



THE PRESERVATIONIST

MAY/JUNE 2021

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A Message from the President

Dear Landmarkers,

I'll have to say, it is a little depressing with summer upon us and not having any Landmarks events to attend. However, we are still optimistic about being able to host some events this summer. We have some ideas, and we have some times in mind, but we will have to wait a little longer and see where the Covid protocols go from here. As of this writing, the newly announced mask wearing guidance has only created confusion amongst both business owners and patrons, and social distancing, limited capacities, table and chair placements, etc. are still in effect. Some have relaxed a bit, but we are hoping more restrictions are lifted soon, which would allow us to put some entries on our calendars- and keep them there!

Also depressing is what our contractors have told us about our upcoming construction that was planned for the summer. We figured there would be a bump or two in the road but we did not expect to hear what we have been told so far! Sadly, manpower and material shortages are wreaking havoc on our plans, and increased prices on what materials can be had have changed all our quotes and figures. We have been told by some contractors that August might be the soonest they can get any work started and some others have said they might not be able to help us at all this year because of their lack of workers. Hopefully, we will get something accomplished this summer, we just don't know what or when it might happen at the moment.

Alright, that's it for the depressing news. Some uplifting news came about recently when Philip Bean, executive director of the Central New York Conservancy, announced that historic pathways in Proctor Park will be restored to their former glory. The Conservancy, the City of Utica and Mohawk Valley Community College will collaborate on the project. The pathways, designed by Frederick Law Olmsted Jr. in 1913 for horse drawn carriages to travel through the park, will be slightly narrower and used only by walkers when the project is completed. Kudos to all the folks working on this collaborative restoration effort. It was very refreshing to hear of an area landmark being restored and reused instead of being destroyed and disappearing. We as a community need more efforts such as this!

Steve Grant

President



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MAY/JUNE 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.



COURTVUE LUNCHEONETTE – 219 ELIZABETH STREET

By Michael Bosak

It was 36 years ago – April 1st, 1985 – when Al Valeriano and his wife opened the Court Vue Luncheonette on Elizabeth Street. The location was ideal, directly across the street from the Oneida County Courthouse (hence the name) and just down the street from both the Oneida County and the State Office Buildings, as well as numerous other offices and businesses. The business was a hit after a lot of very hard work and “giving up a lot” in order to make it a success. The food was – and is – all homemade and fresh.

The structure is single story and attached to and a part of the adjacent Paul Building, albeit wholly-owned by Mr. Valeriano. In the 1920's and into the 1930's it housed an African-American church. At some point, there was a fire that consumed a significant portion of the building (it was originally twice as wide and likely had multiple stories), and it was rebuilt into its present configuration. It became a luncheonette in 1952 when it was purchased and run by a Mr. Hershwitz. Since then it changed hands several times until it was bought by Al Valeriano.

Covid has put a strain on the business of course, but they have been able to weather the storm better than most. Take out and delivery are responsible for up to a quarter of their business, but they are still at only around 75% of what they were at pre-pandemic. It is unlikely that business will return to 100% of what it was over a year ago. Until recently, he did a lucrative catering business as well, but it came down to wanting – and needing – weekends off. He is there promptly at 5:00 a.m. each weekday, and leaves well after 2 p.m.

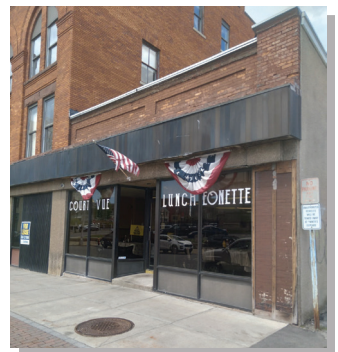
Al does not believe that the MVHS hospital will positively impact his or any other downtown retail businesses significantly. He does believe that Covid (specifically telework-from-home) and changes in workers attitudes about dining out for lunch will make the future much more difficult. It was his plan to have one of his two daughters take over the business when he eventually retires, but he doesn't feel that it may be the best option in retrospect and given the current state of the restaurant industry. Perhaps, someday, down the road, “the right person” will walk in who will be interested in taking it over; if and when that happens, Al “will know.”

