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# HISTORIC UTICA

4 WALKING TOURS

IN THE

SCENIC AND HISTORIC DISTRICTS



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*design photography*  
SUSAN STANLEY RAND CARTER



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**INTRODUCTION** by Philip A. Bean

Utica was first settled by New Englanders, primarily from Connecticut, who migrated to Oneida County in the aftermath of the American Revolution. Incorporated as a village in 1798, Utica soon became a stopover of some importance on the Erie Canal, which for many decades cut across lower Genesee Street in downtown Utica.

The first Irish immigrants came to Utica in this period to help construct the canal. Thousands more Irish and German immigrants, who were brought to Utica by the completed canal, transformed the ethnic and religious composition of the then still infant city.

The community which had earned its livelihood catering to the needs of migrants moving slowly westward by canal boat was threatened in the 1840s as many travelers began to bypass Utica aboard newly-constructed train lines at the unheard-of speed of 40 miles per hour. Uticans saved their city by transforming it into one of the greatest centers of textile production in the world; its distinctive contribution to the history of the industry was the invention of the one-piece woolen underwear known as the "Union suit."

Until Utica experienced its industrial revolution, its outer geographic limits had only reached Rutger Street. By 1900, however, Utica was the most rapidly growing city in New York State. An industrial corridor of brick textile mills stretched from the easternmost edges of the city, across lower downtown Utica, and into the west end; many of these mills still stand as testimony to the industrial might of nineteenth-century Utica.

The industrial development of the city coincided with the arrival of new immigrant groups, most notably southern Italians and Poles. Many of these people provided the muscle power not only for the mills, but also for the related local construction boom which lasted from about 1880 until 1930. Indeed, the eastern quarter, which was virtually unsettled until after 1900, was largely developed by Italian immigrants. Many structures on downtown Utica's Bleecker Street, once the center of the local Italian community, still bear the names of the Italian businessmen who built them.

In the 1920s, the city continued to expand by annexing much of what now constitutes the southern quarter of the city from the Town of New Hartford. However, even as the city grew geographically, its economic base was

already being threatened by competition from textile mills in the South. After World War II, the local textile-based economy collapsed, as mill after mill shut down.

For the second time in a century, Utica's leaders were moved to action, as businessmen and politicians engineered an economic renaissance. Many of Utica's abandoned textile mills became home to "high-tech" employers like General Electric; other companies constructed factories on the outskirts of the city.

Amidst the optimism thus generated by the short-lived "loom to boom" period of the forties and fifties, community leaders also launched one of the first urban renewal programs in the country. Efforts to "modernize" the city resulted in a radical alteration of the character of the city center. In an effort to make downtown more competitive in the face of the growing challenge of suburban shopping centers, much of downtown Utica was cleared to make way for parking, new retail facilities, and roadways.

The heyday of urban renewal witnessed the loss of many of Utica's architectural treasures, most notably the old City Hall. The building was designed in 1853 by noted architect Richard Upjohn, and was located diagonally across Genesee Street from the same architect's Grace Church of 1856. Until City Hall was demolished in 1968, it and Grace Church were said to have the only two Upjohn towers located within sight of one another in the entire country.

The losses of the Urban Renewal period galvanized the local historic preservation movement, and in 1974 the Landmarks Society of Greater Utica was established. Among the chief accomplishments of local preservationists was the prevention of the demolition of Utica State Hospital, a grand masterpiece of Greek Revival architecture, and the saving of Union Station, a monument to Utica's historic role in the development of transportation.

WALKING TOURS by Rand Carter

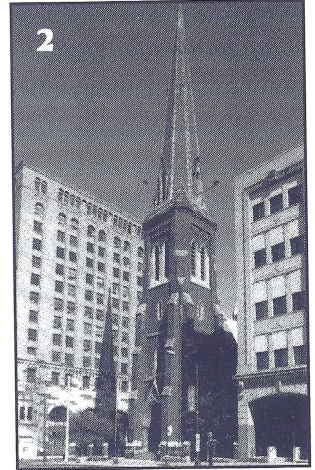
Utica's Scenic and Historic Districts were first established in the early 1970s and expanded in 1995. The following four walking tours concentrate on those older sections near the centrally located Radisson Inn, and each can be completed in approximately one hour.

**TOUR I** LOWER GENESEE STREET AND THE BAGG SQUARE DISTRICT

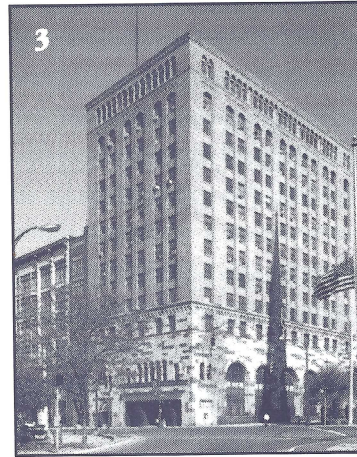
The history of Utica is closely linked with the development of transportation. It began in 1758 with the building of Fort Schuyler to guard a ford of the Mohawk River, and gathered momentum after 1800 when the State Legislature authorized the construction of the Seneca Turnpike (now NYS 5) and Utica became an important stage coach stop. The city's economic fortunes were further enhanced by the Erie Canal. In October 1819 the first section of the new waterway opened between Utica and Rome, and by 1825 the completed canal linked the Hudson River at Albany with Lake Erie at Buffalo. The village of Utica grew up in the area between the river and the canal (approximately the path of the present Oriskany Street). When the first train station opened in 1836 it was the western terminal of the Utica and Schenectady Railroad, with the tracks running along the south bank of the river. By the turn of the century the city had become an important railway junction, and when the river was straightened and its channel relocated about a mile to the north to eliminate spring flooding in the Bagg Square area, the land formerly within the old bend was available for a 43-acre railway yard and a new railway station. After the completion of the wider and deeper Barge Canal in 1917, the now obsolete Erie Canal was abandoned and the section which passed through Utica filled-in in 1923. In the 1960s it became the path of the 'East-West Arterial', as the internal combustion engine and the highway had come to dominate transport.

Walk north (downhill) on Genesee Street from the corner of Washington Lane. At 207 stands the 16-storey **State Office Building** of 1966-70 (1), while the next block is dominated by the former J.B. Wells Department

Store at 169-171, built in 1910 for another retailer, John A. Roberts. At the corner of Elizabeth Street is Richard Upjohn's Gothic Revival **Grace (Episcopal) Church** (2), built 1856-60, with its soaring spire completed in 1875.



