

LANDMARK DESIGNATION FORM

TOWN OF NEW PALTZ, NEW YORK

Town of New Paltz Historic Preservation Commission
Town of New Paltz Building Department (845) 255-0102
Web Page: <http://www.townofnewpaltz.org>

For Bldg. Dept. Only

Rec'd by _____

Date: _____

File #: _____

INSTRUCTIONS:

Print or type clearly with black ink.

Attach additional sheets for each category as needed to ensure completeness of form.

Label all accompanying forms with Section, Block, & Lot (SBL) number.

Your Name(s): Susan Stessin-Cohn and Richard Miller
Your Address: Town Hall, New Paltz, NY 12561
Your Telephone Number: 845-255-0100 (Town Clerk)
Organization (if any): Town of New Paltz Historic Preservation Commission

PROPERTY IDENTIFICATION

- 1 Building's Common or Current Name: The Josiah P. LeFevre House
- 2 Building's Historic Name (if known): The Josiah P. LeFevre House
- 3 Street Location (and SBL): 454 Rt. 32 N. SBL. 78.2.3.5
- 4 Present Owner(s), Address, and
Phone Number: Silas Wheelock Smith, Jocelyn Tener Smith, &
Luke Ewing Taft Smith
(list all owners of record) The owners' mother, Kathleen Tener Smith,
resides at the property, but is not, and never
has been, an owner.
Phone # not available
- 5 Tenant Name and Phone Number: N/A

PROPERTY CLASSIFICATION:

Category:
 Building
 Site

Ownership:
 Private
 Public

USE OF PROPERTY:

Please describe Current and Historic Use(s):

This Greek Revival house was built by the LeFevres around 1850 and overlooked their hundreds of acres of farmland near a notable 270° bend in the Walkill River known as the Bontecou. The area

was known for having the best farming lands in the county. The name Bontecou traces its meaning back to the French word Bon-ter-cou, meaning neck of good land. This site's origin as the seat of an extensive working farm is evinced by the several wood-framed barns just beyond the house. It is still the private residence of the direct descendants of Simon LeFevre, the Patentee. The property has not been farmed since the late 1920s or early 30s, when the prime grazing area and cropland on the original Farm were contained in the fifty acres to the west of State Route 32. Such fifty acres were sold by Elizabeth Smith to Louis Pokrass in 1941. That property is now owned by the estate of Jack Erman and is currently offered for sale. There are no longer unique land or forest boundary features distinguishable from surrounding properties.

PROPERTY DESCRIPTION:

- 6 Building Materials: Wood clapboard siding, asphalt roof shingles, brick chimneys, and metal gutters
- 7 Structural System (if known): Timber frame on stone foundation
- 8 Condition/Integrity: Intact. The owners have submitted **Exhibit B**, an integrity and structural assessment of the outbuildings by Wilfred Rohde, P.E. which indicates that the outbuildings are in poor structural condition. The main house currently has jack posts placed in the cellar to support the main beams. Summary of Commission findings and site visit regarding the main house follow. The house basement has a small V-trench [presumed to be original] running through the basement to south-west corner, to remove flowing water. Several columns were installed to support the main carrier beam, which appears to be due to the original structural configuration of the floor assembly. The leaders at the rear porch roof drain back to the building. The gutter and leaders at this location should be modified so that there is a leader draining water directly down and away from the building.
- 9 List Major Alterations and Dates (if known): The large eastern kitchen ell was an integral part of the original house structure. An artesian well was dug in 1941 and interior plumbing, telephone, and electrical system installed, along with a simple septic system. A small kitchen addition was made to north side of house next to cellar entrance area to accommodate new interior kitchen space in 1941. Small patio built on east side in 1941. Furnace heating system was installed in 1950. Exterior east chimney built in 1950 to augment and replace interior chimney (other chimneys closed in 1941). All chimneys