The Court Vue embodies a microcosm of *who's who* in Utica and Oneida County political and legal downtown history in its past and present clientele. Four-plus generations of County Executives, lawyers, judges, legislators, politicians, sheriffs, and yes, even jurors have eaten there. Names like Buckley, Pomillio, Balio, Donnelly have been customers. Former County Executive and Representative Sherwood Boehlert was a very frequent customer and was known to enjoy his daily bowl of soup. All of his regular clientele are like “one big family”, are “wonderful people”, and he frequently addresses them by name, a practice that reinforces Al's real affection for his patrons.

The Court Vue Luncheonette is open Monday through Friday from 6 a.m. until 2:00 p.m. for breakfast and lunch, eat in or take out.



AL VALERIANO, OWNER OF THE COURT VUE LUNCHEONETTE FOR 36 YEARS



THE COURT VUE LUNCHEONETTE, 219 ELIZABETH STREET



“TRUTH IN ADVERTISING:” THE VIEW OF THE ONEIDA COUNTY COURTHOUSE FROM THE COURT VUE LUNCHEONETTE



THE PAUL BUILDING, 209 ELIZABETH STREET, WITH THE DIMINUTIVE COURT VUE DIRECTLY EAST



THE COURT VUE LUNCHEONETTE AND THE ADJACENT PAUL BUILDING

OUR LANDMARK INTERIORS — by Michael Lehman, AIA

First Presbyterian Church, Genesee Street, Utica, NY | 1924 | Architect: Ralph Adams Cram



PHOTOS: PAVIA REAL ESTATE SERVICES

This Georgian Revival style church is somewhat of a departure for Cram- a nationally prominent American architect of the day who helped popularized the Collegiate Gothic Style in this country. Among his noted Gothic Revival works are the Cathedral of St. John the Divine in NYC, The Princeton University Chapel, and the US Military Academy Chapel at West Point. Other Georgian Revival projects included the campus of Sweet Briar College and buildings at The Choate School.

During these Covid times, please consider a donation to The Landmarks Society to help further our mission of Historic Preservation.

Please consider The Landmarks Society in your Estate and Legacy planning.

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!

Joanne Szczygiel
Katharine Adams
Joanne Ambrose
James Marketos
Anthony & Karen Giannotti
Suzanne Ernst

JoAnne Destefano
Paul & Kathy Sierak
Eleanor Scheidelman
Barbara Turro
Pamela G Smith

Kevin Schultz
Angela Elefante
Steven Ripley
Kathleen Ellsworth
Cara Berry

THANK YOU TO OUR SUPPORTERS!



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EDITORIAL – UTICA: A CITY WHERE GOOD IDEAS GO IN THE WRONG LOCATIONS— *by Michael Bosak*

I am old enough to recall a 1960s-era Utica Club commercial that stated, that we are “Fifty years behind the times and that’s the way we like it.” The gist of this advertising campaign was that the now famous local beer was brewed using old-fashioned methods, tried and true, and was, therefore, better than more modern newcomers. For many years, this adage also rang true for the City of Utica, which was slow to adopt many planning trends. However, when they eventually did, such as with the concept of Urban Renewal, it was with a vengeance and with disastrous effects.

Established and chartered by the State of New York Department of Education in 1974, The Landmarks Society became the premiere voice for intelligent development and historic preservation in the Greater Utica area. In our nearly 47 years, we have been able to garner a lot of public support to help save such local gems as Union Station, Old Main, the Swan Fountain, the former Central Methodist Church (now the Mosque for the Bosnian Islamic Association on Court Street, the Landmarc Building (former HSBC/Marine Midland Building) the 200 Block of Bleecker Street, and, of course, #1 and #3 Rutger Park, as well as many, many others.

However, the recent trend has been to **not** pay attention to the (in some cases) overwhelming tide of public opinion when it has come to the design, scale and location of several local projects. The ones that come to mind nearly immediately are the MVHS Hospital, the Kelberman Center apartments, and currently, the proposed ArtSpace project.



