

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 *How to Complete the National Register of Historic Places Registration Form* (National Register Bulletin 16A). Complete each item by marking "x" in the appropriate box or by entering the information requested. If an item does not apply to the property being documented, enter "N/A" for "not applicable." For functions, architectural classification, materials, and areas of significance, enter only categories and subcategories from the instructions. Place additional entries and narrative items on continuation sheets (NPS Form 10-900a). Use a typewriter, word processor, or computer, to complete all items.

**1. Name of Property**

historic name Fine Arts and Flower Building, Altamont Fairgrounds

other name/site number Exhibition Hall

**2. Location**

street & town Altamont Fairgrounds, vicinity of Grand Street  not for publication

city or town Village of Altamont  vicinity

state New York code NY county Albany code 001 zip code \_\_\_\_\_

**3. State/Federal Agency Certification**

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I hereby certify that this  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  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. I recommend that this property be considered significant  nationally  statewide  locally. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

 Signature of certifying official/Title

 12/03/03 Date

State of Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

In my opinion, the property  meets  does not meet the National Register criteria. ( See continuation sheet for additional comments.)

Signature of certifying official/Title \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

State or Federal agency and bureau \_\_\_\_\_

**4. National Park Service Certification**

I hereby certify that the property is:

- entered in the National Register.
  - See continuation sheet.
- determined eligible for the National Register.
  - See continuation sheet.
- 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)

- public-local
- private
- public-State
- public-Federal

**Category of Property**  
(check only one box)

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

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

Contributing

1

Noncontributing

1

buildings  
sites  
structures  
objects  
Total

### Name of related multiple property listing

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

**Number of contributing resources previously listed  
in the National Register**

### 6. Function or Use

#### Historic Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: museum

#### Current Function

(Enter categories from instructions)

RECREATION AND CULTURE: museum

### 7. Description

#### Architectural Classification

(Enter categories from instructions)

OTHER

#### Materials

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation CONCRETE

walls WOOD

roof METAL

other GLASS

#### Narrative Description

(Describe the historic and current condition of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

See Continuation Sheets-

Property Name Altamont Fairgrounds Fine Arts and Flower  
Building  
Location Altamont, Albany County, New York

NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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**7. Narrative Description**

The Altamont Fairgrounds are located in the Village of Altamont, a small hamlet situated approximately ten miles northwest of the City of Albany on the northern fringe of Albany County. The fairground property is generally flat in character, bounded to the southwest by a forested ridge that extends from the highest point of the Helderberg Mountains further to the south. The Fine Arts and Flower Building, or Exhibition Hall, is located in the extreme northwest corner of the complex, off of the racetrack, near the gatehouses flanking the Grand Street entrance. The building rests on an extremely slight rise that raises it perhaps a foot above the grade level of the asphalt area immediately south and east of the building. A narrow border of grass articulates a small area between the building and the asphalt. Buildings representing a number of periods in the fair's evolution are situated to the immediate north of the Fine Arts building, aligned along a narrow access way. A small landscaped area with deciduous trees and shrubbery fronts the east elevation and highlights the path that leads to the entrance on this side. Otherwise the area around the remainder of the elevations is open and the view to the building is largely unobstructed from within the core of the fairground, the area immediately around the track.

The fairground complex was evaluated in its entirety during the nomination process. Unfortunately a number of alterations have occurred to the fairground layout and during the 1980s the grandstand, essentially the primary character-defining architectural feature of agricultural fairgrounds and the visual anchor of the track, was lost to fire and replaced with a more utilitarian structure. The dual gatehouses were likewise evaluated for listing along with the Fine Arts building as a small district but it was determined that their physical fabric had been significantly undermined and therefore they lacked sufficient integrity under the National Register criteria. The area between the gatehouses and exhibition hall has likewise received non-historic infill construction compromising the interrelationship of the two buildings. Therefore only the Fine Arts and Flower Building, which maintains a high level of historic physical integrity, is being nominated for listing at this time.