were capped in late 1990s. New septic system installed 1954 (and in 1970s). Front porch and steps and back porch were rebuilt in 1980s secondary to severe water damage and dry rot; only the railings and columns on the front porch could be retained. The front porch gate was added in 1999. Driveway paving and fencing installed periodically from 1940s-1990s, along with major periodic landscaping. The decrepit icehouse was considered a dangerous hazard and was removed in the 1950s. Multiple windows were placed in the second floor of the granary in the late 1950s. Exterior steps to second floor of granary were rebuilt numerous times. The large south cow barn collapsed in a severe snowstorm in 1971 and was removed. A rebuilt horseblock rotted and was removed in the early 1980s. All structures except the granary have modern asphalt roofs which have been replaced more than once and metal gutters. The large north horse barn collapsed in a severe snowstorm in 1994 and was largely removed. Major siding, foundation, and roofing repairs to all outbuildings. A security system was installed in 1998. The fountain in the front lawn was stolen in 2000. Original weathervane on wood house roof was stolen in 2000. Two future additions to the main house were planned, one prepared by the classically trained architect, Leon Smith, the spouse of the then owner, and one by the historical restoration architectural firm of Kenneth Hewes Barricklo. One of the additions was to be to the north and one to the south and east. Construction of such additions was not implemented due to financial constraints. Copies of such plans have been placed into the record of the Commission. Numerous renovation and landscaping works are in progress or are planned in the near future for weather protection, privacy, and security reasons (eleven of which were approved by the Commission at its meeting on December 5, 2005). Modifications, repairs, and planned additions have been sympathetic to existing structures but have used modern materials and building techniques. These have attempted to address ongoing issues of structural integrity, and necessary drainage, ventilation, light, and modern heating, plumbing, sanitary, and electrical systems.

10 Surroundings:
(Check all that apply)

<u> X </u> Open Land	<u> </u> Industrial	<u> X </u> Residential
<u> X </u> Woodland	<u> </u> Commercial	<u> X </u> Other <u> see</u>
<u> X </u> Scattered	<u> </u> Densely Built Up	<u> below</u>

Buildings

- Other Regional Transfer Facility, Town Highway Department
- Other Former Town capped Landfill
- Other Multipurpose, multi-use Town Recreation Facilities
- Other New York State Thruway (Interstate 87)
- Other New York State Route 32
- Other High Power Electrical Transmission Lines
- Other Electrical Power and Telephone Distribution Lines

11 Notable Features of Building and Site (i.e. style, details): Greek Revival 1 ½ story farmhouse with cellar, brick chimneys at both sides of the main portion of the house and at east ell, and pairs of quarter-round windows at the gable ends of the attic - more information below in the description of the historical and architectural importance. Barns and granary, red with white trim, one retains its metal roof (see Exhibit B). The white and brown rail, board, and picket fences are not original.

12 List the following and your source(s) of information:

Date of initial construction: c. 1850

Architect (if known): John LeFevre

Builder (if known): Elting

Source(s): Boy Scout survey 1967

Huguenot Historical Society

Haviland-Heidgerd Historical Collection

Town of New Paltz Historic Resource Survey 2004.

Town Assessment records, research by Commission members

Owners

Historical and Architectural Importance: Referring to the criteria set forth in the Town Preservation Ordinance, 140-122, list those that apply and explain how the property meets those criteria.

- 140-122 i:** Possesses special character or historic or aesthetic interest or value as part of the cultural, political, economic or social history of the locality, region, state or nation.
- ii:** is identified with historic personages
- iii:** embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style
- iv:** is the work of a designer whose work has significantly influenced an age
- v.** because of a unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood.

i: Possesses special character or historic or aesthetic interest or value as part of the cultural, political, economic or social history of the locality, region, state or nation.

The original character of this farmhouse with panoramic views of the Shawangunk Ridge in an area of Town of New Paltz is an important element in the historic fabric of the region. A map which defines the area of the historic farmhouse and its surrounding curtilages which are being designated herewith is attached hereto and made a part hereof as **Exhibit A**. Such surrounding curtilages are indicated with hash marks and red outline as "**Option 1B**" and do not include the outbuildings.

ii: is identified with historic personages

This is an ancestral home of the LeFevre family, original patentees whose descendants continued to influence local events and history.

