

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 of eligibility for individual properties or 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 listed in 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 Hiram Griggs House

other names/site number \_\_\_\_\_

## 2. Location

street & number 111 Prospect Terrace

☐ not for publication

city or town Altamont

☒ vicinity

state New York

code NY

county Albany

code 001

zip code 12009

## 3. State/Federal Agency Certification

As the designated authority under the National Historic Preservation Act, as amended, I 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.

Ruth Purpont / DBHPO  
Signature of certifying official/Title

5/28/10  
Date

State or 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 this property is:

Signature of the Keeper

Date of Action

☐ 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:)

**Hiram Griggs House**

Name of Property

**Albany County, New York**

County and State

**5. Classification****Ownership of Property**

(Check as many boxes as apply)

☒ private☐ public-local☐ public-State☐ public-Federal**Category of Property**

(Check only one box)

☒ building(s)☐ district☐ site☐ structure☐ object**Number of Resources within Property**

(Do not include previously listed resources in the count.)

Contributing

Noncontributing

01

0

buildings

0

01

sites

0

0

structures

0

0

objects

01

01

Total

**Name of related multiple property listing**

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

N/A

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

0

**6. Function or Use****Historic Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

**Current Functions**

(Enter categories from instructions)

DOMESTIC: Single Dwelling

**7. Description:****Architectural Classification**

(Enter categories from instructions)

LATE VICTORIAN: Italianate

**Materials**

(Enter categories from instructions)

foundation Limestone

walls Wood

roof Rolled Metal

other

**Narrative Description**

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

See continuation Sheet

**Hiram Griggs House**

Name of Property

**Albany County, New York**

County and State

**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.

☐ 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)

ARCHITECTUREPOLITICS/GOVERNMENT**Period of Significance**1873-1909**Significant Dates**1873-1909**Significant Person**

(Complete if Criterion B is marked above)

Hiram Griggs**Cultural Affiliation**N/A**Architect/Builder**Mason- Robert L. Zeh; carpenter unknown**Primary location of additional data**

☒ State Historic Preservation Office

☐ Other State agency

☐ Federal agency

☐ Local government

☐ University

☐ Other

Name of repository:

**Hiram Griggs House**

Name of Property

**Albany County, New York**

County and State

**10. Geographical Data**Acreage of property 0.82**UTM References**

(Place additional UTM references on a continuation sheet.)

1	18	579014	472129
	Zone	Easting	Northing
2			

3			
	Zone	Easting	Northing
4			

☐ 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 Travis Bowmanorganization New York State Historic Preservation Officedate June 25, 2009street & number Peebles Island State Park, Box 189telephone 518-237-8643 x 3259city or town Waterfordstate New York 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 the SHPO or FPO.)

name John Scallystreet & number 111 Prospect Terracetelephone (518) 861-1010city or town Altamontstate NYzip 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 Reduction Projects (1024-0018), Washington, DC 20503.

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Hiram Griggs House, Altamont  
Albany County, New York

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### Narrative Description

The Hiram Griggs House at 111 Prospect Terrace occupies a rectangular lot in the Village of Altamont. The lot is set on a slight rise above street level and runs roughly north to south; the main elevation of the Griggs House fronts Prospect Terrace on the north. The Griggs House is set in a neighborhood of mixed residences and a few commercial buildings, both the former and latter dating from the nineteenth and early-mid twentieth centuries. The nominated property consists of single dwelling and the surrounding parcel, no outbuildings are extant. The grounds consist of open lawn with some shrubbery and deciduous trees.

The house is a framed dwelling, two-stories in height, and is symmetrically massed at five bays wide by two bays deep. It is situated on a foundation of roughly squared limestone blocks bedded in mortar and laid in irregular courses. The roofline is characterized as a low-pitched hipped shape, covered in rolled metal. The roof has wide overhanging eaves, supported by pairs of elaborately treated brackets. The exterior sheathing is narrow wooden clapboard. The entrance elevation (north) is the most elaborately treated, including a single-story, full width entry porch. A polychrome paint scheme highlights the variations in shape and decorative detailing.

The entrance façade features regular and symmetrical fenestration which varies by story. Lighting the upper story are 2/2 double-hung, wood-sash windows with simple rectangular moulded surrounds and overhanging crowns. The lower story windows have matching surrounds and feel, but are elongated by the addition of paired, single-hung transom windows above. The addition of the transom extends the height of the windows to the deck of the exterior porch, giving the appearance of entry doors. The mullions on the lower story windows are thicker and more substantial than those on the upper story as well. Both the 2/2 upper story windows and the full-height lower story windows are flanked by louvered wooden shutters; most are original, the rest are exact reproductions copied from extant examples on the house. Detailing on this elevation is especially fine. Beginning at the roofline, the builder featured a wide frieze band and paired, scroll-sawn brackets with compound curves to support the overhanging eave. The brackets have a polychrome paint scheme, and punched decoration in the spandrels and on the underside. The frieze band has elaborate raised panels, patterned in diamond and rectangular shapes, with punched decoration. A carved, twisted-rope band is applied below the panels.