On the NE corner of the intersection, at 183-7, is the elegant **Adirondack Bank Building** of 1926 (3). Note the carved stone detailing and the fine wrought-iron work in its ground floor windows along Elizabeth Street. The narrow building at 181 is the entrance to the offices of **Harza-Northeast**, an engineering and architectural firm, which occupies the larger building immediately to the

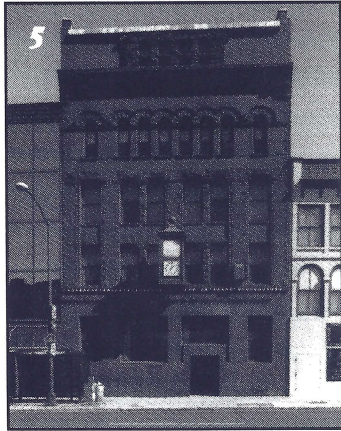


north at 173, built as the Robert Fraser Department Store in 1907 and after 1937 occupied by Woolworth's (4). The extensive changes which architect Donald Wilhelm made to the building when it was acquired in the 1980s are especially apparent on the lower portion of this former retail shop. Frank Winfield Woolworth

opened his first Utica shop (in the next block down) in 1879, one of his three original outlets—the others being in Watertown, NY and Lancaster, PA. The narrow, 4-storey brick building of c.1865 at 165 is a reminder of the scale and character of the shops once lining lower Genesee.

An even older building, dating from before 1854 (with later alterations), can be seen on the NE corner of Genesee and Bleecker. One block up Lafayette Street to the west is the **Hotel Utica**, built in 1912 with the four top floors added in 1926. The intersection of Genesee with Lafayette and Bleecker came to be known as "the

busy corner” in the days when the north-south and east-west streetcar lines crossed here. To the north is the triangular **Franklin ‘Square’** landscaped in 1995 by landscape architect Rick Talbot of Harza-Northeast to form the “Gateway” to the city (**front cover**). On the east side, at 157 Genesee Street, is the former **Oneida National Bank (5)**, a tawny-toned “Richardsonian



Romanesque” building of **1886**. The brickwork above the cornice replaces the steeply-pitched and dormered roof destroyed by fire in 1948. Hidden beneath the unsightly black reflective glass of “Boston Place” is the handsome limestone elevation of the 1941 Boston Store. At Oriskany Street one crosses what was from 1819-1919 the path of the Erie Canal. During the 1950s when

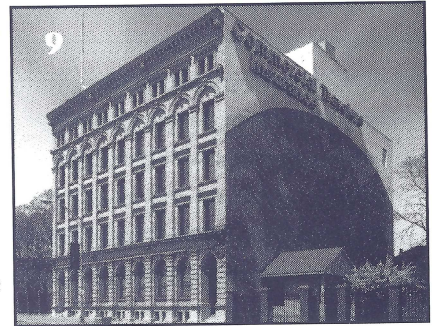
the opening of the first suburban shopping centers were drawing shoppers away from downtown, the buildings between Oriskany and Liberty Street began to be torn down to provide parking space. By the 1970s this area had become a landscaped median in the ‘East-West Arterial’. On the NW corner of Genesee and Liberty is the **Hale Building of 1833** (remodelled 1929). One block to the west, at the intersection of Liberty and Hotel Street, is the former **Mechanics Hall (6)**, built by the Utica Mechanics

Association in **1836** to the designs of a Mr. Bourn of Utica. It contained a library, reading room, and a large hall or assembly room which late in the last century was converted into an ‘opera house’. After a fire in 1924, the damaged roof was rebuilt and an additional upper storey replaced the pediments on either street front. As the



original residents of old Utica moved to the newer residential areas, this area became first a neighbourhood for Jewish immigrants and later for African-Americans moving up from the south.

A near-fatal blow was struck to this once busy area by the Genesee Street overpass of 1971. The west side of Genesee in the block north of Liberty Street fared better than the east and retains a series of commercial buildings of differing periods and widely disparate scale. No. 110 was built in **1904** as the **City National Bank**, its ten storeys and steel frame qualifying it as Utica’s first ‘skyscraper’(7). This opulently detailed building was the design of prominent Utica architect Frederick H. Gouge, who also designed that same year the granite-faced **Commercial Travelers Building** further along at no. 70 (**9**; addition **1937**). Between these two tall buildings a handsome group of four mid-19th century brick buildings of Greek Revival and Italianate style survives, providing valuable evidence of Utica’s appearance as a bustling canal city (**8**).



Historically, Whitesboro Street was the western continuation of Main Street. Slightly rerouted, it now crosses under the elevated section of Genesee Street to become Broad Street. At the corner of John Street, the former **Court House, Post Office and Custom House of 1927** now houses various Federal Government offices (**10**). Turn left on Railroad Street and walk one block to Main.

# HISTORIC UTICA

## FOUR WALKING TOURS

To the left is the **Children's Museum**, an imposing red-brick commercial block built in **1893** for Hieber Dry Goods (11). Immediately to the west is the **Proctor Memorial**, a little park commissioned in 1933 by Mrs. Thomas R. Proctor as a memorial to her late husband on the site of **Bagg's Hotel** (12). The famous hostelry, opened in 1812 and enlarged several times, was demolished in 1932. Local lore has it that the little stone pavilion was intended to house the records of the historic tavern and hotel, but by the time it was completed the documents had vanished.

**Union Station** (13) opened in **1914**. It was built to the designs of Allen H. Stem and Alfred Fellheimer. In partnership with Charles A. Reed, Stem had collaborated with Warren & Wetmore on the new Grand Central Terminal in Manhattan, completed in

1913. Stem & Fellheimer went on to design a chain of New York Central railway stations extending as far as the Cincinnati Terminal. The numerous Vermont marble columns, combined with the soaring coffered vaults, give the interior something of the grandeur of a Roman Imperial Bath. Utica's Union Station is one of the few great railways stations in North America still serving its original function.

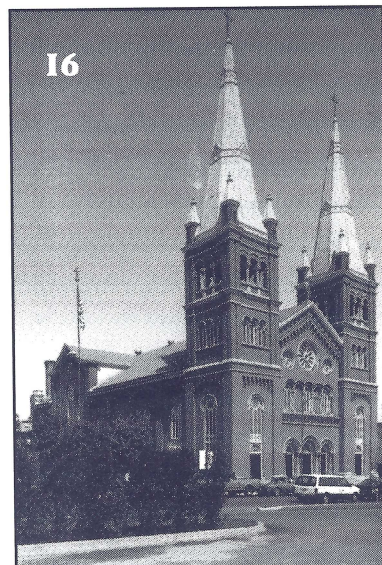
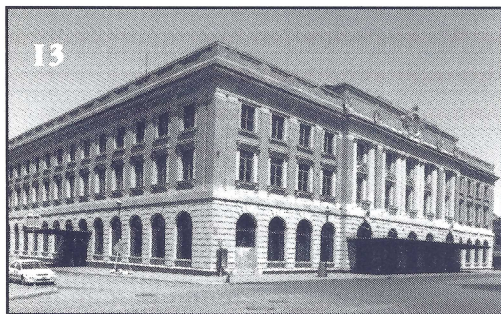
Two blocks east, at 401 Main Street, is the **Millar Building** (14) of **1912**, built on the site of the long-vanished Fort Schuyler.

