrors appear to have been added, likely in 1904–1919. There are three en-suite bathrooms on the second floor: two historic, though slightly reconfigured, off of the southeast (master) and the northwest bedrooms, and one, constructed in 2016–2017, off the southwest bedroom. The master bathroom retains a historic clawfoot bathtub, metal frame rib cage shower, and cream-colored tiled walls with a border of floral swags in pastel colors. The master bath also retains a historic window comprised of a central casement window flanked by fixed stained-glass panels that consist of wavy pearl and opalescent stained glass with a decorative motif in the center (see Photo 24).

The third floor echoes the second floor in layout and building materials (see Photos 24–25). The two southern bedrooms also have white marble fireplace surrounds, with rectangular openings flanked by Doric pilasters with a simple slab lintel and mantel set above. Each bedroom has an en-suite bath: those off the southeast and northwest bedrooms are in the same location as historic baths, though they have been slightly reconfigured; the bathroom off the southwest bedroom was added in 2016–2017. At the same time, a kitchen was installed in the northeast corner of the third floor, near the secondary staircase.

The rear ell was remodeled in the mid-twentieth century as a townhouse apartment unit. The ell has a separate entrance in its east elevation, accessed by the porch on the first story. A separate staircase, set in the northwest corner of the ell, provides access between the first and second story living spaces. A living room, kitchen, and bathroom are on the first floor, and two bedrooms and a bathroom are on the second floor. In comparison to the main block of the house, the rear ell is highly reserved in architectural details and richness of materials. Materials on both stories of the ell consist of a mix of replacement and original materials, including light oak hardwood flooring, plaster walls and ceilings, and painted baseboard. Crown molding is found on the first floor of the ell. The bathroom on the second story has a clawfoot tub, most

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likely original to the house. The kitchen was most likely remodeled in the late twentieth century with replacement materials, cabinets, and appliances.

As noted above, a number of interior alterations are attributed to the period when Adolph Audrain owned the property between 1904 and 1919. These include the installation of various decorative elements, including the stained glass, French-style lighting fixtures, and French-style door surrounds for the foyer, living room and dining room. Interior renovations to the building in 2016–2017 consisted primarily of renovating the kitchen, bathrooms, and utility spaces in the main block, reconfiguring the rear stairs in the northeast corner of the main block, and renovating the rear ell. The floor plan remains largely intact, and the house features many of the original and early twentieth-century finishes and decorative elements.

Setting

The Van Rensselaer House was originally set on a parcel of approximately five acres in a rural area of Middletown, close to the boundary with Newport. The grounds of the Van Rensselaer House and its companion, the Hoppin House, were designed by Michael Butler (ca. 1829–1900), a Newport-based gardener of Irish descent,¹ and featured in Jacob Weidenmann’s 1870 publication *Country Homes Near Newport, Rhode Island* (see Figure 1). The two properties were separate, but connected by winding paths and a unified planting scheme. Both had semi-circular entry drives and barns. While the Hoppin property included numerous greenhouses and extensive vegetable gardens, the Van Rensselaer lot was occupied by meandering drives and paths set amidst manicured lawn and ornamental landscaping, including over 40 species of trees. A dense planting of evergreen and deciduous trees separated the houses from one another (Weidenmann 1870; *American Gardening* 1900:27; Jordy and Monkhouse 1982:184–185). Between 1960 and 1970, the Van Rensselaer property was subdivided, and Restmere Terrace and Ichabod Lane were laid out and developed with small-scale, one- and two-story single-family residences. Some remnants of the former grounds have survived, however, including at least one mature beech tree on an adjacent property. A pair of ornamental concrete entrance posts (added between 1904 and 1919) with “Restmere” engraved on the west post, still stand at the location of the eastern entry to the former semi-circular driveway, though they are no longer part of the Van Rensselaer House property. The former barn and a small outbuilding are extant, converted into a residence in the twentieth century; they, too, are no longer part of the property.

¹ When he died in 1870, Michael Butler was hailed as “one of the horticultural pioneers” of Newport by *American Gardening* magazine. He emigrated from County Kilkenny in 1848 and was “engaged in planning and laying out the grounds of many of the principal summer residences of Newport.” (*American Gardening* 1900:27)

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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.)

- 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

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Areas of Significance

(Enter categories from instructions.)

COMMUNITY PLANNING AND DEVELOPMENT

ARCHITECTURE

Period of Significance

1857-1919

Significant Dates

1857: House constructed for Alexander Van Rensselaer

1904-1919: Alterations completed by Adolph Audrain

Significant Person

(Complete only if Criterion B is marked above.)

Cultural Affiliation

N/A

Architect/Builder

Upjohn, Richard

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Statement of Significance Summary Paragraph (Provide a summary paragraph that includes level of significance, applicable criteria, justification for the period of significance, and any applicable criteria considerations.)

The Alexander Van Rensselaer House, also known as Villalou and Restmere, is significant at the local level under Criterion A in the area of Community Planning and Development and Criterion C in the area of Architecture. Built in 1857 as the summer country estate of Alexander Van Rensselaer of New York, the property reflects mid-nineteenth-century resort development on Aquidneck Island, primarily in Newport and Middletown, as wealthy urbanites sought the seasonal benefits of a rural coastal setting. As designed by noted architect Richard Upjohn, the Van Rensselaer House is representative of a transitional moment in American residential architecture, exhibiting elements of the Italianate style and the emerging Stick Style. It is also significant as the work of a distinguished master. Alterations undertaken by the second owner, Adolph Audrain, between 1904 and 1919 reflect the popular revivalist aesthetic preferences of the period, as well as Audrain's decorative arts expertise from his work as an antiques dealer. The period of significance for the property spans from 1857, when the Van Rensselaer House was constructed, through 1919, the last year of Adolph Audrain's ownership.

Narrative Statement of Significance (Provide at least **one** paragraph for each area of significance.)

Criterion A: Community Planning and Development

The rich soil and gently rolling terrain of Middletown on Aquidneck Island in Narragansett Bay, Rhode Island, produced a community of farmers who found ready markets in the growing colonial-era town and port center of neighboring Newport. Newport's development directly impacted Middletown; rural farms provided food for Newport's dense, urban population, and as early as the 1740s prominent Newporters built summer estates on Middletown's undeveloped land.

Newport emerged as one of the principal American summer resorts in the second quarter of the nineteenth century, attracting wealthy business magnates, intellectuals, writers, and artists first from the South and later from New England, New York, and the mid-Atlantic region to its picturesque shoreline and agreeable seaside climate. During the 1830s and 1840s, rooming houses and newly constructed hotels, such as the imposing Ocean House (1840, 1845) and Atlantic House (1840–1844), provided lodging for this new community of seasonal visitors. By the 1850s, wealthy summer residents increasingly built private cottages and villas as their summer homes. In 1852, the extension of Bellevue Avenue to the coastline near what is now called "Bailey's Beach" expanded the areas available for such development and initiated the creation of one of the nation's most striking collections of architect-designed nineteenth-century summer houses. These development patterns transformed Newport into a premier destination for high society between the mid-nineteenth and early twentieth centuries (Baker 1980:120–122; Downing and Scully 1967:121, 131; Pitts 1976a).

As part of the early wave of summer visitors from the South, wealthy Georgian planter and speculator George Noble Jones commissioned one of the first high-style summer cottages in Newport; Richard Upjohn designed a Gothic Revival-style villa, later called "Kingscote" (1839 et seq.; NR 1973; NHL 1996), for Jones in 1839. Upjohn also designed several of the fashionable new Italianate-style "villas" that proliferated in Newport in the 1840s, including the Edward King House (1845–1847) (NR 1970; NHL 1970), the largest

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and grandest house in Newport at that time, built for a successful China Trade merchant. As summer cottage development boomed in Newport, construction spread outward to Ocean Drive and the nearby towns of Middletown and Portsmouth, where country estates and gentleman's farms were built on the traditionally agricultural landscape. Fine summer houses designed by well-known architects in the Greek Revival, Italianate, and Gothic Revival styles were constructed in Middletown, especially along Miantonomi and Paradise avenues and East Main Road (Downing and Scully; Nebiker 1979:5; Pitts 1976b; Snell 1970; Tschirch et al. 1995). The Van Rensselaer House and its companion, the Hamilton Hoppin House, reflect this pattern.

