



THE PRESERVATIONIST

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2021

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A Message from the President

Dear Landmarkers,

Despite the fact that this is the quietest time of year for the Society and I normally do not have much to share, I was looking forward to writing this piece for the newsletter. Why? Because this is the first newsletter of 2021- and that means 2020 is now behind us, finally! Last year was so disappointing, and on so many different levels, that just a simple change of calendars was incredibly spirit-lifting. I hope all of you enjoyed throwing away last year's calendar as much as I did.

Unfortunately, there is a sad fact regarding my new calendar and it is very evident. I have no dates highlighted for any upcoming Landmarks events. Due to the ongoing Covid protocol and not knowing when we might be able to start holding any of our annual events again, we can not begin to make any plans. We are already seeing other local events being cancelled or pushed back to tentative later dates, so we are hesitant at the moment to plan anything. Naturally, we are hoping and praying that we can hold some of our events at some point this year. Time will tell on this and we will keep you posted on any future events.

Our temporary roof above the guest room in the #1 mansion is working nicely. In years past, once the snow came and stayed, the dripping started. The catch pails started to fill with every slight rise in temperature to anything above freezing. Believe me, I'm not a big fan of winter and cold temperatures, but there were many times where I was happy to see a dip in the temperature- because it made the water stop. It's great not having to check and empty catch pails of water all winter!

Speaking of temperatures, it is nice and warm inside the Miller-Conkling-Kernan mansion, thanks to our new furnace. The Landmarks Society would like to thank The Community Foundation for their donation towards the purchasing of the unit. Their generosity could not have come to us at a better time. We would also like to thank Ken Rockett and Rich DeRosis for installing the unit free of charge. All the assistance we received on our furnace replacement was greatly appreciated.

Unfortunately, for a few days after installation, we had trouble keeping the temperature in there constant. I made many trips to Rutger Park to check the temperature and it was different every time I went in! We could not help but think the worst about our new furnace. Luckily, the problem turned out to be a faulty thermostat. I made a fast, late-night trip to Lowe's for a replacement, came back and installed it, and then nervously waited. Needless to say, I was very happy to see the furnace continually cycle at the set temperature!

Do you know what else I'll be happy to see in regards to the furnace? The day I can shut it off!

Think Spring everyone!

Steve Grant

President





JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2021



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MERCHANDISING

Our Merchandise Committee is at work with plans to increase our Landmarks Society shop. New ideas include mugs, glassware, t-shirts, and so much more are being considered.

IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO RECEIVE AN
EMAIL VERSION OF OUR NEWSLETTERS -
CONTACT US AT 315-732-7376.



"We will probably be judged not by the monuments we build but by those we have destroyed."

New York Times Editorial, October 30, 1963,
in response to the demolition of Penn Station

.....
The following is a reprint of an original article written by Blandina Dudley Miller. It has been transcribed as nearly as possible from a newspaper copy, some of which was illegible or missing, included the original punctuation and capitalizations (or lack thereof).

"MILLER'S SEAT," NOW RUTGER PLACE

The Observer, 16 February 1901

Slow the changes came in fifty years

The "Seat" Divided and Beautiful Homes Grouped in Rutger Place - The House in Which Seymour Died, Now Occupied by N.E. Kernan By Blandina Dudley Miller [for The Observer]

The death of Mrs. Morris S. Miller in the month of March, 1850, marked the passing of "Miller's Seat" in its original form and design. The old farm with its orchards was sub-divided into city lots, and the central stone mansion was in the course of a few years to have houses of widely differing design for its near neighbors. The sale of lots took place in August, when Mr. John Munn purchased the site nearest to Howard Avenue and built a house after architectural designs much in vogue in New York and....which had not hitherto been attempted in our city, where a plainer style had prevailed; and its central tower, with arched entrance doors, attracted much attention. It has since been occupied by Samuel Remington, and John C. Devereux, and is now the home of Mrs. W. Jerome Greene and her family.

At the same time J. Wyman Jones purchased the lot directly next to the old house, and after moving back the quaint little building used for an office, built a wooden house or villa which was afterwards the home of Rev. Philemon H. Fowler for many years, and in now the residence of Charles A. Butler of the First National Bank of Utica.

