



Albany Preservation Report

Albany Preserves!

A series on some of Albany's most prominent restoration efforts...

The Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception:

Eagle Street at Madison Avenue

In preparation for its sesquicentennial anniversary in 2002, Albany's Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception is undergoing a major preservation and restoration effort. The Albany architectural firm of Mesick Cohen Wilson & Baker is overseeing the exterior work which will keep the Cathedral structurally sound for at least another 150 years.

The Cathedral was commissioned by Bishop John McCloskey, and designed by Patrick C. Keeley of Brooklyn. Keeley, a noted Irish architect, also designed St. Joseph's Church on Ten Broeck Street in Arbor Hill.

Inspired by the Cologne Cathedral, which was then nearing completion, the Albany Cathedral is faced with Portland brownstone from the Connecticut River valley. While this sandstone was widely employed for residential, religious and institutional buildings, it was beginning to show some evidence of weathering.

In 1997, the Diocese hired Mesick Cohen Wilson & Baker for an evaluation of the stone on the exterior of the building.

They in turn hired Vertical Access, an "extreme evaluation" firm, who actually lassoed the top of the towers and rappelled down, documenting their findings with photos and video. They found a startling degree of deterioration.

Sidewalk bridging was installed first, to protect pedestrians on the busy walkways of Madison Avenue,



adjacent to the New York State Museum and Empire State Plaza complex.

In 1999, Bishop Howard J. Hubbard announced the Albany Diocese's plan to restore the its historic Cathedral — the nation's third oldest. Later that year, the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation awarded the Cathedral an \$800,000 grant for its restoration effort.

The grant called for the replacement of Portland brownstone. Unfortunately, the original facing material suffered from inappropriate installation. Sandstone, and all other sedimentary rocks, are deposited in layers. Builders must take care to keep the bedding plane consistent with the direction of the grain. If not positioned properly, water seeps between the stones layers. With the winter's freeze-thaw cycle, the stone will begin to delaminate and exfoliate.

Preparations for repairs began with a worldwide search for comparable brownstone material. The source of the original stone in Portland, Connecticut — once a 30-acre quarry — was now a

much smaller operation, and not up to the task of providing the quantity of stone needed for the Cathedral renovation. German and English stone was then considered, and the call went out for fabricators to work the stone after quarrying.

English sandstone from St. Bee's in Cumbria, UK was chosen. Approximately 90% of the fabrication will be completed at the quarry before shipping. 10% of the work, especially the ornamental carving, will be completed on-site in Albany.

A stone shop has been built on the west side of the Cathedral site, and a staff of master masons, stone carvers, laborers and apprentices has been hired. Starting this winter, and continuing through the next year, traditional stone carving and fabrication techniques will be used, and the public will be able to learn about the role and work of modern-day masons, and how they are following in the footsteps of the 19th-century craftsmen who built the State Capitol and the Cathedral.

This work represents the first phase of an anticipated 15-year project that would restore towers, roofs, sacristies, interior plaster and clerestory walls of the building. The Diocese of Albany has committed and raised more than \$6 million for this first phase.

"The Cathedral is our mother church and our spiritual center," said Bishop Howard J. Hubbard. "Our vision is to renew the Cathedral to its full magnificence."

On Saturday, November 17, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 noon, Larry Wilson of Mesick Cohen Wilson Baker will lead a project site tour at the Cathedral. This tour is free and open to the public, reservations are required. For more information, call Historic Albany Foundation at 465-0876.



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www.historic-albany.org

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Historic Albany Foundation is a private, not-for-profit membership organization working to promote the preservation and appreciation of the built environment in and around the city of Albany.

The Preservation Report is published for members and friends of Historic Albany Foundation with assistance from the New York State Council for the Arts.

Living Preservation Workshops

Historic Albany Foundation is sponsoring a series of six practical workshops for homeowners – **Living Preservation** – during September and October, 2001. These hands-on workshops, scheduled for Saturday mornings, will be presented by experts at historic private residences, house museums and churches in Albany. September workshops included Historic Decoration Problem Solving: Period Wallpaper and Faux Finishes; Flawless Repair for Your Plaster Walls and Ceilings; and The Diagnosis and Treatment of Old House Ailments.

Made possible in part by a grant from the New York State Council for the Arts, Architecture, Planning & Design program, these workshops will offer ample time for questions and answers for anyone with an interest in Albany's turn-of-the-century (and older) housing stock.

The workshops are free and open to the public, but reservations are required. For more information or to make a reservation, call the Foundation at 518-465-0876.

An Introduction to Stained Glass and the Tiffany Windows of First Presbyterian Church

October 6 • 10 a.m.-12 noon
First Presbyterian Church,
State Street at Willett

This seminar will cover both a general introduction to stained glass and an expository tour of the stunning Tiffany stained glass windows of the First Presbyterian Church. Slides will aid participants seeking information, and also those facing restoration issues with their own stained glass treasures. Question & Answer session: bring your problem project or a photo.

Nigel D. Johnson is the President of Cohoes Design Glass Associates, Inc., a full service restoration, conservation, and new commission studio. He has university degrees in both art and cultural history, has worked in the field for 20 years.