*Interior and Exterior*

The Fine Arts and Flower Building is a large one-story cruciform building with a stout, pyramidal-roofed tower at the crossing. The building was constructed with a light wood frame sheathed in novelty siding with vertical board-and-batten siding above. The pitched roofs of the four arms of the cross and the pyramidal roof of the tower are clad in raised seam metal; the gables are terminated by boxed wood cornices and have deeply projecting eaves. Fenestration consists of Palladian windows with multi-pane sash and molded casings in the gable fields of each of the four projections; continuous window bands in the tower, consisting of nine square-headed windows each double-hung with original nine-over-nine light sash, are situated on each of the four sides of the tower and light the interior from above. Sliding vertical batten wood doors are situated beneath each of the Palladian windows and allow for access to the building's interior. Outside of the Palladian motifs and the cavetto-type wood cornice of the tower the building displays no other overt stylistic

Property Name *Altamont Fairgrounds Fine Arts and Flower Building*  
Location *Altamont, Albany County, New York*

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references, excepting the vertical board-and-batten siding that lends a vertical emphasis. Though modest in scale and detail the building is nonetheless pleasing in its proportion and massing.

The interior of the building is given over entirely to a single open area, largely unfinished. The floor consists of poured concrete. Where each of the four arms of the cross intersect the tower, at the crossing, there are exposed king-post trusses braced at the corners. The inside walls and ceiling of the tower are finished with narrow width beaded-board; the remainder of the interior is clad in unpainted ship-lapped board. The rafters and purlins of the roof framing of the four arms of the building are exposed.

*Major alterations and losses*

The Fine Arts and Flower Building remains much as it was when completed in the summer of 1896. The only significant change to the building was the replacement of the original slate roof with raised-seam metal at an unknown date.

## 8. Significance

### Applicable National Register Criteria

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

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

### Criteria Considerations

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

Property is:

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

### Narrative Statement of Significance

(Explain the significance of the property on one or more continuation sheets.)

## 9. Major Bibliographical References

### Bibliography

(Cite the books, articles, and other sources used in preparing this form on one or more continuation sheets.)

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 # \_\_\_\_\_

### Areas of Significance

(enter categories from instructions)

ARCHITECTURE

### Period of Significance

1896

### Significant Dates

### Significant Persons

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

### Cultural Affiliation

### Architect/Builder

Schoonmaker, Hiram; builder

### Primary location of additional data:

- State Historic Preservation Office
- Other State agency
- Federal agency
- Local government
- University
- Other Name of repository: \_\_\_\_\_

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Building  
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**8. Narrative Statement of Significance**

The Fine Arts and Flower Building, located at the Altamont Fairgrounds in the Village of Altamont, is significant in the local context as a highly intact example of fairground architecture in Albany County, New York. Constructed in 1896 and built by contractor Hiram Schoonmaker, the building, also referred to as the Exhibition Hall, was patterned closely after the Domestic Pavilion or Ladies Pavilion at the Cobleskill Fairgrounds. The building has remained in continuous use at the fairgrounds since its completion and is the most intact resource of the dozens of buildings that remain there to chronicle the history and evolution of the fair.

The formation of agricultural fairs in the United States stemmed from the republic's need to advance agricultural practices and technology and was derived from similar events held in Great Britain such as the Bath Agricultural Fair. By the early nineteenth century regional agricultural societies were forming in New York State, following the precedent of the Society for the Promotion of Agriculture, Arts and Manufacturers, founded in 1791, which as part of its activities published technical information for the benefit of state farmers. Early fairs in New York State included those sponsored near Auburn by the Agricultural Association of Cayuga County, formed in 1818, and the Otsego County Fair in Cooperstown, organized in 1816 largely through the efforts of promoter Elkanah Watson. Agricultural fairs provided a venue where the dissemination of information on traditional agricultural issues facing the farmer, among them soil exhaustion and drainage, insect and drought issues, and the improvement of established breeds, could be addressed. Early fairs were often established along the lines created by Watson for the agricultural fair he helped form in Pittsfield, Massachusetts, with requirements that specified the fair be a multi-day event with appropriate facilities for the animals, with the event planned and overseen by a governing board.

The Altamont Fair originally formed in May 1893 as the Altamont Driving Park and Fair Association. This association stemmed from the agricultural fairs first sponsored by the Albany Agricultural Society, held in the city and the surrounding towns, the first of which was hosted in 1819 in Albany. In August 1892 a committee was organized and charged with investigating the possibility of conducting the annual fair at a permanent location in Altamont. Following the formation of the Altamont Driving Park and Fair Association in the spring of 1893, a twenty-four and one-half acre parcel of land was acquired from George Severson, representing the core of the present-day fairgrounds.<sup>1</sup> The first fair was conducted in Altamont between September 12<sup>th</sup> and 15<sup>th</sup> in 1893. The only major building extant during this first year of the fair was the original grandstand, which was subsequently altered; portions of this grandstand were later subsumed within the 4-H cattle barn. The Fine Arts

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<sup>1</sup> Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Altamont Driving Park and Fair Association, entry dated 10 June 1893. Materials provided by Gail Fuller, Altamont Fair.