Colonel Egbert Bagg built on the lot directly east of the stone mansion a brick house of the Italian style, all the main rooms fronting on the Place, and formed a continuous series of apartments, handsome for entertainments, but not altogether adapted for comfort in our severe climate, as the French windows extended down to the floors and opened out on verandas.

At a much later date the late Thomas E. Kinney built a handsome stone house on the lot east of Colonel Bagg's, thus completing the row of five houses in the enclosure.

Soon after 1853 the name of Miller's Seat was changed to Rutger Place, very appropriately; and the houses, although of widely differing styles of architecture, forms a harmonious whole and the Place ranks as heretofore among the most beautiful and attractive of Utica's homelike homes.

The Miller house was not sold until 1852, when it was bought on speculation by J. Wyman Jones, who sold it in 1853 to Mrs. Arthur Breeze, whose family at the time consisted of Mr. and Mrs. Thomas R. Walker and their three daughters. At Mrs. Breeze's death in 1857, she bequeathed the property to Mrs. Walker, and the family continued to reside in the house until 1868....

In the earlier years of its existence the old house was singularly exempt from death, after that of Mrs. Arthur Breeze in 1857 the black camel did not again kneel in silence before the door for nearly thirty years and then alas! came the sorrowful changes in swift succession. Ex-Governor Seymour, who had been spending a part of the winter with his sister, Mrs. Conkling, died on the 12th of February,

1886, while still under her roof, and in a few brief weeks was followed by his wife, who died on the 7th of March.

In a little more than two years, Senator Conkling, who died at the Hoffman House in New York city, in April, 1888, was brought home for burial and his remains laid in state in the large hall prior to the services in Calvary Church on South Street.

Mrs. Conkling continued to make this house her residence until her death on the 18th of October, 1893. On the 16th of the following December the following notice appeared on the city papers:

“The residence of the late Roscoe Conkling has passed into the hands of Nicholas E. Kernan, son of the late Senator Kernan. By the terms of the will of Senator Conkling, all of the property of which he was possessed was given to his wife. Mrs. Conkling in turn willed her property to her daughter, Mrs. Walter G. Oakman of New York, who has sold the residence to Mr. Kernan for \$26,000. It is considered a rare bargain in real estate, for it is beautifully situated and surrounded by spacious grounds. The Conkling house was purchased by Mr. Conkling about thirty years ago. It is a simple, unpretending building, two stories high, with attic and basement, colonial in style and constructed in stone.”

In 1894, Mr. Kernan constructed the large stone wing on the eastern side of the house, thus affording many extra rooms and making it, with the modern appliances of electricity, one of the most complete, as it has always been one of the most beautiful houses in all this part of the country. An observer who approaches the Place from John Street or from either direction on Rutger Street cannot fail to be impressed with the unique arrangement of houses and lawns within the park, totally unlike any other part of the city. As time goes on and so many of Utica's old gardens disappear from sight, the sensation of space to move in, fresh air to breathe in, “green things growing” to delight the eye, is enhanced ten-fold from its rarity and one thanks the farsighted vision of the original owners who provided that this fair open space should remain intact forever.

MISSION STATEMENT

The mission of the Landmarks Society is to actively promote the preservation and restoration of historically and architecturally significant buildings and sites in the Utica area. Through projects, community education, advocacy, marketing and planned activities, the Society engages its members, partners and the community in preserving the past and protecting the future.

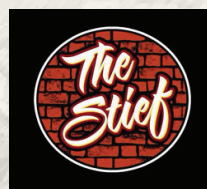
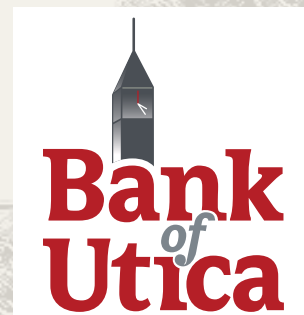
The Landmarks Society was chartered by the State of New York in October 1974 as a nonprofit, educational corporation. The purposes for which the Landmarks Society was created include the following: 1) To protect, enhance, perpetuate and preserve buildings, landmarks and other districts of historic, architectural and cultural significance; and 2) To acquire by purchase, gift, device, or otherwise, the title to, or the custody and control of sites, buildings and areas of historical and cultural significance.”