The lower story is dominated by a highly detailed porch which features a delicately turned balustrade and original newels, squared support posts with chamfered corners, scroll-sawn support brackets with punched spandrel panels and drop finials, a moulded cornice atop a frieze of running circular shaped ornamentation and a perforated panel screen below the porch. The current owner has replaced missing balustrades with exact, turned reproductions copied from extant examples on the porch. The main entrance occupies the center bay and is set into a surround that matches the windows. The doors consist of large, rectangular oak double doors with paneled geometric moulding below and arched top inset glass above.

The other three elevations are similarly treated with regular fenestration, matching windows on the lower and upper stories, and the elaborately treated cornice and roofline described on the primary façade. The west elevation has an exterior, red-brick chimney extant in the center. Both the side elevations also have a pair of casement windows lighting the full basement—aluminum framed on the west, replacement vinyl on the east. Other than the east elevation casement window, all other windows on both stories and all elevations retain their original mouldings, surrounds, and glass.

### Interior

In plan, the interior of the house consists of a double pile organized around a narrow center hall. A staircase with an elaborate fluted shaft turned newel and balustrade rises from the center hall toward the rear of the main block. The

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hall is flanked by double parlors on the east side and a front dining room and rear kitchen on the west. Behind the stairs is a passage connecting the rear parlor and kitchen, with a bathroom opening off towards the south. The double parlors are connected via a wide cased opening and retain paneled doors, extensive moulded trim beaded baseboards and door surrounds, many original lath and plaster walls. The rear parlor is connected to a separate access hallway which provides entrance to the kitchen. The dining room features an elaborate reproduction parquet floor and based on surviving elements of the original design, and retains its original moulded baseboards and door surrounds. The second story plan consists of two bedrooms flanking each side of the hall, with a bathroom towards the south. The bedrooms exhibit the same moulded trim, door surrounds and beaded baseboards seen in the lower story. Original gas lines and piping are extant on both floors throughout the house. The name of the stonemason, "Robert L. Zeh" and the construction year "1873" are scratched into the foundation in the basement.

**Non-contributing features**

In the rear yard of the Griggs house is a ruin of stone wall; Historic Sanborn Insurance map evidence indicates the presence of a one-story frame outbuilding (unlabeled) in this location. This ruin of the outbuilding is not significant to the architectural character of the house and therefore is a non-contributing site to this nomination.

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**Statement of Significance**

The Hiram Griggs House is historically and architecturally significant as a local example of Victorian Italianate styling and for its association with Hiram Griggs (1836-1909), the first President (Mayor) of Altamont. As leading citizen, and then as President, Griggs was involved in every important event in Altamont's formation, history and development during his lifetime. His achievements during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries were distinctive, and impart a unique significance to his public service. As the home of the prominent Griggs during the period of his greatest contributions, the house is associated with his productive life and thus best represents his significant accomplishments. Built in 1873 for Griggs, the home also exhibits the form, massing and embellishment that characterized the local and regional Italianate styling and is an intact and distinguished example of period-piece, residential architecture of that style in the town.

Born in Schoharie County in 1836, Hiram Griggs studied in a successful Schoharie law practice until 1862 when he established his own practice at a small settlement then known as Knowersville. Located in the western portion of the Town of Guilderland, Knowersville had developed c1800 around a hat factory on the Bozenkill (creek). Griggs' arrival in 1862 was timely—Knowersville was about to be literally put on the map. In the 1850s, the Albany and Susquehanna Railroad (later the Delaware and Hudson Railroad) began work on a thirty-five mile long passenger service line from Albany, NY to Schoharie Junction, NY. Griggs secured employment as an attorney for the railroad, and helped facilitate the necessary legal work related to a new rail stop at Knowersville. Although the exact nature of his work or involvement could not be ascertained, according to one published obituary, the nascent lawyer "assisted very materially" with the construction of the railroad.<sup>1</sup> Rail service to Knowersville had arguably the single-most profound effect on the history the settlement. Within a year of the first train (1863), businesses began springing up in the town, located close to the new depot. The immediate area around the depot had only two farmhouses prior to 1863, but within a single year "a store and several residences" were built according to a contemporary history.<sup>2</sup> Growth occurred at such a rapid pace that the town center of Knowersville shifted from the area around the old hat factory to the area around the new depot; the shift was prominent enough to cause the former location to be colloquially referred to as "old Knowersville," to distinguish it from "new" Knowersville proper.