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and Flower Building and other architectural features were conceived and added as the fair grew in size and popularity.

The first reference regarding the construction of the Fine Arts and Flower Building was made by the Board of Directors during their March 24, 1896 meeting:

... Moved and seconded that the President appoint a committee of three to procure plans and estimates for a two story building to be used for the exhibition of Domestic Manufacture Art and Fancy work and Fruit and Vegetables; Carried. The President appointed as such committee J.O. Stitt, Edward Becker and E.E. Fowler. . .<sup>2</sup>

The May 14<sup>th</sup> minutes of that year noted that C.M. Friedrich was to accompany builder Hiram Schoonmaker on a visit to the Cobleskill Fairgrounds to inspect their exhibit building and report to the committee at the next meeting estimates for the construction of a similar building. (The Cobleskill Fairgrounds were listed on the National Register in 1978 as part of the Cobleskill Historic District). Following their visit it was reported that the Cobleskill building measured approximately 100 by 80 feet and was erected at the cost of \$2,300.

Attempts to locate the plans and specifications for that building were however unsuccessful.<sup>3</sup> At their June 2<sup>nd</sup> meeting the Board of Directors began formalizing plans for a building following the lines of the Cobleskill example specifying that it would be roofed with "A #1 slate." It was likewise noted that bids were to be solicited from local builders beginning on June 16<sup>th</sup> and that the payment schedule would be as follows: one-quarter of the contract following the erection of the frame, one-quarter to be paid August 15<sup>th</sup>, and the remainder to be paid following the completion of the work.<sup>4</sup>

At the June 16<sup>th</sup> meeting it was noted that the following bids had been received:

From Weaver and Son without roof	\$1887.00
" " " with "	\$2327.00
" S. C. [?] same as Cobleskill building	\$2200.00
" F.P. Fellows, Building complete	\$2549.50
" H. Schoonmaker " "	\$2146.00

Moved and seconded that H. Schoonmaker be awarded the contract for building said hall according to plans and specifications at his bid viz \$2,146, Carried

Moved and seconded that the Board repair to the Fairground for the

<sup>2</sup> Ibid, entry dated 24 March 1896.

<sup>3</sup> Ibid, entry dated 23 May 1896.

<sup>4</sup> Ibid, entry dated 2 June 1896.

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purpose of locating the building...<sup>5</sup>

It appears the project moved quickly from there as the July 24<sup>th</sup> minutes noted that the Board would "take a recess of thirty minutes for the purpose of repairing to the Fair Grounds and inspect the New Hall," likely the wood frame the completion of which would require payment to Schoonmaker.<sup>6</sup> It was also noted that the building committee was thereby authorized to begin soliciting bids for "priming [the] New Hall and shellacking knots on same." Unfortunately no information has come to light regarding Schoonmaker, and thus it can only be presumed that he was a builder of local visibility.

On August 26<sup>th</sup> the building committee made entered the following report to the Board of Directors:

According to instructions from your honorable body we have examined the new exhibition Hall on Fair grounds just completed by Hiram Schoonmaker and found the same to be built according to plans and specifications except a small portion of the siding which in our judgment was not quite up to standard, but on account of superior workmanship in the construction of said building your committee recommends the building be accepted according to contract.

J.O Stitt  
Building Committee  
Edward Becker<sup>7</sup>

As noted in the minutes of the Board, the Fine Arts and Flower Building was patterned very closely, if not quoted almost verbatim, from the Domestic Building at the Cobleskill Fairgrounds, one of the first of the Cobleskill Fairground buildings erected following the completion of the Grandstand.<sup>8</sup> It appears that the Late Victorian style gatehouses, originally offices for the secretary and treasurer, were likewise inspired if not derived directly from those at the Cobleskill fair. This design of the exhibition hall is largely utilitarian in spirit, the cross shape allowing for four generous openings for air circulation and access and egress from the building and the light banks in the crossing tower and the Palladian windows in the gable ends providing for ample natural lighting. Notwithstanding its functional design, the Fine Arts and Flower Building was still conceived as one of the preeminent architectural features of the fairground, second only to the grandstand in terms of its visual prominence. A picture of the building taken c. 1925 shows the exhibition hall much as it appears today, with the exception of the replacement of the original slate roof with raised-seam metal and the loss of what appears to be a lightning rod that once crowned the tower. Though constructed near the

<sup>5</sup> Ibid, entry dated 16 June 1896.