SPECIAL THANKS TO OUR NEW & RENEWING MEMBERS!

Martha Brody

Beth & Don Stookey

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS!



The Tianaderrah Foundation

Freeman and Foote Jewelers, Inc., 165 Genesee Street, Utica



Heidi Foote loves having her jewelry store in Downtown Utica. She finds it exciting, she absolutely loves her business and the diversity of people who come through her door on any given day. Heidi believes that it is a sentimental and a happy business, as people buying jewelry are coming in seeking to “make memories”. She is also very proud to own and have her business located in a historic building at 165 Genesee Street from the late 1800s where it has been located for over 40 years. She has been asked many times why she doesn't move to New Hartford, but she has absolutely no plans to do so.

Originally established in 1925 by her grandfather, Morris Freeman, primarily as a watch repair shop, Freeman and Foote Jewelers, Inc. has been a staple of the Busy Corner for over 40 years. It was always

located in Downtown Utica.

The business expanded from watch repair to primarily a jewelry store by Heidi's father, Eli Freeman. For him, it was a seven day a week business, and it was from him that Heidi learned the business and learned to love the business as she would accompany him into the store even during off-hours. For her, it was a chance for her to get closer to her dad.

But like many second and third generations, Heidi wasn't originally planning to get involved in the jewelry business; in fact, after college, she wasn't sure if she'd come back to Utica or not. However, she did eventually decide to acquire the business from her father, take some diamond selection and grading courses, and she is now the president. She took Heidi Foote picks out each and every piece of jewelry she sells.

Freeman and Foote was closed for two-and-a-half months due to the pandemic. They are now open regular hours. They have a Facebook page and a very extensive website presence. Customers will often research the store on-line and may order some pieces they may be interested in, but most want to physically come into the store to get a more “hands-on” experience.



165 GENESEE STREET DECORATED DURING THE SPANISH AMERICAN WAR

According to Heidi, the upper floors of her building are beautiful. However, the building is very narrow, and over the years the storefront was remodeled and made wider, effectively eliminating the separate outside entrance for the upper floors; the only access to upstairs is now through the store. Like many of the buildings on Genesee Street, the basement of 165 extends under the sidewalk to approximately the curb; deliveries were originally done in front of the building since there is no access from the rear.

So Sweet Candy Café, 531 Varick Street, Utica

315-765-6463



The So Sweet Candy Cafe is located on the ground floor of a very old building at Varick and Columbia Streets, at the “five points” intersection (Varick north and south, Columbia east and west, and Huntington to the south), across from the new Irish Cultural Center. It is one of a few remaining classic Utica triangular-shaped buildings. The building is well over 100 years old, and the ground floor storefront has been many, many things over the years, with apartments on the upper floors. The storefront has been a diner, for many years it was Hamlin and Scott Insurance, a pawnshop, a smoke shop, and many years ago it was an ice cream parlor.

So Sweet! is a locally-owned sweets stop that started at the local farmer's market ten years ago and eventually decided to open a “bricks and mortar” shop, in the heart of the brewery district. It has been in its current location for 5 years, since May of 2016, according to owner Margaret Rienzo.

So Sweet features exceptional homemade fudge and candies of all kinds, as well as old fashioned “retro” candies from the past, and other treats. Besides the fudge, they make homemade cookies, caramel corn, cotton candy and French macarons. Their niche item has been their homemade decorated sugar cookies, which they supply for parties, birthdays, showers, weddings, and other occasions. They also feature unique items from “small” businesses and suppliers, like the “Wine-O-Saur” wine-filled gummies from Syracuse, or the Cocoa Bombs that are disks put into a mug and covered with hot milk until they “explode” filling the mug with mini marshmallows. Their suppliers come from Oregon, Vermont, and Pennsylvania, among other places.

Margaret relates that business has been very good, particularly around Christmas time. This is especially gratifying



as she has not been able to do the myriad of craft fairs that have been so prevalent in the past but have been cancelled due to the pandemic. She is still able to do the Clinton Farmer's Market, however.