GENESEE TOWER (THE FORMER UTICA FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY) DWARFS ITS ERIE CANAL-ERA NEIGHBORS IN BAGG’S SQUARE WEST. WHEN BUILT IN THE EARLY 1900S, IT WAS LIKELY ASSUMED THAT BUILDINGS OF SIMILAR SIZE AND SCALE WOULD SOON SURROUND IT, BUT THAT NEVER OCCURRED.

A GOOD IDEA BUT IN THE WRONG LOCATION.



THE KELBERMAN CENTER APARTMENTS LOCATED ON SUNSET AVENUE IN UTICA THAT DWARFS IT CLOSEST NEIGHBORS

Kelberman Center

The concept here was to create a 12-unit venue for persons with disabilities who appear on the autism spectrum where they would be able to function on their own in apartments with some oversight, a very noble and worthwhile endeavor. The location that was chosen was the former Sunset School which had been vacant for a number of years and which was nearby to the Kelberman offices located in the Community Foundation building on Genesee Street. The former Sunset School was a neighborhood school located in a quaint neighborhood in South Utica with mostly small one and some two family residences. The size and scale of Sunset School would have lent itself well to redevelopment in keeping with the neighborhood.

Somehow the project “morphed” into a massive 60-unit apartment project, 48 of which are for medium-income families, presumably to align with New York State Homes and Community Renewal development requirements. Again, in and of itself, these are not bad things, but the location, had there been any urban planning coordination, is totally wrong for the chosen size and scale. Many neighbors voiced their opposition to massiveness of the project with calls and signs proclaiming “*Kelberman: Build it Smaller*” but to no avail.



TYPICAL HOMES IN THE NEIGHBORHOOD; THESE ARE ACROSS THE STREET FROM THE CONSTRUCTION

MVHS Downtown Hospital

A GOOD IDEA BUT IN THE WRONG LOCATION.

new hospital complexes are constructed on property adjacent to existing hospitals or in areas on the outskirts of downtowns to allow for future growth and expansion and to avoid downtown traffic congestion. Even the design and site plan of the new hospital in Utica emulates a suburban concept.

Proposed ArtSpace Project

When ArtSpace was first proposed some eight or so years ago, it was conceived as a wonderful project that was geared toward



THE VIEW THEY NEVER SHOWED YOU IN THE RENDERINGS; IT LOOKS LIKE THE BROADSIDE OF A CRUISE SHIP

A GOOD IDEA BUT IN THE WRONG LOCATION.

housing artists in **existing underutilized buildings** throughout the city (many of which were, unfortunately, in the “footprint of the downtown hospital”). Now, it appears that ArtSpace is destined to be placed directly on Genesee Street in the current parking lot adjacent to the Stanley Performing Art Center with a brand new structure. While a new structure is not necessarily a bad thing, although adaptive reuse of existing structures is always preferable, the location is a major issue. There are several other vacant lots on Park Avenue and elsewhere nearby that would be ideal for this project instead of the potentially disastrous elimination of a much-needed and well-utilized city parking lot that serves the Stanley Center for the Performing Arts and other downtown businesses. The negative impacts on these critical inner city revenue generators cannot be overstated.



LOCATION OF THE PROPOSED ARTSPACE PROJECT
A GOOD IDEA BUT IN THE WRONG LOCATION.

The most disturbing aspect of the abovementioned examples is that there was significant public opposition and discussion that largely went ignored. To a large extent, arguments against these projects have been thoughtful, intelligent, well-researched, well-documented, and impassioned from citizens with a vested interest in the issues. However, political and/or corporate agendas have overridden what appears to be sound urban planning guidelines. This is most disturbing, creating an unfortunate precedence that will be hard to overcome.

NEWS FROM AROUND GREATER UTICA – by Michael Bosak

Rome’s Capitol Theatre Restoration Continues as a New Marquee is Manufactured

The Capitol Projector newsletter for March and April 2021, published by the Capitol Arts Complex in Rome, reports that the venerable theatre in the heart of Rome’s Arts District will be getting a replacement marquee in the not-too-distant future. This is welcome and exciting news in the long and arduous process of restoration of this Roman landmark.