Retrace your steps to the foot of John Street and turn left. At the NW corner of Oriskany and John is the 1931 office building of the Utica Observer-Dispatch newspaper. The broad expanse of pavement in front was once the site of a weighing station and turning basin on the Erie Canal (15). Continue south on John to Bleecker Street. On the SW corner is **Historic St. John's Church** (16), begun in the Romanesque Revival style in 1869 and

consecrated in 1872. The spires on the two towers were completed in the Gothic Revival style in 1893. This, the fourth Catholic parish founded in New York State, built its first church in 1821 on the opposite side of the street. It was moved to the site of the present building a few years later and a second church was constructed in 1836.

Across John Street from the church is the **old Utica Free Academy Building of 1867** (17). Its main facade faces east across Academy Street to Chancellor Park and features a tower (now shorn of its fourth storey). Chancellor Park is one of the oldest of Utica's parks, and

in 1905 when work began on Frederick Law Olmstead, Jr.'s uncompleted scheme to encircle the city with a parkway it was one of only four public 'green spaces' in Utica (the others being Steuben Park, Johnson Park, and Watson Williams Park). Called Chancellor Square when it was first laid out c.1811, the park was named after James Kent, Chancellor of New York State at the time, who also lent his name to the street which forms the park's eastern boundary. The 2-storey Greek Revival building at 41-5 Bleecker gives an idea of the park's earlier context.



Walk south on Academy Street and turn right on Elizabeth. **235** is the former **Central Fire Station** of 1911 by Utica architect John A. Hobbes. 227-233, the **Langdon-Hughes Building**, and 221-223, the limestone-faced **Hugh R. Jones Building**, are attractive examples of low-rise commercial architecture of the 1920s and 30s. Somewhat larger is 209, the red-brick **Paul Building**, built in 1893 as Young's Mammoth Bakery. Its architect, George Edward Cooper, later took in Egbert Bagg, Jr. as a partner. On the south side of the street is the **County Court House (18)**. Completed in **1911** as a somewhat over-ripe Neo-Renaissance building, its rich 3-dimensional character was 'flattened out' in a trivializing remodelling of 1958.

The building at 19 Elizabeth Street was erected in 1878 as the **old Utica Public Library (19)**. The picturesque fervour of architects George Edward Cooper and E. D. Smalley's design has been seriously compromised by the removal of three pyramidal-roofed towers and the obscuring of its vibrant brick and stone polychromy by a coat of institutional grey paint.

Before reaching Genesee Street the apse and north side of Grace Church can be seen on the left (the parking lot occupies the site of the demolished Gothic 'choir room'), and another view of the Adirondack Bank Building enjoyed on the right.

## TOUR II UPPER GENESEE STREET TO ONEIDA SQUARE

Genesee Street, Utica's 'Grand Avenue', follows the path of the Genesee Road, funded by the New York State Legislature in 1797 to replace the earlier trails with a 'modern' road extending from the Mohawk River in Utica to Geneva, Canadaigua, and Avon on the Genesee River. In 1800 the state chartered the Seneca Turnpike as a toll road following the same route. During the 1950s the route of NYS 5 (the old Seneca Turnpike) was rerouted in the area of Utica to an expressway known as the 'North-South Arterial'. Throughout the boom decades which lasted from 1850 until the Great Depression, the

city grew mainly toward the south, with many prominent families building mansions along Genesee Street. Near the end of the 19th century commercial development (and a trolley line) followed the same route and few of these stately homes survive below Oneida Square.

Until the late 1960s and early 70s when the American elm ("the perfect street tree") fell victim to Dutch elm disease, Genesee Street proceeded as a 'cathedral nave' under the arcing branches of hundreds of these trees. Attempts to recapture that splendid effect with a variety of other species have been largely frustrated by the butchering of trees in deference to an unsightly tangle of above-ground utility lines.

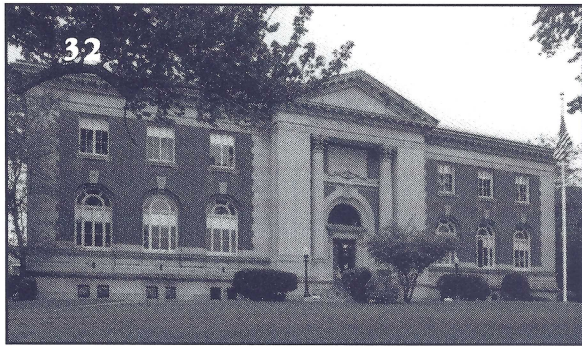
From the intersection of Washington Lane proceed south (uphill) on Genesee Street. The east side of the block is

dominated by the **Savings Bank of Utica (20)**--the "Gold Dome Bank", a sumptuous Neo-Baroque building of **1898-1900** designed by Robert

William Gibson, an English-born and educated architect who immigrated to the United States in 1881 and opened an office in New York City. Additions to the north were built in 1927 and 1979. On the opposite side of the street a variety of commercial buildings representing a stylistic evolution of almost 80 years extends up to the acute angle of Genesee and Washington. **The Carlile (21)** of **1884** at 240 is the most impressive of



commissioned architect William L. Woollett to design the house for his daughter and son-in-law, Mr. and Mrs. James Watson Williams. Later their daughter and son-in-law Rachel and Frederick Proctor also lived here, with another daughter and son-in-law, Thomas and Maria Proctor, residing next door in a house torn down in the late 1950s to make room for the new museum building. Fountain Elms now functions as a museum of decorative arts. It is connected to the Museum of Art by a low wing (opened 1995), designed by Charlotte, NC architects Lund McGee Sharpe, which contains offices and storage. The main building of the **School of Art** is located behind the new wing in a remodelled stable and carriage house. Designed by architect James Constable in 1895, this building replaced the original carriage house of the now demolished Thomas Proctor House.



The **Utica Public Library (32)** across the street at 303 Genesee opened in 1904. It was designed by Utica-born Arthur C. Jackson of the New York City firm of Carrere and Hastings, the architects responsible for the contemporaneous New York Public Library. Next door at 307 is an Italianate house built in 1867 for Charles A. Yates, a retailer selling ready-to-wear clothing (33). Five years later it was acquired by Irvin Abijah Williams, a manufacturer of locomotive headlamps, and since 1915 has belonged to the Knights of Columbus who constructed a large addition to the rear.