<sup>6</sup> Ibid, entry dated 24 July 1896.

<sup>7</sup> Letter to the Board of Directors from J.O. Stitt and Edward Becker, dated 26 August 1896.

<sup>8</sup> "Cobleskill Agricultural Society Celebrates One Hundred Years, 1876-1976 (Come to the Fair)," 12-13.

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end of the nineteenth century, the application of vertical board-and-batten siding is reminiscent of mid-nineteenth century Picturesque design when the values of American agriculture and rural society were championed by Andrew Jackson Downing (1815-1852) in his highly influential books and the periodical *The Horticulturist*.

Agricultural fairs continue to provide important links to the agricultural traditions that underpin the regional history of many areas of New York State. In addition to celebrating agriculture through education, competition and exposure to advances in technology, these fairs also helped foster a sense of community through participation and events sponsored by a variety of civic groups. Exhibition halls such as those at the Cobleskill and Altamont fairs, modestly constructed with function foremost in mind, provided covered gallery space for a variety of installations complementing the more traditional outdoor activities for which these fairs are known. The Fine Arts and Flower Building survives with a considerable level of historic integrity and is an excellent representative example of fairground architecture, conceived as both a functional space and a visual anchor of the fairground complex.

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Location *Altamont, Albany County, New York*

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**9. Major Bibliographical References**

"Cobleskill Agricultural Society Celebrates One Hundred Years, 1876-1976 (Come to the Fair)."

Minutes of the Board of Directors of the Altamont Driving Park and Fair Association.

Fine Arts and Flower Building, Altamont Fairgrounds  
Name of Property

Albany County, New York  
County and State

## 10. Geographical Data

Acreage of Property Less than one acre

### UTM References

(Place additional boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

1 18 579503 4727550  
Zone Easting Northing

3  
Zone Easting Northing

2  
Zone Easting Northing

4  
Zone Easting Northing

See continuation sheet

### Verbal Boundary Description

(Describe the boundaries of the property on a continuation sheet.)

### Boundary Justification

(Explain why the boundaries were selected on a continuation sheet.)

## 11. Form Prepared By

name/title William E. Krattinger

organization NYS OPRHP

date

street & number Post Office Box 219

telephone 518-237-8643 x3265

city or town Waterford

state NY zip code 12188

### Additional Documentation

Submit the following items with the completed form:

### Continuation Sheets

### Maps

A USGS map (7.5 or 15 minute series) indicating the property's location.

A Sketch map for historic districts and properties having large acreage or numerous resources.

### Photographs

Representative black and white photographs of the property.

### Additional Items

(Check with the SHPO or FPO for any additional items)

### Property Owner

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

name/title Altamont Fair, c/o Andrew King, President

street & number PO Box 506, 129 Grand Street

telephone

city or town Altamont

state NY zip code 12009

**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. 470 et seq.).

**Estimated Burden Statement:** Public reporting burden for this form is estimated to average 18.1 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 Chief, Administrative Services Division, National Park Service, P.O. Box 37127, Washington, DC 20013-7127; and the Office of Management and Budget, Paperwork Reductions Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

Property Name *Altamont Fairgrounds Fine Arts and Flower Building*  
Location *Village of Altamont, Albany County, New York*

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**10. Geographical Data**

**Verbal Boundary Description**

The boundary for the Fine Arts and Flower Building nomination is shown as the heavy black outline on the enclosed map, entitled *Fine Arts and Flower Building, Altamont Fairgrounds, Altamont, Albany County, New York*.

**Boundary Justification**

The boundary for the proposed nomination has been drawn to include only that land immediately associated with the building itself. During the nomination process the entire fairground was evaluated for its National Register eligibility; at that time it was determined that the fair no longer maintained sufficient physical integrity to warrant its nomination. Thus only the Fine Arts and Flower Building, one of the centerpieces of the fairground and arguably its most intact architectural element, has been nominated. The parcel is square in shape and includes only that land immediately adjacent to the cruciform-shaped building.