Irrigation Systems for the Historic Urban Garden

October 13 • 10 a.m.-12 noon
Ten Broeck Mansion,
9 Ten Broeck Pl.

This unique seminar will offer solutions for the time-challenged urban dweller who wants a garden, but lacks the time for proper watering. Session will begin with a discussion of various irrigation products, including spray systems, stream rotors, and subsurface micro irrigation, with a demonstration of installation and operation.

Michael R. Mills, CID, holds an A.S. in Golf Course Management from Western Kentucky University, is a guest lecturer at SUNY Cobleskill, and is the Irrigation Sales Manager at Grassland Equipment.

Wendy L. Yurkewecz holds a B.T. degree in Landscape Contracting from SUNY Cobleskill, where she serves as a guest lecturer. She teaches residential, commercial and athletic facility irrigation design to contractors.

Stone and Brownstone Repointing and Repair

October 27 • 10 a.m.-12 noon
329 State Street, Albany

Brownstone and stone repair is popular topic in our beautiful but aging city. This seminar, held outside on a typical brownstone stoop, will demonstrate repairs for falling and spalling brownstone, including mixing and coloring, application and finishing. Warm work clothing recommended. Tool list, materials list, and material sources provided.

Eugene Lugowski holds a B.A. in Building Construction from Krosno University, Krosno, Poland. He has over twelve years of construction supervisory experience in the Capital District. He owns Historical Restorations, Albany, New York.

Preservation Merit Awards: 2001

Each year, Historic Albany Foundation presents Preservation Merit Awards at our Annual Meeting to recognize outstanding preservation efforts.

Please join us in congratulating the following winners.



University Plaza

The exterior masonry restoration of the former D&H Building, now known as University Plaza, was begun in 1997 and completed just this past year. The extensive project included repointing or recaulking all existing joints, as well as the replacement of masonry elements that were removed from the building between the 1950s and 1970s. The last phase of the project and the one which altered the building's appearance most remarkably was the restoration of missing design elements to the elaborate "subway dormer" immediately south of the central tower.

Lincoln Park Bathhouse

Prior to the first stage of its phased restoration, which is still ongoing, the Lincoln Park Bathhouse had suffered extensive damage to both the building's brick exterior and steel substructure due to dramatic differential settlement. In addition to the needed exterior restoration, which included the rebuilding of large sections of the building's masonry shell, the interior was reconfigured and upgraded while maintaining and reusing as much of the existing material as possible. All of this work was performed within a constricted time schedule to allow the bathhouse to be used throughout the summer season.



326 Clinton Avenue

The three-story townhouse at 326 Clinton Avenue stands at the intersection of two of Albany's primary thoroughfares within the Clinton Avenue National Register Historic District. The building was extensively refurbished by its owner, Catholic Charities, for use as two two-bedroom apartments with community offices on the ground floor. Much of the work was performed with the guidance of the State Office of Parks, Restoration and Historic Preservation.

Friends of Lincoln Park Pool were awarded a *Certificate of Recognition* for their grassroots efforts to save one of Albany's greatest and most-loved civic amenities. The group has achieved great success – through bumper stickers, tee shirts and letter writing campaigns – in raising awareness of the unique nature of this enormous dish-shaped pool, and its importance to the city's residents.



Preservation Merit Awards: 2001

Certificates of Recognition

Elizabeth Benjamin is commended for her consistent and objective journalism in the *Albany Times Union* on a variety of preservation issues throughout the city. Her reporting on buildings such as School 10, 41 Ten Broeck, and 132-138 Madison Avenue was instrumental in disseminating information that ultimately helped to galvanize public opinion in favor of preservation.

The City of Albany is commended for the efforts made by Mayor Gerald D. Jennings, the Delaware Area Neighborhood Association, and members of the Delaware Avenue fire station to have historic Hook & Ladder No. 4 listed on the national register of Historic Places. This award is also in recognition of the new exterior lighting scheme that extends the hours that this beautiful building is visible to the public.



459 State Street

The extensive façade restoration undertaken at 459 State Street was one of the most painstaking in Albany in recent years. The owner, herself an architect, directed the work, which included re-applying stucco to the entire front wall of

the building, while forming decorative window lintels and score marks in imitation of coursed ashlar blocks. The aluminum siding that covered the projection wooden bay window over the door was removed to reveal the original woodwork largely intact.



748 Madison Avenue

The large front porch and attached porte-cochere on the house at 748 Madison Avenue was recently replicated based on original drawings found inside the home. The owner, Christopher Hacker, the fourth generation of his family to live in the home, did most of the work himself with the help of a friend. Great attention was paid to reproducing the porch as closely as possible with minor concessions to modern-day building codes.



Pommer Building

The Pommer Building, a large commercial building in Albany's historic South End had for many years stood vacant, until its recent reincarnation as an antiques and auction gallery. The building's owner, Gallagher and Company, restored the interior in an attempt to maintain as much as possible of the structure's open floor plan and architecturally rich interior.