Oneida Square marks the beginning of Oneida Street which originally lead southward to the old Bridgewater Turnpike (old NYS route 8). The triangular area between Genesee, Oneida Street and the Parkway is the neighbourhood known as **Mayfield (35)** and contains numerous fine houses of the late 19th century. The

focal point of Oneida Square is the **Soldiers and Sailors Monument of 1891 (34)**, the design of Hartford, Connecticut sculptor Karl Gerhardt. The central pillar is surrounded by a relief depicting the departure and return of Civil War combatants. The four figures at the base of the pillar and the figure on top have been variously interpreted. Unmistakable are the soldier and sailor facing east and west respectively. The figure facing north holds the stars and stripes of the Union and may represent Victory, while the figure facing south has an olive branch and cornucopia, attributes implying Peace and Plenty. The female on top holds an inverted sword (hilt down) in her left hand, indicating her pacific nature. Because the emblems immediately below are associated with the city, we can identify her as the personification of Utica.

At the corner of Plant and State Street is the **Plymouth (Congregational) Church (36)** of 1905, now combined with the Bethesda congregation formerly at the corner of Columbia and Washington Street. 501-9 Plant Street is the **'Comstock Row' (37)**, an impressive terrace of houses built in 1889 by Miles Comstock who had served as mayor of Utica in 1871.

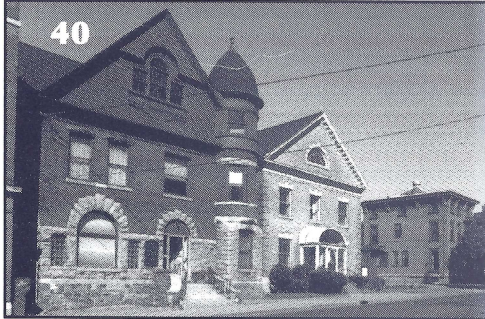
### TOUR III RUTGER STREET

Utica is extraordinarily rich in its domestic architecture, with examples of every 19th century style from Federal to Colonial Revival. Most can be seen on Rutger Street which was intended as the central concourse of an area planned in the decades just before and after the city's incorporation in 1832 by John Bleecker, son of the large land-owner Rutger Bleecker, who named its streets after members or friends of the Bleecker family. As the city continued to grow, the streets were extended beyond South Street, across sloping terrain formerly occupied by corn fields. Hence, the area between South Street and the Parkway came to be known as Corn Hill. Rutger Street ended at the 'gulf' (the old Ballou Creek)--which reached from Third (originally called East Street) to Mohawk Street--until a viaduct was completed in 1891, enabling the street to reach the Masonic Home begun that year at the city's eastern boundary. The viaduct was removed in 1916 and the gulf filled in and graded. In 1886 Rutger was the first of Utica's streets to replace

cobblestones, bricks or wooden blocks with asphalt paving, and the smoother surfaces made it a favourite course during the bicycle craze of the 1890s.

From the intersection of Genesee and Hopper Street turn east past the auditorium added to the rear of the New Century Club in 1897 (38). On the SW corner of Hopper and King is the Gothic Revival **Tabernacle Baptist Church** of 1865 (39) designed by the Boston architect G. S. Meacham. The chapel on King Street with its new entrance on Clark Pl. was built in 1905. The north side of Hopper Street is lined with houses now converted to commercial or professional uses. **No. 1** (40) of c.1890

has an asymmetrical massing with a cylindrical corner tower and turret. This, and the variety of tone and texture produced by its mixture of

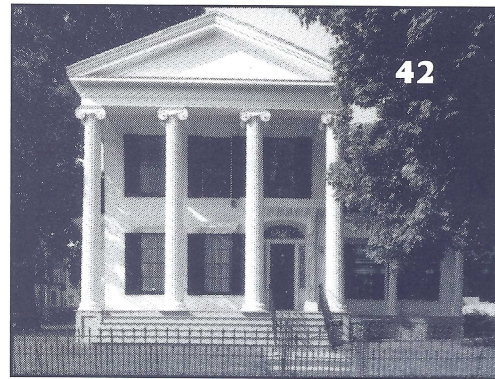


stone, brick and shingle, is typical of the so-called 'Queen Anne' style. Although it has little that would seem familiar to an English monarch who died in 1714, the 'Queen Anne' is an informal free style which appeared between two high styles: just as the architecture of Queen Anne's reign afforded a moment of relaxation between English Baroque and Anglo-Palladianism, so did the later 'Queen Anne' offer a detente between the *parvenu* period's extravagance and the Colonial Revival's self-conscious 'good taste'. This latter can be seen in no. 3. Further along, nos. 21 and 23 are modestly scaled examples of the Italianate bracketed style so popular during the third quarter of the 19th century. Above two storeys with tall vertical windows is an attic storey with small square windows in a frieze beneath the eaves/cornice. The widely overhanging eaves are supported on brackets, and the roof is so low-pitched as to be invisible from the ground, contributing to the effect of simple cubic volumes. This style was preceded by the Greek Revival of which no. 25 is a modest specimen. Instead of horizontal eaves it has a

gable end facing the street. As is often the case, the door frame and window hoods at ground level are a later elaborate replacement of the simpler originals.

Many of the fine houses which once surrounded **Steuben Park** have vanished, but **no. 6** survives as a late (c.1870) and unusually vertical example of the Italian villa style (41). Characteristic of the style are the tower anchoring the picturesquely asymmetrical massing and the round-headed windows, features which Romantic architects found so appealing in the rural vernacular of Italy. The numerous books on 'cottage' architecture which appeared during the first half of the 19th century provided a repertory of picturesque models based on this and other rustic sources. The wooden porch is a late-19th century addition.

The house at 210 Rutger Street (c.1865) is a larger version in wood of the Italianate bracketed style we noted in the earlier brick examples on Hopper Street, with a lower and recessed wing placed on the side of the off-center entrance. The house next door at **212** (42), built c.1849 for the wholesale drug merchant George L. Dickenson, is a fine example of the Greek



Revival mansion. The entire house, including the fluted Ionic columns of its pedimented portico, translates into wood the stone architecture of the classical temple. The challenge of squeezing the complex requirements of a modern dwelling into the cella of that ancient prototype is met by employing such anti-classical devices as off-center entrance and various asymmetrical extensions to its basic cubic volume. The Greek Revival was widely disseminated during the second quarter of

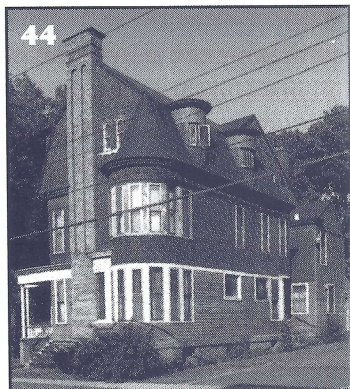


the 19th century by New Englanders moving across New York State to the western territories. The original simple detailing was often replaced in later, more affluent periods. The present cast-iron fence may replace an earlier wooden picket fence; the Italianate door surround was a later addition (as was the bay window on the east), while the door itself, with its elliptical fan- and side lights, is a Colonial Revival alteration of the early 20th century. The modest version of the Greek Revival across the street at 211 has a door closer to the original.

