

# The Landmarker

A publication of the Preservation Association of Central New York

Fall 2002

## These 12 Syracuse buildings remain at risk

By Samuel Gruber

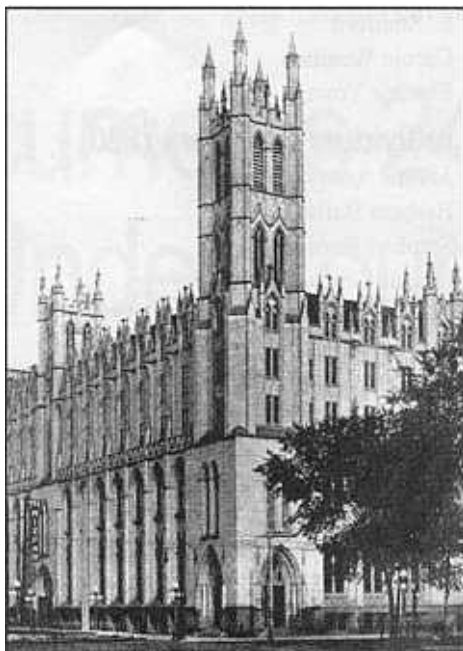
Four years ago, The Landmarker included a list of endangered buildings and sites in Onondaga County. Several of the historic structures on that list have since been demolished, including the Onondaga

**Inside:** County Poorhouse and the former East Syracuse First Presbyterian Church. Page 8 The future of most other structures on

that list remains uncertain, even some that have recently been saved like the former Jewish War Veterans' Post at East Genesee and Westcott streets in Syracuse.

With this issue of The Landmarker, we offer a new list of endangered buildings, this time focused within the city of Syracuse. It includes some structures from the earlier list, plus several new ones, including such venerable landmarks as the Hotel Syracuse.

**1. North Salina Street National Register Historic District, Syracuse.** North Salina Street, at one time called Cooper Street, was the original route of transportation and trade between the villages of Syracuse and Salina. By mid-century, the North Side was being built up by German immigrants who made barrels and vats for salt production and North Salina Street developed as the center of their community. After the salt industry declined in the 1860s, following the Civil War, German artisans transferred their carpentry



Saving Mizpah Tower for the long term requires commitment from the community like the support that restored the Landmark Theater.

skills to the manufacture of domestic goods. The area developed as a commercial and small manufacturing center, encouraged by paved streets and sidewalks and a street railway. Italian immigrants who came to Syracuse in the 1880s helped build the West Shore Railroad and settled in the predominantly German area, transforming it into a neighborhood exhibiting the influences of both immigrant groups.

Today, the life of the street has declined

See DANGER, Page 6

## County plan rethinks growth in suburbia

By Michael A. Stanton

The new Onondaga County Settlement Plan is an ambitious effort intended to do nothing less than reverse the course of development in Onondaga County.

Although the plan was completed in 2001, copies of the final report have only been made available to the public during the last few months. In its introduction, the Settlement Plan notes that "in its long history, Onondaga County has experienced only two models of growth: the traditional neighborhood and suburban sprawl. The Onondaga County Settlement Plan represents the determination of the county and its citizens ... to limit suburban sprawl in favor of the traditional neighborhood model of growth."

The plan was developed over a two-year period by the Florida firm of Duany, Plater-Zyberk and Co. Andres Duany and his wife, Elizabeth Plater-Zyberk, are best known as the creative force behind New Urbanism, a national movement that has led to the creation of neo-traditional developments like Seaside in Florida and the Kentlands in Maryland. These devel-

See SETTLEMENT, Page 9

# Preservation Association of Central New York

The Preservation Association of Central New York Inc. (PACNY) is a not-for-profit advocacy organization dedicated to the preservation of the historic resources of Central New York. PACNY's primary focus is directed towards issues pertaining to the resources of Onondaga County and the Greater Syracuse area. Founded in 1974, PACNY's primary goal is to illuminate the positive value of historic preservation for Central New York, in large part by preserving the past as a living part of our community. PACNY is a membership organization with a volunteer Board of Directors.

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## The Landmarker

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*For information on how to join, see Page 16.*



Beginning in the late 1840s, Mary Robinson, an African American laundress born in Schenectady, bought these two houses on Catherine Street near Burnet Avenue. They remained in the Robinson family until 1968.

# Survey documents 24 sites related to Underground Railroad

By Judith Wellman

Everyone knows about upstate New York's importance to the Underground Railroad. Auburn has Harriet Tubman. Rochester has Frederick Douglass.

**Related story:** Syracuse has Harriet Tubman home continues, Page 4

Now, thanks to a recent \$9,000 grant to PACNY from Preserve New York that is administered through the Preservation League of New York State, Syracuse and Onondaga County have become national and state-wide leaders in documenting local sites relating to the Freedom Trail.

Using a model developed in Oswego County, Judith Wellman of Historical New York Research Associates and Milton Sernett of Syracuse University's African-American Studies Department directed a survey that revealed twenty-four standing structures and several potential archeological sites related to the Freedom Trail, abolitionism and African-American life.

Thirteen of the sites are located in Syracuse and 12 in Onondaga County.

At least two of these sites will be nominated to the National Register of Historic Places. Several others will be part of a tour developed by Angela Bone-Owens of Cultural Ventures with money from UpDowntowners.

As Eber Pettit noted in 1879, Syracuse was the "great central depot" of the Underground Railroad. We have always known many of the major players:

■ The Rev. Jermain Loguen, minister of the A.M.E. Zion Church, and Caroline Loguen, whose home at 293 East Genesee Street was the major Syracuse depot in the late 1850s

■ The Rev. Samuel J. May, minister of the Church of the Messiah (now May Memorial Church) whose congregation, along with that of Plymouth Congregational, was one of the main supporters of the Underground Railroad

■ Charles Wheaton, hardware store owner, sometimes called the local "president"

of the Underground Railroad

■ William "Jerry" Henry, whose daring escape in 1851 forged a coalition of local African-American and European-American abolitionists that sustained the Freedom Trail until the Civil War

Until now, however, we have known very little about the large number of less visible supporters of the Freedom Trail, nor have we consistently documented sites that still exist to help us tell this story. This survey has led to several conclusions:

■ While local work was sometimes very secret, by the late 1850s, Underground Railroad supporters worked very openly in Syracuse.

■ While many freedom seekers went to Canada, many others settled in Syracuse – especially on the Near East side – and Onondaga County. Many of them, such as the Rev. Jermain Loguen and James Baker, took leadership roles in organizing resistance to slavery.

