

CURTAIN CALL:
THE ROLE OF HISTORIC THEATRES IN THE REVITALIZATION
OF ERIE CANALWAY COMMUNITIES

Gina M. DiBella

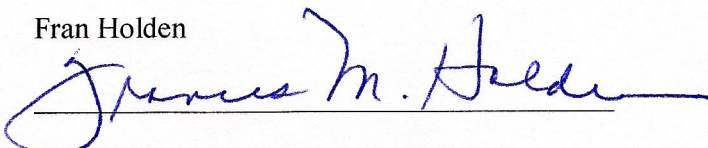
Thesis submitted to the Faculty of Goucher College in partial
fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of
Master of Arts in Historic Preservation
2013

Advisory Committee

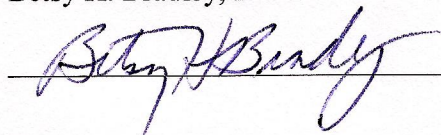
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ABSTRACT

Title of Thesis: CURTAIN CALL: THE ROLE OF HISTORIC
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ERIE CANALWAY COMMUNITIES

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Degree and Year: Master of Arts in Historic Preservation, 2013

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Historic theatres capture the fascination of all who enter their treasured performance halls. Rehabilitated theatres have the added advantage of making a positive impact on their communities. This thesis proposes that the reuse of a historic theatre can play a role in the revitalization of a community and provides evidence from a number of examples in a study area, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor in New York State. The Erie Canal, once a catalyst for community growth, economic development and social change, has evolved into a recreational and tourist attraction and is now part of a congressionally-designated National Heritage Corridor. Historically, theatres contributed to the growth and prosperity of a community. Today, their operation and reuse as part of the Canalway Corridor can have a similar effect.

The wealth of successful historic theatre rehabilitation projects within the Erie Canalway Corridor – from nineteenth century opera houses and music halls, to early-twentieth century vaudeville stages and motion picture palaces – proves that reuse of a historic theatre can have a positive impact on its community. This study uses five areas of opportunity – architectural and historic integrity, business structure, sustainability, programming, and community impact – to examine existing programs.

Central to the information gathered for this study were several interviews with theatre staff using a questionnaire specifically-designed for the project, and site visits to more than a dozen historic theatres in the region. This method of research allowed for an informed analysis of the five areas of opportunity, enabling the thesis to highlight best practices used by theatres in the study.

Because of the number of extant historic theatres in the Erie Canalway Corridor, New York State, and throughout the United States, this thesis confirms the importance of historic theatres as catalysts for community revitalization.

Subject Headings: Historic theatres, historic theatre rehabilitation, historic preservation, Erie Canal, Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, opera houses, motion picture palaces, economic development, community revitalization, arts and community development.

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DEDICATION

To my family,
whose love and support enable me
to pursue my dreams.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to take this opportunity to recognize those who helped and supported me during the research and writing of this thesis. First, thank you to my thesis committee whose combined areas of expertise resulted in the production of a well-rounded treatise: Betsy Bradley, from the MAHP faculty at Goucher College, Hannah Blake, from the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, and Fran Holden, former executive director of the League of Historic American Theatres.

Special thanks to the theatre owners, executive directors and staff members; historic preservation, theatre and planning professionals; and all the individuals listed in the appendices who shared their experiences and knowledge during interviews and site visits. The information gained from them is the heart of this thesis.

Thank you also to those who supported me during my graduate studies, including my MAHP classmates, program director Richard Wagner, and distance learning librarian Yvonne Lev, who consistently goes above and beyond to locate resources for student research, as well as Cynthia Howk, architectural research coordinator at the Landmark Society of Western New York, and the NYS Historic Preservation Office staff, who have supported my work both as a student and as a historic preservation commissioner.

Finally, I thank my family and friends, especially my husband Al Gonnella, my sons Dan and Alec, and my mom, Rose DiBella. Their encouragement and support made it possible for me to complete this thesis and my degree in historic preservation.

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CHAPTER I INTRODUCTION

Theatres have the ability to transport their audiences to another world. Whether through the magic of a live stage performance or the technological wonder of film or digital projection, a night at the theatre offers an escape from everyday life. A theatre that maintains its historic fabric has the added advantage of providing a link to the past, enabling its patrons to step back in time and experience what it was like to enjoy a concert, watch a play, or listen to a famous orator in a nineteenth or early-twentieth century performance hall. These buildings bring a richness of history and tradition to villages, cities and towns that cannot always be duplicated in modern performance halls. The loss of a historic theatre to demolition or neglect leaves a void in a community that may never be filled.

While a historic theatre can provide a unique entertainment venue, its rehabilitation has the potential to play a part in the revitalization of the community and even the region in which it is located. This study was framed to examine if and how a historic theatre can accomplish that.

Thesis Topic and Focus Area

The impetus for this study was a news release from the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor announcing an award of a National Park Foundation Impact Grant to support the launch of the “Theatre on Main Street Project” in the village of Albion, New

York. Organized by the Albion Main Street Alliance and the Western Erie Canal Alliance, both National Trust Main Street® programs, the project would stage a vaudeville performance in downtown Albion with the Pratt Opera House as a backdrop. The Pratt is a late-nineteenth century performance hall currently unused and in need of rehabilitation, located on the third floor of a Main Street building. Proceeds from the program would support the Pratt Opera House Preservation Fund and the Building Restoration Fund of the Western Erie Canal Alliance. According to the release, by helping to support this project the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor hoped that the grant would be a catalyst for additional funding to support the restoration of the opera house and other community revitalization projects in the Western Erie region.¹

Another news release, this time from the Preservation League of New York State, confirmed the importance of studying historic theatre rehabilitation. The release announced the naming of Bent's Opera House in the Village of Medina to that organization's "Seven to Save" list of the state's most threatened resources for 2012-2013. Like the Pratt, Bent's is unused, in need of rehabilitation, and located on the third floor of a Main Street building in an Erie Canalway community. The building's previous owner donated it to the Orleans Renaissance Group (ORG) in 2010. Since then ORG, an arts nonprofit, has been working to bring Bent's back to life. The "Seven to Save" listing provides technical assistance from the Preservation League, increases public awareness for the project, and opens doors for grant assistance. Adding Bent's Opera House to this list provides the Preservation League with the opportunity to work with advocates to

¹ Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, "National Park Foundation Awards 2012 Impact Grant to Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor," news release, February 9, 2012.

develop a strategy for returning the building to full use. “With so many opera houses in New York’s small cities and villages, solutions to the use, design, current code, and financial issues facing the building could serve as a statewide model,”² the news release stated.

The fact that a federal entity (the National Park Service through the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor) and a state-wide preservation organization (the Preservation League of New York State), as well as local Main Street programs, have taken an interest in the revitalization of historic theatres and these communities indicates that this is a topic of not only local, but also state and national, interest and worthy of more investigation.