Apparently, The Capitol had two different marquees in its long and storied history, as has been the case for many theatres of similar vintage. After careful consideration, the Restoration Committee chose to recreate the original marquee from 1928 as opposed to the one from 1939 that most Romans remember from their youth. The Committee felt that the “period of significance” was when the theatre originally opened and that is the era that theatre restoration would emulate. Furthermore, the original marquee was far more complex and visually interesting, including a 40-foot “vertical blade” sign that extended over the building and was able to be seen as far away as the city limits. The replica is being built by the Wagner Electric Sign Company of Elyria, Ohio at a cost of around \$900,000. It is a pricey venture, but a worthwhile one to symbolize the revitalization of Downtown Rome.

The project would not have been possible without a \$2.5 million grant from the City of Rome’s Downtown Revitalization Initiative (DRI). The Capitol actually began working with Wagner Electric about 20 years ago with an eye toward the eventual marquee recreation, but in order to accomplish that, the necessary funding needed to be in place. It is important to note that a theatre marquee is not a sign, but a complex “engineered structure” that includes critical drainage and a very complicated electrical system to support thousands of “animated” light bulbs. It takes a very specialized company to accurately recreate such a structure, and this includes period materials and historically-accurate colors, as the photographs of the theatre with its marquee are all in black and white. Wagner has restored numerous marquees throughout the country and are considered to be the subject matter experts in their field.

Another ongoing projects include refurbishing the rare 93 year old Moller theatre organ, only one of three that are in their original locations. The Capitol Arts Complex has raised \$25,000 toward this restoration project, coming primarily from the Sears Family Foundation, the Griffin Charitable Foundation, the Max and Victoria Dreyfus Foundation, as well as many individual contributions. David Peckham, organist and organ restoration expert from Horseheads, NY, has been involved in this process. More money will be needed toward this project, and donations are always appreciated.

Also in the future is the restoration of the building façade that includes front door replacement and the uncovering of ornate original plasterwork that will help to recreate that motif under the new marquee.

The Capitol Arts Complex is located at 220 West Dominick Street, Rome, NY.



SUPPORT THE CAPITOL
 ARTS COMPLEX



THE CAPITOL THEATRE WITH
 THE ORIGINAL MARQUEE



THE CAPITOL THEATRE AS
 IT LOOKS CURRENTLY

Rutter Memorial Building Celebrates 65th Anniversary

The Frederick B. Rutter Memorial Building, located at 1401 Genesee Street, on the corner of Genesee and Hobart Streets and the headquarters of the Leatherstocking Council of the Boy Scouts of America, recently celebrated 65 years since it was dedicated on January 22, 1956. This “modern landmark” was designed by Egbert Bagg Associates Architects of Utica. The Council was once known as The Upper Mohawk Council and is one of 15 councils in New York State. It proudly serves Delaware, Hamilton, Herkimer, Lewis, Madison, Oneida, Otsego and Schoharie Counties.

Two rather handsome houses were demolished to make way for the new headquarters building, and an adjacent vacant lot was added to give the structure a prominent position on the street. One of those houses was the Rutter family homestead.

According to a Utica Observer-Dispatch article from Tuesday evening, January 10, 1956, the new building was made possible by a generous bequest of the late Mrs. Mary E.H. Rutter in memory of her son, Frederick, who was killed in a car accident on Deerfield Hill in 1923. Mrs. Rutter died in 1941. Her generosity included enough money to create an annual sustaining endowment that has allowed the council to remain debt free and without a mortgage for these many years. This endowment is the third largest for Boy Scout Councils in New York State, surpassed only by that of the Greater New York City Council and the Theodore Roosevelt Council on Long Island. Ironically, the headquarters building is owned and administered by a Board of Trustees and is not actually owned by the council.



INTERESTED IN BEING MORE INVOLVED WITH LANDMARKS?

The Landmarks Society of Greater Utica is looking for “a few good people” to fill several vacancies on the Board of Trustees. We are meeting once a month on the second Wednesday.