■ The Freedom Trail involved African

See FREEDOM, Page 4

# Survey continues at Tubman House

By Beth Crawford

A significant portion of Harriet Tubman's life was spent in Auburn and Cayuga County. Through her activities with the Underground Railroad in the 1850s, she became acquainted with several prominent Auburn residents including William H. Seward and Martha Coffin Wright, Lucretia Mott's sister. The Tubman property on South Street in Auburn and the Thompson A.M.E. Zion Church were designated National Historic Landmarks in 2000.

In 1859 Harriet acquired seven acres of land on South Street in the town of Fleming, just south of the Auburn city line, and relocated her parents there from St. Catharines in Ontario, Canada. Following her return from service with the Union Army during the Civil War Tubman lived at the South Street property (or on adjacent land acquired later) from c.1865 until her death in 1913.

With the assistance of the City of Auburn's Capital Improvement Program, Manager Michael Long and the staff of the Harriet Tubman Home Inc., grants have been secured to fund professional services for the preparation of an Historic Structure Report. In 2001, Crawford & Stearns, Architects and Preservation Planners of Syracuse was retained to prepare the Historic Structure Report documenting the history and condition of these properties in anticipation of the development of a coordinated plan for their accurate restoration.

For these purposes Crawford & Stearns has assembled a team of professionals including PACNY board member Douglas V. Armstrong, an archeologist and associate professor of anthropology at Syracuse University. Armstrong directed archeological investigations at the site this summer including the use of ground penetrating radar in key locations to confirm the existence of numerous former structures. Armstrong and his team are continuing to identify areas of potential archeological significance and will be preparing a report documenting his findings along with

recommendations for subsequent efforts.

Local landscape architect Paul Fritz of Environmental Design & Research, Inc., Syracuse, is providing preliminary evaluation of the overall site and will be assisting with program development and long-range planning. Crawford & Stearns' work to date includes graphic and photographic documentation of the structures and the preparation of base condition drawings. Preliminary research, including interviews with elderly neighbors, has provided direction for the next stage of investigation.

Communication with known Tubman scholars from around the county has resulted in the sharing of significant amounts of building and site-related information which has contributed to a better understanding of Tubman's life in Auburn and her efforts to establish the "Harriet Tubman Home for Aged Colored People."

In November 2000 the U.S. Congress mandated the National Park Service assess options for protecting nationally significant resources related to Harriet Tubman. The NPS is currently conducting a multi-

year "Harriet Tubman Special Resource Study," separate from the Historic Structure Report. The NPS study team is comprised of ten park service professionals who will evaluate the national significance, feasibility, suitability and management options of the properties relating to the life of Harriet Tubman particularly in Auburn and Dorchester County, Maryland.

The study team completed a two day preliminary evaluation of the Auburn properties in June 2002 and conducted public comment meetings in both locales in July 2002. The NPS anticipates that their study will be completed in 2004.

The Preservation Association of Central New York supports the preservation efforts of the Harriet Tubman Home Inc. Those wishing to write a letter of support should address them to Ward Dewitt, Executive Director, Harriet Tubman Home Inc., 180 South St. Auburn, N.Y. 13021.



Image of Tubman Home circa 1914 appears courtesy of the Seward House in Auburn.

## FREEDOM, from Page 3

Americans and European Americans, women and men, rich and poor.

■ Freedom trail supporters were sustained by religious ideals as well as by the essential American value that all men are created equal.

Other team members included Angela Williams, librarian with Syracuse

University's Martin Luther King Jr. Library; researcher April Harris; and speaker Ronald Graves. PACNY thanks the Advisory Board and the many volunteers who helped with this project.

So far, we have shared preliminary results of this study with several church groups, focusing on congregations active in the Underground Railroad, including People's A.M.E. Zion in Syracuse,

Thompson A.M.E. Zion in Auburn and Syracuse Monthly Meeting of Friends.

Reports from this project, including an overview, a context statement, a list of more than 700 people potentially involved in the Freedom Trail in Syracuse and Onondaga County, and photos, maps and descriptions of each site will soon be available on the PACNY Web site. Stayed tuned for more information.

# PACNY expands its online presence

By Michael A. Stanton

In May, PACNY established its new Internet home at [www.pacny.net](http://www.pacny.net). This new Web site displays PACNY's mission statement and goals, information about upcoming events, links to other preservation sites and information for volunteers.

The new Web site also opens the way to two new PACNY online projects: "Syracuse Then and Now" and "The Freedom Trail." These Internet projects are made possible through a generous donation of resources by USA Datanet.

Prior to the Civil War, Syracuse was known nationally as the "great central depot" for the Underground Railroad, transporting escaped slaves to freedom in the North and Canada. "The Freedom Trail" documents the people, places and events of the Underground Railroad in Central New York. *(To learn more about this PACNY research project, funded by a grant from Preserve New York, see the story on Page 3.)*

"Syracuse Then and Now" explores the changes that have taken place in Syracuse's architectural landscape since World War II. Told largely through the use of historic and contemporary photographs, this is a work-in-progress. We hope to see it grow over time to include information about all the great buildings our community has lost, as well as the treasures we still must fight to preserve.

This is truly becoming a community-wide project. Here are just a few of the contributions of time and resources individuals and institutions have made to "Syracuse Then and Now":

■ The Erie Canal museum has generously allowed PACNY extensive access to their collection of historic photographs, more than 60 of which are now on display at the Web site.

■ PACNY is in the process of digitizing all of the Onondaga County Library collection of vintage postcards, more than 300 in all. In addition to displaying many of these

postcards on our Web site, PACNY will provide the library with a complete digital record of their postcard collection on CD-ROM.

■ Syracuse Blueprint has allowed us the use of more than 50 images from their collection of historic photographs, including panoramas of Clinton Square from 1912 and 1925.

■ Cleota Reedzxx has offered PACNY the use of images and information from her collection on Ward Wellington Ward and the Arts and Crafts movement in Central New York.

■ Members of the Syracuse Camera Club are producing contemporary photographs to match historic images of Syracuse and Central New York. Members will also contribute photo-essays documenting the important landmarks in our community.

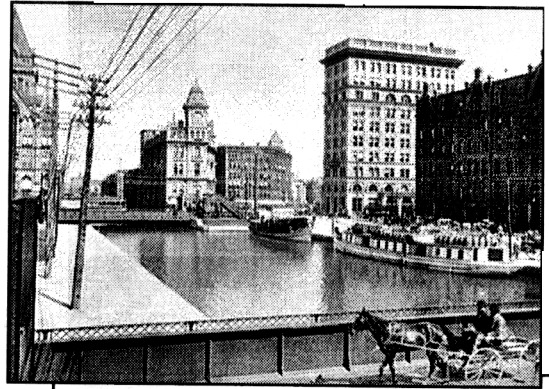
■ The State Tower Building provided more than 20 photographs that document the early years of what remains Syracuse's tallest building.

■ The Onondaga Historical Association has offered the use of 10 of the most popular images from their extensive collection.

