

**United States Department of the Interior
National Park Service**

For NPS use only

**National Register of Historic Places
Inventory—Nomination Form**

received

date entered

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

1. Name

historic Will Rogers Memorial Hospital

and/or common

2. Location

street & number New York Route 86 _____ not for publication

city, town Saranac Lake _____ vicinity of

state New York code 36 county Essex code 31

3. Classification

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

4. Owner of Property

name Bank of Lake Placid

street & number 81 Main Street

city, town Lake Placid _____ vicinity of state New York

5. Location of Legal Description

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

street & number Court Street

city, town Elizabethtown _____ state New York

6. Representation in Existing Surveys

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

date _____ federal _____ state _____ county _____ local

depository for survey records

city, town _____ state

7. Description

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

Describe the present and original (if known) physical appearance

The Will Rogers Memorial Hospital is located immediately east of New York Route 86 in the village of Saranac Lake, Essex County. Situated approximately one mile south of the village center, the hospital is located on a five-acre wooded plot bounded on the east by several two-story apartment buildings built in the 1950s and on the north and south by wooded land. Situated on a hilltop, the hospital is oriented with its formal elevation facing west toward a sloping lawn. The main receiving entrance and approach drive are located on the north side of the building. There are no outbuildings on the property.

The hospital is a three-story steel frame and reinforced concrete structure above a raised basement faced with random cut stone. The exterior wall finish of the upper stories consists of stucco and decorative half-timber framing. The T-shaped plan of the hospital consists of a major north-south axis from which a service wing projects to the east. An attached single-story power plant with a tall decorative chimney is located at the east end of the service wing. The hospital is distinguished by its asymmetrical massing consisting of projecting pavilions highlighted by dark half-timber framing. The three-story pavilions were characterized by recessed open sleeping porches until they were enclosed with storm sash in the 1960s. The central portion of the formal west elevation is dominated by a four-story polygonal tower with a wide brick cornice and hexagonal roof. Decorative quoins and buttresses of rough cut stone provide vertical emphasis to the angular exterior wall surfaces.

The fenestration is regular and symmetrical consisting of single, double-hung and casement sash. The raised stone foundation and tower contain round-arched multi-pane windows surrounded by radiating voussoirs. The steeply pitched slate-covered gable roof is punctuated by shed dormers and gable wall dormers with decorative bargeboard trim. The main entrance on the north elevation is sheltered beneath a gabled canopy with eaves trim. The formal entrance on the west elevation consists of an enclosed gable-roofed vestibule with pointed-arch transom and a round-arched double door. The central portion of the west elevation is also characterized by double multi-paned glass doors with transoms flanking a polygonal rough stone bay with a round-arched entrance. The east elevation has a modern apse-type entrance flanked by two segmental-arched stained-glass windows which were designed and built in France.

→ Because the hospital remained in use until the mid-1970s and has undergone a series of extensive internal alterations, no distinguishing interior architectural features remain with the exception of a circular staircase in the tower. The staircase retains its original decorative iron with wood handrail and is lit by recessed round-arched multi-pane windows in the tower. The rotunda at the base of the staircase once held a bronze statue of Will Rogers sculpted by Jo Davidson. The statue was removed in the early 1970s to the Will Rogers Memorial Fund headquarters in White Plains, New York.

The building was used as a hospital from its construction in 1928 until 1974. The structure remained unused and vacant until 1980 when it served briefly as the press headquarters for the XIII Winter Olympic Games at nearby Lake Placid.

8. Significance

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

Specific dates 1928-1929 **Builder/Architect** William E. Scopes

Statement of Significance (in one paragraph)

The Will Rogers Memorial Hospital is architecturally significant as a distinctive example of Tudor Revival style institutional architecture and historically significant for its association with the innovative treatment of tuberculosis patients. Designed by local architect William E. Scopes to resemble a country estate house or lodge, the hospital incorporated features reflecting the non-institutional approach to treatment advocated by its founders. Completed in 1929 as a subsidized treatment facility for vaudeville entertainers, the "NVA Lodge" became the Will Rogers Memorial Hospital in 1936. In its picturesque Adirondack setting, the imposing hospital provided unconventional tubercular treatment to entertainment industry patients from 1930 to 1974 and remains a significant architectural landmark in Saranac Lake.

