

The Window

Volume 1, No. 5

ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Sustain America - Vision, Economics & Preservation

May is National Preservation Month!

by Francis Caracilo

This special issue of *The Window* is being distributed to all addresses in the Village in consideration of Preservation Month 2006, as designated by the National Trust for Historic Preservation and proclaimed by Mayor Diana Smith.

This year's theme, *Sustain America - Vision, Economics, and Preservation*, invites us to consider how historic preservation impacts our society and our culture by linking the heritage of our past directly to the potential of our future. Communities all across the nation have discovered that it makes sense to recognize and utilize the past to help develop a direction for the future. Historic preservation provides, and helps us maintain, a sense of place or an identity unique to our individual community. It is this sense of place, this unique identity, which guides us today.

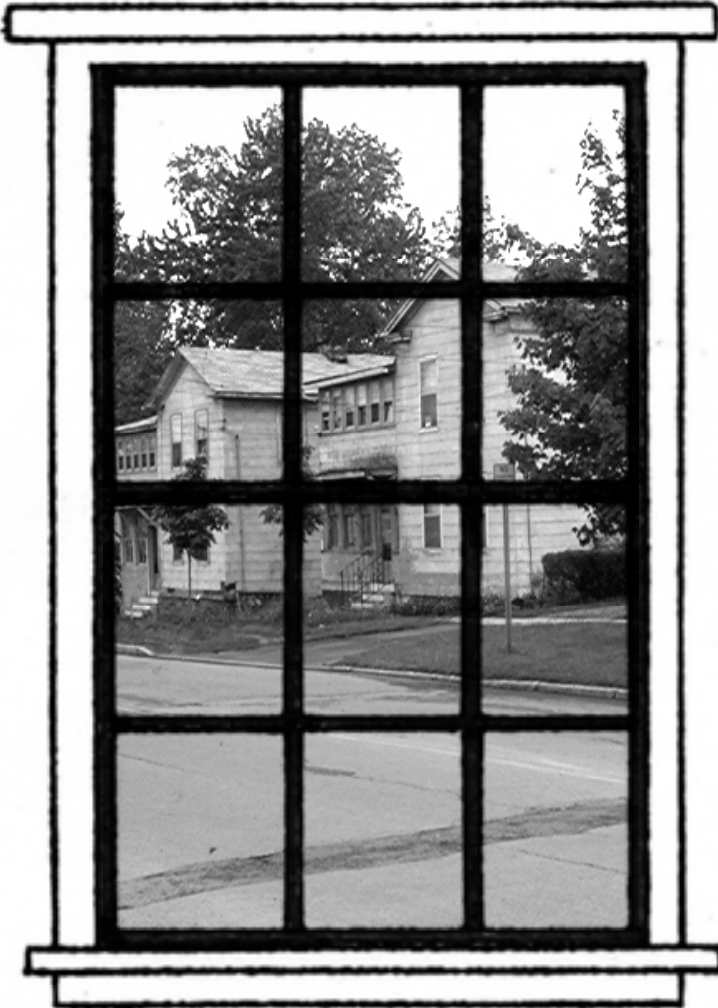
The economic benefits of preservation may seem subtle, but they're real. It's one of the reasons a growing number of our nation's communities are rediscovering their past and taking the necessary steps to protect and preserve the physical reminders of their heritage. In Seneca Falls, as in other communities, preservation usually brings benefits on several levels. For example, preservation and rehabilitation of the First and Fourth Ward School buildings provided initial construction jobs; reversed the appearance of blight on their neighborhoods; provided much needed housing units; and enhanced the Village's tax base. Similarly, the rehabilitation of the Village's former freight station not only enhanced the appearance of the neighborhood, but it also has become the home of several professional businesses providing stable jobs to the community. These are examples of developers looking beyond empty or under-utilized old buildings, and recognizing the potential economic benefits of preservation.

As recently as 2001 the Lower Manhattan Task Force of the City of New York estimated that \$1 million invested in preservation construction in the city created five more construction jobs and three more permanent jobs than \$1 million invested in new construction. Because of the labor

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Through The Window

Through *The Window* above we can see the "Latham Twins" on West Bayard Street in the early 1980's. These Greek Revival houses were originally built as identical twins by the Latham family in the early 1840's. The Lathams, a family of builders, partnered with Gary Sackett to build many of the houses in what is now called the Sackett District in the Third Ward. Besides contributing to the architectural landscape of Seneca Falls, the Lathams also built structures around New York. The Latham Twins were demolished in 1985 to make room for a parking and storage area, after a failed effort to give them away and have them moved.

Photograph Courtesy Seneca Falls Planning Department

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BEFORE & AFTER SUCCESS STORIES!

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Trinity Episcopal Church, early 1990's with NYSDOT concrete blocks for shoreline treatment



Trinity Episcopal Church, 2006 - lowered water level shows effective shoreline preservation treatment

It took the vision and determination of local, state and federal agencies and individuals to realize we didn't have to settle for an unsightly and ineffective treatment to save the Trinity Church from continuing shoreline erosion. The resulting appropriate treatment not only halts the erosion, but has eliminated a major threat to one of the most photographed sites in New York State. The success of appropriately and effectively preserving and protecting the canal shoreline and the historic church can be directly attributed to the fact that Seneca Falls has a local historic preservation program, participates in the federally sponsored Certified Local Government Program, and is one of New York's designated Heritage Areas. Without the kind of access these programs afford our community to financial and technical resources and expertise, the photo on the left might still be the "present day" reality.



