

# The Window

Volume 1, No. 9

## ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

### *Historic Windows*

by *Christine Capella Peters*

*NY State Historic Preservation Office,*

*NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation*

The location, pattern and design detail of historic window openings and units help to illustrate the underlying design philosophy, as well as local and regional interpretations, of an architectural style. Because windows contribute to both the interior and exterior character of an historic building, the federal *Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties* recommend the retention and repair of historic windows.

In almost all cases, the repair and retrofitting of historic windows is the most feasible and prudent course of action, and far superior to replacement. Historic wood windows can be more easily repaired than contemporary aluminum or vinyl units, as traditional methods and matching materials are readily available. The life of wood windows, especially historic units commonly made of old growth hardwoods, is generally the life of the building, that is 75 years or more. Historic steel units, which have an equally long life, can be repaired by removing warping and cutting out damaged material, welding in new steel where necessary. Aluminum and vinyl window manufacturers typically do not guarantee their sash for this length of time, and they often recommend replacing a damaged unit in its entirety rather than repairing it. For example, in 1989 the US Military Academy at West Point had to replace aluminum window units that were only 12 years old!

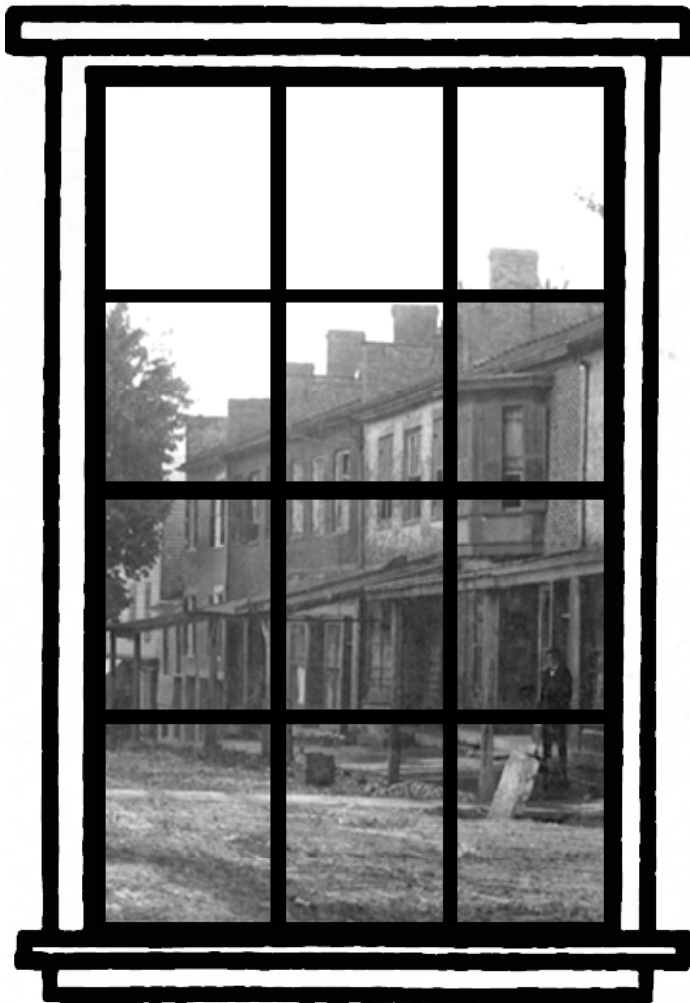
Most people assume that aluminum and vinyl windows are more energy efficient than wood units, which is not the case since neither aluminum nor vinyl has any insulating value while wood does. Regardless, most energy lost through windows is not due to the conduction of heat through the sash material, but rather air infiltration, which is easily prevented with proper caulking and weather-stripping. Once repaired, historic wood windows can meet or exceed the air infiltration qualities of aluminum and vinyl sash.

In addition, most people also assume that windows with double-panes (or double glazing) provide substantially higher energy efficiency than single-pane windows, but that is not the case. Single-pane units have an R value of 1, while double-pane

The Window

1

September 2006



### *Through The Window*

Through *The Window* above we see a view of lower Bridge Street, between 1892 and 1915, featuring the brick Sackett Block. Built by Judge Gary V. Sackett, in 1828-29, this Federal style commercial rowhouse block dominated the village's main business district until the railroad spurred development of the north side of the canal. Described as the "finest row of buildings in the village," the block provided commercial space on street level, and second-story residential quarters. This neighborhood witnessed the early influx of Irish immigrants settling in Seneca Falls, and later the waves of Italians making Seneca Falls their new home. Today the building in the far right is the location of Antonina's Restaurant.

*Photograph Courtesy of the Seneca Falls Historical Society*

*Turn to Page 3*

# ARCHITECTURAL STYLES, PART 7

*Auburn Road*

*State Street*



Colonial Revival homes often display an asymmetrical balance in their massing or detailing.



*State Street*

Full or partial width front porches can be found,

often supported by triple column groupings, with tightly spaced balusters. Windows are usually double hung and rectangular in shape with multi-pane sash. Palladian windows, a typical colonial detail, were used in many examples of this style. Paired or triple window groupings and bay windows clearly distinguish the Colonial Revival style from the original.

*West Bayard Street*



Full or partial width front porches can be found, often supported by triple column groupings, with tightly spaced balusters. Windows are usually double hung and rectangular in shape with multi-pane sash. Palladian windows, a typical colonial detail, were used in many examples of this style. Paired or triple window groupings and bay windows clearly distinguish the Colonial Revival style from the original.