Property Name *Altamont Fairgrounds Fine Arts and Flower Building*  
Location *Village of Altamont, Albany County, New York*

**NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES  
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**Photographs**

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**Photographs**

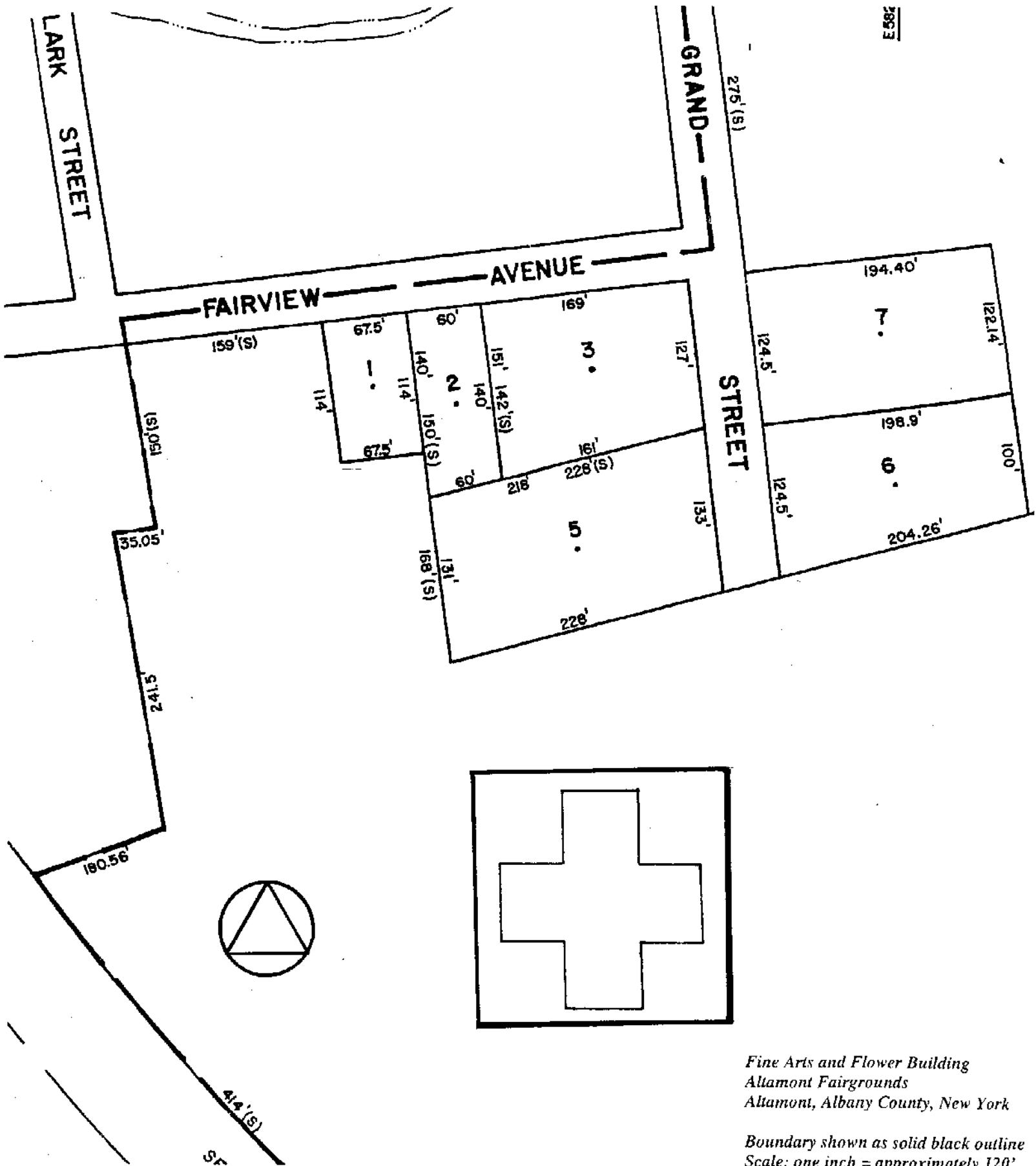
Photos courtesy of Gail Fuller  
Negatives at SHPO Field Services Bureau, Peebles Island  
Photographs taken November 2003

**Photograph list**

1. Exterior view
2. Detail of monitor glazing
3. Detail of sliding door and Palladian window
4. Interior view below monitor