Alexander Van Rensselaer (1814–1878) and Hamilton Hoppin (1821–1885) married sisters of the Howland family of New York City: Mary Ann (1830–1855) and Louisa (1826–1897), respectively (Schenectady Digital History Archive 2015). The sisters' mother, Joanna Esther Hone (1799–1848), was a niece of the New York mayor, diarist, and industrialist Philip Hone (1780–1851), who had vacationed in Newport beginning in the 1830s (Craven 2009:152). Their older sister Caroline (1821–1863) married a Newport native, Charles Handy Russell (1796–1884), who owned a successful shipping firm in New York. Charles and Caroline Russell hired Richard Upjohn to design their Newport home, Oaklawn, in 1852–1853 (demolished) (Bartlett 1879). Upjohn was a logical choice of architect since, as noted above, he was actively engaged in the design of residences for Newport's wealthy summer population. He had also recently designed the Gothic Revival-style Church of the Holy Cross (1845) in Middletown.

Given the Howland sisters' connections to Newport, it is perhaps not surprising that, when it came time to establish their summer estates, they and their husbands looked to Aquidneck Island. In 1855, Hoppin purchased 5¼ acres of land on the top of Miantonomi Hill near the Middletown-Newport line. The location, just over a mile from the coastline to the west and south and less than two miles from the center of Newport, allowed for water views and easy access to the town. Hoppin commissioned Richard Upjohn to design his house, Villalon, completed in 1856, on the west part of the property and sold the east part of the property to Van Rensselaer. Van Rensselaer commissioned Upjohn to design a nearly identical house, originally called Villalou, in 1856, and it was completed the following year. He would have been familiar with Upjohn's work, not only at Villalon and Oaklawn, but also because the architect had completed renovations of the Van Rensselaer house in Albany in 1840–1844, transforming the 1765 residence into an Italian villa.² The Van Rensselaer and Hoppin Houses shared landscaped gardens designed by Michael Butler (Weidenmann 1870; Upjohn 1939:93; Wood and Woodward 1996).

Alexander Van Rensselaer was directly descended from Kiliaen Van Rensselaer, a wealthy seventeenth-century Amsterdam jewel merchant and the first Patroon of the Manor of Rensselaerswyck, which became Albany, New York, when it passed from Dutch to English rule. He was the seventh child of Cornelia Paterson (1780–1844) and General Stephen Van Rensselaer (1764–1839), who had inherited a vast estate in Albany and Rensselaer counties. After graduating from Harvard University, Stephen Van Rensselaer served in state government and as a member of the U.S. Congress (1822–1829). In 1824, he co-founded the prestigious Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute. Alexander Van Rensselaer received a degree in medicine, but never practiced. During his adult life, he was “a man of means and leisure” who traveled extensively and devoted himself to charity. He lived in New York City for about 40 years, where he died in 1878 (Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute 2017; Reynolds 1914:1170–71; *New York Times* 1878:4; Schenectady Digital History Archives 2015; Upjohn 1939:93).

² In 1895, the house was moved to Williams College to serve as the Sigma Phi fraternity house. It no longer stands.

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Van Rensselaer's 1851 marriage to Mary Ann Howland ended upon her death in 1855, the same year Hamilton Hoppin bought the Miantonomi Hill property in Middletown and one year prior to the start of construction of the Van Rensselaer House (*New York Times* 1855). Exactly why Van Rensselaer chose, after Mary's death, to locate his summer home next to that of his in-laws is unknown, although the planning may already have been underway. In addition, the 1855 New York State census lists the Hoppin and Van Rensselaer households one after the other, suggesting they lived in very close proximity in New York City, and Van Rensselaer was left with two small children – Samuel, born in 1852 and Mary, born in 1854 – when his wife died. Perhaps he simply wanted to maintain a relationship with the Howland side of the family. In any case, the house was completed in 1857, apparently with the active engagement of Van Rensselaer; in a letter to Upjohn, dated July 9, 1857 (during construction of the house), Van Rensselaer wrote, "Dear Mr. Upjohn: I received your letter of the 8th July. I wish the Piazza to be 12 ft wide" (Van Rensselaer 1857).

Van Rensselaer's children from his first marriage both died in November 1859, while in France. In 1868, Van Rensselaer married again; he and his second wife, Louisa Barnewell (1836–1920), also of New York City, had three children, Louisa, Mabel, and Alice. Alexander and Louisa Van Rensselaer are shown in Middletown in the 1870 census, along with Louisa (age 4), Mabel (age 1) and nine servants. Following Alexander's death in 1878, Louisa continued to summer at the house until 1904 (Green-wood Cemetery Burial Records 1878, 1920; Reynolds 1914:1171), when she sold the property to Adolph Audrain of New York.

Adolph Louis Audrain (1859–1930) was born in California to French parents. He owned the house as his summer residence, with his wife Mary E. Audrain, until 1919 (Department of State 1930; Union Publishing Co. 1919:146). During that time, he undertook exterior remodeling and interior decorating and renamed the house "Restmere." Audrain was a successful art and antiques dealer specializing in imported French antiques with shops in New York, Paris, and Newport. His Newport shop was in the Audrain Building 220–230 Bellevue Avenue (in Bellevue Avenue-Casino Historic District, NR 1972; in Bellevue Avenue Historic District, NHL 1972) that he commissioned architect Bruce Price (1845–1903) to design in 1902–1903 (Pitts 1976a; Overby and Harrington 1972).

According to one recollected account of Audrain's ownership, written in the mid- to late-twentieth century in the *Newport Daily News*, "The Van Rensselaer House, it was said, was furnished entirely in the French style with all the furniture and fittings made in France. It was shipped to the country in bulk and set up, even to the wallpaper and draperies. The only exception was the billiard room, which was strictly American and in mission style. The various rooms were furnished in Louis XVI or Chippendale. The dining room it was said, was one of the best examples of Gothic style in Newport" (Panaggio n.d.).

At the start of Prohibition (1919–1933) in 1919, Audrain sold the Van Rensselaer House to Rear Admiral William L. Howard. Audrain divested of all his U.S. holdings and emigrated to France. On September 22, 1919, he was quoted in newspapers around the world as saying, "When the American people regain their common sense, which I think will be in about six years, I will come here to reside" (*Newport Daily News* 1920). Audrain remained in France until his death in 1930 and is buried in Paris (State Department 1930).

Rear Admiral William L. Howard sold the Van Rensselaer House to Admiral Edward Clifford Kalbfus (1877–1954) about 1930. Admiral Kalbfus resided in the house with his wife Syria Kalbfus while serving two terms as the President of the U.S. Naval War College at the Naval Training Station on Coaster's Island in Newport, from 1934 to 1936 and 1938 to 1941. Admiral Kalbfus died in 1954 and his wife died six years later (Arlington National Cemetery). The house was unoccupied for a period; in 1964, George Wein,

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founder and director of the Newport Folk Festival and Newport Jazz Festival, rented the Van Rensselaer House to house some of the blues musicians performing at the Folk Festival, including Muddy Waters, Skip James and Mississippi John Hurt. The album *Traditional Music at Newport 1964 Part 1* features a photograph of musicians gathered on the Van Rensselaer House's front porch (<https://oldtimeparty.wordpress.com/2014/11/07/the-blues-house-pt-2/>; That Blues Show.com n.d.).

In 1966, Lucille Meyers purchased the Van Rensselaer House from a developer who had acquired the property and planned to demolish the house and build nine ranch-style houses on the former estate grounds. Myers preserved the house and maintained it within the much-reduced, immediately surrounding land parcel. In 2014, Myers sold the property to Shirley Schiff, who made minor improvements to the kitchen and bathrooms. Schiff sold the Van Rensselaer House to the current owners in 2016.

Criterion C: Architecture

The Van Rensselaer House is an important work of the prolific and influential British-born American architect Richard Upjohn (see biography, below) and among the earliest examples of a picturesque half-timbered and cross-braced house in the United States. The use of applied stick decorative elements in combination with the Italianate style became increasingly popular in the 1860s and 1870s. The Van Rensselaer House demonstrates the architectural innovation and variation that Upjohn advanced, which influenced the course of domestic architectural design in the Newport area and the nation during the nineteenth century.³

American residential architecture in the mid-nineteenth century was shaped by the ideas of romanticism, rationalism, and the picturesque. Writers such as Alexander Jackson Davis in *Rural Residences* (1837) and Andrew Jackson Downing in *Treatise on Landscape Gardening* (1841), *Cottage Residences* (1842) and *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850) promoted romantic, historically-inspired designs, typically expressed in the Gothic Revival and Italianate styles, that harmonized with their natural surroundings. Richard Upjohn employed the Gothic Revival extensively, and very successfully, in his ecclesiastical and residential designs of the 1830s. These included his first important residential commission, Oaklands, the R.H. Gardiner House (1835, NR 1973) in Gardiner, Maine, and his highly original Kingscote (1839, NHL 1996), one of the earliest summer "cottages" in Newport. Kingscote employs a complex massing and roof line with a picturesque play of light and relates strongly to its natural surroundings. Executed in wood, it is sheathed in horizontal matched boards with applied ornament but is not expressive of its structural skeleton. It served as a model for the Gothic wooden cottages subsequently promoted by Downing in his pattern books of the 1840s and 1850s (Jordy and Monkhouse 1982:236).