The Josiah P. LeFevre house was built on a portion of land originally occupied and owned by Isaac LeFevre (1683-1752), son of New Paltz Patentee, Simon LeFevre. (**See attachment #1 - genealogy**) The land was inherited by Isaac's son, Daniel who lived in a stone house (the White Duck Farm) still standing on the west side of what is now called Rt. 32 North. (**See attachment #2 - 1790 map**) Upon the death of Daniel, his youngest surviving son, Peter inherited, "all that of my land and tenements at the Bontiekoe in the New Paltz patent it being my old homestead together with the lands I now own"

The name Bontecou traces its meaning back to the French word Bon-ter-cou, meaning neck of good land. The early settlers may have also chosen this name in remembrance of the Dutch vessel, the Bontecoe, which made several voyages from Holland to America bringing many Huguenot emigrants.

In 1789, Peter LeFevre married Magdalene Elting, daughter of New Paltz, shopkeeper Roeliff Elting and his wife Mary Louw. Their son, **Josiah P.** was born at the White Duck Farm on August 10, 1811. According to The History of Ulster County (Sylvester), Josiah received his education in the common schools of the neighborhood and at the New Paltz Village School. In 1836 he married Elizabeth LeFevre, who was from Kettleborough (Gardiner). (**See attachment #3 photo**)

Josiah built the house known as the J.P. LeFevre house c.1850. (**See attachment #4 – 1858 French Map and attachment #5 – Beers 1875 map**) By that time, Elizabeth had given birth to eight children, one son Daniel having died as an infant. Elizabeth went on to have three more children, only one of them surviving past infancy. In total, Elizabeth lost four children before their first birthdays.

According to Ralph LeFevre's History of New Paltz Major Isaac LeFevre (Josiah P's. great-grandfather) built a barn on the White Duck Farm property. Part of the timber of this old barn was of yellow pine and had been hauled all the way from Greenfield in the town of Wawarsing, where Isaac's mother owned land. This barn was torn down by Josiah P. and some of the yellow pine lumber used to build his own barn across the road. Josiah served in the 92nd NY Infantry and received the appointments of Lieut. in 1833, Lieut. Col. in 1838 and Col. in 1842. Josiah also served the Town of New Paltz in the following capacities: Supervisor (1851-1853, 1864-1866 & 1868), Justice of the Peace (1854, 1857 & 1870), Town Assessor and Elder of the Dutch Reformed Church. Josiah kept a ledger documenting his daily accounts. This ledger is an excellent example of the daily transactions of an early 19th century local farmer. (See attachment #6 - Ledger) This ledger is now in the possession of the Huguenot Historical Society.

Josiah's eldest son, Johannes (See attachment #7 - photo) was born May 26, 1837. He held high ranks in the 156th Regiment, Co. E. under General Banks. He enlisted in Aug 1862 as 2nd Lt. at age 26, was promoted to 1st Lt. Oct. 1863 and finally to Captain Dec. 1863. Johannes frequently wrote home to his family. Several letters gave full details of his fatal wound (See attachment #8 – Johannes' letter). The attending physician, Dr. West sent a telegraph along with a letter explaining how Captain LeFevre died of "ganque green." The original letter is found in the collection of Huguenot Historical Society. Johannes's body was brought back to New Paltz and was buried at the New Paltz Rural Cemetery. The Highland G.A.R. Post is dedicated to his memory. (See attachment #9 – Huguenot Hero) for more details on Johannes's life.

Peter, Josiah's second son (1838-1878) (See attachment #10 - photo) graduated from Union College with a degree in the classical studies. He, as well as his brother Johannes served in the 156th N.Y. Regiment. He served as Lt. Colonial and was later promoted to Captain. Peter was a prolific writer and sent more than 50 letters to his family during the Civil War (See attachment #11– Peter's letter). These letters give deep insight into the thoughts and actions of Union soldiers during the Civil War. Peter died of Yellow Fever in Bartlett, Tennessee.

Jane LeFevre (1842-1908) (See attachment #12 - photo) never married. She spent most of her life living on the family homestead, taking a short time out to attend the Nyack Female Academy. Jane

began a Thanksgiving journal (See attachment #13 - journal) which she began the year her brother Johannes died (1864). She kept this annual journal going until her death at the age of 66 from cancer.