■ The Strathmore Neighborhood Association has provided both photographs and historical information for use in the section of the Web site devoted to that neighborhood.

■ The Hotel Syracuse and M&T Bank (formerly OBank) have both provided images and information for use by PACNY on the Web site.

If you have historic photographs of the Syracuse area or know anyone who does – particularly photos showing historic buildings that have since been lost – we'd love to hear from you. Please contact the PACNY office at (315) 475-0119.



## Syracuse Then and Now

From 1840 to 1940, Syracuse grew dramatically in both population and wealth. This was due to the city's position on the Erie Canal, its location at the junction of major highways and railway lines and its growth as a manufacturing center. Between 1860 and 1870, the city's wealth more than quadrupled. In 1868 alone, 850 buildings were built in Syracuse. Between 1880 and 1900, the population of Syracuse doubled, then doubled again between 1900 and 1930.

On the eve of World War II, Syracuse was left with a fine collection of public buildings, commercial structures and private residences designed primarily by talented local architects. Some of these ranked among the finest in the state.

"Syracuse Then and Now" explores what has become of this inheritance. What were the city's architectural assets at the end of the war? What has been lost? What remains for us to enjoy and preserve?

This story is told largely through the use of photographs – pictures taken in the early twentieth century matched with recent photos of the same locations.

There have been significant changes during the intervening years. Some historic buildings have been substantially modified; others are gone entirely. Of course, historic buildings are sometimes removed to make way for something even better.

Link to <http://www.syracusethenandnow.org> and decide for yourself.

as retail businesses first moved south to the downtown area, then to the strip malls and enclosed mall of the suburbs. Many buildings are now vacant and suffering from poor maintenance.

**2. First Baptist Church or Mizpah Tower, 215 E. Jefferson St., Syracuse.** This building, erected as the First Baptist Church, replaced the Central Baptist Church designed by Horatio Nelson White in 1868. The building's upper stories were originally connected with the adjacent YMCA building to take care of its overflow. In the 1940s, the connection was closed and the space converted into a regular hotel. Twenty years later, the church took over management, and the Mizpah Tower functioned as apartments and rooms for single women. In 1969, it was named Mizpah, said to mean "temporary rest under the tower." The building served the First Baptist Church until 1988, when the congregation moved to Jamesville.

The auditorium was last used for 20 months between 1993 and 1994 as Symphony Hall, a rental performance space. The building, which was to be a central element in the package of the failed Avenue of the Arts Project, ultimately was seized by the city for non-payment of



The Conrad Loos Building, designed by noted Syracuse architect Archimedes Russell, is slated for demolition.

taxes. It suffered from a leaky roof and failure of the exterior terra cotta details, both of which resulted in interior damage. The city is aware of the problems at Mizpah and is searching for viable solutions, perhaps as part of a newly promoted but still not fully articulated Cultural Corridor development. In 2001, a state grant funded emergency stabilization work for some terra cotta ornamentation and a complete roof repair. Saving the building for the long-term will require a multi-million dollar investment and a long-term commitment from the community like what was done for the Landmark Theatre.

too expensive. They said they would prefer to raise money to demolish the existing building and, in its place, erect a new church on the site that would better serve their needs. The Landmark Preservation Board denied the church's application but it was later approved by the City Planning Commission. The congregation has been granted a Certificate of Appropriateness to allow demolition of the building.

**3. Second Olivet Baptist Church, 818**

**S. West St., Syracuse.** This building is a local protected site designed by Horatio Nelson White and built in 1867. In 1992-93, the congregation of the church nominated the site for local historic designation. Little subsequent effort was made to restore the church and in 2000 the church claimed the building was too small and restoration would be

**4. Conrad Loos Building, Park and Butternut streets, Syracuse.** This three-story Romanesque Revival brick commercial building, designed by noted Syracuse architect Archimedes Russell, is slated for demolition. A court challenge by PACNY to the process that allowed a Certificate of Appropriateness to be granted to the owner failed. The corner location is the type favored by modern drugstores and convenience stores, but so far there has been little interest in redevelopment. Thus, the building still stands. Perhaps only through government intervention or the actions of a preservation-minded buyer will the structure be saved.

**5. Former Masonic Temple (former Metropolitan School for the Arts), 318-322 Montgomery St., Syracuse.** This Second Renaissance Revival style building was designed by Gaggin and Gaggin and completed in 1917. It was occupied by the Masons, until 1985 and subsequently became home to the Metropolitan School



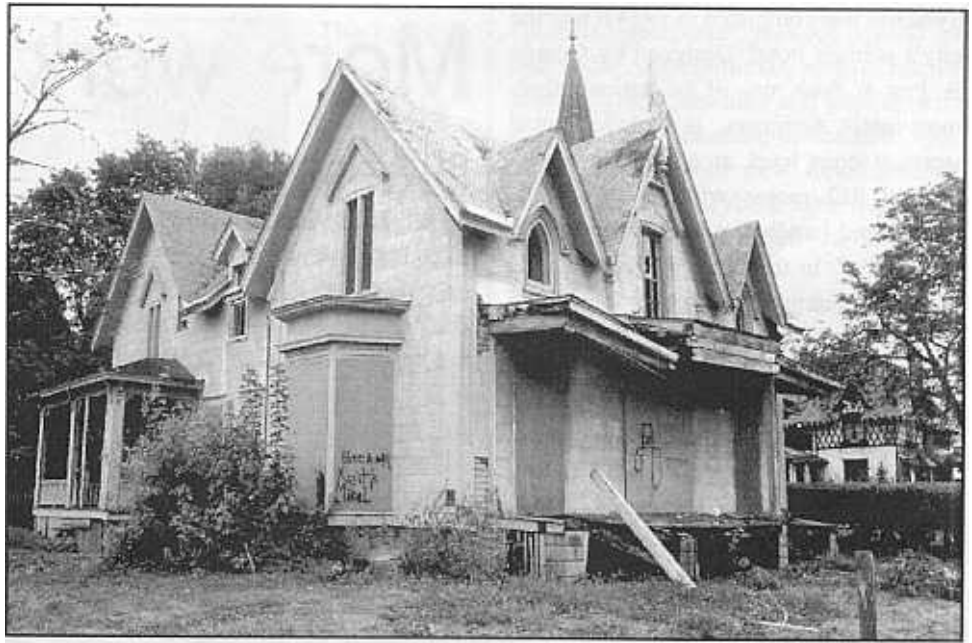
Local protected status has been granted to the former Jewish War Veterans' Post, but until renovation plans are implemented it is still endangered.

See DANGER, Page 7

for the Arts. Built of concrete and faced with brick, it is adorned with handsome decoration including an articulated cornice, copper spandrels, pedimented entrances, arched windows and limestone trim. The building was in regular use by the school for the arts until it was partially gutted in advance of the ill-fated Avenue of the Arts development scheme for Montgomery Street. Since then, it has remained empty, the subject of opposing legal claims. Most recently the Metropolitan Development Foundation has applied for state funds to stabilize the building.