Upjohn also helped popularize the other pictorial expression, the Italian Villa, as illustrated by the brick Edward King House (1845–47, NHL 1970). Considered an early and exceptionally fine prototype of the form in America, it was included in Downing's *The Architecture of Country Houses* (1850) as "one of the most successful specimens of the Italian style in the United States" (Downing 1850:317). It displays an asymmetrical plan, heavy massing, and monumentality that creates visual interest with limited ornament. While differentiated by their weight and mass, Kingscote and the Edward King House are similar in their free arrangement of interior space and general picturesque composition. Upjohn's asymmetrical Charles H. Russell House, Oaklawn (1851–1852; not extant), in Newport is another notable example of his work in the Italianate, this time executed with smooth wood horizontal siding and heavy bracketed detailing. The

³ The Hamilton Hoppin House National Register nomination provides an analysis of importance of the Hoppin House design by Richard Upjohn, and by extension, the similar Alexander Van Rensselaer House (Wood and Woodward 1996).

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Grove (1852–1853, NR 2008) in Cold Spring, New York, is a more sedate rectangular Italianate form presented in brick with a symmetrical arrangement of openings and restrained trim. In the 1840s, Upjohn remodeled two houses of prominent individuals in New York to reflect the popular Italianate and Italian Villa styles: the 1795 Van Rensselaer House (1840–44) in Albany; and the 1797 Lindenwald, Martin Van Buren National Historic Site, (1849–50, NR 1966; NHL 1961) in Kinderhook (Downing and Scully 1967:130–137; Tschirch et al. 1995; Olausen et al. 2011; Upjohn 1939:93, 103).

Upjohn’s residential design took a new direction in the mid-1850s, when he began incorporating exterior framing motifs into the Italianate style. He had traveled to Germany, Switzerland, and Italy, including time in the Alps, in 1850, where he would have had the opportunity to study medieval European architecture. He may also have been influenced by the Vienna-trained émigré Leopold Eidlitz (1823–1908), who had worked in Upjohn’s office in the 1840s, and who designed at least one Swiss-chalet-inspired, half-timbered building, the Hamilton Ferry House (ca. 1853; not extant) in Brooklyn, New York (Wood and Woodward 1996; Upjohn 1939:125, Figure 76).

The Van Rensselaer House is one of three examples of Upjohn’s smaller, wood-frame, Italianate-style houses of the mid-1850s, in which he first introduced the application of stick decoration. The others are the George M. Atwater House (1854–1855; not extant) in Springfield, Massachusetts and the Hamilton Hoppin House (1856). The interior plan of the Van Rensselaer House, like that of the Hoppin House, is a traditional center hall plan; it is the exterior wall treatment that distinguishes the design. As in the Hoppin House, Upjohn used a rectilinear, symmetrical-plan and low hip roof to establish the basic three-story, box-like Italianate-style form of the Van Rensselaer House. The arcaded full veranda is likewise a hallmark of the Italianate style. The George M. Atwater House exterior differs with a more prominent roof and a slight second story overhang. In the Van Rensselaer House, Upjohn used a simple decorative scheme with a bracketed cornice, narrow corner boards and trim band between the first and second floor, and a veneer of applied chamfered cross-bracing frieze into which he placed the third-floor windows. By contrast, the exterior wall surface treatment of the Hoppin House included chamfered vertical and horizontal half-timbering of the first and second stories and the board-and-batten frieze between the roof cornice and the cross-braced panels. The George M. Atwater House used chamfered corner boards, vertical siding, and bracketed cornices. Upjohn’s use of half-timbering and cross bracing may well have been an experiment to enliven and reduce the blockish urban appearance of the façade and better fit it in the semi-rural setting (Jordy and Monkhouse 1982:184–185; Yarnall 2005:57–58).

The Van Rensselaer House and the Hamilton Hoppin House have been subject to scholarly interest and inquiry since the 1950s. As the slightly earlier and more elaborate of the two houses, and the one for which plans exist, the Hoppin House has received the greatest attention (such as Upjohn 1939:125–126, Figure 77; Wood and Woodward 1996).⁴ In *The Architectural Heritage of Newport, Rhode Island*, architectural historians Antoinette Downing and Vincent Scully comment on Upjohn’s development of the exterior wall surfaces of the Hoppin House with “a series of vertical and horizontal members which schematically indicate the vertical posts and horizontal plates of the actual frame.” The authors note that “The Van Rensselaer House, which was soon built beside the Hoppin House and imitated it, copied carefully the details of the piazza porch but retained of the skeletal articulation only a single rather meaningless frieze of diagonals under the roof” (Downing and Scully 1967:141). Nonetheless, Downing and Scully conclude that “Upjohn’s projected skeletonization of the surface is fairly early of its kind” (Downing and Scully 1967:141), predating the development of what would come to be known as the Stick Style. A transitional

⁴ The Van Rensselaer House was, for a time, considered lost; the second edition of Antoinette Downing and Vincent Scully’s *The Architectural Heritage of Newport, Rhode Island* (1967) stated that the house had been demolished after 1952 (Plate 172).

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style linking the Gothic Revival and the Queen Anne, the Stick Style emerged around 1860 and remained in use until ca. 1890. Less common than the Italianate and Second Empire styles, the Stick Style mostly appeared in resort and suburban settings. Its proponents lauded the structural honesty of the exterior applied trim as reflective of the interior, balloon-frame construction. In truth, the exterior trim was generally a decorative overlay that bore no direct connection to structure, but can still be seen as an expression of vernacular American wood-frame architecture.

William Jordy and Christopher Monkhouse, in *Buildings on Paper* (1982), consider the Hoppin and Van Rensselaer Houses as a pair, with Upjohn's half-timbering being not so much a "visual metaphor for the timber framing within," but a way to reduce the buildings' mass by breaking their surfaces down into smaller units (Jordy and Monkhouse 1982:184). Jordy and Monkhouse suggest that the Hoppin and Van Rensselaer Houses may have directly influenced Richard Morris Hunt's design of the John N.A. Griswold House (1864, NHL 2000) on Bellevue Avenue in Newport, the first example of the mature Stick Style. Located in the center of Newport and highly visible, the Griswold House set the standard for domestic architecture of the 1860s and 1870s in Newport and elsewhere (Jordy and Monkhouse 1982:185; McAlester 1984:336; Wood and Woodward 1996; Donovan et al. 2000). The legacy of this aesthetic in Newport includes Thayer Cottage (1870–72) by Peabody and Stearns; the George Champlin Mason House (1873–74), designed by Champlin for himself; and, in Middletown, the Jacob Cram-Mary Sturtevant House (1871–72) by Dudley Newton.

The first American to study architecture at the École des Beaux Arts in Paris, Richard Morris Hunt (1827–1895) returned to the United States in 1855 and rapidly became one of the most influential architects of his time, working primarily in Newport, Boston, and New York (Baker 1986:4, 8; Stein 1986:xiii, 176, 177). He was familiar with Upjohn's office in New York (the men were co-founders of the American Institute of Architects in 1857) and had married Catherine Clinton Howland, sister of Louisa Howland Hoppin and the deceased Mary Howland Van Rensselaer, in 1861. Through his association with Upjohn in New York City and his family connections in Newport, Hunt surely would have been acquainted with the Hoppin and Van Rensselaer houses.⁵ Hunt's travel sketch books from his time in Europe demonstrate that he was familiar with half-timbering in Europe and England. Upjohn's Hoppin and Van Rensselaer houses may have shown him how effective the treatment could be in American resort architecture (Jordy and Monkhouse 1982:184–185).

The Van Rensselaer House has been subject to several alterations over time; however, these changes do not detract from the building's integrity and are in most cases now architecturally significant in their own right. By 1895 (based on historic maps), two, two-story, angled bays were added on the east and west elevations, framing the façade, and a two-story service ell had been built off the north elevation. These additions meld with the original design and repeat the main block's exterior wall and trim treatments. Other exterior and interior changes were likely executed between 1904 and 1919 by the second owner, Adolph Audrain; they reflect the highly decorative Beaux Arts tastes of the Gilded Age and Audrain's aesthetic preference for French antiques. The exterior modifications of the Van Rensselaer House are loosely Beaux Arts or Classical Revival and relatively simple, and they do not detract from the overall architecture of the original design. The reduction of the second-floor footprint of the two-story angled projecting bays retains the exterior treatments and reduces the blocky mass of the building when seen from the front. The curved end additions to the front porch and the curved splay of the porch stairs soften some of the hard edges of the

⁵ Alexander Van Rensselaer may have engaged Richard Morris Hunt in a project to modify his Middletown house in 1867–1868, as there are reportedly two invoices in the Hunt papers at the Library of Congress for work on the Van Rensselaer house at this time. The nature and extent of those alterations are not currently known (Baker 1980:490; Ronald Onorato personal communication 2017; Richard Guy Wilson personal communication 2017).