But how should such an investigation begin? Since historic theatres are found everywhere across the United States, this study required a focused research area. The common link to Albion and Medina is the Erie Canal. Located in Orleans County, about ten miles from each other along the Erie Canal in Western New York, the villages of Albion and Medina share many similarities. Both communities developed and prospered due to the opening of the Erie Canal in the first quarter of the nineteenth century. Good fortune continued throughout the 1800s, eventually leading to the construction of two Main Street buildings by wealthy benefactors of those villages – Don C. Bent and John Pratt. Bent’s building opened in 1865; Pratt’s was constructed in the 1880s, with the opera house opening in 1890.

² Preservation League of New York State, “Preservation League Names Bent’s Opera House to Seven to Save List of Endangered Places for 2012-13,” news release, April 2, 2012.

The prosperity of those communities, like so many others along the Erie Canal, diminished in the mid-twentieth century as the canal's importance as a commercial transportation waterway decreased. Today, with support of groups such as the Albion Main Street Alliance and the Orleans Renaissance Group, communities are working to revitalize their downtowns. Both see their now vacant opera houses, once vibrant centers of community life, as catalysts for that revitalization.

According to the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor website, more than 25 historic theatres from Buffalo to Albany, New York are in active use today.³ Even more communities have vacant or underused historic theatre buildings. Those who have undertaken the restoration of these buildings believe they can serve as catalysts for revitalization of the communities themselves. Since many towns and villages developed because of the Erie Canal, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor provides a historic and present-day corridor from which to examine similar resources and to define and develop strategies for revitalization.

Statement of Hypothesis and Analytical Framework

This thesis will examine the following hypothesis: The rehabilitation of a historic theatre can play a role in the revitalization of a community, which might consist of a small village, a large city, or a region containing a group of villages, cities and towns. In particular, it will focus on the communities along the Erie Canal and its lateral canals, which are part of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

³ "Things To Do: Historic Theatres," Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, http://eriecanalway.org/explore_things-to-do_art_historic-theaters.php.

To support this hypothesis, this study answers several questions: What are the challenges in maintaining architectural and historic integrity when restoring a historic theatre to use in the twenty-first century? What is an optimum or preferred structure for theatre ownership, management and business models? What is needed to sustain a theatre building during the rehabilitation process and beyond? What are some innovative individual or shared programming opportunities that might benefit historic theatre buildings along the canal? In what ways can a historic theatre project have an impact on its community and region?

Those five questions form the basis for the analytical framework of this study and can also be referred to as the five areas of opportunity. For a historic theatre project to move forward and be successful, these key aspects need to be identified and addressed:

1. Architectural and historic integrity
2. Structure of ownership, management and business models
3. Sustainability
4. Programming
5. Community impact

Because of the number of historic theatres in and near the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, this treatise examines several theatres, highlighting the best practices in the five areas of opportunity. Rather than a case study approach where three or four examples are studied in great depth, the consideration of fifteen theatres in some depth allows for a broader examination of key topics. This approach falls short of a statistical study, but reveals common practices.

Research Methods

Research for this study included a variety of primary and secondary sources: literature on the Erie Canal, historic theatres, theatre restorations, and economic impact, both in print and on the internet, including articles from journals and newspapers, booklets, books, and graduate theses; video recordings of canal history and historic theatre conference sessions; websites of theatres and national theatre organizations. Particularly helpful in this research were resources from a bibliography created by former League of Historic American Theatres executive director Fran Holden for “Curtains Up! Restoring Historic Theatres and Revitalizing Communities,” a three-day workshop for individuals and communities contemplating historic theatre projects.

Central to the research for this study were interviews with professionals working in the fields of historic preservation and theatre management (Appendix 1). A questionnaire developed specifically for theatres in the study; phone and/or on-site interviews with executive directors, owners or managers of historic theatres; and site visits to several of the theatres chosen for the study made up the majority of those interviews.

Originally, this study intended to focus on communities within the borders of what has been designated the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. A starting point for choosing research participants was the list of historic theatres on the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor’s website⁴ as well as the draft of an internal/unpublished survey conducted by the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor provided by Hannah Blake, director of planning and heritage development. In looking through those lists,

⁴ Ibid.

theatres that had undergone or were undergoing rehabilitation projects and had the potential to make an impact on the revitalization of their communities were initially selected.

New York State has many examples of successfully rehabilitated historic theatres. Several are outside the Erie Canalway, as defined by the National Park Service, in communities similar in size to those in the focus area, or located on a former lateral canal or waterway that once connected to the Erie Canal. Upon the recommendation of professionals in the arts, theatre and historic preservation fields, these additional examples of classic theatre reuse were included in this study.

The original list compiled for this study consisted of 26 historic theatres. Executive directors, managers, or owners of each of those theatres were contacted by email and asked to participate in the study. Eighteen theatres responded. A detailed questionnaire (Appendix 2), created specifically for the study, was forwarded to fifteen theatres asking for basic information on the theatre, its history and rehabilitation story, as well as information on its budget, type and scope of operation, architectural and historic integrity, programming, community engagement, partnerships, and impact of the Canal System and Erie Canalway. Individual interview questions were created for the three theatres in the early stages of the rehabilitation process or without current plans to use the theatre space.

Twelve of the theatre owners, managers, or directors responded, with most of them preferring to answer the questionnaire during a phone interview or site visit. All together, fifteen theatres participated in this study, with site visits made to thirteen theatre buildings (Appendix 3).

Historic theatres included in this study stretch across New York State. Most are in the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, but some are located outside this region (Table 1 and Figure 1).

Canalway or Other Region	Theatres
Western Erie	Bent's Opera House (Medina) Pratt Opera House (Albion) Ohmann's Theatre (Lyons)
Cayuga-Seneca Canal	Smith's Opera House (Geneva)
Oswego Canal	None in study
Central New York	Palace Theatre (Syracuse) Capitol Theatre (Rome)
Mohawk & Hudson Valleys	Proctors (Schenectady) Cohoes Music Hall (Cohoes) Troy Savings Bank Music Hall (Troy)
Champlain Canal	None in study
Outside of Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor	1891 Fredonia Opera House – near Lake Erie Avon Opera Block – near former Genesee Valley Canal Clayton Opera House – on St. Lawrence River Earlville Opera House – near former Chenango Canal Hudson Opera House – on Hudson River Hubbard Hall (Cambridge) – east of Champlain Canal

Table 1: Locations of theatres included in study by Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor regions.