**6. Former Jewish War Veterans' Post, 2004 E. Genesee St., Syracuse.** Local protected site status has been granted to this impressive 1895 mansion at the corner of Westcott and East Genesee streets, but until renovation plans are implemented it is still endangered. A consortium of not-for-profit arts groups has put forward an ambitious plan to transform the building into a multi-use center, but financing for this project remains elusive. It has been five years since it was saved from the wrecking ball. If work does not begin soon, deterioration will only increase and the viability of the property will diminish.

**7. Otisca Building (former Onondaga Brewery, former Ryan's Consumer's Brewery Co.), 501-11 Butternut St., Syracuse.** Most of this complex of three-story red-brick industrial buildings dates from the Ryan's Brewery expansion in the 1880s. It was once more ornate, with Beaux Arts decoration and a prominent towered upper story at the corner. Some Beaux Arts medallions are still affixed to the brick facade, giving a hint of how 19th Century industrialists linked industry and art. With the demolition of adjacent buildings for the erection of a large Rite-Aid store, these buildings are now at risk. The owner of the Conrad Loos Building, who has engaged in speculative development with several commercial lots on Butternut, has so far unsuccessfully sought permission from the city to acquire and demolish the property.



Although a neighborhood organization was awarded funds for rehabilitation of this rare surviving Gothic cottage at 1631 S. Salina St., work has yet to start. The structure, built in the 1850s, remains at risk.

**8. Gothic Cottage, 1631 S. Salina St., Syracuse.** This rare surviving Gothic cottage was built in the 1850s. It is part of the South Salina National Register Historic District and remains empty and dilapidated despite announced rehabilitation plans by the city and local neighborhood redevelopment organizations. The building retains its distinctive characteristics including a steeply pitched, cross-gabled roof with pinnacles and pendants, and pointed-arch windows with label molding. Although a neighborhood organization was awarded partial funding for rehabilitation of the property, work has yet to start and the building remains at risk.

**9. The Amos Block, 210-216 W. Water St., Syracuse.** The Amos Block, located just southwest of Clinton Square and adjacent to the path of the old Erie Canal, is listed on the National Register. This old commercial block was empty and dilapidated and, despite its designation, was scheduled for demolition in the 1970s as part of the Chandler Plan, a doomed project that would have turned much of Clinton Square into the urban version of a highway

interchange. In recent years, it was best known as the home of the Syracuse Suds Factory, one of the city's recent micro-breweries. In 1999, Syracuse Suds Factory moved to the former Neal & Hyde Building on South Clinton Street, and the Amos Block sits empty. The Syracuse Downtown Committee and others are working to find a new use for the building.

**10. Nathan Breed House, 819 S. West St., Syracuse.** The building was designed in 1882 by Nathan Breed, who used it as home and office. It is a good local representation of the Italianate style, which was common in the late 19th Century but has few examples left in the city. With its collapsed chimney, bricks scattered on the roof and plywood ripped from many windows, the building has been close to being razed at least twice since 1990. Its owner saved it both times by having it declared a local protected site and promising to renovate the historic home. But so far, nothing has been done.

**11. The Hotel Syracuse, 500 S. Warren St., Syracuse.** When the Hotel

**See DANGER, Page 8**

## The state of preservation in CNY:

# More work to be done

By Samuel Gruber

Scores of older commercial and residential buildings in Syracuse face a precarious existence, with owners juggling the demands of maintenance and taxes against the need to maintain relatively low rents to retain tenants in the face of continued competition from new construction in the suburbs. To these we must add those structures that are unable to compete profitably in a restricted commercial and manufacturing market and thus stand empty. Some of

these are secured and saved for some future use. Many more have been abandoned to the elements and vandals, eventually reaching a state of such decay that they sometimes become candidates to be seized by the city and demolished. Such was the recent fate of what remained of the former Benedict H a b e r l e Mansion on

Butternut Street, once home to one of Syracuse's most renowned brewers.

The record for preservation in this community has improved only marginally during the past few years, despite the work of the Preservation Association of Central New York and other local groups, and the short-lived late-1990s surge in our local economy.

There has been a flurry of interest in

urban design issues surrounding Onondaga County's recently completed Settlement Plan, the work of New Urbanist planner and theorist Andras Duany. But this new urban ethic has yet to be translated into deeds, or to spill over into increased concern for the protection of historic cultural resources. Indeed, the most significant result so far from Duany's visits to our community has been, to some extent, counter productive – the creation of a new housing development on farmland near Camillus, designed in part to lure well-heeled older city residents to its "new urbanist" amenities.

The Syracuse Landmark Preservation Board has shown leadership, often in the face of political pressure, in protecting the city's historic fabric while meeting the needs of property owners. While the board has neither the authority nor resources to fund rehabilitation work, it can and does provide advice on the appropriate treatment of historic properties designated under the city's Landmark Preservation Ordinance. The Board has found a useful consultant and resource in the State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), drawing on the expertise of its staff. Many property owners have responded positively to Board and SHPO guidance and the results are evident in the numerous historic buildings that now accommodate contemporary uses while retaining their historic character. Unfortunately, some owners disregard this advice and continue to pursue inappropriate alteration and — as in the case of the Loos Building and Second Olivet Baptist Church — demolition.

Listing properties in the New York State and National Registers of Historic Places can spur interest and reinvestment in historic properties. However, using designation on registers to protect historic places has not been uniformly successful.

**See MORE WORK, Page 9**

Syracuse was completed in 1924 it was the city's premier hotel. Designed by George B. Post & Sons, one of the nation's foremost hotel designers, it included retail stores at street level, an emergency hospital and 612 rooms with baths. Tennis, squash and handball courts were located on the roof. In the early 1980s, the hotel underwent major renovations including construction of a contemporary tower across the street, a connecting second-level pedestrian bridge and a new ballroom complex. As downtown's fortunes declined in the 1980s and 1990s, so did those of the Hotel Syracuse. The hotel has had several owners in recent years and twice has gone through bankruptcy proceedings.

**12. George Whedon House, Whalan Bros. Funeral Home, 366 W. Onondaga St., Syracuse.** This large, imposing shingle-style residence was built circa 1892 for George Whedon (1832–1912). Although the architect is unknown, the plan and many details closely resemble those of the brick residence at 572 West Onondaga St., also built for Whedon, that was designed by Archimedes Russell. In 1989, it was sold at auction for lack of payment of taxes. The house since suffered the stripping of many of its interior architectural details, subsequent neglect and finally abandonment. The carriage house behind the residence burned down in 1999. Nonetheless, much of the grandeur of the building remains in its profile, massing, roofline, chimneys, porch and exterior articulation.