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frontispiece. The relocation of the porch balustrade from the porch roof and its extension on the ends and stairs keeps and reuses this important trim element. The changes to the main entrance door and the windows on the first floor of the façade are relatively minor and barely visible under the porch. The one-story, shallow bowed bay addition set towards the rear of the west elevation and the two-story, angled bay on the north elevation allow more natural light into the northwest room and are not visible from primary vantage points. The interior modifications completed during Audrain's ownership involved installing French antique trim in the first-floor hall to create a grand classically-inspired main entrance and passage to the flanking dining and living rooms. The addition of antique French lighting fixtures, the massive fireplace mantel in the northwest room, and tiled bathrooms, along with other minor changes, continue the high architectural quality of the interior public and private spaces and finishes.

Few alterations occurred between 1919 and the present, with the exception of a few window replacements and the conversion of the rear ell to townhouse units in the mid-twentieth century. The renovations completed in 2016–2017, described in Section 7, made relatively minor changes to the floor plan and preserved many significant interior finishes.

Richard Upjohn (1802–1878)

Richard Upjohn, one of the preeminent architects of the mid-nineteenth-century, was influential in the development of American ecclesiastical and domestic architecture and had a significant impact in Newport and Middletown, Rhode Island. Upjohn was born in Shaftesbury, England in 1802. He worked as an apprentice to a builder and cabinet maker, where he showed a talent for drawing and mathematics. Five years after opening his own cabinet shop, he immigrated to New Bedford, Massachusetts in 1829 with his wife Elisabeth and two-year-old son Richard. Upjohn moved to Boston in 1833 and worked in the architectural office of the prominent architect-engineer Alexander Parris (1780–1852) before setting up his own office. In 1839, Upjohn moved to New York City, where his practice would from thereon be based, and completed Trinity Church (1839–46, NHL 1976) in the English Gothic style. Upjohn is widely celebrated for his ecclesiastical architecture and designed more than 50 churches in New England, New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania, Texas, Alabama, Minnesota, Wisconsin, and Utah. In addition to Trinity Church, his noted Gothic Revival church designs include St. John's Episcopal Church in Bangor, Maine (1835–36, burned 1911), Grace Church in Providence, Rhode Island (1845; with Cram, Goodhue & Ferguson, NR 1972), and Saint Paul's Cathedral in Buffalo, New York, 1849–51, NHL 1987). To support and promote his ecclesiastical work, Upjohn published *Upjohn's Rural Architecture: Designs, working drawings and specifications for a wooden church and other rural structures* in 1852. The designs presented in this publication were used widely across the country during the second half of the nineteenth century.

Upjohn completed many residential commissions, in Massachusetts, New York, Ohio, Pennsylvania, and Rhode Island. In addition to the Van Rensselaer and Hoppin Houses in Middletown, they include three National Historic Landmarks: his first project, the Greek Revival-style William Rotch, Jr. House in New Bedford, Massachusetts (1834, NHL 2005); the Gothic Revival-style Kingscote in Newport, Rhode Island (1839, NHL 1996); and the prototype of an Italian Villa in America, the Edward King House, Newport, Rhode Island (1845–47, NHL 1970).

Upjohn was an undisputed leader in his field. In 1857, thirteen architects met in his office to create an organization to promote architects and architecture – the beginnings of the American Institute of Architects (AIA). Upjohn served as the first President of the AIA from 1857 to 1876. His accomplishments were also recognized in Europe, where he was elected an honorary member of the Royal Institute of British Architects and of the Institute of Portuguese Architects (Baker 1980:110; Withey and Withey 1970:612).

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Personal Communication

Richard Guy Wilson, Commonwealth Professor, Architectural History, University of Virginia, Charlottesville, VA. Interview with Virginia H. Adams, PAL, October 11, 2017.

Ronald Onorato, Professor and Chair, Department of Art & Art History, University of Rhode Island Kingston, RI. Interview with Virginia H. Adams, PAL, October 12, 2017.

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): _____

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10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property 0.436 acres

Use either the UTM system or latitude/longitude coordinates

Latitude/Longitude Coordinates

Datum if other than WGS84: _____

(enter coordinates to 6 decimal places)

- | | |
|--------------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Latitude: 41.302362 N | Longitude: -71.174752 W |
| 2. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 3. Latitude: | Longitude: |
| 4. Latitude: | Longitude: |

Or

UTM References

Datum (indicated on USGS map):

NAD 1927 or NAD 1983

- | | | |
|----------|-----------|-----------|
| 1. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 2. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 3. Zone: | Easting: | Northing: |
| 4. Zone: | Easting : | Northing: |

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

The boundary of the Van Rensselaer House encompasses the City Assessor's Parcel 140 on Plat Map 108SE, which contains a total land area of 0.436 acres within the southwest part of Middletown, Rhode Island, near the Newport, Rhode Island town boundary.

Boundary Justification (Explain why the boundaries were selected.)

The boundary follows legally recorded property lines for 1 Ichabod Lane, Middletown, Rhode Island.

Van Rensselaer, Alexander House
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11. Form Prepared By

name/title: Virginia H. Adams/Senior Architectural Historian, Melissa J. Andrade/
Architectural Historian, Michelle H. Johnstone/Asst. Architectural Historian
organization: The Public Archaeology Laboratory, Inc. (PAL)
street & number: 26 Main Street
city or town: Pawtucket state: Rhode Island zip code: 02860
e-mail: vadams@palinc.com
telephone: (401)728-8780
date: March 2018

Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

- **Maps:** A **USGS map** or equivalent (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.
- **Sketch map** for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources. Key all photographs to this map.
- **Additional items:** (Check with the SHPO, TPO, or FPO for any additional items.)

Photographs

Submit clear and descriptive photographs. The size of each image must be 1600x1200 pixels (minimum), 3000x2000 preferred, at 300 ppi (pixels per inch) or larger. Key all photographs to the sketch map. Each photograph must be numbered and that number must correspond to the photograph number on the photo log. For simplicity, the name of the photographer, photo date, etc. may be listed once on the photograph log and doesn't need to be labeled on every photograph.

Photo Log

Name of Property:	Van Rensselaer House
City or Vicinity:	Middletown
County:	Newport
State:	Rhode Island
Name of Photographer:	Melissa J. Andrade (PAL)
Date of Photographs:	September 28, 2017
Location of Original Digital Files:	Rhode Island Historical Preservation and Heritage Commission, 150 Benefit Street, Providence, RI 02903