Analysis of photographs of Knowersville in the 1880s reveals a thriving village undergoing steady growth.<sup>3</sup> In 1887, Knowersville resident Mrs. William R. Cassidy (Lucie Rochefort Cassidy) decided to undertake a campaign to change the name of the village to something more agreeable—namely Altamont. Meaning "high mountain," the name change would honor Mrs. Cassidy's summer estate at High Point, on the Helderberg Escarpment, which overlooked the village. Mrs. Cassidy brought about the name change through her personal friendship with the then US President Grover Cleveland, and Hiram Griggs worked for the name change through necessary legal and political channels, and via his position at the D&H railroad. President Cleveland influenced the US Postmaster General to change the name of the Knowersville Post Office to Altamont, and Griggs influenced the railroad to change the name of depot at Knowersville to Altamont; the village itself became Altamont in short order.

For Altamont, Hiram Griggs in every way embodies the term "town father." One of the most well-known and respected citizens in the history of Altamont, Griggs held important local and regional offices that demonstrated the

<sup>1</sup> Unknown Author, "Honorable Hiram Griggs, a Prominent Albany County Attorney and Politician, whose Death Occurred at Altamont June 8<sup>th</sup>" Altamont Enterprise, 11 June, 1909, no. 51. <http://historicnewspapers.guilpl.org/>

<sup>2</sup> *History of the County of Albany, N. Y., from 1609 to 1886, compiled by George Rogers Howell and Jonathan Tenney and "assisted by local writers"* (New York, 1886), 854.

<sup>3</sup> A.B. Gregg, "Rare Views of Early Village of Altamont" and "More Early Views of Altamont" Altamont Enterprise, 31 May, 1957, no. 46 and 5 July, 1957, no. 51. <http://historicnewspapers.guilpl.org/>

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confidence and respect of his fellow citizens, among these were: Guilderland Town Supervisor (1867-76), President of the Albany County Board of Supervisors (1873, 1874), Member of the New York State Assembly (1878-80: Albany County 1st District 1878-79, Albany County 2nd District 1880), Chairman of the Albany County Republican Convention (1897) and delegate to the National Republican Convention from New York (1884). By the late 1880s, Griggs was one of the most respected and well-known politicians in Altamont, and he would lead the town through some of its greatest challenges.

### Mayor Griggs

After suffering a series of devastating fires in the late 1880s, public sentiment in Altamont called for an adequate water supply and fire protection for the village. With Hiram Griggs "leading the discussion" (as a contemporary newspaper phrased it), a May 20, 1890 public session was held in Altamont's Union Hall. At the meeting, Griggs and other town leaders convinced concerned residents that incorporation as an independent municipality would allow them to control affairs and solve their problems at the local level.<sup>4</sup> At a special election held October 18, 1890, the vote was overwhelmingly in favor of incorporation, and subsequently the Village of Altamont became the only incorporated municipal unit in the Town of Guilderland. Griggs' fellow citizens rewarded his leadership efforts by unanimously electing him as the first President (Mayor) of Altamont, an office he would hold for eight consecutive terms from 1890-98.

President Griggs faced immediate challenges upon assuming office. Residents of Altamont has been promised incorporation as a solution, so Griggs' administration could not simply maintain public services at an existing level—services had to be drastically expanded to meet expectations.<sup>5</sup> As the major advocate of incorporation, Hiram Griggs had been responsible for brining about a significant political change in the village of Altamont; as President, Griggs would have to be responsible for major public works efforts in the village.

Fire protection and an adequate water supply, the very impetus for incorporation, were the first major accomplishments of the Griggs' administration. The importance of water can not be overstated; the editor of the Altamont Enterprise wrote that water was "worth more than incorporation" to the concerned citizens of Altamont.<sup>6</sup> Hiram Griggs has been dealing with the water question in Altamont for some time. Prior to incorporation, Griggs had chaired the committee to investigate water options for the village. At that time (1886), a reservoir was considered too expensive and impracticable, so the committee proposed an alternative solution consisting of a series of large wells spread throughout the village.<sup>7</sup> The 1886 un-incorporated settlement of Altamont had no means of implementing and financing the plan, so it was never adopted; the 1890 incorporated Village of Altamont under President Griggs, however, had a readymade solution to the cost issue—municipal bonds. Altamont's timing of incorporation, desire for large-scale public works projects and need for capital coincided with an era that historian Jon C. Teaford described as the proverbial golden age of municipal bonding.<sup>8</sup> Bonds had become highly sought-after because they had proved to be increasingly stable, profitable investments in the late nineteenth century's economic boom-bust cycles, and the fact that no major American city defaulted on its debt between 1888 and 1900.<sup>9</sup> Lower interest rates followed in the wake of the economic downturn of the Panic of 1873, and the 1890s saw financial institutions readily extending credit to municipalities.<sup>10</sup> With bonding lined up a funding source, Altamont convened a new water commission to investigate the 1886 findings and propose the best solution. The Altamont

