

LANDMARK

Newsletter of the Preservation Association of the Southern Tier

www.pastny.org

Moving PAST Forward

Spring 2018



Grandchildren of Florence B. Chauncey unveiling the PAST Historical Marker on the 100th anniversary of the first vote by women in New York State. Left to right: James Vollertsen, Anne Nenneau, Janice Vollertsen.

November 2017 marked the 100th anniversary of passage of the women's suffrage amendment in New York State. Over the last year, PAST has worked closely with the Broome-Tioga Suffrage Anniversary Committee to honor and celebrate the historic event. It was while researching the local suffrage movement that an amazing discovery was made: the very first election that was held in New York State after passage of the suffrage amendment, took place on January 5, 1918, in the Town of Lisle in Broome County. That election would be the first opportunity for women of this state to exercise their right to vote.

Further research uncovered more exciting news: the Old Lisle Village Hall, site of that first election, is still standing; photos of the 1918 event were discovered; Florence Chauncey, the person credited as being the very first woman to vote in New York State was identified, and some of her grandchildren were located. Even the original 1918 ballot box was found!



Former Old Lisle Village Hall – Site of First Vote by Women in New York State

Old Lisle Village Hall

(Continued from Page 1)

Until now, the historic role of Lisle and its Old Village Hall in the women's suffrage movement was a little-known secret – even to local residents. Clearly, this was too big to remain unnoticed, so PAST came up with an action plan.

First, an historical marker would be obtained to mark the site of that first election. Working with village officials and the Lisle Historian, a celebration was held on the anniversary of the first vote, January 5, 2018, to announce the marker. Another ceremony is scheduled for June 1 to unveil the installed marker, with an historical walking tour around the village followed by receptions at the historic Lisle Free Library and French Distillers.

In the meantime, the State Capitol at Albany picked up on the story and created an exhibit to run through the month of March, Women's History Month.



Exhibit at the New York State Capitol in Albany



Lieutenant Governor Kathy Hochul with Assemblymember Donna Lupardo and others at opening ceremony, NYS Capitol, Albany



Assemblymember Donna Lupardo, PAST Director Roger Luther, Janice and James Vollertson, right side: descendants of polling official Francis Mee

Sacred Sites

Annual Sacred Sites Open House – May 6, 2018

By Ron Borgna

The New York Landmarks Conservancy is once again sponsoring a statewide Sacred Sites Open House on Sunday, May 6, 2018, hosted locally by the Sacred Sites Committee of the Preservation Association of the Southern Tier. It is free and open to the public.

Sacred Sites in Binghamton, Johnson City, Endicott and Endwell will be welcoming visitors at varied times from 10:00-5:00. This year the New York Landmarks Conservancy has set a theme of "Sacred Sounds and Settings". There are twenty-four participants locally, including five new sites: the Landmark Church, Community Bible Church, and Redeemer Lutheran Church in Binghamton, and the Islamic Organization of the Southern Tier and All Saints Episcopal Church of Johnson City. All will showcase their unique structures, histories, cultures and music. This is an opportunity to be a tourist in your own neighborhood and view the spectacular interiors of varied religious structures in our community.

The sites are grouped in clusters along specific streets, neighborhoods or downtown areas. In this way, visitors can select groups of sites to visit that may be within walking distance of each other. Sites will welcome visitors, give tours, sing hymns, perform musical recitals, explain architecture, describe stained glass windows and tell the history of their building and congregation. Several sites also inform visitors about social and community activities that take place at the site outside of the religious service.

For a list of participants and their times in this year's Sacred Sites Open House on Sunday, May 6, 2018, visit the PAST website at www.pastny.org or obtain flyers at most religious sites, local libraries and historical societies.

This is a rare opportunity to experience a wide diversity of religious structures located right in our neighborhoods. We thank all the participants for their willingness and efforts to be included in this open house.

CALL FOR NOMINATIONS!

The Annual Presentation of Historic Preservation Awards is coming in June. If you know of any recent examples of historic preservation, please consider submitting a nomination – just go to www.pastny.org to submit a recommendation on-line.



Landmark Church, Binghamton



Community Bible Church, Binghamton



Redeemer Lutheran Church, Binghamton



Islamic Organization of the Southern Tier, Johnson City



All Saints Episcopal Church, Johnson City

Village Trustee Board Votes To Undermine Historic Preservation in Owego

Submitted by Nadine Bigsby, Former OHPC Commissioner

On November 20, 2017, the Village of Owego Board of Trustees voted to abolish the Owego Historic Preservation Commission (OHPC), which had provided more than twenty years of dedicated service to the Village's Historic District. Walking back forty-nine years of steady and progressive Village government support for Historic Preservation, the current Board adopted Local Law #5 of 2017, abolishing the OHPC. The Trustees publicly acknowledged that without the existence of an active Commission, the Village would be decertified by state and federal agencies as a Certified Local Government (CLG). This decertification will create a significant financial disadvantage for the Village when applying for grants and loans.

At the Board's October 16, 2017 Public Hearing on abolishing OHPC, twenty-three supportive OHPC testimonials were documented. Only two negative statements were presented by the public. During the entire process, the Board of Trustees failed to produce a single piece of documentation supporting the abolition of OHPC. The law was adopted without the benefit of a Village referendum because the Commission was never entered into the Village Charter. This action should serve as a warning to all commissions serving other districts, proving that historic preservation is an important factor in local elections.

The new Local Law #5 of 2017 requires that the Trustees and Code Enforcement Officer will work with a five-member volunteer committee instead of a legal commission. Four months after adopting the new law, no members had been named to the committee.