Valentine's Day is rapidly approaching, and this is **the** place to stop to purchase unique treats! And while they are normally closed on Sundays, this year Valentine's Day falls on a Sunday, so they will be open from 11am until 6pm. They are open the week of Valentine's Day as well, and will offer limited delivery options.

So Sweet is open Tuesday through Friday from 11am until 6pm, and Saturday from 11am until 4pm; they are closed Sunday and Monday. They have a website and are on Facebook, but for the best experience you just have to go there!



Alabaster + Ash Merchantile, 10169 Fuller Road, Remsen



315-235-9523 | alabasterandash@gmail.com

With all of us nearing the end of our ropes with wintertime cabin fever topped with Covid restrictions, a small road trip may well be in order. Alabaster + Ash on Fuller Road in Remsen may well be the ticket! Owner, Landmarker and past Trustee Daniee Weaver would be thrilled to see you! Attached to the rear of the historic Fuller Farm Mansion that served as the Landmarks 2019 Holiday House Tour, it is a true treasure worthy of exploration.

According to their website, "Our mission is to awaken the potential for holistic healing and discovery through the of metaphysical means." "Every person walks their own path and we are here to help equip them with the tools for that journey."



Alabaster + Ash features unique gifts, crystals, antiques, cleansing herbs, all natural face and body products, candles, incense, one of a kind items, jewelry

and home goods. They are open at the rear of the historic home from 3pm until 7pm Tuesday through Friday, and on Saturday from 9am until 5pm. They are closed on Sunday and Monday.

Visit Alabaster + Ash on the web or on Facebook.

Scenic and Historic

Spotlight on a Landmark - by Michael Lehman, AIA

Utica Maennerchor Hall- 1893/1902

323 Columbia Street at Sayre Alley, Utica, NY

History

The Utica story very much reflects America's narrative at the time when the majority of our city's German-American citizens' ancestors began to arrive. These refugees from the Revolution of 1848 came in great numbers to Utica and found ready employment in the early textile mills. They settled largely in West Utica, where all three of the mills were located. So numerous were they that when one passed beyond State Street, one entered a neighborhood where there was little conversation except in the German language.

One of the most outstanding accomplishments of this German-American colony was, as in many other cities, the founding of a German musical society- *the Utica Maennerchor*- which has continued to this day. The organizational meeting was held at Bierbauer's Brewery, now the West End Brewing Company, on January 1, 1865.

About the Building

In 1874 the society was incorporated, in 1891 it purchased a lot on Columbia Street opposite Sayre Alley, and erected its own hall, which opened on January 1, 1893. *Jacob Agne, Jr. FAIA was the architect.* He was also an active singing member and president of the society for many years. The new five story hall on the south side Columbia St. between Broadway and Cornelia St. was designed in the Richardsonian Romanesque style popular at the time. The brick building featured three story blind arches, large elaborate dormer elements and an imposing elaborately carved stone entry portal.



1893 BUILDING



1902 BUILDING- AFTER FIRE, INCORPORATING THE 1893 ENTRY

In 1901 this building burned in a spectacular fire during which one fireman was killed when the front wall collapsed. It was promptly rebuilt, incorporating part of the original first story wall and main stone entry portal into a more commercial version of the Richardsonian Romanesque style including several store fronts. It reopened on October 2, 1902.

About the Architect



JACOB AGNE JR., FAIA (1859-1918)

Jacob Agne, Jr. FAIA, one of Utica's most prominent, talented, and prolific architects, was born of German immigrant parents in Utica on March 13, 1859. After graduating from the Utica Business College, he went to work in the office of architect William L. Hamilton for a short time; he then worked in the building trades for two years. In 1881, he entered the office of architect Adolphus I. Simmons and in 1884 established his own office. Agne served as president of the central New York Chapter of the American Institute of Architects from 1901-1902. At the time the chapter's membership included architects from across upstate New York including Syracuse, Rochester, Buffalo, Binghamton and Ithaca. He was also named to the prestigious national AIA College of Fellows by his colleagues.

He was involved in banking; in 1900 he was appointed president of A.D. Mather & Co., a private bank that was facing financial difficulties. Under Agne, the finances soon improved and in 1903 it was chartered by the state as the Citizens Trust Company. He continued as president until 1906 and served on the Board until his death in 1918.