<sup>4</sup> No author "Incorporation", Altamont Enterprise 17 May, 1890; No author "Incorporation", Altamont Enterprise 24 May, 1890; No author "Altamont Incorporated 42 Years Ago-1890", Altamont Enterprise 12 August, 1932.

<sup>5</sup> Jon C. Teaford, *The Unheralded Triumph: City Government in America 1870-1900*. (John Hopkins University Press: Baltimore, 1984).

<sup>6</sup> No author, "Water for Altamont" Altamont Enterprise, 9 July, 1892.

<sup>7</sup> No author, "That Water Question" Knowersville Enterprise, 29 May, 1886.

<sup>8</sup> Teaford, *The Unheralded Triumph*, 293.

<sup>9</sup> Ibid, 289.

<sup>10</sup> Ibid., 288.



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Enterprise, a proponent of incorporation and public water, noted that the new commission was composed of "the pick of our village — men of property, business qualifications, and sterling common sense"; Hiram Griggs, of course, was its chair.<sup>11</sup> In addition to the local committee, Griggs also chaired the Albany County Water Commission, and probably through this larger, regional connection, Altamont located a suitable water source in the nearby town of Knox. The Altamont water commission proposed to pipe water directly from the Knox spring to a town reservoir and subsequently into a series of hydrants for the village. The estimated \$13,600 cost would be bonded, and water rents would be collected to offset the cost of maintaining the system. The largest water client in town was the D&H Railroad, and water rents from the rail alone would reportedly generate an income "sufficient to pay the interest on the outlay, and the expense of maintaining the same" according to one commissioner.<sup>12</sup> In March of 1893, President Griggs delivered the promised water system to the village. With seventeen reliable double hydrants in place, the village quickly held a referendum to raise money for the purchase of hose and apparatus to fight fires, and according to the Altamont Enterprise:

Altamont will thus move yet a step closer in the furthering of adequate protection from fire, and will place herself in the front ranks with those communities which seek the best interests of the citizens. Altamont takes no step backward. She does the right thing furnishing the necessary appliances for the convenience and protection of her citizens. With a good water plant in operation and the organization of a hose company there need be no fear of loss by fire . . . NOW let us have a well organized hose company!<sup>13</sup>

The water system created by Hiram Griggs and his fellow commissioners lasted over one-hundred years, until 1994.

In his study of municipalities worldwide for the period 1870-1900, historian Jon Teaford has determined middle-class urban residents in the United States enjoyed the highest standard of living in the entire world; under the leadership of Hiram Griggs, residents of Altamont achieved this high quality of life. The local Altamont Enterprise duly noted Griggs' role as chair of the street committee, chair of the Albany County School Board Commission, chair of the committee to solicit funds for the proper care of the new town park, and as one of the principal investors of the Altamont Illuminating Company—13 community leaders who brought street lighting to the town by building an acetylene gas manufacturing plant and laying two gas lines for the village. The system provided light for homes and public gas lights until electrification in 1916. The nominated property still contains fixtures which once connected to the company's gas line. Altamont thus achieved practically every hallmark of the Gilded Age under Griggs' guidance—waterworks, fire protection, street paving, park creation, public lighting and education.

In addition to his numerous political office-holdings and government activities, Griggs involved himself in community affairs on every level. His name appears literally hundreds of times in the Altamont Enterprise (and its earlier incarnation the Knowersville Enterprise), associated with an impressive variety of activities. A sampling of the local paper shows that Griggs served as a trustee of the Helderberg Creamery Association, Chair of the Guilderland Mutual Insurance Association, a Board Member of the Altamont Musical Association, Chair of the building committee for the new 1888 Reformed Church of Altamont, and was even President of the Stars of Altamont baseball club team.<sup>14</sup> Griggs lent his name to philanthropic endeavors as well; in 1885 he chaired a local committee supporting a bill establishing the rights of Civil War veterans, and earlier he had served as a trustee and financial supporter of a charity benefit for twelve year old Wilber Whipple who was nearly blind and needed an

<sup>11</sup> No author, Altamont Enterprise, 11 June, 1892.