Shortly after World War I, theatre impresario Edward F. Albee and a small group of prominent vaudeville figures organized the National Vaudeville Artists (NVA), an association to provide subsidized care for the ailing and aged performers of the variety stage. The NVA began assisting performers requiring treatment for tuberculosis by providing care in "cure cottages" at Saranac Lake. In 1925, the group acquired forty acres and built a large cottage for its patients. In March 1927 the National Variety Artists Fund with its own board of directors was created out of the parent organization (NVA) for the express purpose of erecting and maintaining a larger hospital at Saranac Lake. The NVA directors commissioned architect William E. Scopes to design the proposed hospital. Scopes, a resident of Saranac Lake, was himself a tuberculosis victim who had left his former architectural practice in New York City seeking the curative environment of the Adirondack mountains. The architectural firm of Scopes and Feustmann conducted a local practice in Saranac Lake during the 1920s - 1930s.

The present hospital was constructed from 1928 to 1929. The physical design of the building was a drastic departure from the average hospital of the period due to the conviction of those involved that a comfortable, non-institutional environment would greatly aid recuperation. In developing the unusual design, emphasis was placed upon patient access to the picturesque Adirondack mountain views and the wooded environment of the hilltop site and upon treating the patients as colleagues rather than outcasts. The result was an English Tudor style building resembling a country estate or lodge rather than a hospital. The structure had many uncommon amenities including private rooms, sleeping porches, and common dining and recreation facilities. Patients were encouraged to be independent and self-sufficient, as well as to interact with their fellow patients. This practice differed sharply from the normal confinement which most hospitals employed in the treatment of tuberculosis. The new hospital was named the National Vaudeville Artists' Lodge at the dedication

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Continuation sheet Will Rogers Memorial Hospital,
Saranac Lake, Essex Co., NY item number 8

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ceremonies in 1930.

The general economic depression of the 1930s and the rapid growth of the motion picture industry adversely affected vaudeville entertainment placing the NVA lodge in financial jeopardy. In 1935 the NVA transferred the hospital to the newly organized Will Rogers Memorial Commission. Established following the tragic death of the popular humorist, the commission was dedicated to perpetuating his memory. The group decided that the hospital would be a fitting memorial if its services were extended to benefit all entertainers. Enlisting the support of the motion picture industry, the committee launched the "Will Rogers audience collections" in May 1936. The national audience collections from theatre patrons became the principal sustaining support for the hospital. In October 1936, the structure was rededicated as the Will Rogers Memorial Hospital.

Renewed financial difficulties during World War II forced the Will Rogers Hospital to restrict patient admissions. In the late 1940s, contributions were again solicited from motion picture industry leaders. With improved financing, the hospital continued to function until 1974, when the Will Rogers Memorial Fund ended its direct administration of the treatment facility. The building remained vacant from 1974 until 1980, when it was briefly used as the press headquarters for the XIII Winter Olympic Games at nearby Lake Placid. The Will Rogers Memorial Hospital remains a significant example of Tudor Revival style institutional architecture associated with important events leading toward humanitarian health care within the entertainment industry.

9. Major Bibliographical References

Will Rogers Memorial Fund. The Development of Will Rogers Hospital and Research Center. White Plains, New York, n.d.

10. Geographical Data

Acreage of nominated property 5.78 acres

Quadrangle name Saranac Lake

Quadrangle scale 1:25,000

UTM References

A

118	570660	4906560
Zone	Easting	Northing

B

Zone	Easting	Northing

C

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D

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E

--	--	--

F

--	--	--

G

--	--	--

H

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Verbal boundary description and justification

The nominated property is delineated on the enclosed survey map (1983) and Essex County tax map, No. 032 PD, and the boundaries reflect current property lines.

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

state NA code county code

state NA code county code

11. Form Prepared By

name/title Raymond W. Smith, Field Representative
Historic Preservation

organization NYS Office of Parks, Recreation and date July 1983

street & number Empire State Plaza, Agency Bldg telephone (518) 474-0479

city or town Albany state New York 12238

12. State Historic Preservation Officer Certification

The evaluated significance of this property within the state is:

national state local

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

State Historic Preservation Officer signature 

title Commissioner

date 8/9/83

For NPS use only

I hereby certify that this property is included in the National Register

date

Keeper of the National Register

Attest:

date

Chief of Registration

250.01'
 1/2 in
 50' of
 2 1/2 Pine

LOT 14

PARCEL 8
0.59 Acres
28669

PARCEL 7
0.54 Acres
18769

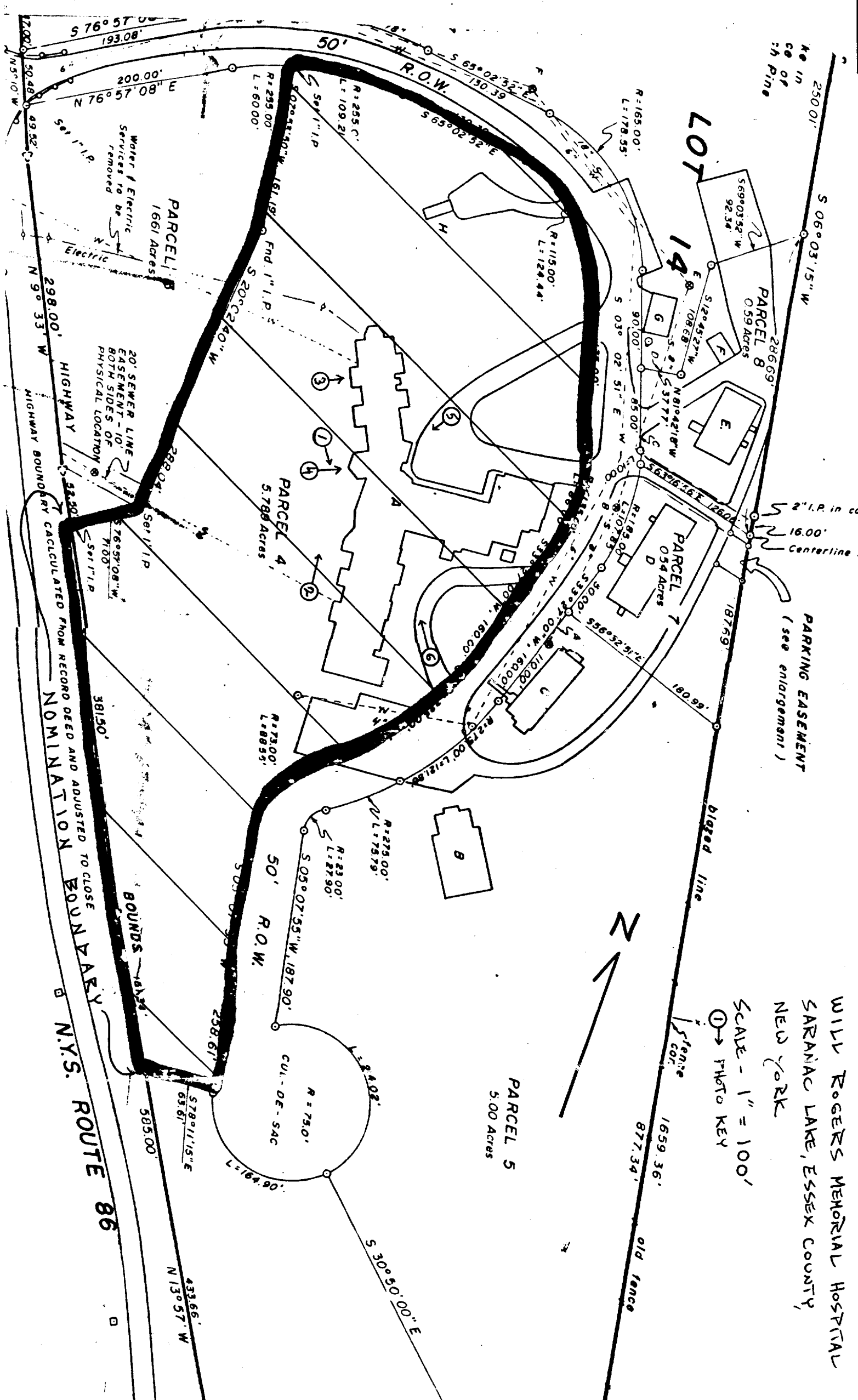
PARCEL 5
5.00 Acres

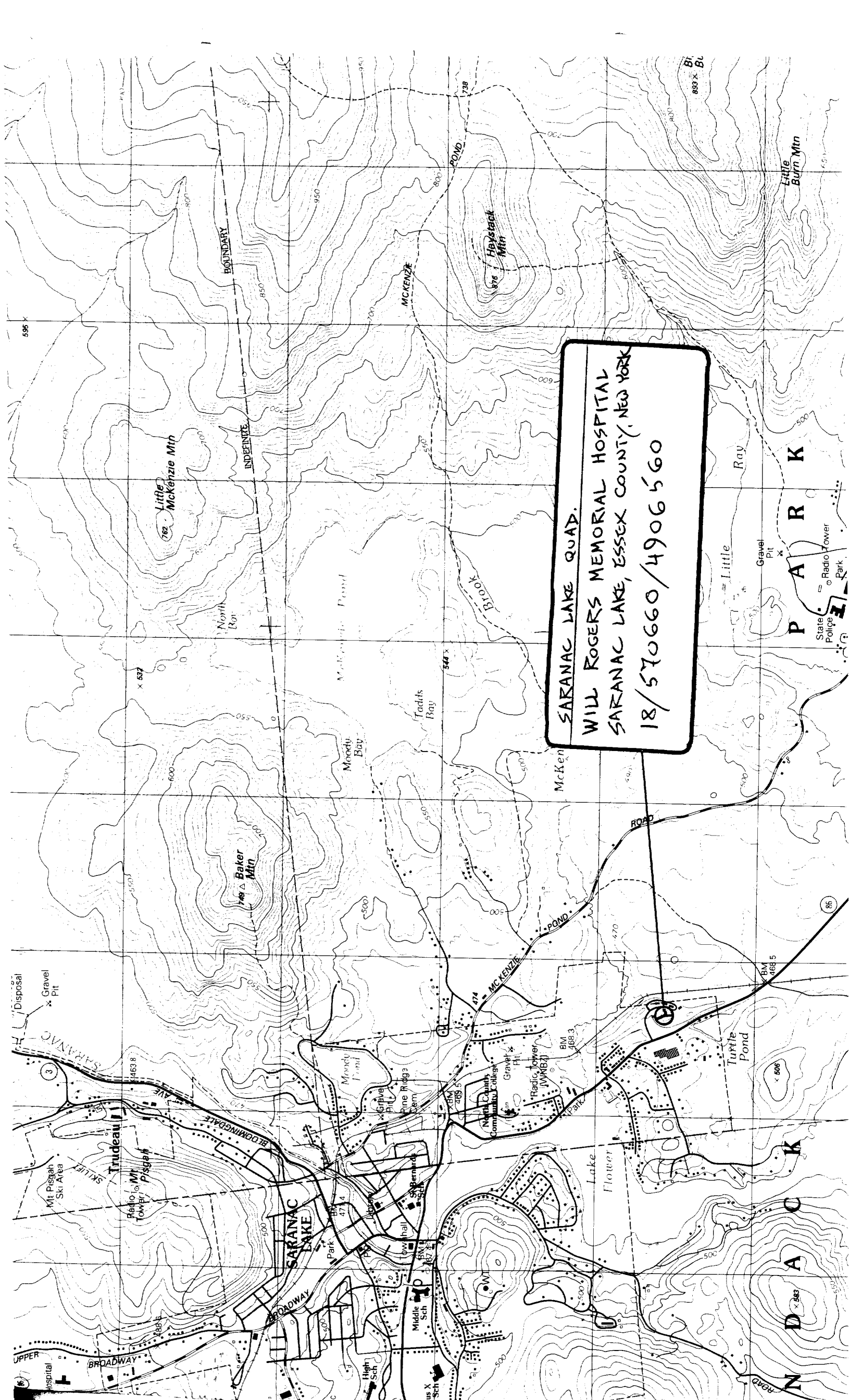
PARCEL 4
5.785 Acres

PARCEL 1
1661 Acres

WILL ROGERS MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
SARANAC LAKE, ESSEX COUNTY,
NEW YORK

SCALE - 1" = 100'
① → PHOTO KEY





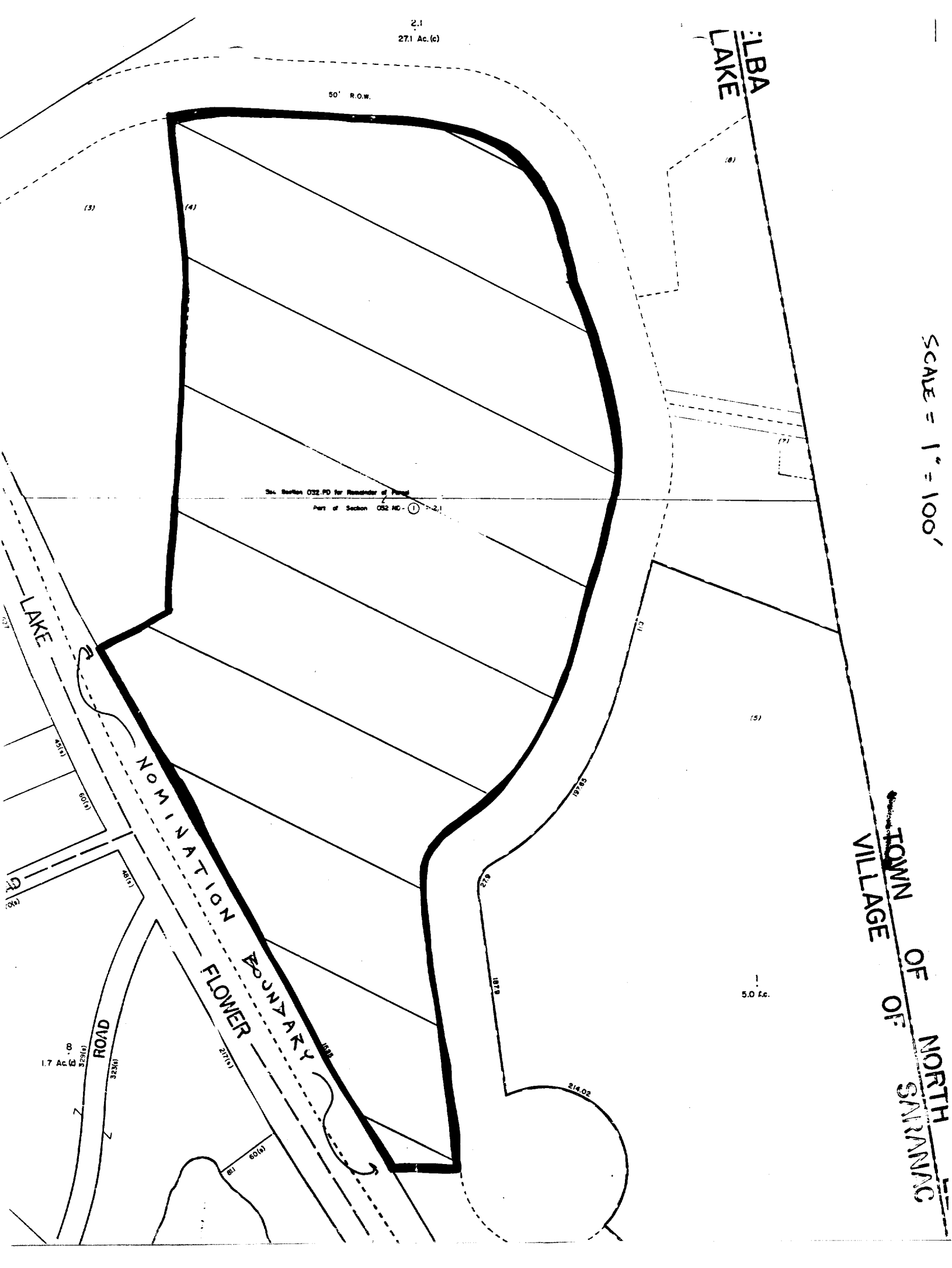
SARANAC LAKE QUAD.
WILL ROGERS MEMORIAL HOSPITAL