The Italianate style can be seen in all its permutations along Rutger Street. One of the most impressive examples, complete with adjacent carriage house, can be seen at **203 (43)** of **1855**. The entrance is in the projecting center of the 5-bay facade, while the French windows to either side open onto terraces with cast-iron railings. The lantern which rises above the center of the roof is a characteristic feature which serves two practical functions: it provides natural light for the central staircase; and, by allowing the hot air rising through the interior to exit at roof level, it creates convective currents to ventilate and cool the interior. The house was built for Lewis Lawrence who had made a fortune in the lumber business. The Utica, Chenango and Susquehanna Railroad which he organized in 1865 would render the Chenango Canal obsolete since, after it began operations in 1870, it could bring coal from Pennsylvania to Utica's steam-powered factories in three hours rather than three days, and at the same cost. Nos. 213 and 215 are more modest versions of the style, as is 216 with its wooden porch and spindle work a later addition.

A short detour up Miller Street brings us to two spectacular examples of the 'Queen Anne', facing one another at **1001 (44)** and 1002. Somewhat less intense versions of the style can be seen at 223, 301 and 303 Rutger Street. With stone restricted to the foundations and brick to the chimneys, the variety

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of tone and texture on **301 (45)** is achieved largely through the handling of the wood siding, enabling us to label it as that peculiarly American sub-species known as the "shingle style". The informality of planning and emphasis on comfort made such houses especially popular for summer houses, often at the shore. No. 307 of c.1868 is essentially an Italianate bracketed house with lantern to which a *porte cochère* and verandah with spindle work were later added.

The center-piece of Rutger Street is **Rutger Park**, which until the demolition of no. 2 in 1994 offered a unique ensemble of 19th century American domestic architecture. When **no. 3 (46)** was built to the designs of Albany architect Philip Hooker in 1830 it sat alone, well outside the village of Utica and approached up John Street. The austere main block, stuccoed and scored to simulate stone, was originally flanked by two dependencies with pedimented porticos. That on the west contained an office, while the other housed the gardener and the coachman. Planned for Judge Morris Miller, private secretary to John Jay, the house was completed by his son Rutger Bleeker Miller, lawyer, member of the United States District Court, and member of Congress. Later owners included Thomas R. Walker who sold it to his law partner, Senator Roscoe Conkling, and Nicholas Kernan. Conkling, the "power behind the throne" during the Grant administration, served on the Senate concurrently with another Utican: Francis Kernan. From 1830 until 1958 the house remained the scene of many glittering parties and it was here that Samuel F. B. Morse (the nephew of Mrs. Walker) met Theodore Faxton and John Butterfield, the men who later purchased the New York State rights to Morse's telegraph.

The gardens of the Miller House originally covered the entire block, but in 1850 the old homestead was divided into city lots and ground was broken for a house immediately to the west (the former no. 2). Its first owner, J. Wyman Jones, sold it in 1856 to the Reverend Philemon H. Fowler of the First Presbyterian Church. Many Uticans still recall the gracious hospitality of the Gilbert Butler family who lived there until the 1950s. The board-and-batten house--of cedar and impervious to termites--was based on a plan which Alexander Jackson Davis provided for his friend Andrew Jackson

• 19 •



photo courtesy OCHS

Downing, who published it as Design VI, “a villa in the Italian style, bracketed”, in his *Cottage Residences* of 1842.

A. J. Davis was more directly associated with the planning of **no. 1 Rutger Park (47)** of 1854, one of the finest examples of the Italianate villa in America. It was for many years known as “Munn’s Castle” after its original owner, the banker John Munn. Munn had made a fortune in Mississippi before returning to Utica with his southern wife, Mary Jane, who entertained lavishly “in true southern style”. Later owners included Samuel Remington, John C. Devereux, and Walter Jerome Green. During the 1950s nos. 1, 2 & 3 fell into the neglectful hands of the present owners who allowed all three to deteriorate, with 1 & 3 in many ways in worse condition than the demolished no. 2.

**No. 4 (48)**, another variant on the Italianate villa, was designed for his own use in 1854 by Egbert Bagg, a civil engineer and land surveyor who was also the ancestor of two prominent Utica architects of the 20th century. **No. 5 (49)**, of reddish-brown stone, and with a steep conical roof over corner tower, is an imposing example of the “Richardsonian Romanesque”, so called because of its association with the New Orleans-born and Paris-trained architect Henry Hobson Richardson. Utica architect Jacob Agne designed this house in 1889 for Thomas A. Kinney, a prominent civic leader who served as mayor of Utica in 1885 and again in 1897. The house was purchased in 1955 by the Teamsters Union who in 1979 built the elevated cube of mirror glass that dominates the east end of Rutger Park.

Effectively sited on the NW corner of First Street and closing the vista down Dudley Street is **no. 401 (50)**, an especially pure example of the Italianate bracketed style, with window lintels of the chastest form. More ornate in its detailing and complex in its rhythms is **no. 320 (51)** of c.1870. The slightly projecting entrance bay is flanked by two bays of single windows to the left and by a



wider bay with double windows to the right. The elaborately carved window hoods, as well as the projecting bay window above the porch and the round-headed windows of the attic storey, are symptomatic of the opulent display to be found in the *parvenu* houses of the period following the Civil War.

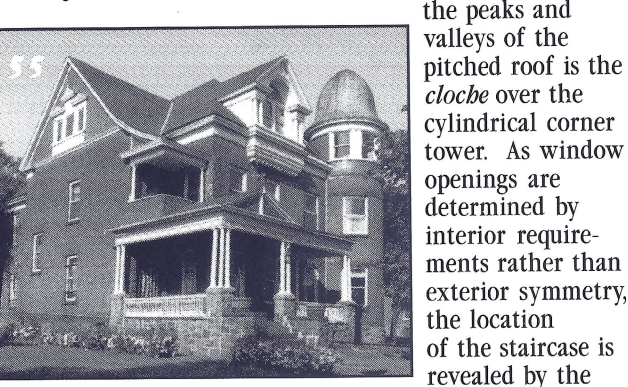
More restrained in its detailing and originally perfectly symmetrical, **no. 402 (52)** of c.1870 has its entrance in the projecting and pedimented center of its 5-bay facade. The bay with double doors on the right was added in the 20th century when the building served as a Syrian & Lebanese Women’s Club. Slightly later in date is **no. 406 (53)** of c.1873. The corner tower and prominent mansard roof—reminiscent of French Second Empire architecture of a decade earlier—are characteristic of a high style popular in America during the Grant presidency. Obviously a later addition, the wooden porch, with classical columns of a relatively pure Tuscan Doric, is typical of a later high style: the Colonial Revival, first perceptible in Philadelphia during the American Centenary of 1876 and virtually ubiquitous a generation later.