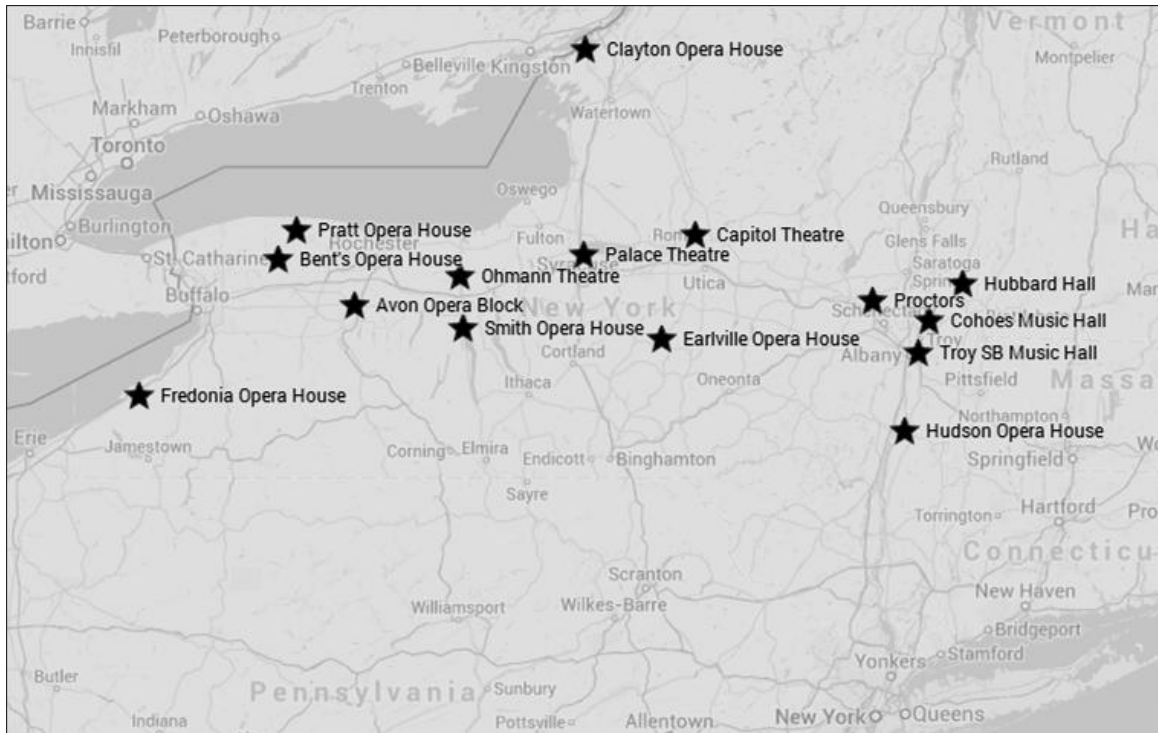


Figure 1: Map of New York State pinpointing the location of the fifteen theatres in the study [source: Google Maps, https://mapsengine.google.com/map/edit?mid=z4v0M_pv-Xe8.kVvGNq2vuiAI].

Research, interviews, and site visits explored each of the five areas of opportunity and provided examples for chapters that examined those areas. Guides such as the League of Historic American Theatres's *Historic Theatre Rescue, Restoration, Rehabilitation and Adaptive Reuse Manual*,⁵ the National Trust's Information Booklet No. 72 *Curtain Up: New Life for Historic Theatres*⁶ and a series of articles on "Rescuing and Rehabilitating

⁵ League of Historic American Theatres, *Historic Theatre Rescue, Restoration, Rehabilitation and Adaptive Reuse Manual*, <http://www.lhat.org/RRManual/index.aspx>.

⁶ Grey Hautaluoma and Mary Margaret Schoenfeld, *Curtain Up: New Life for Historic Theatres*, National Trust for Historic Preservation Information Series, No. 72 (Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1993).

Historic Main Street Theatres”⁷ from *Main Street News*, the National Trust Main Street Center’s monthly journal, also assisted in the analysis of historic theatre projects.

Organization

This thesis is organized into six chapters and supplemented with several appendices illustrating or expanding on information gathered during the research process. After this introductory chapter, Chapter II provides the historical background for both the study area – the Erie Canal – and the subject of the study – historic theatres. It looks at the significance of the Erie Canal to New York State and to the nation in terms of community development, economic growth, and social change. That section of the chapter also provides background information on the designation of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and shows how the cultural landscape has survived to this day. The second half of the chapter provides a synopsis of the development of theatre forms in the United States, with emphasis on historic theatres along the Erie Canal. Chapter II also examines the significance of these theatres and their contributions to canal communities.

Chapter III explores how historic and architectural integrity can be maintained during a historic theatre rehabilitation. The chapter reviews integrity and significance in relation to a theatre building and uses examples from theatres in the study to illustrate seven qualities of integrity as determined by the National Park Service. The impact National Register listing, landmark designation, and use of the Secretary of the Interior Standards have on maintaining integrity is explored. The chapter goes on to examine

⁷ Kennedy Smith, “Rescuing and Rehabilitating Historic Main Street Theatres,” *Main Street News*, no. 232 (September 2006): 1-11.

whether a new use for the building would lead to the loss of its integrity or if reused as a theatre, would the requirements allowing it to function as a twenty-first century theatre – building codes, technology, green practices/environmental sustainability, and the comforts of today's audiences – impact historic integrity.

Chapter IV examines business planning by considering three areas of opportunity: structure of ownership, management and business models; sustainability; and programming. Crafting a business plan that encompasses these areas is necessary prior to embarking on a historic theatre project. Decisions regarding the structure of the theatre, include: what will the theatre's primary business model be, who will own the theatre building, and how will the theatre organization be managed. Ensuring the theatre business survives through the rehabilitation and reuse phase is equally important. This chapter also considers sustainability, in terms of community engagement, financial support, and partnerships formed with other organizations. Once a theatre is restored, filling it with activity and making it a viable enterprise are important to its success. The chapter also explores innovative programming presented by theatres in the study, ways to share programming, and marketing strategies used to promote theatres.

Chapter V examines how a theatre project can serve as a catalyst for revitalization, economic development, and community pride. Studies supporting the impact the arts and historic preservation have on economic development are shared and two models for calculating economic impact are presented. National examples, as well as those from the study area, highlight how historic theatres affect community revitalization and community pride.

Chapter VI summarizes the limitations and omissions of the study and highlights the findings and recommendations of the five areas of opportunity. The chapter ties together communities in the study through their Erie Canalway connections and revisits Erie Canal neighbors, Albion and Medina, updating their theatre rehabilitation activities and offering suggestions on how they might benefit from this project. Suggestions on how the conclusions from this thesis can contribute to existing research are proposed, along with recommendations for further research and development.

CHAPTER II

HISTORIC CONTEXT AND SIGNIFICANCE: THE ERIE CANAL AND HISTORIC THEATRES ALONG THE CORRIDOR

Communities along the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor are as numerous and varied as their counterparts throughout the rest of New York State. They range from large metropolitan areas such as Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Albany, to smaller cities like Geneva, Rome, Oswego and Schenectady, and from rural villages such as Albion, Lyons, Camillus and Fort Ann, to suburban and rural towns like Amherst, Cicero, Greece and Romulus.