NY Central Freight Station, 1970's vacant feed supply store



NY Central Freight Station, 1980's professional offices

The developers of these two formerly neglected buildings had the vision to recognize the potential in the adaptive reuse of them that not only enhanced the buildings' neighborhoods, but also provided the community with jobs and housing. While most of the rehabilitation and restoration was undertaken solely with private funds, the 4th Ward School project also allowed the owner to take advantage of federal historic preservation tax credits.



4th Ward School, Washington Street, early 1980's vacant and deteriorating



4th Ward School, Washington Street, late 1980's exterior restored, interior converted to four condominiums

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intensity of the work involved, according to the Real Estate Services Group of Washington, DC, \$1 million spent on the rehabilitation of an historic building in New York State added \$86,000 more to local household income than the same \$1 million spent on new construction.

The fact that Heritage Tourism is one of the fastest growing branches of the tourism industry is evidence that more and more people are willing to travel to see authentic reminders of our nation's, states', and communities' histories. Here in Seneca Falls it is an incontrovertible fact that an increasing number of people from all over the nation, and all over the world are visiting Seneca Falls. The "Guest Register" at the Heritage Area Visitor Center indicates that, since 1990, people from every state in the Union and from more than sixty different nations have visited Seneca Falls.

For those who might question the value of tourism, consider that the travel and hospitality industry is, according to the Empire State Development Corporation, one of the most vibrant and fastest growing segments of the New York State economy. In 1997 statewide travel expenditures totaled \$30 billion, which supported nearly 400,000 jobs, or five percent of the

Meeting Results

The Seneca Falls Heritage Preservation Commission met on April 25, 2006. The Commission reviewed the following applications:

- APPROVED as submitted the application by the owner of Cat & Dragon Games to install a 3' foot long overhanging sign at their new location, 61 State Street.
- APPROVED the application of Johnson Home Developers, LLC to install aluminum storm windows, bronze or dark brown in color, at 57 Cayuga Street.

private-sector workforce. By comparison, only 360,000 people worked for banking and securities companies.

Joining the preservation movement and celebrating Preservation Month does not require a lot of work. You don't have to learn a lot of fancy vocabulary words; you don't have to own or live in an old house; and you don't have to worry about the prospect of a lot of required reading or attending dry, boring lectures. Enjoying a walk through an historic neighborhood; shopping in an historic downtown; eating in a restaurant located in an historic building; attending a function in an historic school building; even practicing your religion in an historic church all promote these historic resources and contribute to their preservation, reinforcing that sense of place that identifies your community. These older buildings and neighborhoods are enjoyable to look at, they prove time and again to continue being useful, and they help us better understand ourselves as individuals, as communities, and as a nation by reflecting the tastes, values, and concerns of people in a given time.

You may have always been a preservationist but just didn't know it. You've been encouraging Seneca Falls to maintain its unique identity simply by your daily appreciation of the things that provide that identity. Be proud, and keep up the good work!

- APPROVED the application of Johnson Home Developers, LLC to install a 36" X 60" sign advertising the availability of condominiums at 57 Cayuga Street.
- APPROVED the application of Johnson Home Developers, LLC for parking expansion at 57 Cayuga Street with the stipulation that a "Geo Block" type of paving material be used for the two front parking spaces, and that screening shrubs of moderate height be planted in the front on both sides of the sidewalk to offer a symmetrical visual shield of parked cars.
- APPROVED the application for installation of a side porch railing and handrail matching the styling and color of the existing porch railings at 42 Cayuga Street, as submitted.
- APPROVED the application submitted by the owner of Hair Elegance for installation of a 48" X 36" sign with gold border and lettering on a blue background, reading "Hair Elegance Between the Locks Salon & Spa."
- APPROVED the replacement of the large front window at 219 Fall Street with a vinyl replacement window matching the other vinyl windows previously installed.

The Commission passed a resolution to recommend the Village Board of Trustees seriously consider adoption of a local law allowing historic property tax exemptions as a means of promoting appropriate development and improvement within the Village's Historic District.

The next scheduled Commission meeting is Tuesday, May 23rd at 7:00 pm at Village Hall. Procedural training will be available at 6:30 pm.

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Village of Seneca Falls



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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. Questions or comments about this publication, or about historic preservation may be directed to 568-6894, sfha@rochester.rr.com, or by writing to: Planning Department, 60 State Street, Seneca Falls, NY 13148.



Where Am I?

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

Can you identify the building?

ANSWER to the April Where Am I?: fanlight on the east wall of 41 Fall Street

Reminder to Residents

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In the interest of public safety, the Village offers this reminder to Seneca Falls building and home owners: The Village Code requires that each building and home within the Village limits display the official building number in a manner and size that will be legible from the street - each number should be at minimum 4" high and 1/2" wide. Attention to this relatively simple issue can make a great difference if fire, police or ambulance services are ever needed at your building or home.

There are many ways to accomplish this important safety requirement. Building and home owners in the Seneca Falls Historic District who have questions about how to properly comply with the Village Code and also use appropriate style and size building identification, please contact Historic Preservation Coordinator Francis Caraccilo, by telephone at 568-6894 or by email at sfha@rochester.rr.com. Mr. Caraccilo and Village Fire Chief and Street Commissioner William Gladis will be pleased to assist building and home owners to comply with our Code and the requirements of the Seneca County Emergency Services Office.

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Village of Seneca Falls
60 State Street
Seneca Falls, NY 13148