The more informal free-style architecture so popular between these two styles mixed elements from various past style without embarrassment. To gain more light as well as cross-ventilation, rooms often project out from the central core, producing three (or more) exterior walls within a single room. **No. 415 (54)** of c.1880 is a

modest example of a variant known as the "stick style" in which the idea (though not the actualities) of wooden frame construction are expressed by having the clapboard siding articulated by vertical and horizontal members painted a contrasting tone.

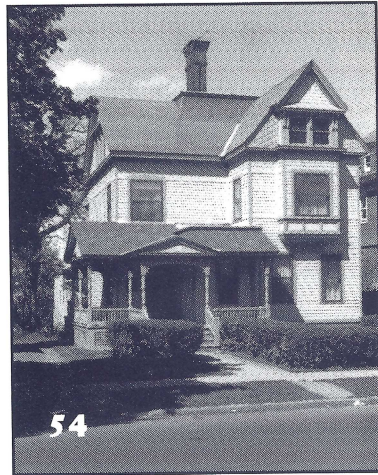
Over the complex plans of these free-style houses the folded planes of the

intersecting high-pitched roofs cascade toward the ground over balconies and verandahs. **No. 408 (55)** of **1886** combines stone foundations, brick walls, wooden shingles in the tower, and slate roofs. Contrasting with the peaks and valleys of the pitched roof is the *cloche* over the cylindrical corner tower. As window openings are determined by interior requirements rather than exterior symmetry, the location of the staircase is revealed by the



stepped windows of the east side. Of approximately the same date, no. 417 makes greater use of wooden shingles on the exterior walls, while no. 491 of c.1890 shows the style being transformed into the Colonial Revival.

Just around the corner of Conkling from the (Maronite) Church of St. Louis Gonzaga is the diminutive Russian Orthodox **St. John of Kronstadt Church** of **1979** with silvered onion dome.

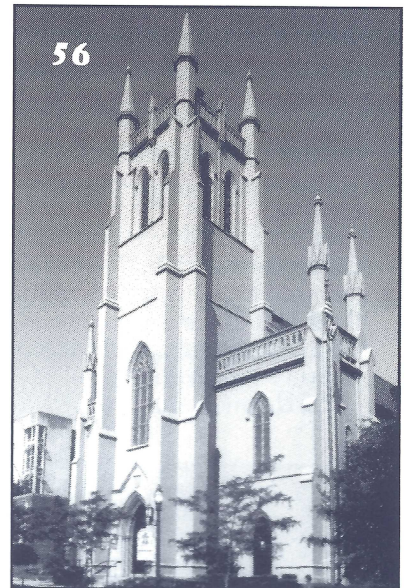


## TOUR IV THE WEST END-- COLUMBIA AND VARICK STREETS

The first permanent European settlers in the upper Mohawk Valley were Germans, and the Prussian General Friedrich Wilhelm, Baron von Steuben--"Drill Master to the Revolution"--was buried on his estate north of Utica in 1794. The great influx of Germans occurred, however, in the aftermath of the European revolutions of 1830 and 1848. For many years Varick Street was the center of the German American neighbourhood in Utica, but as the Germans assimilated they were replaced towards the end of the 19th century by Polish Americans and other groups of central and eastern European background.

One short block up Washington Street from the angle with Washington Lane is **Westminster Presbyterian Church (56)**, a Gothic Revival brick church of 1855

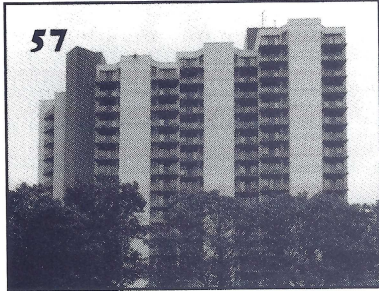
designed by a Mr. Ellis of Albany. The small chapel to the north was added ten years later by Elisha M. Gilbert, and the church house built 1924-25 to the designs of Utica architects Walter & G. Frank. The spire on the church tower was removed in 1947 (and mercifully not replaced by a generic 'steeple' as happened at both Cental Methodist and Plymouth Churches).



Alongside the small chapel runs Hanna Park Drive. Directly ahead is the **Tower of Hope Clock** erected in 1976 at the entrance to a mini-park surrounding the parking lot of the 1965 **City Hall**, designed by Frank Delle Cese. Proceed north on Broadway to Columbia Street and turn left. Half way up the block at 326-336 are the **Haberer** and **Jones**

**Buildings**, two handsome commercial blocks of the 1880s. Much of the south side of this block was torn down in the 1960s, a victim of urban renewal and the unrealized "Center City Mall" project.

Walking west on Columbia Street one sees on the left the high-rise **Kennedy Plaza Apartments (57)** of 1972, designed by Ulrich Franzen & Associates for the New York State Urban Development Corporation. On the opposite side of the street are several late-19th century commercial buildings.



**No. 430** is a small, one-storey building boasting an attic parapet with terra-cotta panels. At 460-64 is the brick

**Witzenberger Building**, and next door at 472 the somewhat larger **M & L Electric Company Building** of c.1890 by Thomas Birt. Above the ground floor rises a two-storey glazed arcade with 'Tuscan windows' inserted at the upper level.

Diagonally across the intersection with State Street and stretching over an entire block is the **former Utica Steam Cotton Mills (58)**, established on this site in 1849 and continually expanded over the next half century. Until 1952 this was the home of 'Utica Sheets' ("She lives

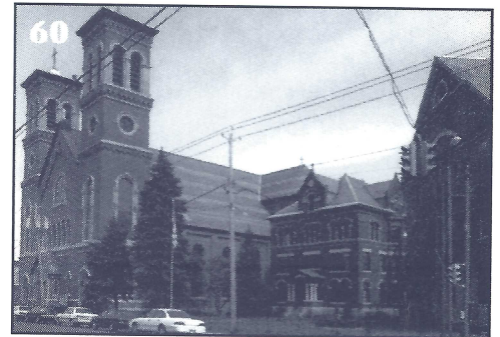


in Boston, but she sleeps in Utica" as one ad of the late 1940s put it). The mill was sited along the Chenango Canal, one of the Erie Canal's nine 'laterals'. This 97-mile

waterway opened in 1837 and linked Utica with the Susquehanna River at Binghamton. The canal provided a means of transporting Pennsylvania coal to the boilers of Utica's emerging steam-powered industry, and many other mills, factories and breweries were attracted to its banks. This was the beginning of the development of the West End, with workers living in new houses built within walking distance of their jobs. By 1870 a railroad connected Utica with Binghamton, and the now-obsolete canal was closed in 1878. The new railroad had run alongside the canal from Oriskany Falls to Utica, and the path of the old waterway became the railway right-of-way until the 1950s when the tracks in this area were shifted to either side of the new 'North-South Arterial', an acknowledgement of the growing dominance of the automobile.