Van Rensselaer, Alexander House
Name of Property

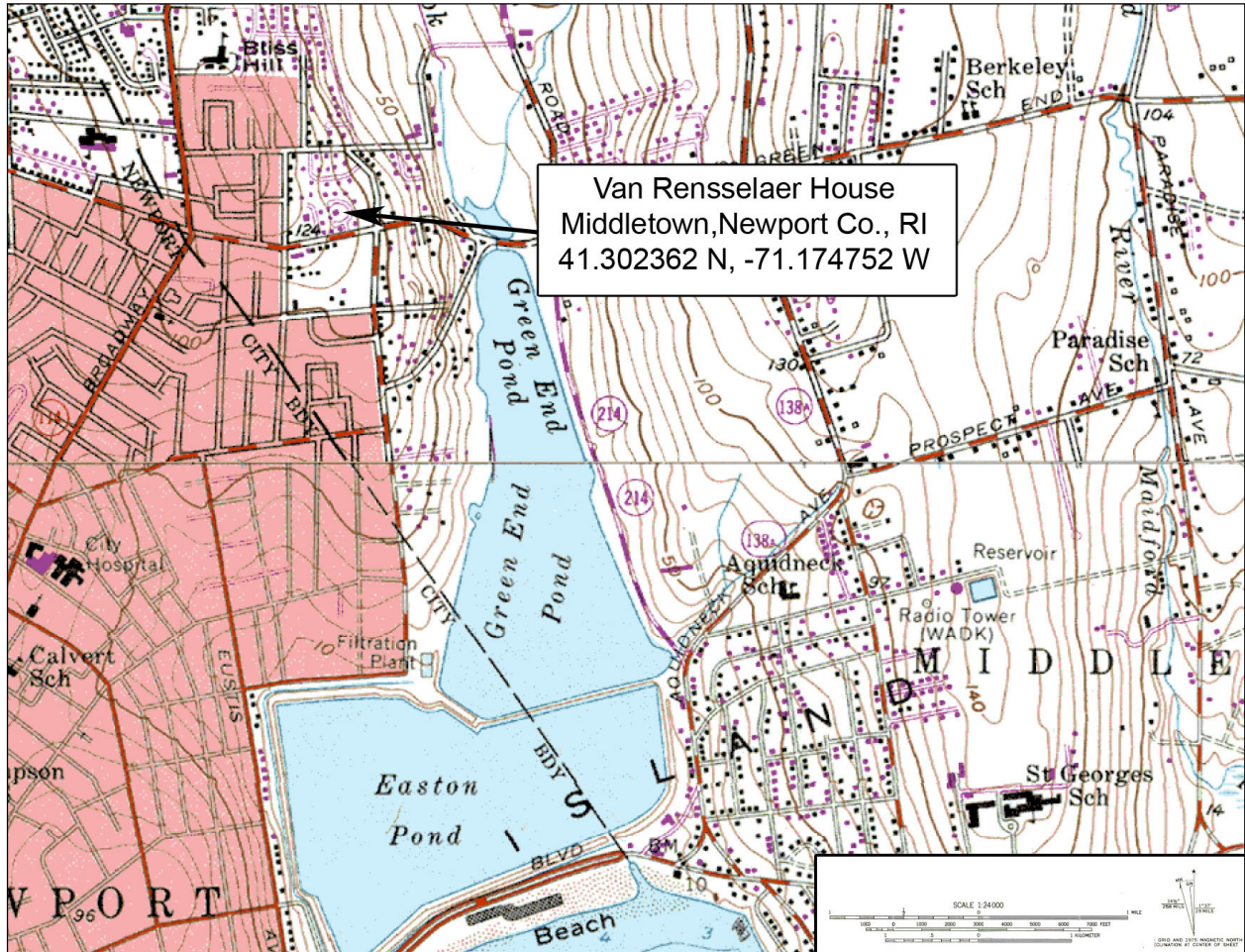
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Number of Photographs: 26

- Photo #1 Van Rensselaer House, façade (south) elevation, looking north.
- Photo #2 Detail of primary entrance, looking north.
- Photo #3 Detail of half-timbering on third story, looking north at façade.
- Photo #4 Façade and west elevation, looking northeast.
- Photo #5 Façade and east elevation, looking northwest.
- Photo #6 East elevation and rear ell, looking southwest.
- Photo #7 Rear (north) and west elevations, looking southeast.
- Photo #8 Front porch, looking east.
- Photo #9 Basement staircase, looking northeast.
- Photo #10 Basement laundry room, looking southwest.
- Photo #11 Entry hall and staircase, looking north.
- Photo #12 Detail of staircase, looking north.
- Photo #13 Detail of door surrounds in hall, looking south.
- Photo #14 Original fireplace in the study on the first floor, looking southwest.
- Photo #15 Study, looking northeast.
- Photo #16 Detail of doors in the living room, looking east.
- Photo #17 Living room, looking northwest.
- Photo #18 Kitchen, looking southwest.
- Photo #19 Dining room, looking west.
- Photo #20 Second-floor landing, looking north.
- Photo #21 Second-floor bedroom, looking southwest.
- Photo #22 Detail of fireplace and inlaid mirror in second-floor bedroom, looking north.
- Photo #23 Second-floor bedroom, looking northeast.
- Photo #24 Second-floor master bathroom, looking northeast.
- Photo #25 Third-floor bedroom, looking northeast.
- Photo #26 Third-floor bedroom, looking northeast.

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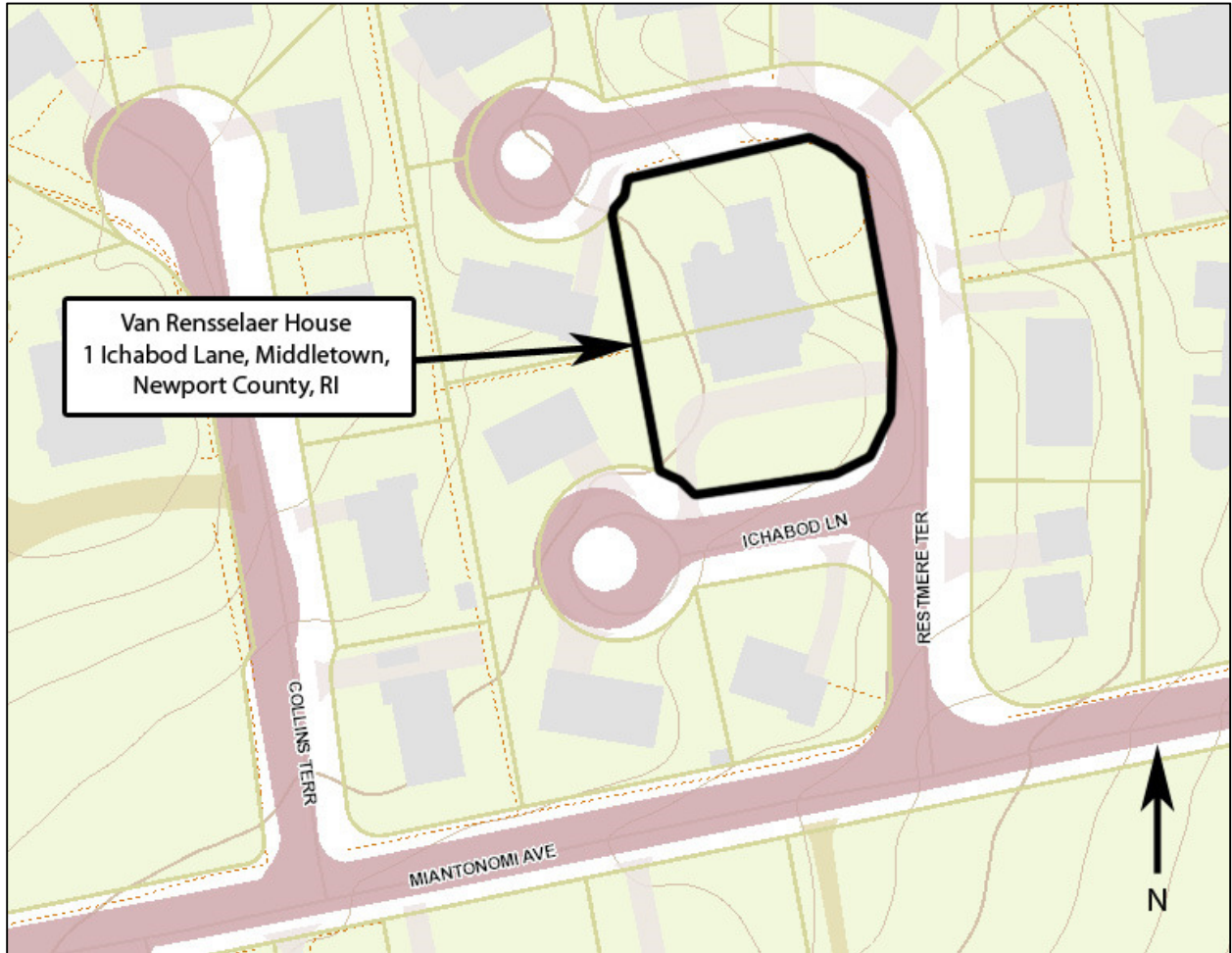
Newport Co., RI
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Location of Van Rensselaer House.