Ralph LeFevre (1844-1925) (See attachment #14 - photo) became one of New Paltz's most prominent citizens. After attending the New Paltz Academy, Ralph attended the State Normal School in Albany. He was schoolmaster of the Bontecoe School at the age of 16 and left behind a journal listing his students and their characteristics. (See attachment #15 - journal) Ralph married in 1873 and moved to the Village of New Paltz, where he went on to become the editor of the *New Paltz Independent*, a weekly newspaper that continued to be published for more than a hundred years. He moved into a large house on Elting Avenue in 1878. Ralph was president of the Huguenot Patriotic, Historical and Monumental Society (later became the Huguenot Historical Society), which was responsible for opening the New Paltz Memorial House (later known as the Jean Hasbrouck House). (See attachment #16). In 1903 Ralph wrote *The History of New Paltz, NY and its Families*, a book still used by local historians.

Simon LeFevre, the youngest son of Josiah P. and Elizabeth stayed on and kept the family farm until 1941. At that time he sold the farm to his cousin Elizabeth LeFevre Elting Smith when no other living relatives wished to buy it. Her husband Leon H. Smith, who died at the age of 100 in October of 1981, was never an owner. Elizabeth LeFevre Elting Smith died in 1970. Ownership then passed jointly to her two sons Elting and Roger Smith. Roger bought his brother's half in 1971. Roger Smith died in 1992, whereupon his children, Silas, Jocelyn, and Luke inherited the property and continue to own it. Kathleen Smith, Roger's widow and mother of Silas, Jocelyn, and Luke, lives on the property, but has never owned it.

This property is deeply tied to the history of New Paltz and many of the notable people who made that history, from the Patentees through a direct line of descendants to today.

Included in this packet are copies and explanations of the 1860, 1870, and 1880 Federal Censuses, the Historic Buildings Survey Inventory and the obituaries of Josiah P. LeFevre, Elizabeth LeFevre, Jane LeFevre, Ralph LeFevre, Peter LeFevre, Johannes LeFevre, Simon LeFevre, and Leon Smith. Obituaries of Elizabeth Smith and Roger Smith are in the process of being located.

Attachment #17 (a photo) was taken on the steps of the house on Aug. 10, 1892 in honor of Josiah P.s' 81st birthday. Attachment #18 (map and blow-up map) is a layout of buildings, exact date unknown.

iii: embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style

"With the advent of the Greek Revival style, large farmhouses in New Paltz generally returned to the traditional 1 ½-story scale, even for the most affluent families, which perhaps suggests that a certain rural modesty was restored following a generation of exuberance following the Revolution... large wood-frame houses in the Greek Revival style are commonly found in the form of the house Josiah P. LeFevre built at Bonticoe in 1850. (Fig. 36) LeFevre moved from the 100-year-old stone dwelling in which he was born into a new stylish house he had erected on the east of the highway overlooking his lands with the Shawangunk Mountains in the distance. (See Fig. 10 for stone house.) The house epitomizes the multitude of 1 ½-story farmhouses built in the same period and that survive in large numbers across the town. If nothing else, these houses document the significant growth that occurred in the town, both by natural increase, as is the case with the LeFevres, and by migration from other places. In the years between 1850 and 1860, the Huguenot families still dominated the landscape, particularly in places like Bonticoe along the Wallkill where patentees had first claimed their personal lands. Nevertheless, the population of the town, including the slow-forming village, was becoming more diversified culturally and economically. Still an unusually insular rural community, New Paltz was feeling the effects of the rapidly changing times. With no room left for their sons to farm, the Huguenots were spread throughout the neighboring towns and counties, and many had already pushed west. The presence of the city was real, as farmers depended on its markets for their quality of life. A clear effort was made by the Huguenot grantees to remain isolated and protected, but it was not because they were naive.