When the Hotel Syracuse was completed in 1924 it was the city's premier hotel.

For updates on these and other endangered sites, link to the PACNY Web site at <http://www.pacny.net>



The Nathan Breed House is a good local representation of the Italianate style, which was common in the late 19th Century but has few examples left in the city.

The past decade has seen dramatic improvements to the properties in the Armory Square and Hanover Square Historic Districts. However, after initial bursts of enthusiasm and investment around the time of their designation, there has been a notable decline in the physical character of both the Hawley-Green Streets Historic District and the North Salina Street Historic District. Nonetheless, interest in the state and national registers remains strong, as evidenced by the recent nominations of the Berkeley Park subdivision and the city's Onondaga Park.

There have been a number of other bright spots:

■ Over 20 new apartments have recently been created in 19th-century commercial buildings in Hanover Square, and new apartments are being developed above the Landmark Theatre on South Salina Street. This is the type of downtown preservation activity first proposed by PACNY twenty-five years ago.

■ Reid and Peck Halls, formerly part of

Syracuse University, were on PACNY's endangered buildings list four years ago. These buildings have found new use as the home of The Central New York Charter School for Math and Science.

■ The Samuel Forman House on Seneca Turnpike was saved from likely demolition, as was the historic Harriet May Mills House on West Genesee Street.

■ The Dome Hotel at Armory Square, empty for many years, has now been renovated and returned to use as a hotel.

■ PACNY has moved into a formerly abandoned storefront on North Salina Street.

■ The historic Courier Building across from City Hall is occupied again by a successful restaurant.

■ More buildings are being rehabilitated in Franklin Square.

■ Despite concerns about the increasing number of nightclubs and bars, the Armory Square area continues to flourish – one lively spot in the otherwise moribund downtown area.

*The most significant result so far from Duany's visits to our community has been the creation of a new development on farmland near Camillus, designed in part to lure well-heeled older city residents to its "new urbanist" amenities.*

opments incorporate features typical of traditional neighborhoods, such as narrow streets, wide sidewalks and houses with front porches. Because so much of their work has involved new developments, Duany and Plater-Zyberk have sometimes been derisively referred to as New Suburbanists.

But the importance of New Urbanism for preservationists isn't in the new communities it builds but, rather, its reverence for the efficiency and livability of historic neighborhoods and businesses districts.

According to Duany, the traditional neighborhood is a self-contained unit. In pre-World War II neighborhoods residents were rarely more than a five-minute walk from the ordinary needs of daily life: food, school, worship, even work.

Every neighborhood had its center, a memorable corner or a patch of green (think of the Westcott business district with its theater, restaurants and shops). Streets were laid out in a continuous web, providing multiple routes from one location to another. Because there were many streets, each could be small – usually no more than two lanes.

Public and commercial buildings came right up to the sidewalk so pedestrians could easily access them. In the rare situation where a public or commercial building sat back from the sidewalk, it did so to create a plaza or garden – something of value to pedestrians.

Most importantly, traditional neighborhoods mixed different activities on the same street, even within the same building. For instance, a building with shops on the first floor might have offices on the second floor and residences on the third. This mix of activities made traditional neighborhoods livable and efficient.

Today's suburban sprawl is just the opposite. The typical suburban housing development has no network of streets offering multiple routes between destinations. Instead, dead-end streets ("cul-de-sacs") lead to feeder roads that culminate in highways. Not only must you drive to

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the store, there is usually only one direct route to get there. Commercial and public buildings sit far back from the street, isolated from pedestrians by a sea of asphalt.

The new Settlement Plan discourages many of the suburban practices that have undermined historic neighborhoods and districts. For instance, in residential areas it discourages the widening of neighborhood streets into arterials, and the conversion of two-way streets to one-way. Such changes discourage pedestrian traffic, increase vehicular speeds while reducing both commercial and residential property values. In commercial areas the plan would require that new buildings be built up to the edge of the sidewalk just as traditional buildings have been, with all parking located behind the building.

Unfortunately, at this point the Settlement Plan has no teeth – it is offered only as a guideline to the county’s 35 separate municipalities, where authority for codes and code enforcement reside.

But that may soon change. This fall, Syracuse initiated a process likely to convert much of the settlement plan into code. Mayor Matt Driscoll has established a commission that will spend the next two years developing a comprehensive plan for the city, the first in decades.

In the meantime, the city is enacting a set of interim guidelines – some of it drawn directly from the Settlement Plan – to control development in historic commercial districts. The focus is on commercial districts, where the greatest potential for harm resides. We can only hope these developments signal the beginning of the end to half a century of local government policy that has encouraged the destruction of the region’s architectural heritage. PACNY will be lobbying for this change, monitoring developments and reporting back to our membership about both progress and setbacks.

PACNY has made available online copies of the three documents that comprise the County’s new Settlement Plan. To view or download them, link to [www.pacny.net](http://www.pacny.net).

## Citistates Report

# We need to control suburban sprawl

*In the summer of 2002, metropolitan consulting group Citistates toured Syracuse, then produced a report outlining their proposals for future directions the city and region might take. Their advice: control sprawl, preserve “precious” historic architecture, relish and maintain the small towns and traditional neighborhoods that make the area charming and livable. This is a condensed version of the Citistates Report for Syracuse and Central New York. The full report can be found at: <http://www.citistates.com/syr-all.pdf>*

**By Neal Peirce and Curtis Johnson**

“This is a great place to raise a family.” “We have a diverse economy.” “If a few more big corporations would only locate here, we’d have all the jobs we need.”

Listen to a cross-section of Syracuse area citizens and business leaders, and those attitudes shine through, indeed seem to represent the region’s de facto economic strategy. We’d suggest those approaches are not good enough – not good enough to assure a competitive 21st century standard of living, to stop spreading poverty, to keep the region’s sons and daughters from heading out of town as soon as they have a diploma in hand.

Smart regions, in the today’s ferociously competitive global economy, aren’t leaving success to chance. They are choosing to be successful, by setting clear goals, mobilizing their resources and staying on task. They’re thinking world class. They’re rejecting mediocrity. ... In the words of Walter Gretzky: “The key to winning is being first where the puck is going next.”

The Syracuse region has some big assets: great institutions of higher education, with their research capacity; a highly-skilled workforce; an active civic cul-

ture.

But it’s obvious the area faces a passel of tough economic problems. Through most of the 1990s, Upstate New York, the Syracuse area included, went through a valley of deep recession. Manufacturing atrophied. New York state’s high taxes, regulatory and energy costs took a toll. Heavy outmigration to other regions was registered both among youth and productive middle-aged people – even those who indicated that with decent jobs, they would have preferred to stay. A key problem: the brand of intelligence- and information-rich industries bolstering so many American regions registered small progress here.

