

# The Window

Volume 1, No. 2

## ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

### *Get to Know Your Built Environment!*

The next several issues of *The Window* will each feature a style of architecture found in Seneca Falls. Have fun with this information. You may find yourself looking at the buildings around you in a different way, searching for clues everywhere.

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### *Resources You Can Use*

Whether you want to plan a maintenance or construction project, or simply learn more about the history of a particular property or neighborhood, there are several resources available that may make the job easier for you.

- The *Architectural and Historical Inventories*, commonly known as *Blue Forms*, are available for all of the buildings within the boundaries of the Seneca Falls Historic District. These forms, compiled and published in book format in 1989, provide historical and architectural information, including building materials, a brief history of ownership, date of initial construction, etc. Blue Forms are available for review at the Village Planning Office, the Seneca Falls Historical Society, the Seneca Falls Library, and the Seneca Falls Heritage Area Visitor Center, which also sells the book.

- The *Seneca Falls Historical Society* has maps, photographs, directories and other resources in its collection that may help develop an understanding of particular properties in the Village.

The Village Planning Office also has in its library:

- *Guidelines & Standards for the Protection and Enhancement of the Seneca Falls Historic District*, available free of charge, provides background information, architectural styles, and some recommended methods for addressing particular issues commonly encountered with older buildings;

- Back issues of *The Old-House Journal*, offering practical maintenance and restoration tips, as well as basic trouble-shooting advice for owners of old buildings;

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## *Through The Window*

Through *The Window* above we can see a snowy day on Lawrence Street, part of the neighborhood in The Flats, flooded with the creation of the Barge Canal. Many of the Lawrence Street, Dey Street and Wall Street houses were relocated to higher ground around the Village. From today's perspective, standing on the shore of Van Cleef lake, this neighborhood would be almost 40' below the surface of the water! Manufacturing was king in Seneca Falls at this time, with the Silsby, Rumsey, Gould, Westcott and numerous other factories driving the economy.

*Photograph Courtesy Seneca Falls Historical Society*

# ARCHITECTURAL STYLES, PART 1

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completely surround the front door. Very often a semi-circular or elliptical fanlight can be found over the front door, often accompanied by sidelights. Classically



## *The Federal Style*

Most popular locally between 1800 and 1840, Federal style buildings in Seneca Falls can usually be identified by their simple rectangular form. These buildings



are normally symmetrical, with double-hung windows aligned horizontally and vertically on the front. These fronts can be visually divided to form five vertical



“bays,” although three and seven bay Federal style buildings can be found as well. The gable roof usually has its ridge parallel to the street, and the gable ends are often embellished with cornice

returns and fanlight or elliptical windows. Sometimes, especially with commercial row structures, the gable ends are punctuated with stepped parapets. Also popular, though somewhat rare in this area, were square buildings with hipped roofs.

The most distinctive feature of a Federal style home is the treatment of the front entry and the elements and detail that



detailed columns or pilasters were capped with a decorative crown or pediment. The entire surround may sometimes extend

to form a small porch. Other important identifying features may include a cornice emphasized by decorative moldings or dentils and double-hung windows with six lights in each sash.

Many Federal style buildings in Seneca Falls have been destroyed by fire or demolition over the years, while others have had many of their distinguishing features covered or removed. If you know what to look for, you can still find examples of this early architectural style around the Village.

The following information was compiled for the Village's latest Certified Local Government annual report, covering the period from October 1, 2004 to September 30, 2005:

The Heritage Preservation Commission held 13 meetings during the reporting period.

- Applications considered for review: 67
- Applications approved as submitted (52), or with modifications (9): 61 (91%)
- Applications denied: 3 (4.5%)
- Applications tabled into next reporting period for more information: 3 (4.5%).

Of the 67 applications reviewed:

- 55% were for minor alterations
- 34% were for alterations/additions
- 3% were for new construction
- 8% were for demolition/removal.