Van Rensselaer, Alexander House
Name of Property

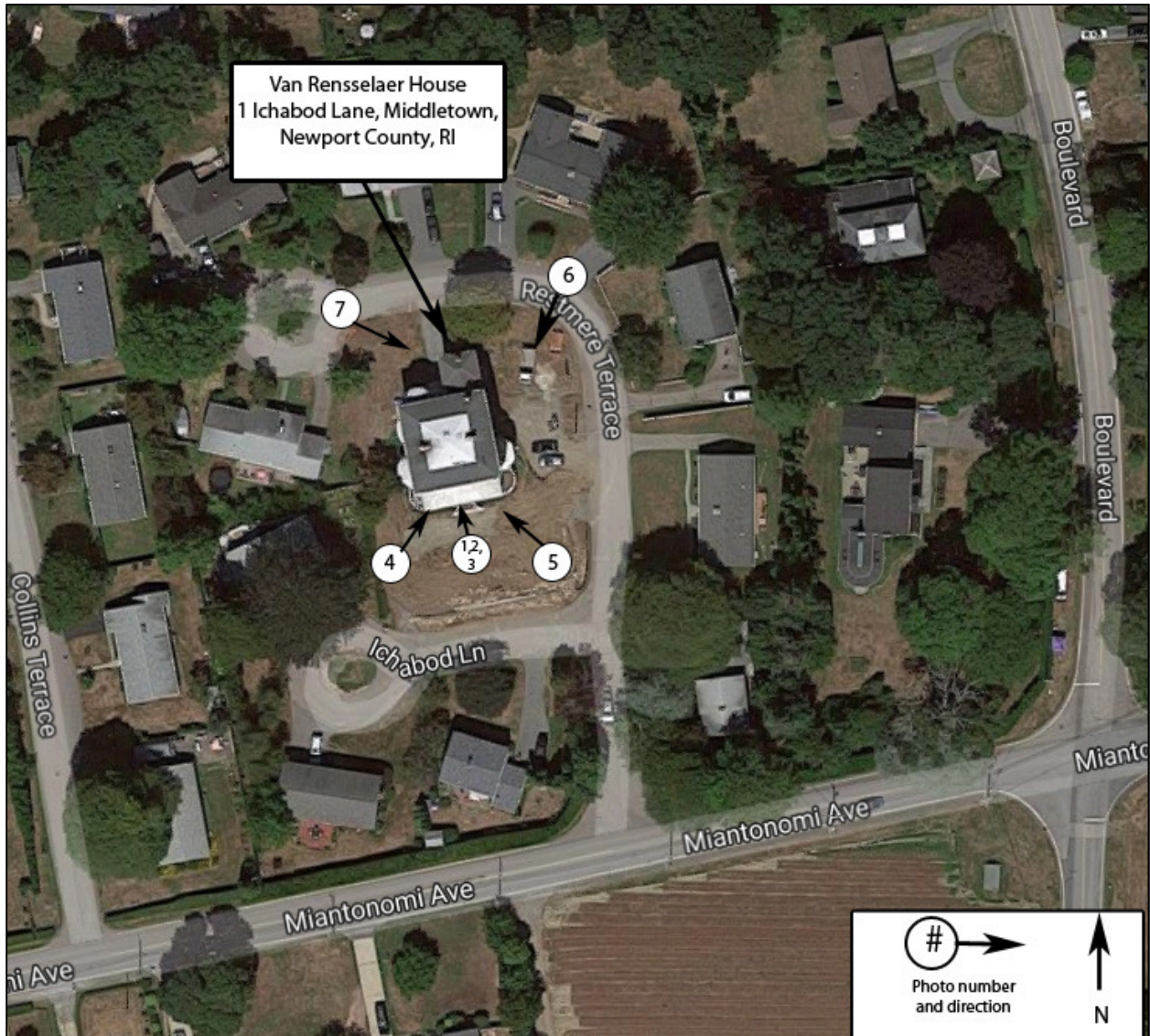
Newport Co., RI
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Location of the Van Rensselaer House, Middletown Assessor's Map (City Assessor's Plat Map 108SE, Parcel 140).

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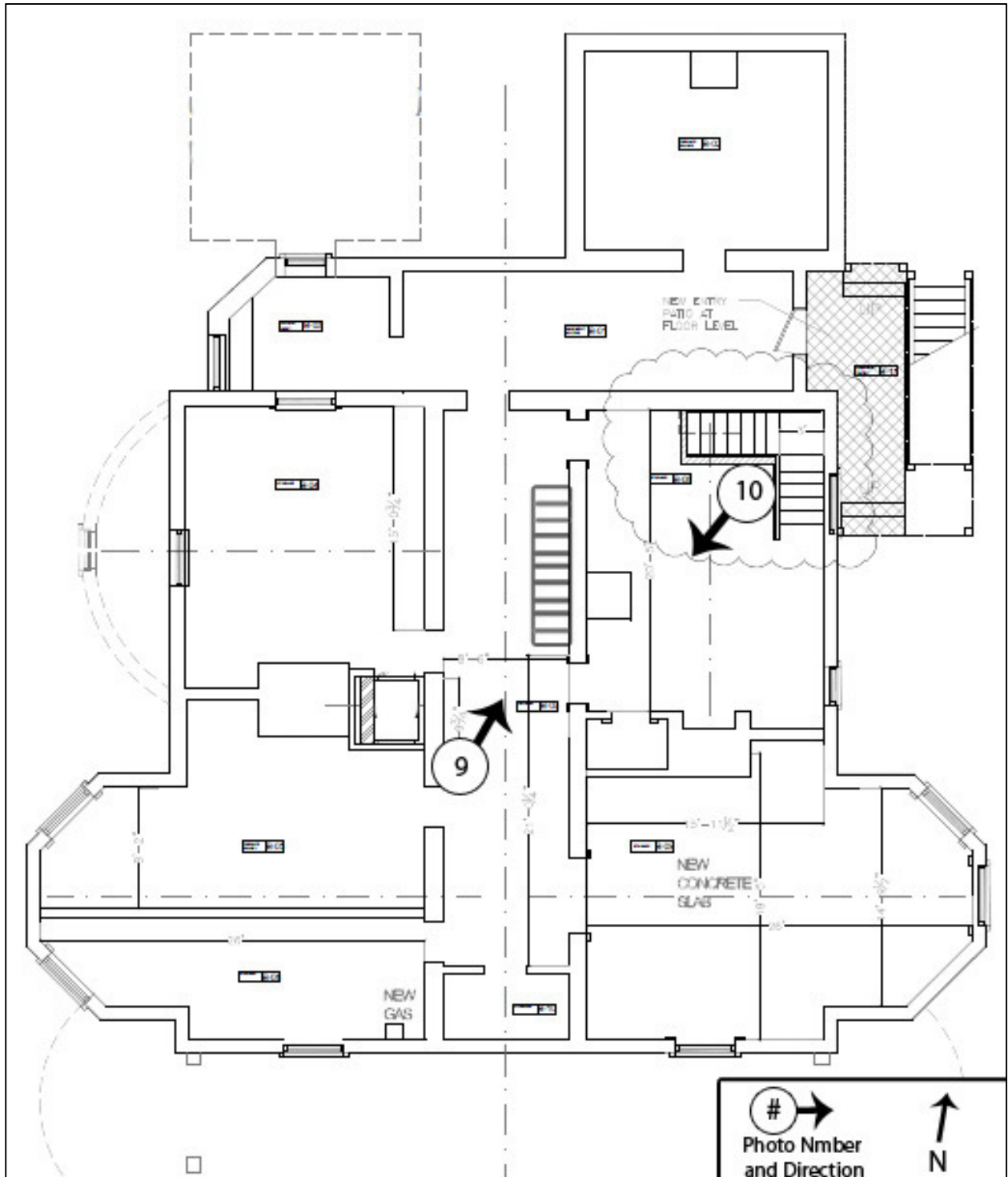
Newport Co., RI
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Key to Photographs: Exterior (source: Google Earth).

Van Rensselaer, Alexander House
Name of Property

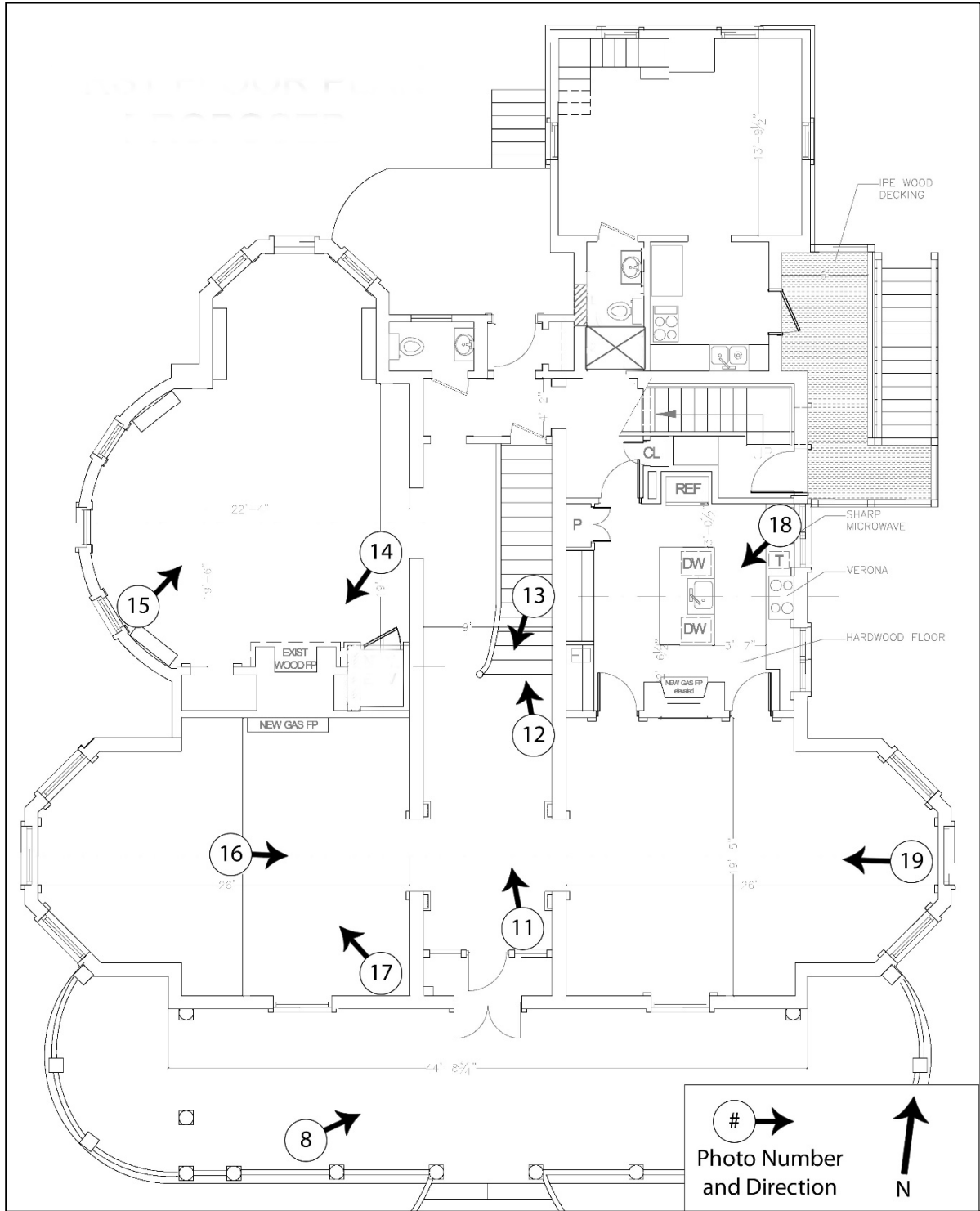
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Key to Photographs: Basement (source: Grosvenor 2016).