What ties each of these communities together and sets them apart from others is the human-built waterway known as the Erie Canal and the lateral canals that form the New York State Canal System. This system is a major landscape feature across the state and was responsible for establishing and shaping patterns of settlement and growth that are still evident today – from the seaport and commercial center of New York City, to the grain port and gateway to the west in Buffalo. Today 233 communities are part of the Congressionally-designated Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

Along with commerce and settlement, the canal played a role in the spread of entertainment types. At some point, each of these communities may have been home to a historic opera house or movie theatre. Over the years, many theatre buildings were lost to “progress” or deterioration; others were successfully brought back to life and continue

to serve as important community gathering places; still others hide in plain sight, vacant and waiting, to be reborn.

History and Significance of the Erie Canal

In operation since 1825, longer than any other constructed transportation system in North America, the New York Canal System has been called “the most successful and influential human-built waterway and one of the most important works of civil engineering and construction”⁸ on the continent. Not only did the canal facilitate the development of communities along its banks, but it brought substantial economic and social change to both New York State and the United States. As an east-west water route, the Erie Canal allowed easier access to the Old Northwest (today known as the Midwest) including Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, Ohio and Wisconsin. It was a principal route for westward migration and allowed for the transportation of agricultural products and manufactured goods between the American interior, the eastern seaboard, and Europe, establishing New York City as a prime Atlantic seaport. The canal also carried people and ideas and facilitated the travel and communication that supported a number of social reform and religious movements. Less often acknowledged is the degree to which the construction of the canal further disrupted many Native American settlements and way of life.

The idea of a water route across New York was conceived in 1724 by Cadwallader Colden, an Irish-born scientist, physician, and surveyor. But the concept of

⁸ Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission, *Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Manifest for a 21st Century Canalway: Highlights of the Preservation & Management Plan* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 2006), 7.

a canal did not begin to take shape until the first years of the next century. During his second inaugural address in March 1805, President Thomas Jefferson reported an expanding budget surplus and proposed that the revenue “be applied in time of peace to rivers, canals, roads, arts, manufacturers, education, and other great objects within each state.”⁹ Two years later, Jefferson recommended to Congress that the surplus be spent on internal improvement.¹⁰

New Yorkers took President Jefferson’s recommendations to heart. Joshua Forman, an assemblyman from Onondaga County, introduced a resolution to the New York State legislature for a survey of the most eligible and direct route for a canal from the Hudson River to Lake Erie. Seconded by Benjamin Wright of Oneida County, the resolution passed and James Geddes was appointed to conduct the survey. In 1809, Geddes submitted a report on two possible routes. One included a canal from the Hudson to Lake Ontario at Oswego, across the lake to another canal running along the Niagara River to Lake Erie. The other was a canal cutting across the interior of the state directly from the Hudson River to Lake Erie. When the interior route proposal was presented to President Jefferson, he dismissed the idea, calling “a canal of 350 miles through the wilderness ... a little short of madness to think of it at this day.”¹¹

Eight years passed, but in the end New York, with the support of Governor DeWitt Clinton, went ahead on its own. Before, during and after its construction, critics

⁹ Peter L. Bernstein, *The Wedding of the Waters: The Erie Canal and the Making of a Great Nation* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2005), 109.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Ibid, 125.

often referred to the project as “Clinton’s folly” or “Clinton’s ditch.” Ground was broken on July 4, 1817. The route was divided into three sections and an engineer assigned to each section: Hudson River to Rome (Charles Broadhead); Rome to the Seneca River (Benjamin Wright); and the Seneca River to Lake Erie (James Geddes). Nearly all excavation and construction was done by pick-and-shovel labor and animal power.¹² The canal was 363 miles long, 40 feet wide at the water surface, 28 feet wide at the bottom, and four feet deep. Since Lake Erie was 565 feet higher than the Hudson River, 83 locks measuring 90 feet by 15 feet raised and lowered boats, carrying up to 75 tons. Along the way, in addition to existing settlements, villages were established every fifteen miles or so, about the distance a team of mules or horses could pull a boat before it needed to be replaced.¹³

To celebrate the completion of the entire length of the canal, on the morning of October 26, 1825 a flotilla of boats left Buffalo en route to New York City. Leading the way was *The Seneca Chief*, with Governor Clinton, other dignitaries, and two barrels of Lake Erie water on board, followed by *Noah’s Ark*, *The Superior*, and *Niagara of Black Rock*. Other boats carrying the canal commissioners and project engineers joined along the journey and the procession stopped at canal towns along the route. By the time the flotilla reached New York Harbor and the Atlantic Ocean on the morning of November 4, 1825 it had grown to 46 vessels. Governor Clinton poured one of the barrels of Lake Erie water into the Atlantic (Figure 2), symbolically mixing the fresh waters of the Great

¹² F. Daniel Larkin, *New York State Canals: A Short History* (Fleischmanns, NY: Purple Mountain Press, 1998), 17.

¹³ Dan Murphy, *The Erie Canal: The Ditch that Opened a Nation* (Buffalo, NY: Western New York Wares, Inc., 2005), 49.

Lakes with the salt water of the ocean in a ceremony known as “The Wedding of the Waters”¹⁴ or the “Marriage of the Waters.”

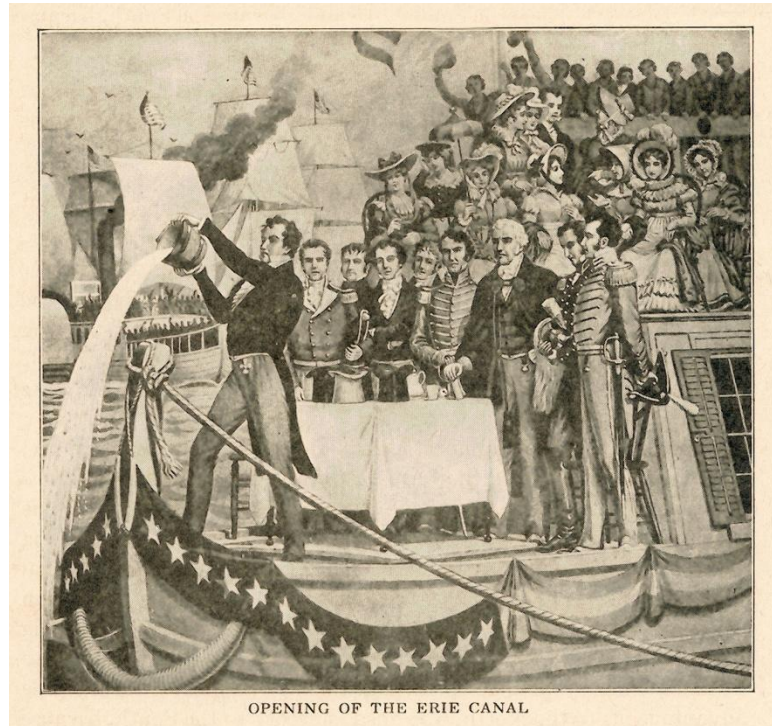


Figure 2: The opening of the Erie Canal. New York Governor DeWitt Clinton pours water from Lake Erie into the Atlantic Ocean to celebrate the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825 [source: <http://www.eriecanal.org>].