## Meeting Results

The Village's Heritage Preservation Commission (HPC) met twice in January. What follows is a summary of the requests for Certificates of Appropriateness and the results.

A request to make changes to two windows in the house at 111 State Street was approved, with stipulations. One window, on the south elevation, had previously been significantly altered and will now be eliminated using matching brick for fill. The second window, on the north elevation towards the back, will be converted into a door with a landing and steps. The HPC approved the changes, stipulating that details of the door, landing and steps be submitted for review at the next regular meeting. Those details were reviewed and approved at the second meeting.

A proposal to replace a concrete sidewalk with red brick pavers at 116 State Street was approved. The sidewalk, from the house to the main walk, will be four feet wide and thirty-two feet long, with the pavers laid in a random pattern.

Various renovations were proposed for the house at 8-10 Troup Street. This property had undergone several major changes in the past. The HPC granted a Certificate of Appropriateness for changes including: demolition of the non-historic wood and concrete block garage; construction of a new garage to be attached to the east side of the house by a breezeway; construction of additions on the west and north; conversion of the enclosed front porch into additional

living space; and installation of a fan light window in the east gable end. Because the house had already been sided with a synthetic material, the HPC approved the option of residing with vinyl shingles simulating cedar shakes, concrete and wood fiber composite clapboards, or restoring the original wood clapboards, if salvageable, after removal of the existing cladding.

The HPC also approved the removal of the deteriorating fixed awning and synthetic panel sign field at 92-100 Fall Street. These materials were exhibiting evidence of water infiltration that could eventually cause structural damage and potentially pose a hazard to passers by. The sign field panels will be replaced with temporary wood panels painted to match the building's red bricks.

Replacement of the slate roof at 221 Fall Street was approved. The slate had, in the past, been completely coated with an aluminum roof coating material that could not be removed. The roof was now leaking. The HPC granted a Certificate of Appropriateness for replacement of the slate with black architectural asphalt shingles.

The next scheduled meeting is Tuesday, February 28th at 7:00 pm at Village Hall. Procedural training will be available at 6:30 pm.

### Resources *continued from page 1*

- *Preservation Briefs* published by the National Park Service on a wide variety of topics, from energy efficiency to plaster repair, relevant to the preservation of historic buildings;
- A collection of reference material on color schemes, architectural styles, and other information of interest.

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The Window on Historic Preservation is an historic preservation newsletter for the people of Seneca Falls, NY. This publication is also available online at [www.senecafalls.com](http://www.senecafalls.com). Questions or comments about this publication, or about historic preservation may be directed to 568-6894, [sfha@rochester.rr.com](mailto:sfha@rochester.rr.com), or by writing to: Planning Department, 60 State Street, Seneca Falls, NY 13148.

**ANSWER to the January  
Where Am I?:  
First Ward School,  
76 State Street**

# NEWS & NOTES

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## *Heritage Area News*

The Seneca Falls Women's History Coalition has announced that Dorothy Dickieson has been named "Woman of the Year" for 2005, and that she will be honored at a banquet at the Seneca Falls Country Club on Saturday March 11, 2006. The event will begin at 5:30 pm with a cash bar, followed by dinner promptly at 6:30 pm. Tickets are \$30 per person and may be reserved in advance by calling 568-8412. Reservations must be made by March 1, 2005. Everyone is welcome!

The Women's Coalition is made up of representatives from the National Women's Hall of Fame, the Seneca Falls Heritage Area, The Seneca Falls Historical Society, The Elizabeth Cady Stanton Foundation, and Women's Rights National Historical Park. The Coalition has been honoring Women of Seneca County for the past 13 years.

## *Where Am I?*

This photo depicts an architectural detail found somewhere in the Seneca Falls Historic District.

Can you identify the building?



**CORRECTION:** *the July Meeting will be held on Tuesday, July 25th*

## *The Window*

ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Village of Seneca Falls

60 State Street

Seneca Falls, NY 13148