*Cayuga Street*



*Cayuga Street*

fashion similar to early Federal prototypes. However, moldings are generally flatter and provide less depth and relief. The roofline is most frequently a simple gable running parallel to the street, or it is hipped, and sometimes is pierced with small dormers. Cornices have little overhang and are usually accentuated by dentils or modillions.



## Colonial Revival Style

The Colonial Revival house in Seneca Falls became a dominant style of building for more than half a century, approximately from 1880 to 1950. Its introduction began a more conservative and restrained trend using the Federal Style as a prototype, leaving behind the ornamentation of the Victorian Era.

The principal area of elaboration once again became the front entrance, windows and cornices.

Typically, the entrance of a Colonial Revival style house is surrounded in



*State Street*

## Historic Windows *con't. from page 1*

windows typically only have an R value of 2 and, in some cases, 3. Therefore, additional thermal efficiency can be realized best through the use of interior or exterior storm windows. Exterior storms should be painted or have a factory-applied finish matching that of the prime sash, and bronze or "silver" mill-finish treatments generally are not the best choice.

Where windows are missing or beyond repair, replacement units should match their historic counterparts, and such wood and steel windows are readily available and affordable. Window manufacturers have substantially increased the number of historically appropriate options they offer by adding new products to their lines and improving others. For example, many manufacturers offer true divided-light wood sash, as well as integral mullion/muntin grills. Such options make it easier to find an appropriate replacement unit. If necessary or preferred, a knowledgeable contractor can easily fabricate in-kind replacements.

The original windows of an historic building are important to defining its architectural style and overall character: they provide interest and detail through their arrangement, design and materials.

They are integral to the history of the property, part of why a particular building is important and captures our attention. Before casting these key features into a dumpster, take the time to consider all options.



## October Windows Workshop Offered

Local fine woodworker Craig Smith will speak on the subject of Historic Windows, Wednesday, October 11, 2006 at 7:00 pm in the Multi-purpose Room of the Heritage Area Visitor Center located at 115 Fall Street, lower level. The presentation is free and open to the public. Some of the topics Mr. Smith will cover are: the parts of a window; various styles and the architectural period in which they were popular; basic operation and maintenance; and the question of whether to repair or replace.

Mr. Smith has been involved with architectural historic restoration for more than 10 years. A graduate of the North Bennet Street School's Preservation Carpentry program, he operates a small fine woodworking shop, North Star Woodworks, which specializes in reproduction and restoration of historic windows and doors.

## Meeting Results

The Seneca Falls Heritage Preservation Commission met on August 22, 2006. The Commission reviewed the following applications:

- APPROVED the application for landscaping improvements to the property, to include a 4' X 6' pond; and to level a portion of the rear yard for installation of a patio area, at 3 Mumford Street
- APPROVED in concept the application of The Women's Interfaith Institute to install a handicap ramp as submitted, at 140 Fall Street, with the stipulations that if the construction material is to be wood, it be painted or stained; and that final materials and colors be determined through consultation with the Village Planning Office.
- APPROVED the application to change the color scheme of the house from white with black shutters and grey porch floor to cream with fawn brown trim and cinnamon porch and accents, at 57 East Bayard Street, and to install two wood signs.
- APPROVED an application for landscaping improvements at the house at 7 Mumford Street.
- APPROVED an application to change the trim color from white to teal on the house at 74 Cayuga Street.
- APPROVED the application to paint the house at 217 Fall Street Kilz Monterey Blue with white trim.

The next scheduled Commission meeting is Tuesday, September 26th at 7:00 pm at Village Hall. Procedural training will be available at 6:30 pm.

### The Window

ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

is a publication of the  
Village of Seneca Falls



**Village Board of Trustees**

Mayor, Diana Smith  
T. J. Ikewood  
Sylvester Campese  
Anthony Petroccia  
Tim Masino

**Heritage Preservation Commission**

Chair, Susan Noble  
Cathleen Johnson  
Patricia Gere  
Susan Harkey  
Maria Hartwell

Edited by Francis Caraccilo

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 Mainstreet Program*

The Window

4

September 2006

In August 2006, the Seneca County Economic Development Corporation (SCEDC) received funding from the New York Main Street Grant Program in the amount of \$200,000 for the development of a Main Street Improvement Program in the Village of Seneca Falls. Since this announcement, many business and property owners within the Village have inquired about the program, specifically asking if they are eligible. This round of Main Street funding is available to property owners within a three contiguous block target area along Fall Street. The target area extends from the Ovid Street intersection (27 Fall Street) to the Clinton Street (143 Fall Street) intersection, and a portion of State Street (30 State Street to intersection with Fall Street). The rear (south) façades of buildings located along Cowing Street adjacent to the Cayuga-Seneca Canal are also eligible for funding assistance.

The Seneca Falls Heritage Area and SCEDC are currently working on securing the grant contract for the Seneca Falls Main Street Improvement Program. Once this process is completed, the Heritage Area will notify property owners concerning the application process and important dates. Future updates about the Main Street program will be posted in *The Window*, on [senecafalls.com](http://senecafalls.com) and mentioned at monthly Seneca Falls Business Association meetings.

For more information contact Christina Selvek, Heritage Area Director at 315-568-2703.

*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 August  
Where Am I?: fanlight at the  
Seneca Falls powerplant at  
Lock 2 on the canal***

## *The Window*

ON HISTORIC PRESERVATION

Village of Seneca Falls

60 State Street

Seneca Falls, NY 13148