<sup>12</sup> No author, "Water for Altamont" Altamont Enterprise, 9 July, 1892.

<sup>13</sup> <http://www.altamontvillage.org/ArchiveMuseumPages.htm> and <http://www.altamontfd.net/history.php>

<sup>14</sup> Shorty Vroman "From our Files: March 24, 1888 The Creamery Meeting" 22 May 1981, 19; No Author "Musical Ass'n. Concert" 23 July, 1897, 1; Vroman "From Our Files: September 3, 1887" 27 March, 1982, 14; No author "Reformed Church Dedication" 6 October, 1888, 1; No author, no title, 10 March, 1888; No Author "Altamont has a B.B. Club!" 23 June 1886. Altamont Enterprise, <http://historicnewspapers.guilpl.org/>

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operation on his "crippled hands."<sup>15</sup> A review of the public notices and court decisions throughout the 1880s, 90s and the early twentieth century also shows Griggs maintained a thriving law practice the entire time. In 1900, and again in 1902, Griggs' local fame was capitalized on as part of a brilliant advertising campaign by F.W. Devoe & Co. Paint. Griggs' name appears in a quasi-endorsement of Devoe's paint in the form of an open "Letter to Hiram Griggs" in the local paper:

"Dear Sir: A Lawyer's business is to know pretty-much everything. Here's a part of it, well worth anyone's knowing. Devoe lead and zinc is the paint that last [sic] twice as long as lead and oil...If you get your house painted with it, and it wears no better than most lead and oil, you will have good cause for complaint; and we must pay damages."<sup>16</sup>

It is unknown if Griggs' received compensation for this "endorsement" or if it was pure name exploitation, but in either case, Devoe's advertisements almost assuredly made the reader stop and take notice.

Altamont has had a handful of seminally important and significant events in its history. Chronologically, the first of these is the genesis of the settlement via founding of the hat factory on the Bozenkill, before Hiram Griggs was even born. The coming of the Albany & Susquehanna Railroad, however, was the most important event in the development of the town, and as already noted, Griggs served as legal counsel and facilitator for that effort. Next, Griggs lent his legal expertise and assisted in the effort to the name change from Knowersville to Altamont, an important event for the sense of place in the town. Politically, the most significant event in Altamont's history was municipal incorporation and the establishment of public services—in both the former and the latter, Griggs' role is unsurpassed. Finally, the social and recreational history of the town was significantly altered in 1893 with the establishment of the Altamont Driving Park and Fair Association and the subsequent construction of a permanent fairground at Altamont; not surprisingly, Hiram Griggs was instrumental in this effort.

In August of 1892, a meeting of "interested" persons formed a committee, and as the local paper reported: "the matter of the organization of an association to hold a County Fair was discussed, and the question as to whether or not a county society existed, arising, the following committee was appointed to investigate the matter and to take such steps as they may deem best for the promotion and carrying forward the matter of establishing an Agricultural society at Altamont."<sup>17</sup> Hiram Griggs chaired the committee. When the Altamont Driving Park and Fair Association incorporated the following year, Griggs served as Vice-President of the Board. In short order, the Association acquired property and constructed a grandstand and front gate. The first fair was held in September of 1893, and the Altamont fairgrounds became the permanent home of the Albany County Fair, which had been moving around the county since 1817. The Association continued to acquire property and erect buildings, creating a bigger and better event and venue every year. In 1897, the association changed its name to the Albany County Agricultural Society and Exhibition. Their efforts still continue today, the Altamont Fair represents three counties (Albany, Schenectady and Greene) and is a non-profit public educational and historical society supported entirely by admissions, rentals, contributions and the assistance of hundreds of volunteers.<sup>18</sup> Despite shrinking farmlands in the surrounding area, the Altamont Fair still emphasizes agriculture and it still serves a place for social gathering, educational exhibits and family entertainment consistent with the original intentions of Griggs' 1892 committee. One surviving building of the early fairgrounds, the 1896 Fine Arts and Flower Building, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2003.

<sup>15</sup> No Author, no title, 19 December 1885, Knowersville Enterprise: A.B. Gregg, "Old Document Verified Charity Began at Home" 6 September, 1957, 1+4, Altamont Enterprise, <http://historicnewspapers.guilpl.org/>

<sup>16</sup> *Ibid*, 21 February, 1902.

<sup>17</sup> No author, Altamont Enterprise 12 August, 1892.

<sup>18</sup> <http://altamontfair.com/about/history>

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committee. One surviving building of the early fairgrounds, the 1896 Fine Arts and Flower Building, was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2003.