269 Hudson Avenue



Number 269 Hudson Avenue stands on the north side of Hudson Avenue, just west of Hudson-Jay Park. It had

stood vacant for over two decades before recently being restored by its current owners Russ and Carol Schwartz. They performed a great deal of work to simply return the building to a liveable state, but did this work with a high standard of both design and craftsmanship.

HAF Members Review School Facilities Plan

On Tuesday, August 29, Historic Albany Foundation hosted a presentation by Albany Superintendent of Schools Lonnie E. Palmer and Thomas Ritzen Thaler from CannonDesign, the Grand Island, NY firm hired to complete an engineering study of the school district's facilities.

The Board of Education is in the process of developing a facilities improvement plan that would result in sweeping changes to the Albany City Schools. The plan has the following fundamental goals and objectives: Appropriate facilities for children at each age, Schools of such size that everyone has opportunity and every student is known, and Schools that encourage interaction between students and staff to enrich the educational experience.

The final details of this project, including the total price tag and the date of the vote, will be worked out in

the coming weeks and months.

Mr. Palmer provided a citywide overview of the plan, focusing on historic preservation and planning – specifically, which school buildings would be renovated and which would be razed.

The architects rated every building on its suitability for the educational program, its structural soundness, its mechanical and electrical infrastructure, its telecommunications system, and the quality of its site.

Based on these ratings, and in the interest of cost-effectiveness, Schools 16, 18, 26 and Philip Schuyler B at the Harriet Gibbons site will be completely replaced; Schools 19, 20 and 27 will be expanded and remodeled; and Livingston and Hackett will be completely renovated. The remaining schools were considered worthy of remodeling and upgrading, including Arbor Hill, Thomas O'Brien Academy, Giffen (which will get a new cafeteria),



and Sunshine School (in Lincoln Park).

Representatives from the school district will continue to seek input to ensure that the new facilities plan meets the needs of the community.

A public vote on the district's facilities project could take place anytime on or after November 30, 2001.

For more information on the Facilities Plan, the school district has set up a web site at: www.rebuildalbanyschools.org.

Membership Application

It's a CHALLENGE!

A generous benefactor has agreed to match (up to \$10,000) every dollar we raise through membership and additional donations. **If you're not a member, now is the time to join!**

If you are a member, please consider increasing your level of membership, making an additional gift, or asking a friend to join! *As always, your membership in Historic Albany Foundation helps to promote, preserve and protect the architectural heritage of the City of Albany.*

Membership Options

Active	\$35
Supporter	\$50
Patron	\$100
Donor	\$250
Benefactor	\$500
Albany Advocate	\$1,000

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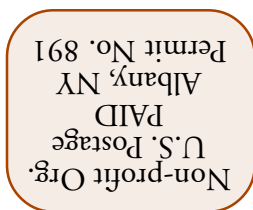
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Please make your check payable to Historic Albany Foundation and mail with this form to:

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Historic Albany Foundation is a not-for-profit 501(c)3 corporation.

Your contribution is tax deductible to the extent allowed by law.



Preservation Connection

Historic Albany Foundation is delighted to introduce a new part-time staff member. **Bill Brandow** recently joined HAF staff as Technical Services Director.

A graduate of the University of York (U.K.) Architectural Conservation program, Bill received his undergraduate degree in Historic Preservation from Roger Williams University in Bristol, RI. Since 1997, Bill has worked for John G. Waite Associates, and he will continue at that post part time.

Bill will provide technical assistance to property owners interested in restoring or rehabilitating residential or commercial buildings. ☞

Donations of three PCs from **John G. Waite Associates**, as well as a next-to-new photocopier from the **Preservation League of NYS**

have enabled HAF staff to work more efficiently. The **preservation library** has also been relocated to glass-fronted cases, to protect important research materials from dust. ☞

Historic Albany Foundation's Architectural Parts Warehouse has resumed Saturday hours, with **Kathleen Kearney** providing friendly customer service. The Parts Warehouse is open Wednesday through Friday from 12 noon - 5 p.m. and on Saturday from 9 a.m. - 5 p.m. Volunteers are always welcome for 4-hour Saturday shifts. Call **465-2987**. ☞

The holidays are just around the corner, and HAF is hoping to re-issue our lovely "*historic doorway*" notecards. We'll let you know just as soon as they're available. ☞

Speaking of shopping, some friends of the Foundation have an exciting project in the works. **R.Scott McIntosh**

will be locating a specialty shop featuring imported Italian handcrafts in an historic building at 126 Central Avenue. **Bel Tesoro** will carry Murano glass, pottery, leather goods, and inlaid wood items. Scott anticipates an opening in early November. For more information, call **463-2978**. ☞

FOR SALE: 12 years ago, HAF discontinued its revolving fund. **399 South Pearl**, which once served as our Parts Warehouse, is the last of a number of properties that we would like to see put to a productive re-use. The building will soon undergo stabilization and removal of rear additions. We are working closely with **Nancy KUPIAK** of **Vesta Construction** and **Tom Griner** of the Albany Community Development Agency to prepare this property for sale. ☞