After crossing under the elevated section of the 'arterial', one sees two old houses on the left: 515 dates from the 1890s, while 517 is several decades earlier and stylistically on the cusp between Greek Revival and Italianate. One block up Fay Street, at the corner of Cooper, is the oldest surviving church in Utica (**59**). It was built in 1851 as an Evangelical Lutheran Church to serve the growing German population and later became Zion Lutheran. The wooden spire is a later addition to the Greek Revival brick building, as are the entrance and front steps. Zion Lutheran Church introduced English in 1921 and in 1960 abandoned this beautiful building for a new church of no architectural interest in an asphalt desert near the New Hartford border.

The 5-point intersection of Columbia, Huntington and Varick is dominated by the imposing red-brick **Church of St. Joseph and St. Patrick (60)**, completed in 1873 in the Italian Romanesque style. It was built as St. Joseph's and, like the 1842 church of that name at 139 Lafayette Street, it was intended to serve the German



Catholic community. The rectory of St. Joseph's was designed in the 1890s by the Utica firm of Agne, Rushaw & Jennison. Diagonally across the street, at the corner of Columbia and Huntington, was St. Patrick's which served the Irish population, a Gothic Revival church of 1893 which replaced an 1850 church gutted by fire in 1889. St. Patrick's was demolished in 1968 and the two parishes merged. (Only a few years earlier, the parishioners of St. Joseph's had fought successfully to save their church when they discovered it was in the intended path of the 'Arterial'.)

Varick Street runs in a southwesterly direction, forming two sharp angles at its intersection with Columbia and Huntington. A little Greek Revival building of the mid-19th century is set obliquely to the former, while a building of 1920 (formerly the Merchants Bank) exploits the latter. The trees lining Varick, along with the period lamp posts on the west side of the street, lend a certain coherence to a sequence of buildings of diverse style and scale. At 612 is the 3-storey **Varick Hotel of c.1850**, while next door is the much larger **Stievector Building (61)** of thirty years later with intriguing brick work. The most interesting example of domestic architecture on the street is the little wooden Greek Revival house at **632 (62)**, with tetrastyle Doric portico and side wing. The entrance door is a later intrusion. Another impressive commercial building of the 1880s is the 3-storey red-brick block at the corner of Varick and Hamilton Street.

A half block up Hamilton Street is the **Church of Sts. Peter and Paul (63)**, of 1886, now serving the Ukrainian Orthodox community. The building at 725 Varick, at the corner of Spring and Sunset, was formerly the Rivoli Theater, one of the numerous small movie houses once found in every Utica neighbourhood.

At the intersection of Varick and Edward Street look right to see the complex of red-brick buildings belonging to the **brewery** known since 1981 as **F. X. Matt's (64)**. The business was founded as the West End Brewing Company in 1888 when the young Baden-born F. X. Matt took a loan (using his character as collateral) to acquire Bierbauer's Columbia Street Brewery. One of nine Utica breweries at the time, it originally served an area of six square blocks. The business succeeded and the modest little brew house was expanded over the



next few years into the 5-storey *Rundbogenstil* building with its (later) landmark illuminated sign promoting "Utica Club Ale". The building at the corner of Varick and Court Street—now the entrance to the brewery's tour (well worth a visit)—was constructed around 1900, with another addition dating from 1915. The brewery survived prohibition by concentrating on bottling soft drinks; in 1947 it added a new brew house, now the tallest building in the complex, and has continued to expand. The brewery's gift shop, remodelled to suggest a mansarded building of the late 19th century, is actually a building of the 1920s which many older Uticans will remember as the popular Tanza's Rainbow Tavern.

On the opposite corner of Varick and Court is a building associated with another of Utica's great success stories. Now remodelled to serve the needs of the Knights of St. John, **Faxton Hall (65)** was built in 1867 by Theodore S. Faxton at his own expense and donated to the public use. Designed by Utica architect A. J. Lathrop "in the French style", this brick building had a mansard roof of green and purple slate. Intended for the benefit of factory workers and their families, Faxton Hall had a school on the lower floor administered by the Utica School Commissioners and a lecture hall on the upper level placed in the charge of the Trustees of the Utica Steam Cotton Mills and the **Globe Woolen Mills Company (66)**—which had begun to develop the industrial complex still visible across Court Street in 1847.

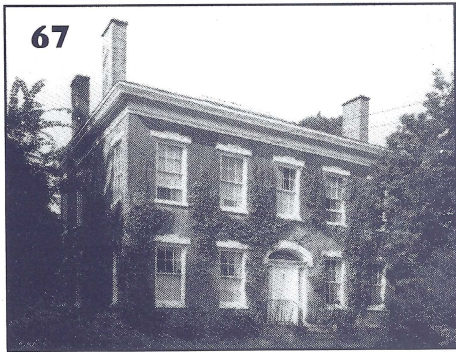
The rags-to-riches story of Theodore S. Faxton (1794-1881) began when the penniless youth arrived in the area from Conway, Massachusetts in 1812 and found employment breaking stones for the turnpike leading into the Village of Utica. After proving himself as a stage coach driver he was taken in as a partner by the owner of the company, Jason Parker. When stage coaches began to be replaced by more modern means of

transport Faxton joined Hiram Greenman and John Butterfield in the Erie Canal packet business and subsequently in the field of steamboats and railroads. He was one of the first to appreciate the potential of Samuel F. B. Morse's new invention, and in 1848 opened the first commercial telegraph line in America with its offices in Utica. Faxton later convinced newspaper editors in the state to subscribe to a wire service which became the model for the Associated Press. He was one of the originators of the Utica Water Works Company, the Utica Steam Cotton Mills and the Globe Woolen Mills.

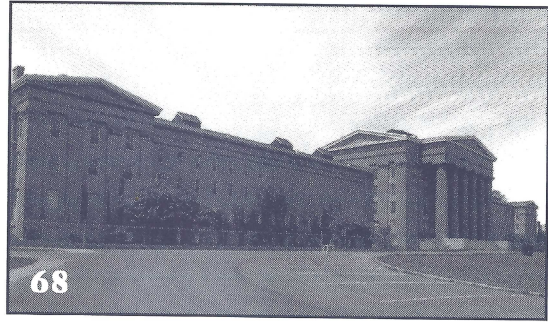
Our exploration of historic Utica, which began with the village which grew up between the banks of the Mohawk River and the Erie Canal, ends appropriately with one of the city's most dedicated benefactors, a man whose own career was intimately linked with Utica's special story--the story of the evolution of transport and its contribution to economic growth and prosperity. We hope that the visitor will appreciate the architecture and the other material evidence which manifests that story and provides a physical and visual link with our past.

