

# The Window

Volume 1, No. 11

## ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

### *Seneca Falls Main Street Improvement Program*

*by Christina J. Selvek, Heritage Area Director*

Downtown... In the past, the word brought to mind an image of bustling centers of commerce and activity. Too often today, the image is of vacant, deteriorated buildings. New York Main Street is a program of the NYS Department of Housing and Community Renewal, encouraging the development and revitalization of downtown commercial districts.

An economically healthy downtown: builds a positive image for the community; reflects a community's confidence in itself and its future; creates job opportunities; attracts new industry and strengthens service and retail job markets; stabilizes and improves the area's tax base, and protects investments already made in downtown infrastructure; enables property owners to maintain historic commercial buildings and preserve an important part of the community's heritage.

In Seneca Falls there is a growing interest in improving the appearance and economic stability of the historic business district. Seneca Falls was one of 36 communities across the state that received NY Main Street funding in 2006. Since the announcement in July, the Seneca County Economic Development Corporation (SCEDC) and the Village of Seneca Falls Heritage Area Department have been working to implement the program. Recently, the Heritage Area Visitor Center hosted two application workshops, in October, for eligible property owners. Main Street funding is available to property owners within a three contiguous block target area along Fall Street. The hour-long workshops provided an overview of the NY Main Street Program including how the funding works, who can apply and what projects are eligible. Approximately 20 business and property owners attended the workshops.

Applications are due Monday January 15th, 2007 by 5:00 pm to the Seneca Falls Heritage Area Visitor Center. A five-person application review panel has been formed representing banking, local government, County tourism, cultural and historic resources, and marketing. Once applications have been scored they will be forwarded to the SCEDC, which will then make award announcements in late February. The Seneca Falls Main Street Improvement Program (SFMSIP) will make every effort

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## *Through The Window*

Through *The Window* above we view the Bridge Street Bridge from Water Street looking south, circa 1940. The truss bridge, completed in 1915 by the Phoenix Bridge Company as part of the NYS Barge Canal Project that flooded the Flats, links the Village's two primary business districts. In April 1917 young Italian immigrant Antonio Varacalli sacrificed his own life when he jumped from the bridge into the icy waters of the Cayuga-Seneca Canal to save a woman attempting suicide. His selfless act of heroism deeply moved the local community, and is believed to have inspired director Frank Capra's rendition of the bridge scene in the film classic, *It's A Wonderful Life*. In the 1990s the bridge was rescued from scheduled demolition.

*Photograph Courtesy of the Seneca Falls Historical Society*

# HISTORIC STOREFRONTS

## Historic Storefront Guidelines

### Rehabilitating Existing Historic Storefronts

If the original storefront exists, repair and retain the historic features using recommended treatments.

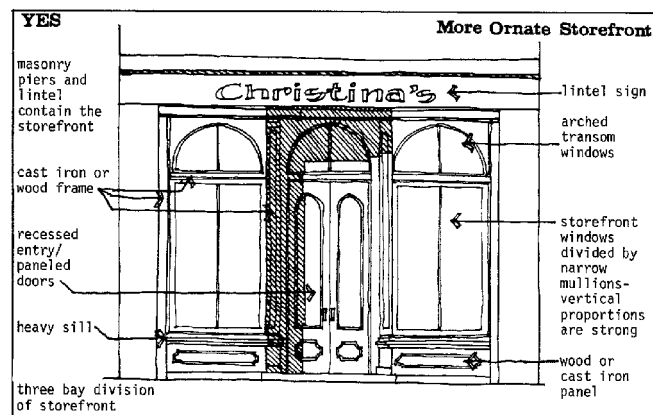
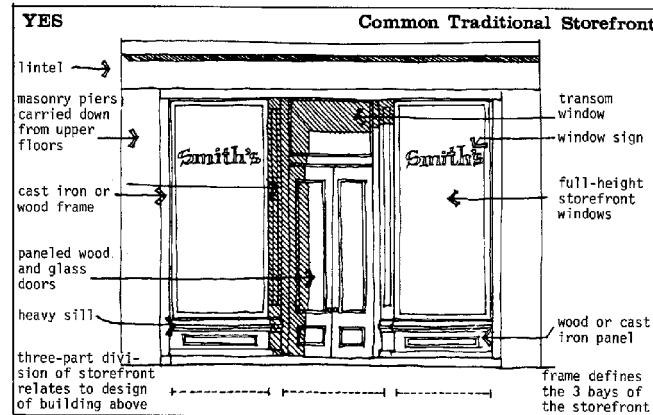
- Become familiar with the style of your building and the role of the storefront in the overall design. Don't "early up" a storefront. Avoid stock "lumberyard colonial" detailing such as coach lanterns, mansard overhangs, wood shakes, non-operable shutters, and small panel windows except where they existed historically.
- Preserve the storefront's character even though there is a new use on the interior. If less exposed window area is desirable, consider the use of interior blinds and insulating curtains rather than altering the existing historic fabric.

- Avoid use of materials that were unavailable when the storefront was constructed; this includes vinyl and aluminum siding, anodized aluminum, mirrored or tinted glass, artificial stone, and brick veneer.

- Choose paint colors based on the building's historical appearance. In general do not coat surfaces that have never been painted. For 19<sup>th</sup> century storefronts, contrasting colors may be appropriate, but avoid too many different colors on a single façade.

### Guidelines for Designing Replacement Storefronts

If the original storefront no longer exists or is too deteriorated to save, undertake a contemporary design which is compatible with the rest of the building in scale, design, materials, and color; or undertake an accurate restoration based



on research and physical evidence.