Griggs continued to serve as President of Altamont until he refused to run again, and his eight consecutive terms are still the most in the history of the town (however term length later was extended to two years). Despite his stalwart affiliation with the Republican Party (the New York Times once described him as a Republican "ruffian" and a "well-known machine leader"<sup>19</sup>), Griggs' popularity was such that he was unanimously elected to his third term in 1892 because he was the candidate on both the Republican and Democratic ticket. In an era of machine politics, political hacks, corruption and outright hatred between Republicans and Democrats, to be described as "the only name" mentioned for an office illustrates Griggs' exceptional popularity.<sup>20</sup> After his death, Griggs' contributions were immediately recognized, and they have been honored ever since. Obituaries described him as one of Altamont's "oldest and best citizens", "one of the best-known Republican politicians in this section of the State" and "a leader with almost it's [Altamont's] every interest." Every business in Altamont closed for his funeral as a mark of esteem for their "departed friend, counselor and neighbor." In every article chronicling the history of Altamont, some variation of appellation "leading citizen" is always applied to Griggs; several centennial and anniversary pieces referred to him as the "Architect of Altamont", as he was so personally responsible for building the town into a solid community.

### Architectural Analysis

Because of Hiram Griggs' involvement in practically every aspect of Altamont's history from 1863 to his death in 1909, no building better represents his significant accomplishments than his home during that productive period. Built in 1873, the nominated house was at first a representation of the success Hiram Griggs enjoyed as an attorney and railroad employee. The wealth and taste of the prominent lawyer is reflected in the imposing, fashionable Italianate residence he had constructed. The product of local builders, the Griggs House features a typically boxy or cube-shaped form, distinguished by a hipped roof with a pronounced eave and embellished by a double-bracketed cornice and punched panel friezes. The ornate porch with chamfered posts, turned balustrade, scroll-sawn brackets and elaborate frieze further illustrate the hallmarks of the style. Although it lacks the segmental arches and elaborate enframements around the windows and doors usually seen, the builder incorporated molded hoods above the windows and doors that are stylistically reminiscent of earlier Greek Revival eared lintels, but executed in the vernacular language of the newer Italianate style. The extant interior finishes epitomize the vernacular Italianate ideal—door and window architraves, a varnished, turned stair balustrade with an elaborate newel, lath and plaster walls, paneled doors and moulded baseboards reflect the high level of craftsmanship evident throughout the house.

The Italianate style was introduced to American tastes as a result of the picturesque movement of the 1840s. Seminal pattern books like Andrew Jackson Downing's *Cottage Residences* and *Architecture of Country Houses* and Samuel Sloan's *The Model Architect* popularized formal house forms and decorative elements that were within the capability of most experienced builders of the time. By the mid to late nineteenth century, the style dominated American architecture, and is seen throughout the village of Altamont. In its form, massing and decoration, the nominated property embodies the design and decorative elements characteristic of Italianate pattern book-inspired design during the late nineteenth century. The builder responsible for the Griggs house is currently unknown, but the mason, Robert L. Zeh, signed his work in the foundation. The 1870 US Census for Guilderland lists Robert L. Zeh as age 33, with occupation "Stone Mason." According to the town historian, Zeh's name also appears on the cobblestone school houses at Guilderland Center, Osborn's Corners and the Voorheesville Army Depot, as well as

<sup>19</sup> No author, "Conkling Ruffians at Albany." New York Times, 2 October, 1882. [www.proquest.com](http://www.proquest.com)

<sup>20</sup> No author "Altamont Election." Altamont Enterprise 19 March, 1892

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the cemetery vaults of the Altamont Dutch Reformed Church, the Osborn's Corners Church cemetery and the Prospect Hill Cemetery in Guilderland.<sup>21</sup>

The floorplan and usage of the home appears to have changed little from Griggs' occupation. Charles Ricard purchased the property from Griggs' descendants in the early twentieth century. According to a recent oral history interview with a surviving member of the family, the downstairs bathroom was used as a pantry by the second owner, but the rest of the rooms are virtually the same as used by Griggs.

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<sup>21</sup> A.B. Gregg "News gems from the Golden Era" Altamont Enterprise 8 March, 1976; Vol. II, No 36, 1.

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<http://www.altamontvillage.org/ArchiveMuseumPages.htm>

<http://www.altamontfd.net/history.php>

<http://www.altamontfair.com/about/history>

**BOUNDARY DESCRIPTION:**

As indicated by the heavy black line on the attached map, the nominated property includes all of tax parcel 2.19 in the town of Altamont. This consists of a roughly rectilinear lot 230' long on the east and west sides, 155' long on the south and 100' long on the north. The lot is set on a slight rise above street level and runs roughly north to south. The grounds consist of open lawn with some shrubbery and deciduous trees. Prospect Terrace forms the northern boundary, the village lot lines form the south, east and west boundaries. The lot contains one dwelling, the Hiram Griggs House and one foundation wall, no other outbuildings are extant.