If you are interested, please contact us at:
315.732.7376 or at uticalandmarks@gmail.com

Preserving the Past – Protecting the Future

Scenic & Historic

SPOTLIGHT ON A LANDMARK - by Michael Lehman, AIA **Utica's NYS Regimental Armories**

Since colonial times the citizens of Utica and the Mohawk Valley have always answered the call to defend our lives, liberty, and freedom. As Memorial Day and the 4th of July approach it seems appropriate to recognize several landmark buildings that enabled them to maintain our Union and protect our freedoms during the course of Utica's history. Several different NYS arsenals and armories, of varying architectural styles, have supported their courageous efforts and sacrifices over the centuries and serve as testimony to their commitment.

According to Webster, an armory is a place where arms are deposited. Especially in the United States- it is also a large building including a drill hall, offices and other ancillary functions. All the buildings share a massive, solid, fortress-like aesthetic appropriate to their purpose. Many generations of soldiers trained and departed for war from these buildings and Union Station for points all over the globe, some never to return.



**BLEECKER STREET ARSENAL/
ARMORY (1862), NOW GONE**

Sadly, two of the structures are long gone. They have become part of Utica's proud but obscure “intangible history” recorded only

in limited access archival materials and seldom remembered except in articles such as this.

Bleecker Street Arsenal/Armory: 1862-1894

This imposing structure stood on the north side of Bleecker Street, at Burnet Avenue opposite the foot of Charlotte Street. It occupied the previous site of the Bleecker Street Market more commonly known as the “Old Clinton Market” whose heyday was from 1832-1850. The two-story market building was erected in 1828 with the main floor devoted (from 4AM to 1PM closing) to the sale of meat, poultry, and game. The upper story was used as the municipal court room until 1844 with the basement used as a lockup and police watch-house. The old market was later demolished and NYS took over the site for a proposed armory.

Built in 1862 during the Civil War as the 45th Regimental State Arsenal/Armory for \$6,000 it was used for 32 years by state militiamen and the Utica Citizens Corps. *Horatio Nelson White* (1814-1892) of Syracuse was the armory's architect and also designed the Hall of Languages (1873)-the first building on the *Syracuse University* campus- as well as many other projects including numerous county court houses and state armories across central New York. His works in the greater Utica area included *The Stone Presbyterian Church* (1878) Clinton, NY and the *Walcott Memorial Presbyterian Church* (1881) in New York Mills, NY.

At the time Oneida County jail cells were also housed in the basement of the armory which flooded frequently from the adjacent bed of the original Erie Canal. It ran directly north of the rear of the building. Prisoners often had to be rescued from drowning in the rapidly rising waters. In 1894 the old armory

was determined to be unsafe, was vacated by the military, and demolished. The *Schubert* (later *Colonial Theater*) was then built on the site and most recently the *Boston Store Annex* which became until recently the *Utica School of Commerce*.

Steuben Park Armory: 1894-1956

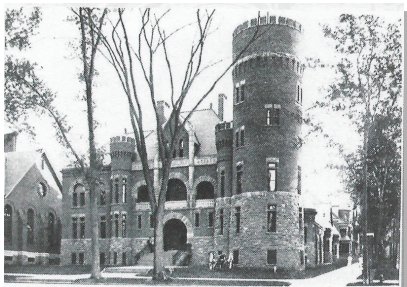


PARK BAPTIST CHURCH (1886) LEFT-GONE, STEUBEN PARK ARMORY (1894) RIGHT-GONE, STEUBEN PARK (1810) FOREGROUND

On April 30, 1891 the NYS legislature passed a bill funding a new armory in Utica. The Williams property on the corner of *Rutger* and *Steuben Streets*, opposite *Steuben Park*, was purchased.

The construction of the adjacent *Park Baptist Church* in 1886 and the Armory would mark the transition of *Steuben Park*, with its majestic elm trees, from primarily a highly desirable residential area to one of Utica's most important public civic open spaces.

In 1893 the contract for the new building was awarded to *P.J. McCaffrey* of NYC and the cornerstone laid. On December 23, 1894 the completed armory was accepted by the state and opened for the use of Utica's two companies of infantry. Two years later, "*Old Saratoga*", the cannon captured from the British during the Revolutionary War was remounted and placed in front of the armory. Oneida County Historian Joseph Bottini has recently documented the story and current status of this historic piece of artillery.