Perhaps Josiah P. LeFevre intentionally built a house strongly reminiscent in form and plan as the old stone farmstead. Yet, if it appeared to be from the same mold, it was greatly improved in the comforts it provided. Behind the standard five-bay facade was a center passage plan with large square rooms in the front and shallow half-rooms in the rear. Three or four chambers were tucked into the upper half-story. Why would LeFevre, with at least six children, resist the convenience of a full

second story at this stage unless he was indeed following some community prescription? The hallmark of the farmhouse, the kitchen ell was concealed in the rear of the house so that it presented a neat and symmetrical appearance to the road. The Greek Revival style was principally conveyed by the heavy entablature that ornamented the roof edge supported by wide corner boards. The front and rear friezes on the house and the ell were pierced with small rectangular windows. These were also common elements of the domestic version of the style. The front entrance was detailed with pilasters and a ponderous lintel in the fashion, but a three-bay piazza with delicate scroll-sawn fretwork revealed the increasing influence of the picturesque taste. (Perhaps ponderous, fluted columns were believed to have interfered with the stunning view of the mountains.) The absence of window trim of any substance also reveals a watering down of the style to the point where it had lost a certain degree of its historical associations. Nonetheless, the style lingered because it could be so easily applied to the standard 1 ½-story farmhouse form.” – Larson, Neil, *Town of New Paltz Reconnaissance-Level Historic Resource Survey*, August 2004, p.IV-39-40.

Leon Smith, spouse of owner Elizabeth Smith and a classically trained architect, made numerous construction additions, renovations, and modifications to the house and barns including telephone, plumbing, heating, electrical, artesian well and septic system, asphalt roofing and metal gutter draining systems, external east chimney and patio, porches, bathrooms, kitchen, closets, windows, doors, driveway, fencing, and landscaping (trees, gardens, and meadows, etc) between 1941 and 1970. After 1970, when he inherited the property, Roger Smith made many renovations and changes to the house and outbuildings. The current owners have similarly renovated the structures and grounds since they inherited the property in 1992.

v. because of a unique location or singular physical characteristic, represents an established and familiar visual feature of the neighborhood.

The Josiah P. LeFevre house is a visible property, a classic farmhouse of the 1800s, with some barns visible on a small rise above the busy State Route 32.

- 13 Please attach any additional material that might be useful in considering the site for landmark designation, i.e., copies of newspaper clippings, magazine articles, old photographs, etc. Photocopies are acceptable. Please be advised that no material can be returned.

14 Sources of Information:

History of Ulster County – by Nathaniel Sylvester

Huguenot Historical Society

Haviland Heidgerd Historical Collection – Vertical Files, House Book Collection, Obituary Books

The History of New Paltz – by Ralph LeFevre

Town of New Paltz Historic Resource Survey 2004, Town Assessment records, research by

Commission members

Owners

15 Photographs required for submission to the State of New York

- Current views
- Minimum size: 4"x6"
- Color prints
- Two (2) sets of each photograph
- Include all exterior views (front, back, sides) showing complete elevations of all structures to be considered.

16 Map Required:

Obtain from the Town of New Paltz Building Department a location map and mark the property's location on this map. If more than one building is being considered on a property, or the property has notable landscape features, include a sketch plot plan of the property noting these buildings and/or features. **Exhibit A** a map which defines the area of the house and its surrounding curtilages, being designated herewith. Such curtilages are indicated with hash marks and red outline as "**Option 1B.**"