**BOUNDARY JUSTIFICATION:**

The nominated property includes the entire parcel under current ownership, this includes all of the land historically associated with the house.

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**Photo Log (Prints from Digital Photos)**

Name of Property: Hiram Griggs House

Location: Albany County, New York

Photographer: Travis Bowman (E-1); John Scalle (E-2, I-1, I-2)

Date: April 24, 2009 (E-1); October 6, 2009 (E-2); October 5, 2009 (I-1, I-2)

Location of Negatives: CD-R Included

NY\_AlbCo\_HGH

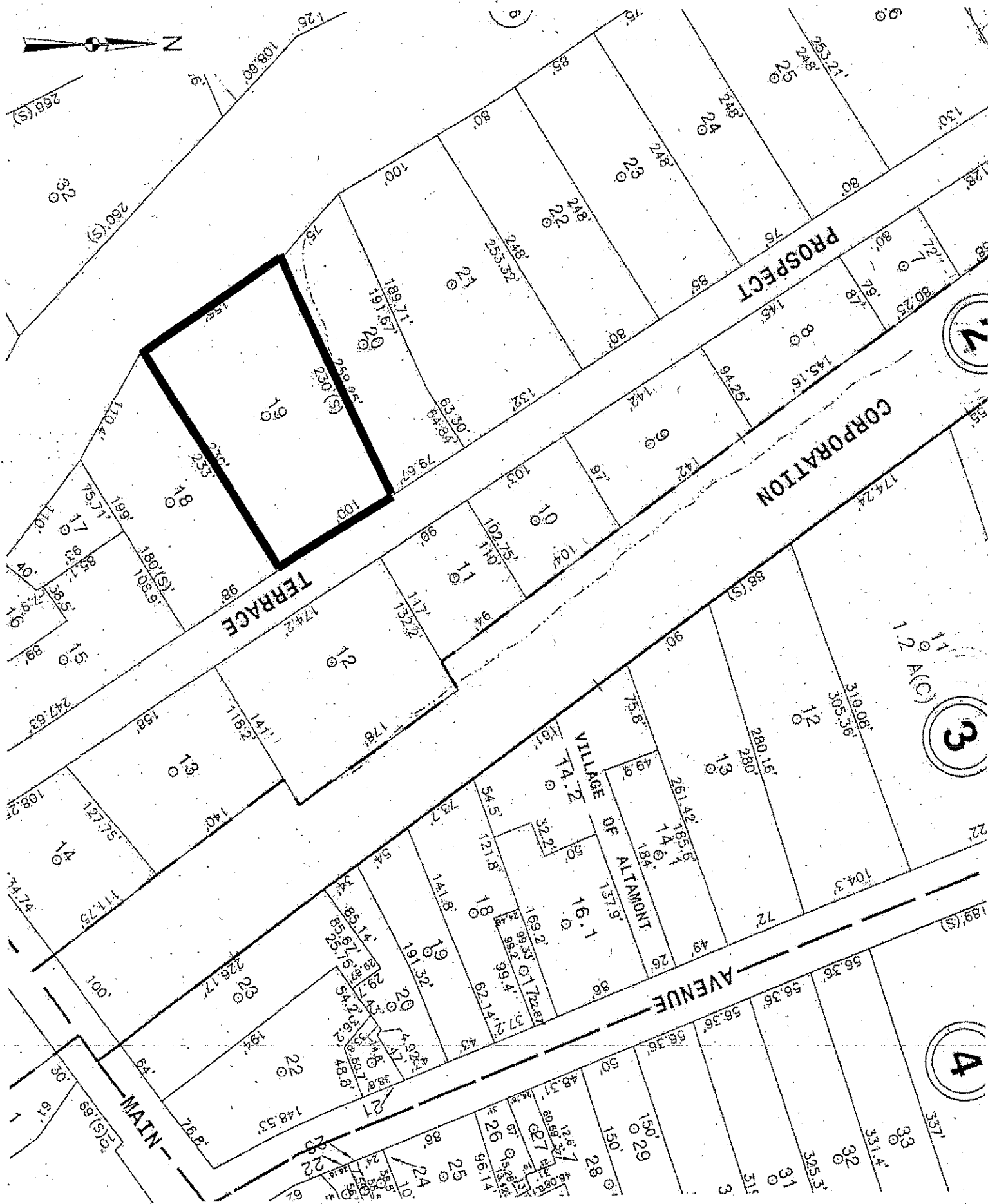
**PHOTO LOG**

PHOTO	DESCRIPTION
E-1	Exterior view, SW; $\frac{3}{4}$ view
E-2	Exterior view, S; Main Façade
I-1	Interior View; Double parlor
I-2	Interior View; Dining Room

