

# The Window

Volume 1, No. 4

## ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

### *A Tale of Two Frans*

*a guest column by Frances Barbieri, Education Director,  
Seneca Falls Historical Society*

When is a Historical Society not a Historic District? When can one Fran be mistaken for another Fran? And what happens if you speak to the wrong Fran?

I have been at the Seneca Falls Historical Society for 18 years and Fran Caraccilo has been the Village Planner for about the same time. Not only do we have the same first name (spelled differently) but, also, we work for agencies with the same sounding names.

It causes a great deal of confusion for many people and businesses. I have been called upon many times to okay neon signs for new stores, vinyl windows for homes, fences for pools, and decks for the do-it-your-selves. A parish priest has yelled at me for not allowing a dog run; a member of Trinity Church thought I was horrible for not letting them save the church from falling into the canal (gee I never knew what power I really had). My father wanted to know how in America I could tell people what they could and couldn't do to their own homes.

Needless to say, I couldn't do any of these things. Fran Caraccilo could! (Well, neither could he, the Commission he works for could.)

With both of us being named Fran people often confused us. I had a contractor who wanted to be placed first on our board agenda even when we didn't have a board meeting. I have received more requests for waivers, variances, and various changes to homes, stores and property.

Being the friendly, open, caring, historical person I am, I always try to accommodate these people by saying fine! Go Ahead! It is Okay with me! Realizing that this makes so many people happy, I am always glad to help. Regretfully, I then have to tell them I have no authority to make those decisions and they have to call Fran Caraccilo to get an application to do these things. I am glad I don't have Fran's job.

Maybe that is the lesson for all. It is not easy to make decisions about anyone's property. Walk in Fran's shoes for a while and you would see it isn't easy for him either.

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## *Through The Window*

Through *The Window* above we can see downtown Seneca Falls in the late 1970's. On the right is Calarco's Bakery; moving west is Western Auto Hardware and Shumway Pharmacy. Also note the "bathtub" style street lights. The late 1970's focused local public awareness on the need to preserve and protect our historic resources, and began the movement to create the Seneca Falls Human Heritage Historic District in 1980. This was also the time when the National Park Service established Women's Rights National Historical Park, and Seneca Falls became part of the NYS Urban Cultural Park Program.

*Photograph Courtesy Seneca Falls Planning Department*

# ARCHITECTURAL STYLES, PART 3

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*Cayuga Street*

located within the front gable. Other windows are generally elaborated with decorative crowns or drip moldings.

Doors were commonly detailed with pointed arches and other decorative



*Green Street*

Gothic motifs similar to those found on windows. Front doors may or may not have sidelights and transoms and are almost always approached from a one-story porch extending the full width of the façade.



Decorative columns commonly support the porch with flattened, pointed arches between them.

## Gothic Revival Style

The height of popularity for the Gothic Revival style was between 1845 and 1865. It flourished as a rural style at a time when the philosophy of living in harmony with nature was being heavily promoted.



Walls extend into the gables without breaking plane, and windows with Gothic detailing are commonly located within the gables.

Decorative features are predominantly found along the gable end vergeboards and in the detailing of porch supports and brackets. The ornamentation was

cut from wood by the newly invented scroll and jigsaws and is commonly referred to today as "gingerbread." Ornate finials often grace gable peaks, and brick chimneys can be highly decorative.

One of the most distinguishing features of a Gothic Revival house is its steeply pitched gable roof. The main roof is usually side-gabled and is crossed with one or three front gables. The central front gable often represents the front of an ell, or wing, projecting perpendicularly to the rear, giving the house a classic cruciform, or cross-like, layout.



*Cayuga Street*

Windows, roof/wall junctions, porches and doors are important areas for decoration. Most houses, for example, have at least one window with a pointed arch shape or a double or triple window with such arches clustered together and normally

Though some Gothic Revival houses in Seneca Falls have been stripped of their ornamentation they remain recognizable. Many intact, or nearly intact examples of the style exist today. You can find a number of these homes both within and outside the Historic District.

*Chapin Street*

*State Street*



*Two Frans continued from page 1*

When I hang-up the phone after these requests I am always glad I work for the Seneca Falls Historical Society. I try to explain to people that, as the Historical Society itself is in the historic district, it too has to apply to the Preservation Commission for any and all changes we want to make to the exterior of our building. The Commission has always assisted us to accommodate these changes. Fran Caraccilo has helped in many ways to make things happen as quickly and efficiently as possible.

We are lucky to have a historic preservation district. Everyone who visits our area comments on the lovely old homes in Seneca Falls. Just remember that the Historical Society has been around for over 100 years but we are not the Agency for the Historic District. The Historical Society makes no decisions on your home or property. Remember I am Frances with an E and he is Francis with an I. For home Improvements call Fran Caraccilo. For Everything else, call me.

**ANSWER to the March  
Where Am I?:  
the old Trinity Church,  
10 East Bayard St.**

*The Window*

ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

is a publication of the  
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](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.

# Meeting Results

The Seneca Falls Heritage Preservation Commission met on March 28, 2006. The Commission reviewed the following applications:

- APPROVED a proposal by the owner of 81-83 Fall St. for an overhanging sign for a business the owner is installing in the lower level of the Cowing Street (rear) side of his building.
- APPROVED an application to install a black chain link fence on the Cowing Street (rear) side of the property at 81-83 Fall Street. The owner explained that, as a sculptor, he would be displaying some of his artwork outdoors behind the building, but that would make them susceptible to vandalism, and leaving him open to potential liability claims. He would provide multiple gates to allow pedestrian circulation during open hours, and they would be locked after hours. The Commission's approval is with the stipulation that the fence be only 6' in height and otherwise comply with all zoning and other pertinent regulations.
- APPROVED an application by the owner of 202 Fall Street, proposing front porch renovations. The brick house has "double-decker" front porches, originally identical in styling. The applicant proposes replacing the wrought iron with a wood balustrade matching the styling of the second floor balustrade, and replacing the metal awning with a wood awning.
- DENIED the application by the Seneca Museum of Waterways & Industry for installation of a 24" long neon "OPEN" sign in the storefront window of the museum at 89 Fall Street as inappropriate based on Guidelines & Standards for the Protection and Enhancement of the Seneca Falls Historic District page 7-11, #5; pointing out that there may be

other methods, including use of the overhanging sign approved in May 2005, to indicate hours of operation.

- APPROVED a request to extend a previously issued Certificate of Appropriateness from October 2004 to change the color scheme of the building at 16 E. Bayard Street until March 28, 2007.
- APPROVED the application submitted by the owners of 82 Cayuga Street to re-roof their house using grey, black or weathered wood-tone architectural asphalt shingles.
- APPROVED the proposal by the owner of 30 Cayuga Street to restore the front porch to its original format based on historic illustrations and plans and descriptions submitted.

Commissioners were invited to attend the annual Regional Preservation Conference sponsored by the Landmark Society of Western New York, to be held Saturday, May 29, 2006 in Brighton, NY. This conference will assist in satisfying the Commission's ongoing training requirements for the Certified Local Government Program.

Commissioners noted that many of the wood stairway structures approved for downtown canalside buildings have never been painted or otherwise sealed and are now showing unattractive staining from the elements. It is recommended that this be considered when granting Certificates of Appropriateness for similar structures in the future, and that painting or staining/sealing of wood elements be required.

The next scheduled Commission meeting is Tuesday, April 25th at 7:00 pm at Village Hall. Procedural training will be available at 6:30 pm.

# NEWS & NOTES

## *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](mailto: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.



### *Where Am I?*

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

Can you identify the building?

## *The Window*

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