- Scale: Respect the scale and proportion of the existing building in the new storefront design.
- Materials: Select construction materials that are appropriate to the storefronts; wood, cast iron, and glass are usually more appropriate replacements materials than masonry which tends to give a massive appearance.
- Cornice: Respect the horizontal separation between the storefront, and the upper stories. A cornice or fascia board containing the store's sign traditionally helped.
- Frame: Maintain the historic planar relationship of the storefront to the

façade of the building and the streetscape (if appropriate). Most storefront frames are generally composed of horizontal and vertical elements.

- Entrances: Differentiate the primary retail entrance from the secondary access to upper floors. In order to meet current code requirements, out-swinging doors generally must be recessed. Entrances should be placed where there were entrances historically, especially when echoed by architectural detailing (a pediment or projecting bay on the upper stories).

- Windows: The storefront generally should be as transparent as possible. Use of glass in doors, transoms, and display areas allows for visibility into and out of the store.

- Secondary Design Elements: Keep the treatment of secondary design elements such as graphics and awnings as simple as possible in order to avoid visual clutter to the building and its streetscape.

*Excerpted from: Preservation Briefs #11, "Rehabilitating Historic Storefronts," by H. Ward Jandl. U.S. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, Preservation Assistance Division. September 1982.*

# Main Street Program

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# COMMISSION NEWS

to fund all applications. However, if the amount of funding requested exceeds the total grant amount of \$200,000, a

## SELECTION CRITERIA

### Façade Renovation Program Priorities

- Aesthetic/ Overall Impact on the Streetscape
- Project Urgency
- Adherence to the SFHD Guidelines & Standards
- Create jobs or expand business
- Proof of matching funds

### Building Renovation Program Priorities

- Brings money into Downtown economy
- Creates new and/ or enhances existing residential space
- Utilizes space that is currently vacant
- Aesthetic/ Overall Impact
- Project Urgency
- Adherence to the SFHD Guidelines & Standards
- Create jobs or expand business
- Proof of matching funds

## APPLICATION SCHEDULE

Applications are due January 15th, 2007 to the Heritage Area Department 568-2703

Upon request, staff will review draft applications prior to the submittal deadline

Applications will be reviewed beginning February 1st, 2007.

project waiting list will be created. If a significant number of applicants are placed on the waiting list, the SFMSIP will consider reapplying for additional funding for the 2007 grant round.

Things to keep in mind when applying for SFMSIP funding:

- This is a matching grant- at least 50% of project costs are to be paid by the applicant
- Grant funding received does NOT need to be repaid
- \$100,000 is available for façade renovations
- \$100,000 is available for building renovations
- Approximately 12% of the funding will be used to fund a Rehabilitation Specialist position

- Funding goes to hard construction costs
- Applicants will need to create an escrow account
- Grant funding is paid after the project is complete and approved

The Seneca Falls Heritage Area Department will provide updates about the program requirements and the application process through emails to workshop participants, online at [www.senecafalls.com](http://www.senecafalls.com) and at Seneca Falls Business Association meetings.

For additional information about the SFMSIP contact Christina J. Selvek, Heritage Area Director at 315-568-2703. For information about the NY Main Street program visit [www.nymainstreet.org](http://www.nymainstreet.org).

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# Meeting Results

The Seneca Falls Heritage Preservation Commission met on October 24, 2006. The Commission reviewed the following applications:

- HELD OVER the application of First United Methodist Church for installation of a freestanding sign with an anodized dark bronze finish aluminum frame at 63 State Street for additional review at the next scheduled meeting, at which time the applicant will provide additional information.
- APPROVED the application to install a six-foot high, white vinyl fence behind the house at 81 State Street.
- APPROVED the application of Seneca County Head Start to install a four-foot high, galvanized chain link fence to be connected to existing galvanized chain link fencing, to

enclose the playing field behind their building at 115 West Bayard Street.

- DENIED the application, as submitted, of Seneca County Head Start for exterior installation of rigid foam insulation and vinyl siding to the concrete block addition to the "Pivotal" rated limestone "Sackett House" at 115 West Bayard Street, because the proposal would result in an architecturally inappropriate, visually distracting "build out" at the junction of the addition and the limestone building.

The Commission accepted a memo from Mayor Smith regarding changes in support staff for the Village's historic preservation program.

The remaining 2006 scheduled Commission meetings will be Tuesday, November 14 and Tuesday December 12 at 7:00 pm at Village Hall. Procedural training will be available at 6:30 pm.

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ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

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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.

# NEWS & NOTES

## *Seneca Falls Heritage Area Events ~ It's A Wonderful Life!*

It's A Wonderful Life

60th Anniversary Pictorial Postal Cancellation

It's A Wonderful Life weekend is December 7<sup>th</sup> through 10<sup>th</sup>, 2006. There are many family activities offered throughout the weekend including a pet parade and tree lighting, special screening of the film, Victorian Christmas Tea, horse drawn wagon rides, train rides with Santa, Ma Bailey's chili cook-off and much, much more!

A feature of the It's A Wonderful Life weekend activities is the US Postal Service's special holiday "Bedford Falls Station" cancellation featuring artwork by Connecticut resident Alan Falk. Stamped holiday greeting envelopes can be hand-cancelled with this special indicia on Saturday December 9<sup>th</sup> from 10:00 am to 4:00 pm at the Heritage Area Visitor Center at 115 Fall Street, lower level. The Seneca Falls Post Master will be on hand with holiday stamps. Holiday ice cream and hot chocolate floats inspired by the film will be sold by the Cayuga Lake Creamery, and Walter Gable, Seneca County Historian, will be presenting "Christmas Past through Historical Christmas Cards." Please join us for this festive holiday event!



### *Where Am I?*

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

Can you identify the building?

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**ANSWER to the October Where Am I?: lantern at St. Patrick's Church northeast entrance**

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Village of Seneca Falls

60 State Street

Seneca Falls, NY 13148