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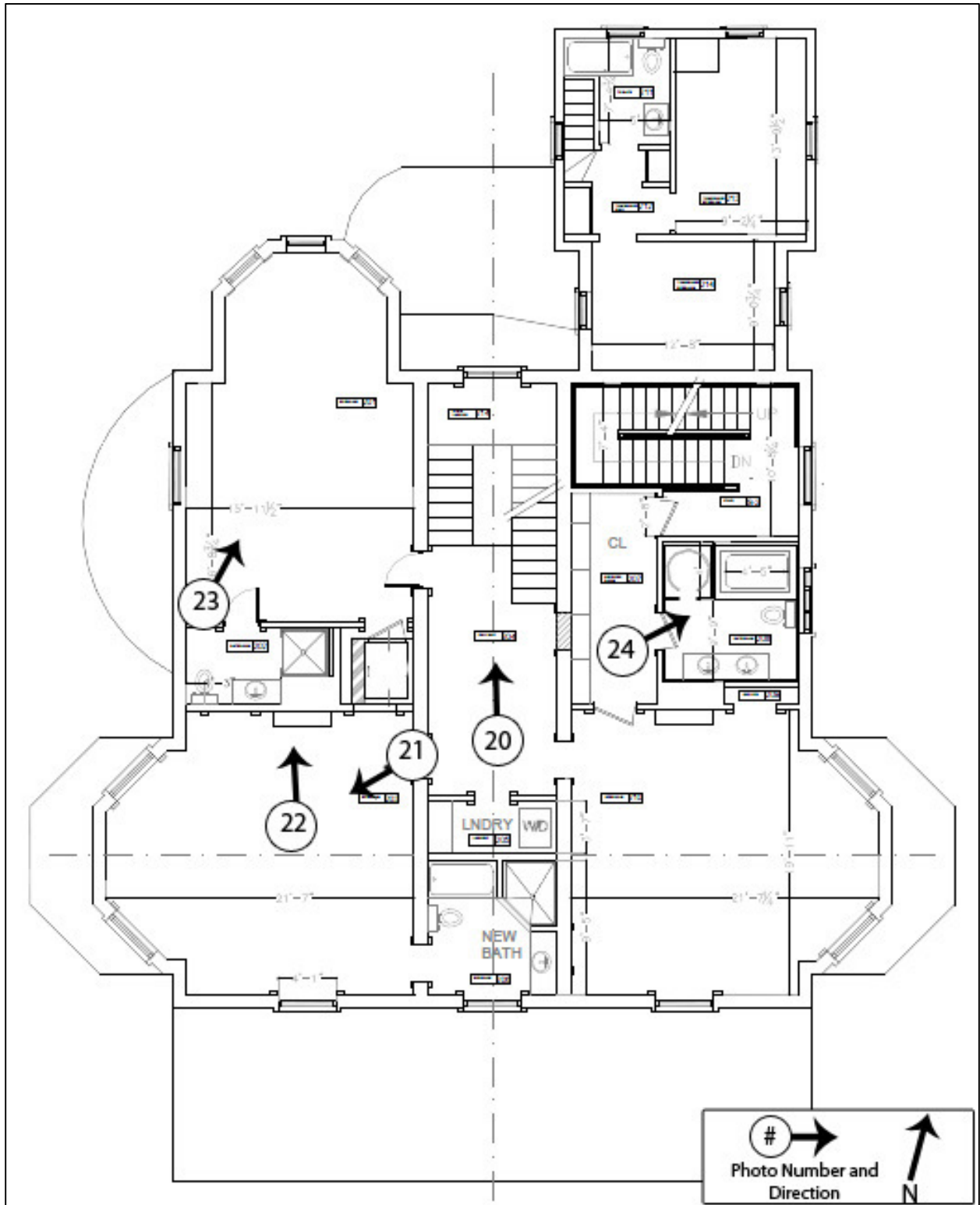
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Key to Photographs: First Floor (source: Grosvenor 2016).

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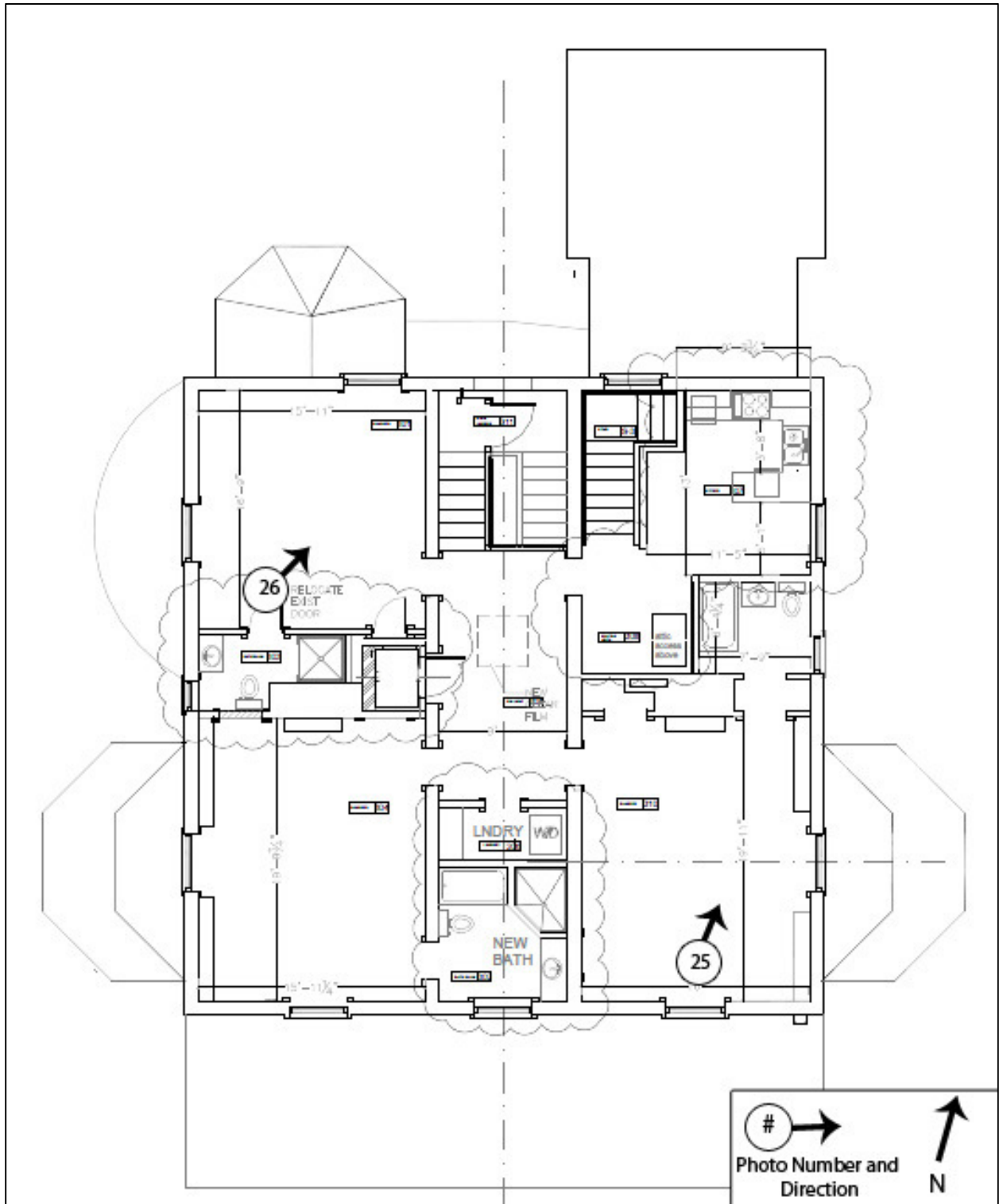
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Key to Photographs: Second Floor (source: Grosvenor 2016).