The Erie Canal was the engineering marvel of the early nineteenth century. Other than a few short canals built to bypass the serious obstructions in natural waterways, little was known about canal design and construction in the United States at the time. Surveyors, engineers, contractors, and laborers learned much about their professions while working on the job. As a result, the canal project led to the founding of the Rensselaer School, today known as Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, in Troy, New York in 1824, and the addition of a civil engineering program at Union College in Schenectady

¹⁴ Ibid., 34-37.

in 1845. These institutions were among the first civilian engineering schools in the country.

During its peak years, the canal supported a workforce of over 50,000. Half worked on boats, the remainder on locks, maintenance crews, as towpath walkers and canal shop keepers. Those earning their living on the canal were called “canawlers” or “canallers.” Millions of men, women and children traveled through upstate New York. Europeans and Americans used the canal as a gateway to the west. Packet boats carried tourists on a travel circuit known as the “Northern Tour,” that ended in Niagara Falls. The canal was also reported to be the last leg of the Underground Railroad, sometimes carrying runaway slaves from Syracuse to Buffalo, and freedom just across the Canadian border.¹⁵

The canal was as awe-inspiring as it was utilitarian. Historian Peter Bernstein captures both perceptions as he states: “Expressed in the concepts of today’s world, people perceived the canal as a combination of Disneyland, the Grand Canyon, and a high-tech laboratory in Silicon Valley. Literary and theatrical celebrities ... all came to see the miracle of the age and pass judgment on it.”¹⁶

The cost of canal construction was paid off through tolls within twenty years and the tolls generated a surplus after that. Moving goods via the canal was one-tenth the cost of what it had been on land. Shipping increased year after year, as did the population of the communities through which the canal passed. In the 1820s Albany grew by 96

¹⁵ Carol Sheriff, *The Artificial River: The Erie Canal and the Paradox of Progress, 1817-1862* (New York: Hill and Wang, 1996), 53.

¹⁶ Bernstein, *Wedding of the Waters*, 325.

percent, Utica by 183 percent, Syracuse by 282 percent, Buffalo by 314 percent and Rochester, the nation's first inland boomtown, grew by 512 percent.¹⁷

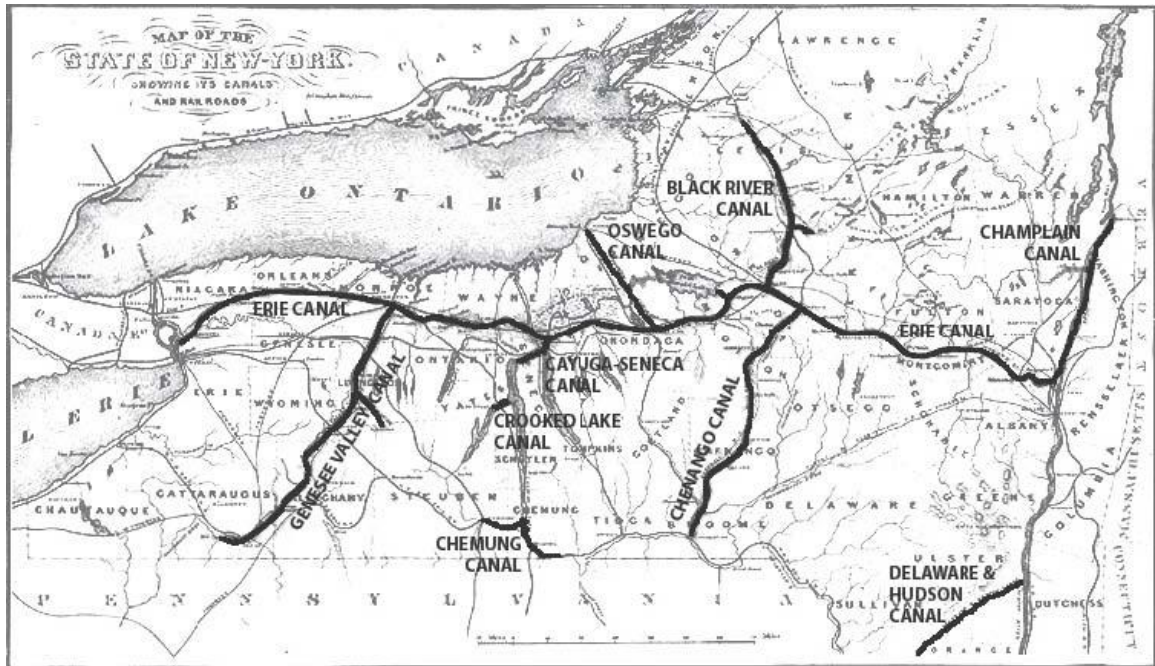


Figure 3: Map of New York State Canals c. 1858. This map was designed under the direction of State Engineer and Surveyor Van Rensselaer Richmond and highlights the Erie, Champlain, Oswego, and Cayuga-Seneca Canals. Also shown are lateral canals now closed to navigation: Chemung, Crooked Lake, Chenango, Genesee Valley, and Black River. Not labeled is the Oneida Lake Canal, between the Oswego and the Black River canals. The Delaware & Hudson Canal connected to the system via the Hudson River. This map has been modified from the original to highlight those canals [source: Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Preservation and Management Plan, 2008].

The success of the canal led to “canal mania,” a nationwide interest in canal building. After completion of the Erie, lateral canals were added, giving all parts of the state access to the man-made waterway (Figure 3). Lateral canals included the Champlain Canal (completed before the Erie), Oswego Canal, Cayuga and Seneca Canal, Chemung Canal, Crooked Lake Canal, Oneida Lake Canal, Chenango Canal, Genesee Valley

¹⁷ Larkin, *New York State Canals*, 27.

Canal, and Black River Canal. Only the Champlain, Oswego, and Cayuga and Seneca are still in operation and part of the New York State Canal System today.

The Erie Canal was so successful that within ten years its capacity needed to be increased. From 1835 until 1862 the system was rebuilt to accommodate larger boats and increasing traffic. The enlarged Erie Canal was 350.5 miles long; nearly twice as wide and deep, and could handle boats carrying three times the tonnage.

By the middle of the nineteenth century canals began to experience competition from another transportation technology – the railroad. But the Erie Canal held its own for the remainder of the nineteenth century and in 1899, New York Governor Theodore Roosevelt appointed a special Committee on Canals. The committee concluded the following year that water transportation was still less expensive than rail and recommended creating a canal that could handle one-thousand-ton vessels.