Agne also became involved in manufacturing and in publishing. In 1910, along with a group of German Americans he helped organize the Utica Cutlery Company and served as its president. The Cutlery employed a largely German American work force in its early years and was proud of its German heritage. Along with his brother-in-law, John C. Fulmer, Agne helped establish the Utica Evening Dispatch in 1898, and in 1900 incorporated it with the Morning Herald, forming the Herald Dispatch. Agne and Fulmer were co-founders of the Utica Deutsche-Zeitung Company- a German language newspaper.

He was one of the co-founders of the Utica Home Telephone Co., set up in 1902 to compete with the Bell Telephone Co. He was also president of the Utica Construction and Realty Co. which erected the Colonial Theater (originally the Schubert Theater), a building he designed in 1906, on Bleecker St. He designed and directed the building of the grandstand at Utica Park which reflected his interest in the promotion of baseball.

In addition to the Maennerchor, Agne was a Mason, and member of the Elks, Royal Arcanum Club, City Club, Yahnundasis Golf Club, and Zion Lutheran Church. Mr. Agne was a lover of the best in literature, and his personal library included many fine first editions. According to the *Encyclopedia of Biography*, "His choice of books was an expression of his character and purpose of life."

Jacob Agne married Katherine Roberts, daughter of Henry Roberts of Roberts Hardware Co. on January 26, 1894. She died in 1897; Jacob fell ill in 1912 and died April 17, 1918.

Partial list of Agne, Rushmer & Jennison projects | (E= extant, L= lost)

- 1881L : Zion Lutheran German English Day School (working with architect Adolphus I. Simmons) | 613 Columbia St. *Allowed to deteriorate by previous owners and the City of Utica Urban Renewal Agency resulting in demolition by neglect. Replaced by surplus suburban style surface parking for adjacent the Irish Cultural Center.*
- 1884 : Agne established his own firm. Albert H. Jennison entered Agne's office to learn the profession of architecture
- 1885E : St. Joseph/St. Patrick School (now Parish Center-) one of many school buildings he designed | 530 Varick St.
- 1886 : Herbert D. Rushmer joins the firm after graduating from the Colgate Academy in Hamilton, NY
- 1889E : Thomas Kinney Residence | 5 Rutger Park
- 1890E : Butler Memorial Hall (tower remove in the 1950s) | 8 Genesee Street, New Hartford
- c.1890E : Utica Cutlery Company Factory | 820 Noyes St.
- 1891L : Home for Aged Men & Couples | 1627 Sunset Ave.
- 1893L : Utica Maennerchor Hall (and 1902 rebuilding L) | 323 Columbia St. *Demolished for unrealized 1960s urban renewal mega-project.*
- 1893E : Children's Museum (originally John C. Hieber & Co. dry goods store) | 311 Main St.
- 1899E : Utica Free Academy (and 1917 addition by Agne, Rushmer & Jennison) | 1401 Kemble St.
- c. 1899E : c.1899E Jacob Agne Residence | 1517-1519 Genesee St.
- 1906E : Thorn Memorial Chapel of Tabernacle Baptist Church | 13 Clark Place



1902 HALL WITH COLUMBIA HOTEL AT RIGHT

COLUMBIA HOTEL.



FRITZ BRAND, Proprietor.
61 AND 63 COLUMBIA STREET, UTICA, N. Y.
GOOD ACCOMMODATIONS FOR TRANSIENTS
CONCERT EVERY EVENING.
SUMMER GARDEN.
Utica Health Society.

COLUMBIA HOTEL - 1907 UTICA CITY DIRECTORY AD



St. Joseph/St. Patrick Rectory (E) | 702 Columbia St.
Holy Trinity Polish Church (E) | Lincoln Ave.

1906L



Utica Paint Co. (originally John J. Collins & Sons Furniture Co.) | 301-303 Columbia St.
Recently listed on the National Register of Historic Places within the city-sponsored Upper Genesee Street National Register Historic District. Demolished in 2020 by MVHS for surface parking without any attempt by MVHS for adaptive reuse, despite MVHS promises to the contrary. The National Register views demolition of a listed building in a listed district as a very undesirable last resort action- only to be taken if all other efforts have failed.