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Key to Photographs: Third Floor (source: Grosvenor 2016).

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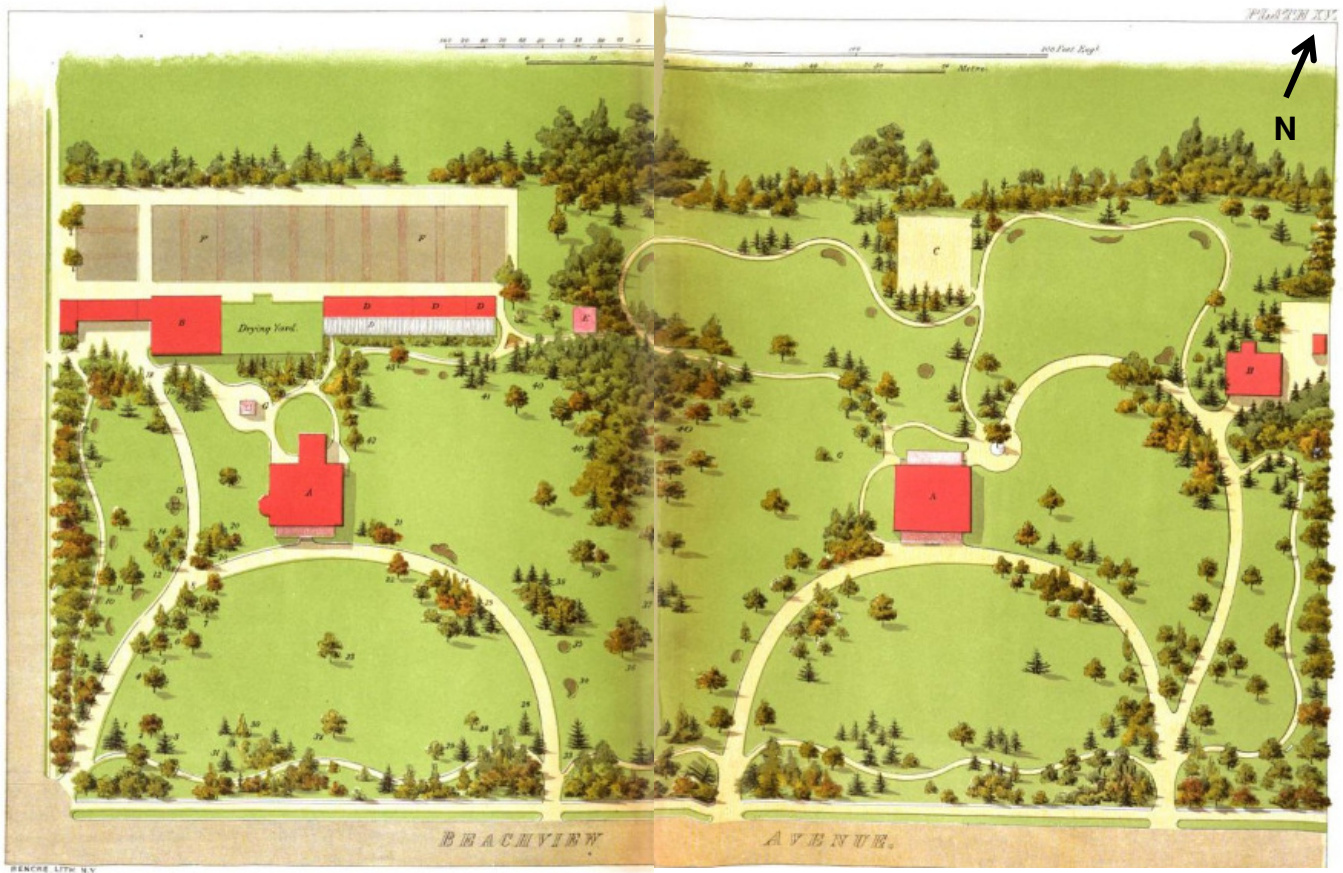


Figure 1. Plan of Hoppin House (left), and Van Rensselaer House (right) showing the house's original form with a front and rear porch (source: Weidenmann 1870).

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Figure 2. Photograph of Van Rensselaer House taken between 1880 and 1900, showing the original configuration of façade openings, porch design, and the two-story bays on the east and west elevations (source: Clarence Stanhope in Downing and Scully 1967).

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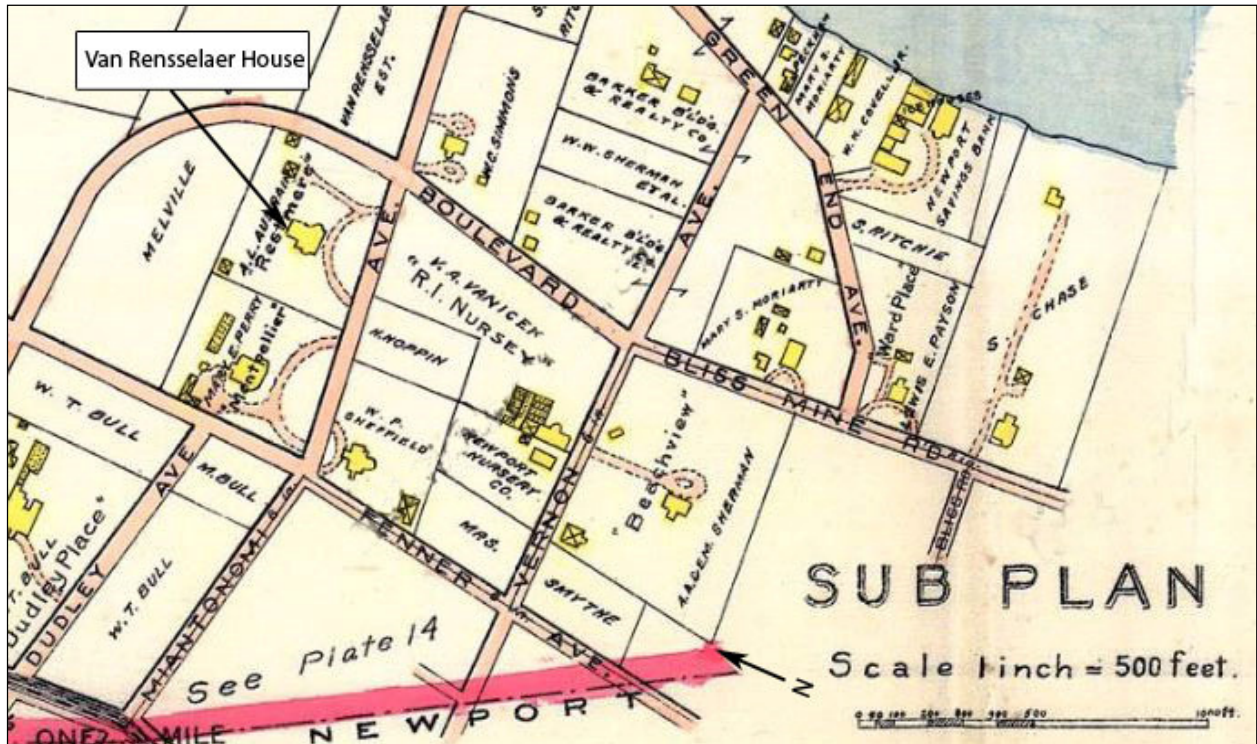


Figure 4. 1907 J.L. Richards map indicating the location of the Van Rensselaer House (source: J.L. Richards 1907).

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 100 hours per response including time for reviewing instructions, gathering and maintaining data, and completing and reviewing the form. Direct comments regarding this burden estimate or any aspect of this form to the Office of Planning and Performance Management, U.S. Dept. of the Interior, 1849 C. Street, NW, Washington, DC.



















