### OTHER BUILDINGS OF NOTE

There are dozens of fine buildings which could not be included in these short walking tours. Here is a brief sampling of buildings which visitors with strong legs or an automobile at their disposal may wish to see. 711 Herkimer Road, the **General John G. Weaver House, c.1815 (67)**: this Federal period house is one of several houses of this style and the subsequent Greek Revival which can still be seen along Herkimer Road.

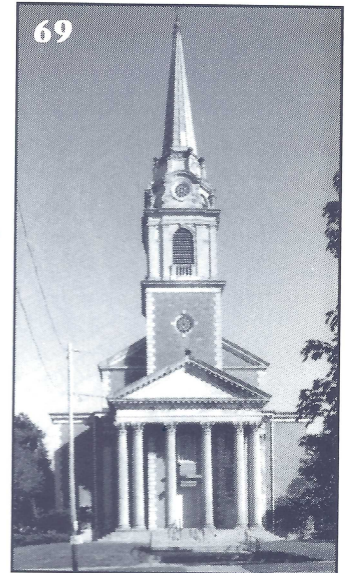


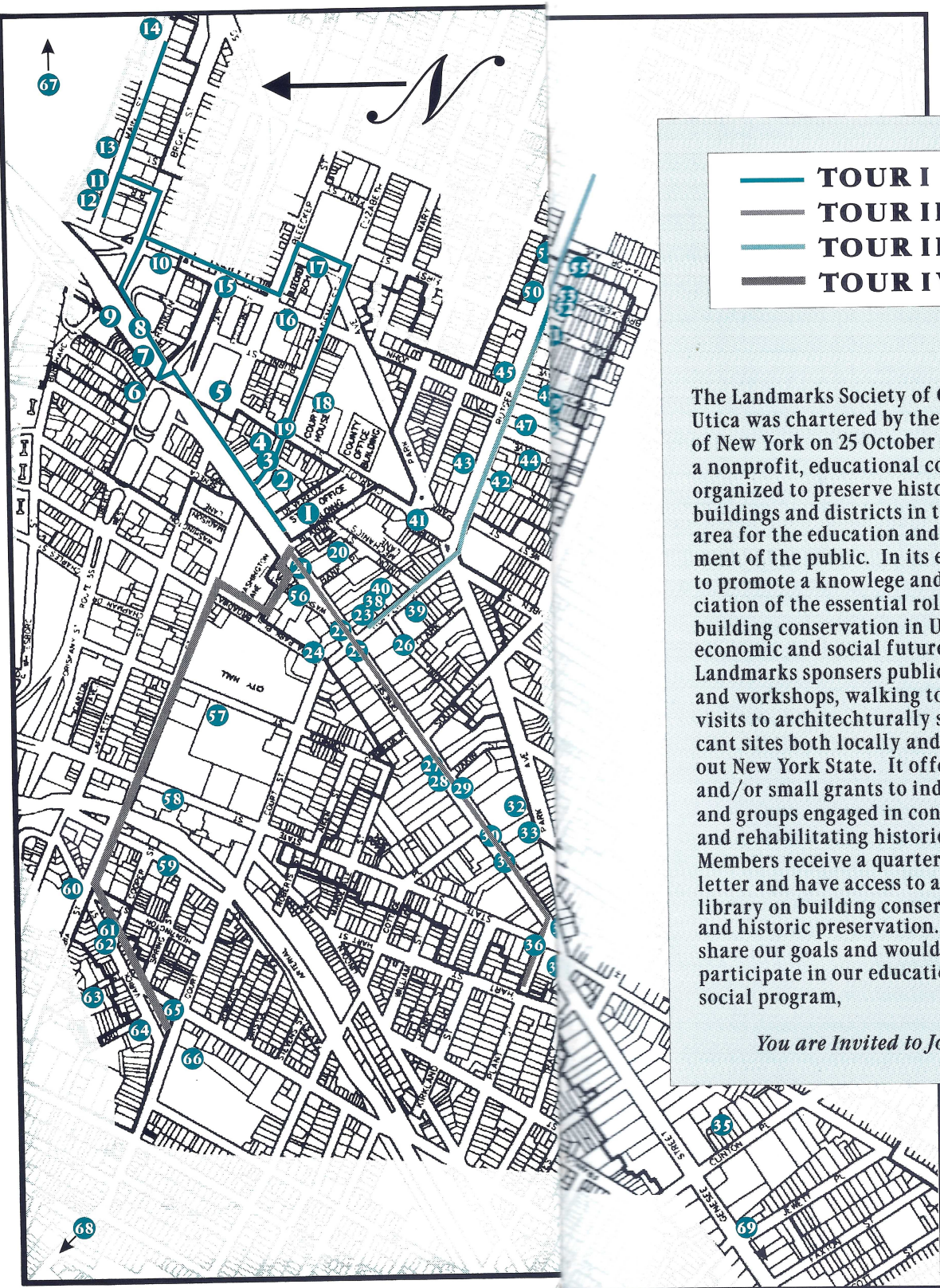
Though once well-represented in Utica, nothing of either style survives along Broad or Whitesboro Street, with only a few Greek Revival houses remaining on Genesee Street or in the Steuben-Rutger Street Scenic



and Historic District. Court Street, the **New York State Hospital, 1843 (68)**: one of the world's finest--and largest--examples of Greek Revival architecture, this limestone structure was built as the Utica Lunatic Asylum by the State of New York. Its many innovations in humane methods of treatment for the mentally ill earned it and its first superintendant, Dr. Amariah Brigham, an important place in history. William Clarke, Chairman of the Board of Trustees, is credited with the design of this remarkable building whose 48' tall Doric columns are among the largest recorded. The central heating and hot and cold running water throughout were considered 'state of the art' at the time. A cupola above the central block burned off in 1857.

1601 Genesee Street, the **First Presbyterian Church, 1924 (69)**: although its architect, Ralph Adams Cram, was one of the leading exponents of the Gothic Revival in early 20th century America (West Point, the Princeton University Chapel, etc.), this building proves that he could use the Neo-Georgian style with equal skill and polish.





- TOUR I
- TOUR II
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The Landmarks Society of Greater Utica was chartered by the State of New York on 25 October 1974 as a nonprofit, educational corporation organized to preserve historic buildings and districts in the Utica area for the education and enjoyment of the public. In its efforts to promote a knowledge and appreciation of the essential role of building conservation in Utica's economic and social future, Landmarks sponsors public lectures and workshops, walking tours, and visits to architecturally significant sites both locally and throughout New York State. It offers advice and/or small grants to individuals and groups engaged in conserving and rehabilitating historic buildings. Members receive a quarterly newsletter and have access to a small library on building conservation and historic preservation. If you share our goals and would like to participate in our educational and social program,

*You are Invited to Join*