1910E

F.X. Matt I Residence (founder of West End Brewery) one of many large residences he designed | 1910 Whitesboro St.

1915E

Oneida County History Center (originally 1st Church Christ Scientist) | 1608 Genesee St.

1918

Agne passed away following an illness which began in 1912

1927E

Uptown Theater | 2014 Genesee St.

1928E



Utica Police Station and City Court | 411-413 Oriskany St.
Eligible for listing on the National Register of Historic Places. Threatened with demolition by MVHS proposed surface parking for their downtown hospital campus.

1932E

Oxford Road Elementary School | 33 Oxford Road, New Hartford

1933

The firm of Agne, Rushmer & Jennison was formally dissolved, ending its 49-year history.

Conclusion

Like many of the other sites in the city's Gateway Historic Canal District, the historic Columbia/Lafayette Street neighborhood, and the recently listed (city sponsored) Upper Genesee Street National Register District, the former location of the Maennerchor Hall has been occupied by several different buildings during its history. Sadly, its fortunes took a turn for the worst during 1960s urban renewal when the Hall was demolished for various proposed and failed large scale urban redevelopment projects.

Most recently, the underutilized Columbia Street commercial storefronts at the uncompleted 1960s Kennedy parking garage and tower (adjacent to the City Hall campus) has been incorporated into the proposed base of a "back of the house" Central Utilities Plant (CUP) for the MVHS's new downtown hospital. It will be connected to the rear of the ten-story hospital building by a 2nd story enclosed bridge. Unfortunately, over time these various mega-projects have been irresponsibly designed without taking into consideration any of the site's history or the city's current zoning ordinances and historic district design guidelines. The projects have ignored any negative financial or environmental impact which they had and will have on the vitality of street life. Such vitality has been proven to be a major contributor to stimulating urban economic redevelopment and long-term sustainable growth.

It should be noted the loss of the *Maennerchor Hall*, the recent demolitions of the *Zion German English Day School*, *The Witzemberger Building* (by MVHS for a heliport), and the impending demolition of the historic 19th century *German Turn Verein Hall* at 509 Lafayette Street have and will rob current and future generations of Uticans of a part of their identity and any awareness or understanding of the role that immigrant groups (in this case German-Americans) played in the growth and development of our city, New York State, and our nation. The Turn Verein Hall has been identified as a "rare" example by the NYS Historic Preservation Office (SHPO).

MVHS plans to demolish it for additional perimeter downtown hospital campus surface parking. All of these buildings were or are eligible for listing on the National Register due to the important role that they played historically, culturally, and architecturally in our local and national story.

In total 12 National Register listed or eligible historic structures will ultimately be needlessly obliterated by MVHS despite their claim that "history is important to us". Unfortunately, MVHS's administration has repeated incorrectly and misleadingly claimed that the demolished buildings "are not historic, just old"- an evaluation that they are totally unqualified to make. MVHS does the community a real disservice by doing so. In fact, MVHS's unsubstantiated opinion contradicts the 12 determinations made by NYSHPO and the National Register- our country's leading authority on whether a building is important enough to be worthy of listing on the Register and preserving.



GERMAN TURN VEREIN HALL,
509 LAFAYETTE STREET

What was one of Utica's most vibrant major East-West commercial thoroughfares has been gradually and unnecessarily transformed into an uninviting disconnected out of place back alley (complete with dumpsters, loading docks, storage tanks, generators and surface parking) for adjacent hotels, parking garages, the City Hall campus, and the MVHS downtown hospital campus currently under construction.

These losses of Utica's unique authentic identity do not need to happen.

SOURCES: Clarke, T. Wood. *UTICA for a century and a half*. The Widtman Press. Utica, N.Y. 1952.

Kennally, Michael. *Agne, Rushmer & Jennisen Architects*. Oneida County Historical Society. Utica, N.Y. 1992.

Zion Lutheran Church archives



THE PRESERVATIONIST



165 GENESEE STREET IS VISIBLE ON THE RIGHT OF THIS POSTCARD VIEW.
POSTCARD COURTESY OF MICHAEL LEHMAN