SARANAC LAKE, ESSEX COUNTY, NEW YORK
18/570660/4906560

2.1
27.1 Ac. (c)

50' R.O.W.

LBA
LAKE

SCALE = 1" = 100'



TOWN OF NORTH
VILLAGE OF SARRANAC

5.0 ft.

NOMINATION FLOWER BOUNDARY

LAKE

ROAD

1.7 Ac. (c)
32810

2170

214.02

187.83

60.10

(5)

(4)

(3)

Sec. Section 052 PD for Remainder of Parcel
Part of Section 052 NE-1-2.1

MAP SHOWING

BANK OF LAKE PLACID

SURVEY OF PROPERTY FOR THE

SITUATE IN

LOT 14 • TOWNSHIP 11 • OLD MILITARY TRACT • R.S.
VILLAGE OF SARANAC LAKE • TOWN OF NORTH ELBA
COUNTY OF ESSEX STATE OF NEW YORK

I HEREBY CERTIFY THAT THIS MAP WAS PREPARED FROM AN ACTUAL SURVEY OF THE PERIMETER BY ME COMPLETED ON JANUARY 5, 1976; THAT THE SUBDIVISION WAS TAKEN FROM A "SITE PLAN" DATED JULY 17, 1982 BY D.W. MAGURK, L.S. AND THAT THE FOLLOWING PARCELS WERE RE-SURVEYED AND MONUMENTED BY ME ON THE RESPECTIVE DATES:
PARCEL 3 - DEC. 24, 1982

REVISION DATES

JAN. 5, 1983

GLENN D. O'DONE
PROFESSIONAL LAND SURVEYOR
SARANAC LAKE, NY.

SCALE



1 INCH = 100 FEET