On top of all that, population levels stagnated regionally and dropped dramatically in Syracuse proper – a sure sign, as authors of the Syracuse Community

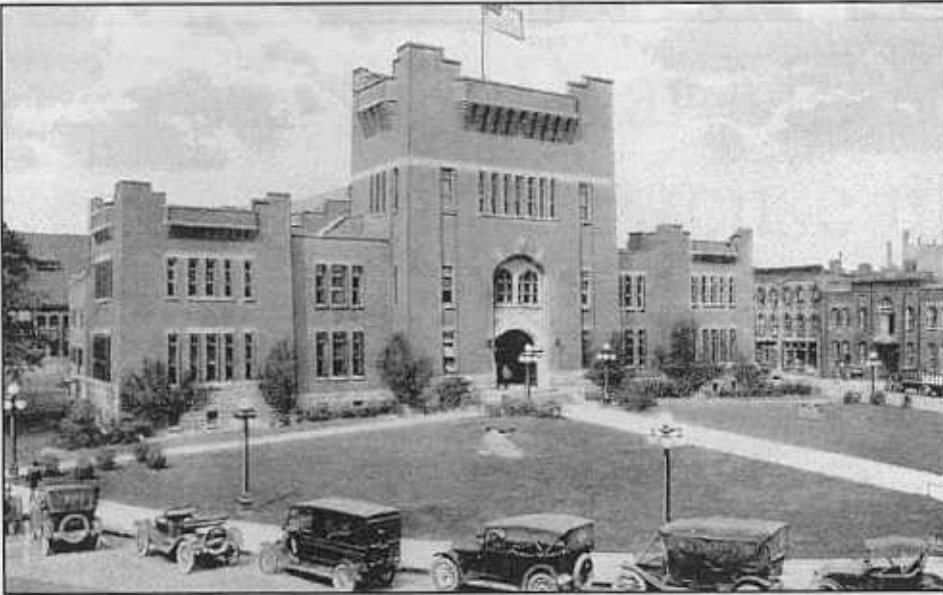


Other cities are trying to build new versions of what Syracuse already has.

Indicators noted, of “suburban sprawl, devalued housing stock and a diminishing tax base.”

Is the Syracuse region a sufficiently “livable,” attractive place for 21st-century standards? Will it be able to attract and hold the professionals and skilled workers who can pick anywhere they like in the U.S. to shape their careers and personal

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Despite concerns about the increasing number of restaurants and bars, the Armory Square area continues to flourish – still a lively part of downtown.

lives? We found people of two minds on that question.

As visitors, one gets a fast earful about short commutes from still quaint suburban towns, raves about close-by lakes and the region's cornucopia of cultural opportunities. And there's wonderful pride in Clinton Square, Armory Square, the splendid public parks and other charms.

But there's a dark side. Some neighborhoods on the South Side seem heavy with adults unemployed and youth out-of-control. A new Family Dollar store will not turn this condition around. Guns and gangs make big headlines and a bad reputation for the whole community.

So what needs to be done to create a Syracuse region that can be sure of attracting talented young professionals and holding its newly footloose baby boomers?

The simple reason so many young people leave, it turns out, is that's what young people do. They search for new places, new adventure, hunger to experience a larger city than Syracuse. Students generally told us that career aspirations, real job offers included, were taking them to other cities after graduation. It's an observation that leads us to make a stronger pitch for the importance of the Syracuse area developing more home-grown industries.

But there's a companion strategy that makes the day for some regions – building truly great communities where talented

people will want to live.

It used to be that any good place to work was considered a good place to live. No more. These days, only good places to live are seen as good places to work.

So what could Syracuse and its surrounding communities do to earn this much sought-after reputation?

**First, protect as vigorously as possible the culture of small towns and rural life.**

Both seem under siege today as sprawling subdivisions spread out over hills and farms. Just consider why this region's collection of villages with real town centers and vibrant neighborhoods is itself a tourist attraction. Places such as Skaneateles, Manlius or Camillus don't need promotional signs saying "great place to live." The message lies in everything a visitor sees.

So agenda number one should be to protect this asset, and not allow it to be eroded by converting even more dairy farms to faceless, standard development.

Onondaga County actually has a plan for ensuring that new growth is not only good quality but oriented to strengthening communities. The county's recent settlement plan was born with assistance from famed New Urbanist architect Andres Duany. It's now being translated from philosophy to an enforceable code.

But the idea's simple enough. Preserve

the rural character of the countryside. Build real neighborhoods around town centers. Mix housing and shops and offices close together. Whether in small cities or hamlets, or even urban Syracuse, it's the "DNA" of the place that matters. That's what Armory Square has in common with Skaneateles – they are both true to a DNA for livability, and that makes them destinations.

Most places in America, it's the counties that don't seem to care, that give away land like more of it can be manufactured. We find it remarkable that Onondaga County is taking the lead to preserve a core asset of the region.

The themes of the settlement plan show up already in the Fayetteville Mall makeover, in the new housing such as Ann's Grove in Camillus, and the village concept in north Cicero. Still, the temptation to sacrifice precious heritage for one shiny new Rite Aid store will not go away. Political resolve will be critical. Pride about great places will likely prove more powerful than any rule of law.

**Second, apply the same rigorous standard to Syracuse itself.**

Syracuse Mayor Matt Driscoll told us that while he would change a few things in the Duany recommendations and he knows it's the county's plan, he liked it. That is no surprise. The plan institutionalizes the very kind of community planning that produced Syracuse's most desirable neighborhoods.

A recent visitor to your region, the father of a local developer, looked around the city and volunteered that "out in Denver we're trying to build new what you already have here." These neighborhoods are the "small towns" of the city. Every decision made and dollar spent ought to be measured for its impact on making neighborhoods better places. The place to start: understand that "cleaner" spells "safer" in the eyes of most citizens.

Some South Side neighborhoods look neither clean nor safe. Not only is this condition a continuing tragedy, it is the source of most of the talk on the Syracuse University campus that trashes the city. Students talk about Syracuse as a "divided city ... where there are many affluent areas

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and also poor, dangerous feeling places.”

Syracuse University student Nick Serrano grew up in northern Virginia, and after graduation is headed for a job in Kansas City. Serrano says, “Back home a vacant house would make people upset – they’d do something. Here you see empty places everywhere.”

In our interviews we heard optimism from neighborhood representatives, who were encouraged by the team of leaders now in place for schools and police. Leaders are necessary and laying better plans is a good step. But what this scene desperately needs is evidence of action – progress, real and visible.

**Third, get more out of Destiny than achieving a large scale retail and entertainment complex.**

What most communities do, especially if they feel down on themselves, is try to shoot the moon, go for broke, fire the silver bullet. Some say that Destiny is in that “silver-bullet” mentality. We agree it might be, but it doesn’t have to be.