Realizing that the old towpath canal was becoming obsolete due to advances in boating technology, New York voters passed a referendum in 1903 to construct a canal across the state for barges (towed vessels operating on inland waterways). The new system, completed in 1918, was called the Barge Canal and is essentially the New York State Canal System that remains in use today. The Barge Canal is 340.7 miles long and three times as wide and deep as the original. Its locks are three times as long and can handle boats eight times as heavy as the original canal.¹⁸ The Barge Canal makes use of canalized rivers and lakes; but still follows the route of the nineteenth century canals in many areas (Table 2).

¹⁸ Emerson Klees, *The Erie Canal in the Finger Lakes Region* (Rochester, NY: Friends of the Finger Lakes Publishing, 1996), 13.

Three Eras of the Erie Canal

	Year Completed	Length (miles)	Surface Width (feet)	Bottom Width (feet)	Depth (feet)	Boat Capacity (tons)	Lock Size (feet)
Original Erie	1825	364	40	28	4	75	15 x 90
Enlarged Erie	1862	350.5	70	52-56	7	240-250	18 x 110
Barge Canal	1918	340.7	123	75	12	2000	44.5 x 300

Table 2: This table shows the size and dimensions of the three eras of the canal system connecting the Hudson River with Lake Erie.¹⁹

The Barge Canal never reached the predicted capacity of twenty million tons of freight a year. The opening of the St. Lawrence Seaway in 1959 contributed to the canal's decline. The last year Barge Canal traffic exceeded one million tons was 1980.²⁰ While commercial traffic has increased slightly in recent years, the last decades of the twentieth century and early years of the twenty-first century, the canals evolved through recreational use with pleasure craft traffic increasing steadily. Improvements made to the old towpath, including construction of trail segments in many areas, allow non-boaters to also enjoy the canal through biking, walking and jogging. The National Park Service suggests that "Much of this growth is undoubtedly due to the appeal of travel on a waterway through which the currents of American history and folklore run so deeply."²¹

¹⁹ Ibid., 13.

²⁰ National Park Service, Northeast Region, Boston Support Office, *The Erie Canalway: A Special Resource Study of the New York Canal System* (Boston: National Park Service, 1998), 72-76.

²¹ Ibid., 76.

The Path to National Heritage Corridor Designation

In 1995 Congress directed the National Park Service to determine whether the New York Canal System merited federal recognition as a national heritage corridor. The Park Service conducted a special resource study process to evaluate the national significance of the New York State Canal System and determine the suitability and feasibility of including it as a part of the National Park System.

Over its 500-plus miles, the current New York Canal System traverses a diverse landscape ranging from urban industrial areas to canalside villages, farmlands and wildlife preserves. The resource study considered three components:

1. The 524-mile New York State Canal System, owned and operated by the New York State Canal Corporation, consisting of the Erie Canal and three lateral canals (Oswego, Cayuga-Seneca, and Champlain) with their locks, gates, dams, feeder canals, and reservoirs.
2. Sections of the alignment of the first Erie Canal that have been restored or have survived the realignment and enlargement of the modern canal, along with roads, highways, and other public and private works in those sections. Some land is owned by the Canal Corporation, other lands are privately owned or held by the state and other public agencies.
3. Twenty-five counties and more than 200 municipalities that immediately surround the New York State Canal System and feature cultural resources and institutions that reflect the canals' influence.²²

²² Ibid., 13.

Findings of the special resource study were published in 1998 and concluded that the resources and themes represented by the New York Canal System were of national significance because no single unit existed that could offer a portrait of the development of the United States from the last part of the eighteenth century through the early twentieth century. Therefore, it would make a suitable addition to the National Park system.²³ The study also offered three possible management alternatives:

1. Erie Canalway, an affiliated area of the National Park System – a Park Service unit with permanent involvement by the National Park Service, federal funding and federal acquisition within the canal corridor limited to land necessary to develop a possible national historic site, and support the development of the Erie Canal Education Center.
2. Erie Canalway: National Heritage Corridor – a project supported by a ten-year involvement of the National Park Service, limited federal funding, and no federal acquisition of canal-related lands within the corridor.
3. New York State Canal Recreationway – a designation with no involvement by the National Park Service, no federal funding, and no federal acquisition of land.

The nineteenth and twentieth century versions of the New York State Canal System were the largest public works projects ever undertaken by a state. During the 175th year of the Erie Canal's operation, and nearly two centuries after President Thomas Jefferson scoffed at the idea of a "Great Western" Canal, the federal government officially embraced this historic waterway, recognizing the significant contributions it has

²³ Ibid., 67.

made to the nation. On December 21, 2000, the United States Congress designated the Erie Canalway a National Heritage Corridor (Public Law 106-554).

The purpose of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor “is to help preserve and interpret the historical, natural, scenic, and recreational resources reflecting its national significance and to help foster revitalization of canal-side communities.”²⁴

Unlike traditional National Parks, the federal government does not own or manage national heritage areas. Instead, a partnership of people, businesses, organizations, local municipalities, counties, and the state work together to protect the canalway corridor and plan for its future.

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor includes the Erie, Champlain, Oswego and Cayuga-Seneca Canals and their historic alignments (Figure 4). It consists of 524 miles of navigable waterways, stretching from Lake Erie to the Hudson River with lateral access to Lake Ontario, the Finger Lakes and Lake Champlain. Today the Corridor encompasses 233 cities, towns and villages; parts of 23 counties, eight regional planning board areas, and six New York State tourism regions; nine New York State Heritage Areas and parts of the Mohawk Valley and Western Erie Canal State Heritage Corridors. Its 4,834 square miles are home to 2.7 million people, including residents of Upstate New York’s largest population centers: Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and Albany.²⁵

²⁴ National Park Service, *Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor*, Brochure (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 2006).

²⁵ “Erie Canalway Overview,” Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, http://www.eriecanalway.org/about-us_what-is-erie-canal_overview.htm.



Figure 4: Map of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor [source: <http://www.eriecanalway.org>].

The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor is designed to “serve as an ‘umbrella’ to unite and coordinate existing federal, state and local plans and multiple points of view, focusing on partnerships that cross jurisdictional boundaries and build on mutual interests.”²⁶

²⁶ National Park Service, *Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Preservation and Management Plan*, CD-ROM (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 2006). Also available online at http://www.eriecanalway.org/about-us_preserve-manage.htm.