The Village of Owego, incorporated in 1787, has an enduring and committed history of honoring and promoting historic preservation. Positive, ongoing results of this community's dedication are evident throughout the Village. The Village Board's recent, regressive action places Owego's treasured and unique Historic District at risk. Real estate speculation, demolition, and "infill" can be permitted without Commission protection. Declining property values along with architectural and structural deterioration could result. Owego's Historic District could disappear into the history books without the Commission's guidance through the standards and guidelines set by the National Park Service and the New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO). The purpose of these standards is to help property owners maintain their properties while using economical and historically accurate methods to accomplish their projects.

Responding to the loss of OHPC, a grassroots organization, "Owego Historic Property Owners Association" (OHPOA), has been organized to support historic property owners in their work to voluntarily abide by the standards which the federal and state governments promoted through OHPC oversight. A steering committee of Nadine Bigsby, Phoebe Morris, and James Overhiser is planning programs and informative meetings for members. The organization can be contacted at OHPOA13827@gmail.com and more information can be found on the Owego Historic Property Owners Association Facebook page.

A separate group of citizens is studying the option of pursuing legal action that would result in the reinstatement of the OHPC and the Village's CLG status.

The New PAST Website

A new website was launched in February and is a dramatic improvement over the previous site. It's easier to navigate, always up-to-date, and looks great!

Visit www.pastny.org and check out the new site... we'd love to hear your comments.

Tours and Events

Coming this Spring

May 6 - Sacred Sites Open House

Tour 24 churches, synagogues and mosques in our area. *Free and open to the public.*

May 12 - Downtown Loft Tour

Visit several of Binghamton's historic buildings that have been renovated for unique and creative living space.

June 1 - The Ladies of Lisle

Honoring the first vote by women in New York State! The PAST historical marker will be unveiled, followed by a walking tour and reception. *Free & open to the public.*

June 9 - Annual Garden Tour

Visit several spectacular gardens in Johnson City.

June 14 - Annual Party & Awards

At Remlik's in the Historic Kilmer Building! A great chance to meet fellow members and learn what PAST has been up to over the last year. *A FREE, members-only event.*

June 16-17 – The Life and Architecture of Isaac Gale Perry

An exhibition and presentation on Binghamton's most famous architect. Presented in partnership with the Phelps Mansion Museum and in conjunction with New York State's "Path Through History" program.

Visit pastny.org for more information

www.pastny.org – Home Page

Upcoming Tours and Events

Architectural Salvage Center

In Memoriam – Merry Harris

By Ruth Levy



With the death of our dear friend and fellow Board Member Merry Harris in January, PAST and our community has lost a significant driving force in the renaissance of downtown Binghamton.

Prior to joining the Board, Merry had collaborated with PAST during her term as the city's Economic Development officer, and we had found her to be very knowledgeable and effective. Our joint project for three years was to conduct a series of loft tours in downtown Binghamton. The establishment of stunning apartments in the upper floors of downtown buildings led to the development of more living space. This in turn was a spark for development of breweries, restaurants and other amenities.

Merry fostered the development of the historic Kilmer Building, managed two New York State Main Street grants, and oversaw the River Trail development. During the 2011 flood Merry added moral support to the city's economic recovery efforts.

All this was after an earlier career as county legislator, active public service and participation in a family business. Surely this was a life well-lived. Our sincere condolences go out to Merry's family and friends.

A Message from the Executive Director **Moving Preservation Forward...**

An article titled "Begin the Transformation" headlined the previous issue of this newsletter, describing the long-awaited plan to renovate and reuse Binghamton's historic Carnegie Library. The formal announcement in 2016 that renovation of the building had begun, and that it would soon reopen as SUNY Broome's new Culinary Arts Center, came as great news.

However, shortly after it began, the "transformation" came to an abrupt halt. New requirements by the State Historic Preservation Office resulted in a long delay, a major redesign and a significant cost increase. Eventually the issue was resolved, only to be followed by another delay, when the future of the Historic Tax Credit program seemed to be in jeopardy.

Finally, after a one-year delay, the project is once again moving forward.

Likewise, Binghamton's National Historic Landmark, the "Castle on the Hill," was to undergo an extensive four-month architectural survey in preparation for renovation and reuse by Binghamton University. Though it was to begin last summer, logistical issues prevented the survey from starting on schedule. Now, after a delay of eight months, the project is finally underway.

There's a saying: "Nothing is easy." That is certainly the case with historic preservation, where delays and disappointments seem to be standard procedure. Plans for renovation and reuse make great news, but things rarely go as planned. That's where PAST comes in. PAST is here to continually monitor progress, get regular updates, offer assistance, and bring missed schedules and broken commitments to light – to ensure that *Plans* are followed up with *Action*, and to keep *Moving Preservation Forward!*

Roger Luther
Executive Director
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cell phone and text message: 607-759-0844



THE GREEN MAN – NEW VIDEO IS NOW ONLINE

Nine years ago PAST launched a project to produce full-size concrete replicas of the 1889 terra-cotta Green Man salvaged from the demolished Binghamton Ross Building. 130 replicas have been produced to date, and now you can watch a short video showing how they are made!

To learn more about this project or order one for your garden, visit www.pastny.org

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| Binghamton Economic Development | 38 Hawley St, 4th Floor, Binghamton |
| Binghamton Material Handling, Inc. | 295 Court Street, Binghamton |
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 A GREAT GIFT IDEA!

REDUCED MEMBER PRICE: \$100 EACH! I'LL TAKE _____

Additional donation of \$ _____ TOTAL AMOUNT ENCLOSED \$ _____

Have you considered adding PAST to your will? Please contact the office for more information, 607-237-0887