Destiny, as explained rather carefully to us by Robert Congel of Pyramid Management Group, could be a major catalyst, succeeding in raising the region’s visibility and increasing its visitor count, while ensuring that downtown and the nearby neighborhoods are also winners.

Pick up one of the Destiny USA books at the Pyramid offices. One very prominent page is called “Creekwalk.” Pictured there is a promenade along the creek that runs from the Inner Harbor through downtown, with a seamless row of lower-rise buildings reminiscent of a scene near the Rialto bridge in Venice. Congel talks about this feature of the project as the “connection to Armory Square.”

Cleaning up this creek, today an eyesore and largely blocked off from public use, is critical, though not merely to make the connection between the Destiny zone and downtown. As colleague Peter Katz put it when we visited in May, “Don’t confuse connectivity with proximity.” In other words, it is what you build along the creek that matters as much as achieving the connection. It is the urban experience one feels walking through the area. Just imagine this corridor filling up with small shops and offices, places to learn comput-



The partnership between Destiny USA and the community should extend also to the North Salina Street neighborhood, so close to Destiny that it cannot go unaffected by its development, say the architects of the Citistates report.

ers or another language or take a music lesson, apartments, lofts, and condos, and great restaurants.

Sound a lot like Armory Square? Yes, that’s the point. At least one pioneer developer, Robert Doucette, is already providing Syracuse with the very thing that people flock to. The apartments in the Loew’s Theater building are great urban spaces. Check out the Lemon Grass at night – plenty of boomers in there. We found young people filling the evening sidewalks, on deck in the outdoor bars and restaurants. The closest thing to a city-streets traffic jam seems to happen because people are looking for a good Armory Square parking place.

We heard that the city was making building restorations and conversions easier to do. If the city and Pyramid can work together on planning and zoning, on resource-building, this is possibly the most strategic step either could take to make Destiny more than just a retail-entertainment draw. The success of Franklin Square shows the great potential for converting old urban buildings into

21st-century spaces. Rather than creating a second downtown space to compete with the first, Destiny and the city could register an immense breakthrough: expanding the quality living and working space of a historic city center.

The community, for its part, then needs to be clear on the vision, insist on clear bookkeeping and accountability where the public dollars are involved, and remain a working partner in the execution.

That partnership should extend also to the North Salina neighborhood, so close to Destiny that it cannot go unaffected by its development. North Salina still functions like a real neighborhood. The urban fabric, not pretty in places, is intact. There are real jobs there, block after block, and homes people are trying to take care of.

Now, fast forward to a successful Destiny, with traffic counts soaring as an index of commercial success. Where do the visitors stay? Where do they eat?

Here’s what happens if there is not a plan to stop it: a typical strip of Taco Bells and Burger Kings, laced with a line-up of

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Hampton Inns and Motel 6s. Each one an island of bedrooms surrounded by a sea of tarmac. This scene would suck the life out of the North Salina district, leaving yet another soulless commercial strip.

There is an alternative. Plenty of hotel space and all the food anyone could need can be built into the structure and style of the historic Salina neighborhood. But not without committing a complex, intentional act. Not without a commitment of the city to work with Pyramid – and with representatives of the Salina neighborhood – to design this capacity, to specify how it looks and works, where the buildings go and where the cars park.

Imagine, for example, that the Destiny project brings the economic growth to Central New York that its sponsors project. In one sense, that's great. But it also could mean huge growth pressures – a deluge of gas stations, pizza parlors and Taco Bells and other roadside clutter, besmirching the very countryside and lakesides of Upstate New York the Destiny folks say they want to help popularize to the American nation.

We believe the region needs some serious discussions about such perils well before they engulf the area. In addition to elected officials, it's critical major businesses be involved: indeed their presence at the table is indispensable for direct and frank talk, and getting by parochial issues of who controls each land use decision or sign permit. Additionally, we'd suggest, your university and college presidents need to be involved too, as major stakeholders for your regional future.

Operationally, one might simplify the task by getting a respected, bipartisan, insightful group to pull the parties together for a forum of Central New York leadership. Maybe your 20/20 organization can fill that bill. But the critical point is simple: Don't just be a victim of the swirling economic and political tides of this new century. Look, think, debate about your future. Think and act regionally. Be prepared for change. The times will absolutely demand it.

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# AN OPEN LETTER TO MATT DRISCOLL

## Dear Mr. Mayor: Hotel Syracuse must be saved

*Here is an open letter to Syracuse Mayor Matt Driscoll regarding the Hotel Syracuse, which is currently in bankruptcy proceedings:*

### Dear Mayor Driscoll:

On behalf of the Preservation Association of Central New York, I would like to thank you for your continuing efforts to restore the historic Hotel Syracuse to its previous role at the center of our city's cultural and economic life. This hotel is one of the city's outstanding architectural assets, an important link to the city's past and a potential centerpiece in the downtown revitalization now gaining momentum.

The grand Onondaga Hotel has already been lost to the wrecker's ball; a parking lot is all we have to remind us of the elegant Yates Hotel that once stood just beyond the front doors of City Hall. The Hotel Syracuse has been a central part of this community's life and identity for more than seventy years. For our sense of history, and our appreciation of those who came before us, the community must retain this last and finest of the great downtown hotels.

Like you, we've watched with concern as the hotel drifted into bankruptcy in recent years. Efforts to team the Hotel Syracuse with the new Onondaga Convention Center have met with frustration.

Still, we think it would be a mistake to simply move on to construct a

new hotel. Not only would a new facility lack the charm and grandeur of a restored Hotel Syracuse, investing in a new hotel would also make it much less likely that the Hotel Syracuse would ever find the funding necessary to bring it back to its former beauty and productivity.

We agree that it might be a waste to expend any effort on the 1982 hotel addition. In fact, a useful first step might be to divorce the historic main hotel from this recent annex.

Whatever the ultimate solution, it will no doubt require persistence, creativity and a good deal of stubbornness, but the success of the effort will be felt in our community for many years to come.

Since its founding in 1974, the Preservation Association of Central New York has played a critical role in the protection and stewardship of Central New York's historical resources and particularly some of the most historic structures in downtown Syracuse. PACNY is a member-based organization, dedicated to education and advocacy on matters of historic preservation, architectural history, and the built environment.

If we can be of any assistance on this matter please feel free to contact me directly.

Sincerely,

**Jae A. Evangelisti Jr.,**

President, Preservation Association of Central New York

## MILESTONES

# PACNY's achievements in 2001-02

■ In March 2001, PACNY moved its offices and research center into a storefront office at 419 N. Salina St. in the North Salina Historic District. The new offices were christened with a fundraiser that same month.

■ In April 2001, PACNY held its Annual Meeting and Preservation Awards at the Corinthian Club on James Street.