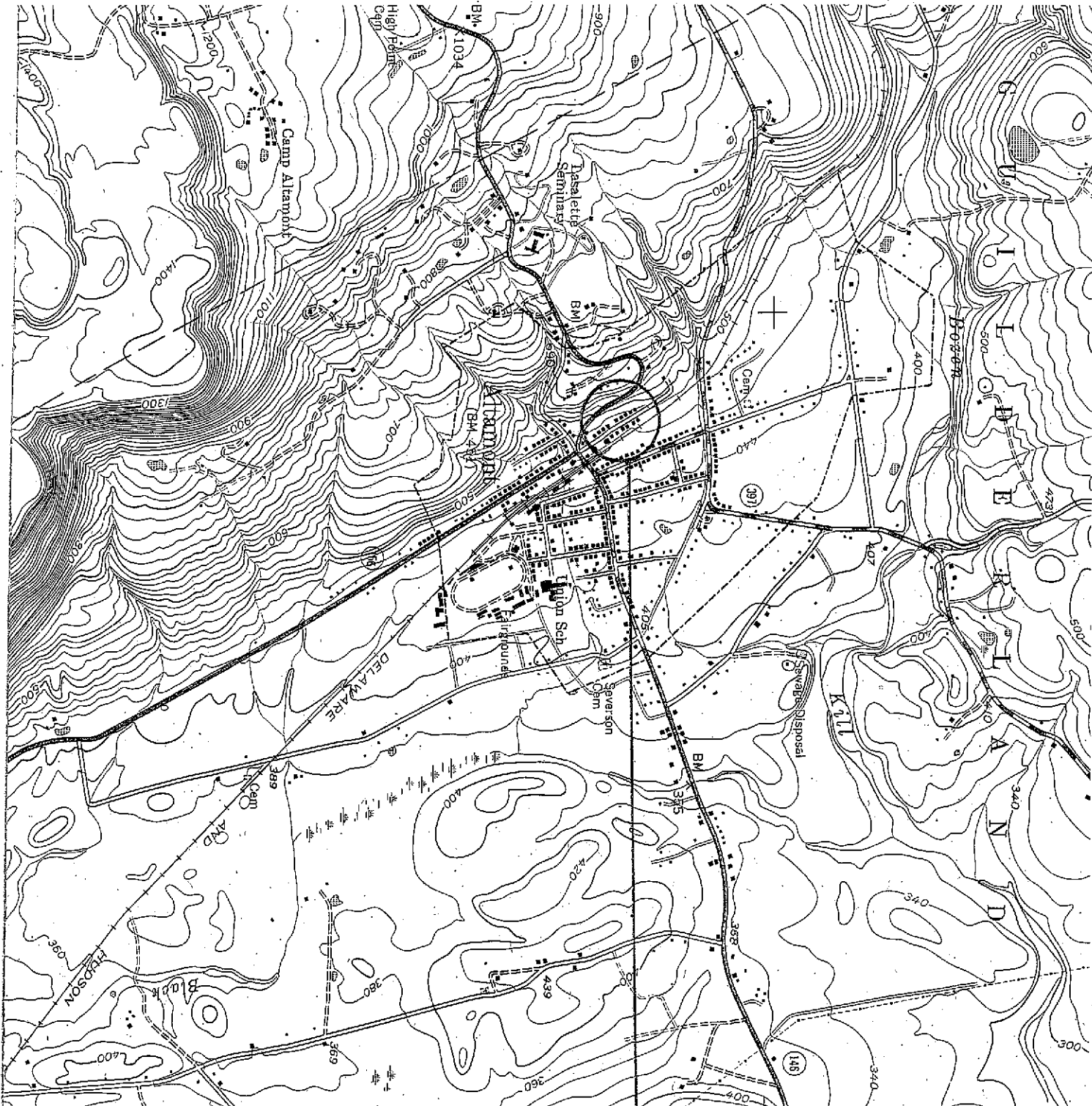




Hiram Griggs House, Altamont  
Albany County, New York







GUILDERLAND CENTER 16 M  
SCHENECTADY (N.Y. 5) 11 MI.

Hiram Griggs House

Altamont, Albany Co., NY

UTM

18 579014 472129

(VOORHEESVILLE)  
6269 III NW