**Illustrations**

1. Historic view of the Fine Arts and Flower Building, c. 1920  
Collection of the Altamont Fair

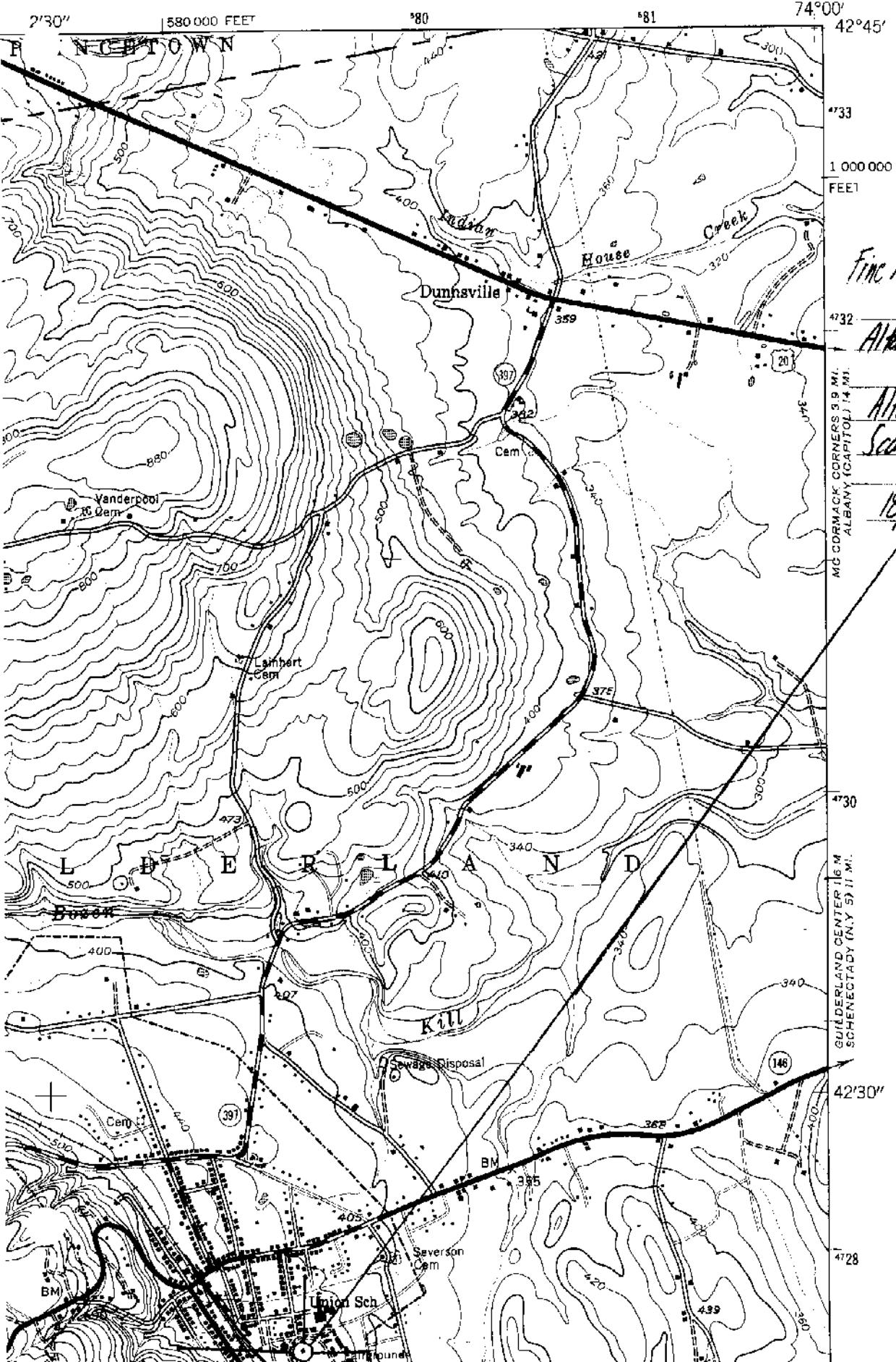


Fine Arts and Flower Building  
 Altamont Fairgrounds  
 Altamont, Albany County, New York

Boundary shown as solid black outline  
 Scale: one inch = approximately 120'

ALTAMONT QUADRANGLE  
NEW YORK  
7.5 MINUTE SERIES (TOPOGRAPHIC)

668 N SW  
(SCHENECTADY)



*Fine Arts and Flower Building  
Altamont Fair  
Altamont, Albany Co. N.Y.*

*Altamont Fair  
Scale 1:250,000*

*18/579503 472750*