■ PACNY was instrumental in preventing the demolition of the Harriet May Mills House on West Genesee Street. PACNY supported Syracuse Brick House Inc. in its efforts to acquire the house, speaking in favor of reuse of the historic house at both Syracuse Planning Commission and Common Council meetings.

■ Thanks to the efforts of PACNY, the Berkeley Park neighborhood, southeast of Syracuse University, became the first 20th Century residential district in Syracuse to be listed on the National Register of Historic Places.

■ A \$9,000 Preserve New York Grant was awarded to PACNY in 2001 by the Preservation League of New York State and the New York State Council on the Arts. The grant made possible a reconnaissance level cultural resources survey for sites relating to the Underground Railroad, African-American life and abolitionism in the 19th Century in Onondaga County.

■ In December 2001, PACNY hosted a community event at The Mission restaurant in Syracuse to announce

See MILESTONES, Page 15



During the past winter, the failing west wall of the Harriet May Mills house was rebuilt by Syracuse-based Heritage Masonry Inc.

## Harriet May Mills House receives state grant

By Beth Crawford

The Harriet May Mills House, saved from demolition two years ago, is preparing for rehabilitation. Syracuse Brick House, Inc. a not-for-profit provider of chemical dependency treatment and rehabilitation services, will preserve the Harriet May Mills House as a residence and operate it as a halfway house for eleven adult women in recovery from alcohol or other drug problems.

The 1858 Italianate house, located on West Genesee Street at Liberty Street near Automobile Row in Syracuse, was home to the Mills family, who were active abolitionists, woman's rights activists and temperance supporters.

SBH has worked for nearly two years to raise funds and gain support for the project. The home was purchased by SBH a year ago. During this past winter, the failing west wall was rebuilt by Syracuse-based Heritage Masonry Inc.

In July, Governor George E. Pataki

announced a \$100,000 Clean Air Clean Water Bond Act grant for the restoration and preservation of the Mills House. The grant will fund exterior restorations including the roof, exterior masonry, doors, windows, trim, and chimneys.

Additional funds have been provided by the city of Syracuse, Senator John DeFrancisco, and the Jon Ben Snow Foundation.

The Preservation Association wishes to thank Bob Shear, President of SBH and former building owner Jim Taylor for their hard work and dedication in preserving this special local landmark.

For more information on the project please visit [www.harrietmaymills.org](http://www.harrietmaymills.org).

There are several areas of the project that need assistance, from letters of support, to contributions of financial, technical, and material resources. Persons interested in this project are urged to contact SBH President Bob Shear to learn more at (315) 474-5506.

The Preservation Association of Central New York wishes to congratulate Grace Episcopal Church, located at 819 Madison Street in the City of Syracuse. Grace was awarded a \$60,000 Clean Water/Clean Air Bond Act to aid in the restoration of the metal gutter system and slate roof of the main portion of the church and adjoining nursery wing.

The limestone Victorian Gothic style church was designed by Syracuse architect Horatio Nelson White and constructed in 1876-77.



Work on a much-needed renovation of North Salina Street, called the Little Italy project, began July 2.

## ‘Little Italy’ project begins

By Christopher Rauscher

The Little Italy project of North Salina Street has begun. After several years of planning, the ground-breaking ceremony took place July 2 in the 400 block of North Salina Street.

The project encompasses street renovations and improvements for the 400, 500 and 600 blocks of North Salina Street. The sidewalks will be widened and replaced, benches will be installed and trees will be planted.

The objectives of the project are numerous. One is to provide a link between the downtown core and the Destiny USA project.

Maintaining the character of this unique neighborhood has been an objective since discussions of the project began. The architectural integrity of the historic near North Side, the neighborhood atmosphere and the continued development of the atmosphere promoting small businesses are important to planners and to city residents.

“Uncovering the Freedom Trail: A documentation program for Underground Railroad, Abolitionism, and African American life in Syracuse and Onondaga County.” This well-attended reception included officials from the National Park Service, the New York State Office of Parks Recreation and Historic Preservation, the Preservation League of New York State, Underground Railroad Friends from Auburn, Oswego, Madison County, and many community supporters from Syracuse and Onondaga County.

■ PACNY established the Freedom Trail Advisory Council (PACNY/FTAC) to help support and encourage Underground Railroad research in Central New York.

■ The new Preservation Resource Directory was completed in 2001, an extensive reference detailing the many preservation and research resources available to preservationists in Central New York. The directory will be available for use at the Onondaga County Public Library, Syracuse University’s Bird Library, Onondaga Historical Association and at PACNY’s office. PACNY’s efforts on this project were made possible by a grant from the CNY Community Foundation.

### CALENDAR

#### Oct. 6

The Preservation Association of Central New York will present information uncovered during a recent study of Underground Railroad sites in Central New York at 1 p.m. in Plymouth Congregational Church, 232 E. Onondaga St., located near MONY Towers and the Hotel Syracuse in downtown Syracuse. The event is free and open to the public.

Consultant Judy Wellman of Historical New York Research Associates and her team will discuss their findings, “Uncovering the Freedom Trail: A documentation program for Underground Railroad, Abolitionism and African American life in Syracuse and Onondaga County, 1820-70.”

#### Oct. 11-12

The Arts & Crafts Society of Central New

York and the Friends of Moon Library at the State University New York College of Environmental Science and Forestry present a symposium on the life and work of American Arts and Crafts movement artist Dard Hunter (1883-1966).

The symposium will offer a rare opportunity to view extensive collections of Hunter’s works during the conference, to be held in the Marshall Hall auditorium at SUNY-ESF in Syracuse. Registration is required; link to [http://www.newyorkbooks.org/dard\\_hunter\\_symposium](http://www.newyorkbooks.org/dard_hunter_symposium).

#### Oct. 13

PACNY and the Westcott East Neighborhood Association sponsor the third Westcott-area historical house tour 10 a.m. to 4 p.m. The self-guided tour is open to the public.

Tickets are \$10 each and can be purchased the day of the tour at Westcott Community Center. For more information, link to the Web site at <http://www.pacny.net>.

#### Oct. 19-20

The Arts & Crafts Society will host a Ward Memorial Weekend and reunion of Ward house owners, family and friends of Ward. Peter Forgan, the architect’s grandson, will present some new findings on the Ward legacy at 2 p.m. Oct. 19 in Room 107 of Syracuse University’s Hall of Languages. A brief graveside ceremony to dedicate a stone will take place at 1:30 p.m. Oct. 20 at Woodlawn Cemetery. A reception will follow from 3 to 5 p.m. at Wellington House in Fayetteville. The lecture and ceremony are free and open to the public; a \$5 donation is requested for the reception.

Preservation Association of Central New York  
 419 N. Salina St.  
 Syracuse, NY 13203  
 (315) 475-0119  
 E-mail: PACNY@USADatanet.net

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