The Erie Canal's Entertainment and Theatre Heritage

The Erie Canal became an important commercial artery through Upstate New York. Villages along its route grew rapidly and turned into boomtowns. The opening of the Erie Canal not only improved transportation and shipping, but also facilitated the spread of information and entertainment along its route. Hence, “it was only natural that along with their usual cargo – produce, grain, lumber, machinery – canallers would bring a dose of show business dazzle to entertain country folk in the thriving communities up and down the ‘Old Erie.’”²⁷

The canal can be called the nation's first information superhighway. A song could be written and performed in New York City one night and six days later it might be heard in Buffalo, something unheard of for the time period.²⁸

The canal itself was written about in literature and songs. Many are familiar with the mule named Sal from the classic song “Low Bridge, Everybody Down” (Figure 5). The Erie appears in travel stories, poems, short stories and novels by such American writers as Nathaniel Hawthorne, James Fenimore Cooper, Herman Melville, and Mark Twain. Hawthorne traveled the canal during a “Northern Tour” and chronicled his experiences on a packet boat. Cooper referred to the canal as a way “to illustrate the boldness and visionary quality of the American character.”²⁹ Melville journeyed the canal en route to Illinois, and even studied engineering with hopes of working for the Erie

²⁷ James P. Hughes, “Homer's Sig Sautelle,” *Life in the Finger Lakes* (Summer 2008), <http://www.lifeinthefingerlakes.com/articles.php?view=article&id=296>.

²⁸ Dan Ward (curator Erie Canal Museum) telephone discussion with author, August 15, 2012.

²⁹ Robert W. Hecht, ed., *The Erie Canal Reader: 1790-1950* (Syracuse, NY: Syracuse University Press, 2003), 12.

Canal Commission. The canal made its way into his writings, including a passage in *Moby Dick*. Twain wrote a poem that was a parody of a well-known canal ballad, *The Raging Canal*.

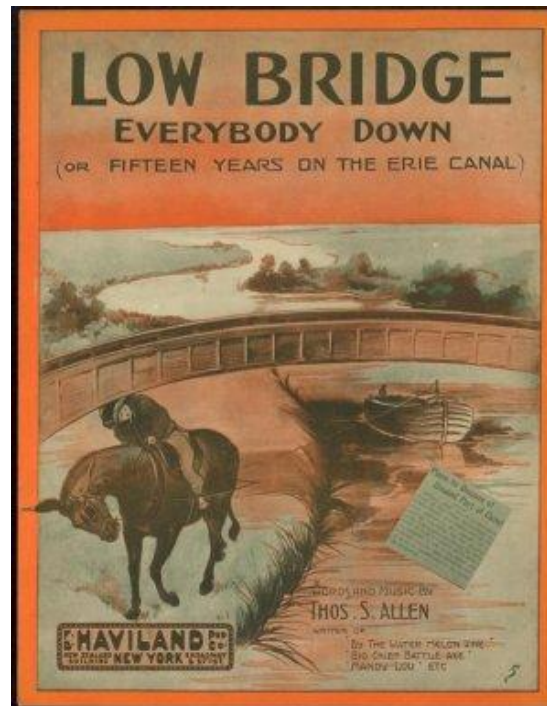


Figure 5: Thomas S. Allen wrote “Low Bridge Everybody Down” in 1905 to commemorate the history of nearly 100 years of life along the Erie Canal [source: <http://www.eriecanalsong.com>].

Two twentieth century writers dominate the field of Erie Canal literature: Walter Edmonds and Samuel Hopkins Adams. Both grew up in Central New York, listening to stories about the canal from their grandparents.³⁰ Edmonds’ novel *Rome Haul* (1929) was adapted for the stage and first performed under the title *Low Bridge*. Later renamed *The Farmer Takes a Wife*, it ran at the Forty Sixth Street Theatre in New York City, was

³⁰ Ibid., 17.

adapted for film twice – the first time in 1935 starring Henry Fonda and Janet Gaynor, and then in 1953 with Betty Grable.³¹ Adams, whose great-grandfather was a contractor on the canal, wrote two novels, a memoir, a children’s book, and a history of the canal. Since Edmonds and Adams, most writings about the Erie Canal have been histories or children’s literature.

The canal ride itself was entertainment for many Americans and Europeans. Besides the “Northern Tour” taken by those who came from afar, New Yorkers travelled the canal to visit friends and relatives. Weekend excursions were a popular pastime. The arrival of a packet boat or freight boat brought mail, newspapers, gossip and other information. During stopovers, women passengers shopped at canalside stores or strolled through the villages. Men played games of chance at carnival booths or visited a circus boat docked in town.³²

The Erie Canal allowed the flow of people, goods and ideas. “Entertainers and entrepreneurs, social reformers and cholera carriers all passed through the state and left their mark on the communities along the canal.”³³ New York State’s canals and railroads connected the cities and towns of the state, “facilitating communication and travel between communities and allowing touring entertainers and artists from the major urban centers of the United States and Europe easier and more rapid access into the interior of

³¹ Ibid., 20.

³² Klees, *Erie Canal in Finger Lakes*, 34-36.

³³ Erie Canal Museum. *Erie Canal Museum: Photos from the Collection*. (East Syracuse, NY: Erie Canal Museum, 1989), 41.

the country.”³⁴ Entertainers traveled the canal and canal towns were important stops on vaudeville circuits.³⁵

At least one circus company, Sig Sautelle’s Big Shows, is known to have travelled by canal. In the early 1880s “Sig reorganized his original small rolling wagon circus and planned a new itinerary using the canal as his route. After all, floating the show along smooth Erie waters offered certain advantages over endless wagon rides over bumpy, rugged country roads.”³⁶ At one point, he chose Syracuse as the home base for his circus, docking his boats at Clinton Square and using them as lager saloons while running small shows and a dog circus in the winter.

Entertainment on the canal was chronicled by Samuel Hopkins Adams and Walter D. Edmonds. In *Banner by the Wayside*, Adams writes about a traveling theater company. Edmonds tells the story of a young boy from Canastota who joins the traveling Huguenine’s Circus as it makes its way through upstate canal country in *Chad Hanna*. The story may have been inspired by Sautelle’s famous shows.³⁷

Not only did the canal bring entertainment to canal communities, but it brought entertainment developed in those communities to the rest of the world. Canal Street in

³⁴ Jane Ellen Oakes, “Opera Houses of the Genesee Country: Perceived Indicators of Cultural and Economic Success” (master’s thesis, State University of New York College at Brockport, 2003), 4.

³⁵ Erie Canal Museum, *Photos from the Collection*, 48.

³⁶ Hughes, “Homer’s Sig Sautelle.”

³⁷ Ibid.