STEUBEN ARMORY W/CANNON ON LAWN C.1896 BOTH NOW GONE

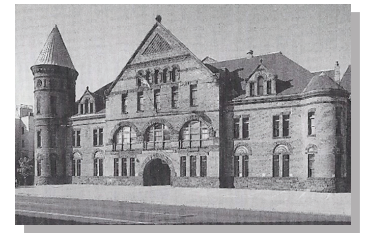


STEUBEN ARMORY PRIOR TO DEMOLITION, 1956

Utica's grand Romanesque Revival armory was one of forty designed by state architect *Isaac G. Perry* in the 1880s and 1890s. Many were built after 1884 legislation spurred their construction. The majority of Perry's armories- most notably the one in Buffalo for the 74th Regiment- were castellated structures (reminiscent of a medieval castle) as was the Steuben Street armory with its crenelated battlements, main tower, and turrets. However, from the late 1880s into the 1890s in Albany (where Perry was at work on the Capitol) and in Utica the spirit of *H.H. Richardson* also began to influence both designs. Each building shared a similar vocabulary which included massive turreted elements trimmed with rusticated sandstone. In both armories Perry's love of stone carving is evident in carved decoration on the lively front facades- at the termination of gables, and at the springing of arches. Both designs also included a row of several small conical towers ranging along the side facade at Albany's Lark Street and Utica's Steuben

Street respectively.

The *Steuben Park Armory* was made of brick with brown stone trim. It stood more than 86 feet wide on *Rutger Street*, opposite *Steuben Park*, and was 165 feet long on *Steuben Street*. The main hall of the structure was 86 feet wide and 60 feet at the highest point of the roof- containing three stories and an



NYS WASHINGTON STREET ARMORY, ALBANY, NY (1889-91) EXTANT

attic. At the front entrance was a set of stone steps 14 feet wide with iron railings. In front of the two front entrance doors was an iron gate. Inside the building were company quarters, officers' quarters, a drill room, and locker rooms. Construction at the time was projected to cost between \$41,000 and \$50,000.

By the early 1950s the beloved landmark was no longer used for its original military purpose. There were hopes that the armory would be used as a war memorial and auditorium. One proposal called for the front of the building to house war artifacts, mementos, uniforms, and other historic memorabilia, while the basement would be used for meetings and other community events. By the 1950s the crenelated battlements at the top of the main tower had been removed. After several unsuccessful attempts at repurposing the building it was demolished in 1956 for a surface parking lot. The *Historic Steuben Park Apartment Tower* currently occupies the site.

Culver Avenue Armory: 1929-present



CULVER AVENUE ARMORY, (1929) EXTANT

On October 1, 1927, the new 121st Calvary Regiment of the NYS Guard was formed. Its members became Troop A with a new cavalry armory then erected on *Culver Avenue* in 1929. The brick medieval castle-like structure with conical towers, castellated parapet walls, and a large rear arched drill hall is likely attributed to the Office of the state architect- *Franklin Ware*. It is listed on the *National Register of Historic Places*.

The building is located along the *Olmsted Brothers designed Utica Park* and connecting *Parkway system* at the corner of *Armory Drive*. In keeping with *Olmsted* and *City Beautiful* design principles, the placement of prominent public buildings- such as the armory- along the *Parkway's* route and in immediately adjacent neighborhoods would have been favored. Other appropriate public uses- surrounded by expansive landscaped grounds- could also include museums, college and school campuses (such as *MVCC and Utica College*), houses of worship, golf & country clubs, cemeteries, and hospitals.

SOURCES: Clarke, T. Wood. *Utica for a century and a half*. The Widtman Press, Utica, New York. 1952. • Oneida County History Center archives from *Illustrated Utica: 1890* • Velardi, Brad. *Steuben Park Armory: Prepared for War*. Greater Utica Magazine. Vol. VI Issue 12, Marcy, New York. November 2020. • Waite, Diane S. ed. *Albany Architecture- A guide to the City*. Mount Ida Press in association with the Preservation League of New York State, Albany, New York. 1993. • Walsh, John J. *Vignettes of Old Utica*. Utica Public Library, Utica, New York. 1982.



THE PRESERVATIONIST



NUMBER #7 RUTGER PARK AT NIGHT