Signature

Date

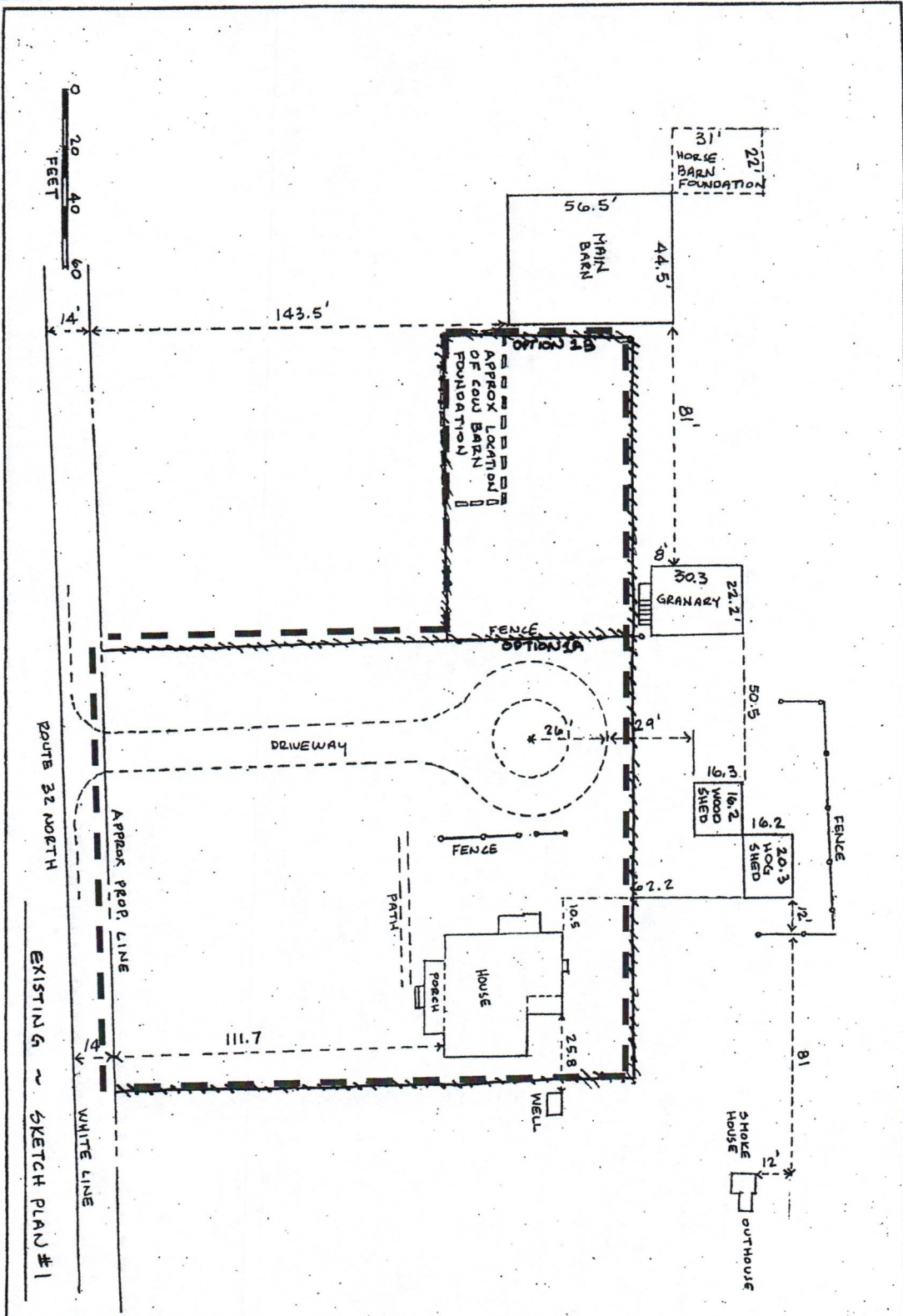
Signature

Date

Signature

Date

EXHIBIT A - A MAP OF THE FARMHOUSE AND CURTILAGES BEING DESIGNATED HEREWITH



DRAWING NUMBER: 5K-1 OF	SMITH PROPERTY 454 ROUTE 32 NORTH TOWN NEW PALTZ, NY	ROHDE, SOYKA & ANDREWS Consulting Engineers PC 40 Garden Street Poughkeepsie, N.Y. 12601 (845) 452-7515 Fax: (845) 452-8335	NORTH ARROW 	DRAWN BY:	*Alteration of this drawing, except by a Licensed Professional Engineer or Architect is illegal. Any alteration by a Professional Engineer or Architect must be indicated and bear his/her seal, signature and date of alteration. *The user of this drawing shall verify all dimensions shown hereon and the scale of this drawing.
	PROJECT NUMBER: 05-480-01			SKETCH PLAN-EXIST	