Buffalo, during the canal era, has been compared to the Las Vegas of today.³⁸ Known as “the wickedest street in the world”³⁹ with 93 saloons, fifteen dance halls, and hundreds of dance hall girls, Canal Street also claims to be the birthplace of a new form of show business entertainment, the minstrel show – musical comedy in blackface, featuring singing and gags. “The minstrel show actually had its origin in many places, and the South had a strong claim to it, but it does appear to have evolved into its final form in Buffalo. It was here that it took the shape and substance that made it an American institution until the end of the nineteenth century.”⁴⁰

Edwin P. “Ned” Christy moved from Philadelphia to Buffalo in 1839. He became a regular performer at Mrs. Harrington’s Dance Hall on Canal Street doing a blackface song-and-dance routine interspersed with sleight of hand and banjo solos. He expanded his routine to include additional jig dancers, another banjo player, and an Irish fiddler. The Christy Minstrels, who introduced the song *Buffalo Gals*, were eventually offered the opportunity to perform at more respectable Buffalo theatres outside the Canal district. Word about them quickly reached New York City and they were soon on their way to Broadway, performing first at Palmo’s Opera House in 1846 and moving on to Mechanics’ Hall. Their fame spread to Europe where they performed for a season at one of London’s music halls. The Christy Minstrels “probably became the most famous, most

³⁸ George E. Condon, *Stars in the Water: The Story of the Erie Canal* (Garden City, NY: Doubleday & Company, Inc., 1974), 265.

³⁹ Murphy, *The Erie Canal*, 41.

⁴⁰ Condon, *Stars in the Water*, 265.

admired group of entertainers in America.”⁴¹ Songwriters sought out Ned Christy because they knew if the Christy Minstrels sang their songs they would become hits. Among some of the songs Christy and his minstrels helped to promote were Stephen Foster’s *Oh! Susanna!* and *The Old Folks at Home*.

The Broadway theatre scene we know today can be credited in part to the theatres along the Erie Canal city of Syracuse. Those opera houses and vaudeville theatres played a role in the establishment of the Shubert brothers’ theatrical empire. Born in Eastern Europe and raised in Syracuse, Levi (Lee), Sam and Jacob (J.J.) Shubert began their theatre management and production careers in Syracuse (Figure 6). Middle brother Sam was the first to get a job in theatre working as a program boy at the Grand Opera House in the late 1880s. He was soon promoted to the box office and then to assistant treasurer before being hired as treasurer at the Wieting Opera House, the foremost theatre in town. When promoted to house manager in 1891, he hired his brothers to help out.⁴² Eventually they began producing plays. The Shuberts left Syracuse for New York City in the early days of the twentieth century and set up the Shubert Organization, Inc., acquiring theatres and producing shows in New York and around the country.⁴³ The Shubert brothers are credited with establishing Broadway as the hub of the theatre industry in the United States.

⁴¹ Ibid., 268.

⁴² Foster Hirsch, *The Boys from Syracuse: The Shuberts’ Theatrical Empire* (Carbondale and Edwardsville, IL: Southern Illinois University Press, 1998), 16.

⁴³ “History,” The Shubert Organization, <http://www.shubertorganization.com/organization/history.asp>.



Figure 6: The Shubert Brothers of Syracuse worked for theatres in that Erie Canal city before moving to New York City and building the largest theatrical empire in the world. Jacob and Levi Shubert pose in front of a portrait of their brother Sam who died in 1905 [source: Shubert Archives via Onondaga Historical Association, date unknown].

Development of Theatre Forms Along the Erie Canal

Very few documented examples of theatres exist prior to the eighteenth century in this country. In the early years of Colonial America, theatre construction and theatrical activity was frowned upon due to the Puritan outlook. The first documented playhouse was built in Williamsburg, Virginia in 1716. The Dock Street Theatre opened in Charleston, South Carolina in 1736 and operated until 1740 when it is believed to have been destroyed by fire. During the latter half of the 1700s, New York, Charleston, Boston and Philadelphia built playhouses. Many used the English design – a proscenium stage opening, horseshoe-shaped auditorium and boxes, with lighting by chandeliers and candles.⁴⁴ Unfortunately, none of these eighteenth century theatres survive today. The oldest existing American theatre is believed to be the Masonic Opera House (1804) in New Bern, North Carolina (Figure 7).⁴⁵



Figure 7: The oldest existing theatre in America is believed to be the Masonic Temple Theatre in New Bern, North Carolina, built between 1801 and 1804 [source: <http://commons.wikimedia.org>, date unknown].

⁴⁴ Hautaluoma and Schoenfeld, *Curtain Up*, 1.

⁴⁵ Robert Stoddard, *Preservation of Concert Halls, Opera Houses and Movie Palaces* (Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 1981), 6.

Population growth, community and industrial development, income growth and westward expansion all contributed to the increase in theatre construction during the nineteenth century.⁴⁶ Auditoriums in town halls, opera houses, and academies of music were settings for live entertainment to communities large and small. Showboats brought theatre to river towns, and the railroad helped bring the opera house to the western United States. Scores of theatres were built in America's largest cities: New York, Philadelphia, Boston, Baltimore, Washington, Charleston and New Orleans. As new settlements were established, makeshift theatres appeared in Cincinnati, Louisville, Nashville, St. Louis, Chicago, Salt Lake City and Sutter's Mill. However, very few of those constructed before the Civil War remain today.

After the opening of the Erie Canal, many communities developed and prospered during the second quarter of the nineteenth century. Theatres in this study were constructed from the mid-1800s to the late 1920s. Despite the loss of many historic theatres to demolition, fire, suburban growth, and urban renewal, the cities, towns and villages along the Erie Canal and its current and former lateral canals are home to many mid-nineteenth and early-twentieth century examples of this building type. A trip along the canal corridor today is like stepping into a survey of historic American theatres. Theatre forms in this study include: large concert halls, opera houses, vaudeville houses, movie palaces, and movie houses.

⁴⁶ Hautaluoma and Schoenfeld, *Curtain Up*, 1-2.

Large Concert Hall

A handful of large concert halls were built in the second half of the nineteenth century, designed in a mixture of classical styles, reflecting the great halls of Europe. Originally used for opera, symphonic, and other large-scale musical performances, these theatres could seat a large number of patrons and their auditoriums included large open spaces, balconies and boxed seating. The Troy Savings Bank Music Hall, built in 1875 on the historic alignment of the Erie Canal in Troy, New York, is an example of this theatre form. The Troy Music Hall is said to have “the finest sound of any theater in the country.”⁴⁷ Large concert halls were known for their architecture and acoustics, which factored into the building’s design. To ensure the best acoustics possible, architects used such design techniques as curved walls and construction materials that absorbed or reflected sound.⁴⁸

Opera Houses

The mid-to-late nineteenth century also saw the construction of halls and opera houses. The years 1870 to 1910 are often referred to as the “Era of the Opera House.” This architectural theatre form remains the most prevalent historic theatre type that survives today.⁴⁹ Almost every town had a hall and many were referred to as opera

⁴⁷ David Naylor and Joan Dillon, *American Theaters: Performance Halls of the Nineteenth Century* (New York: John Wiley & Sons, Inc., 1997), 205.

⁴⁸ Naylor and Dillon, *American Theaters*, 205. Hautaluoma and Schoenfeld, *Curtain Up*, 14.

⁴⁹ Stoddard, *Preservation of Concert Halls*, 10. Hautaluoma and Schoenfeld, *Curtain Up*, 16.

houses. Sometimes they were named after the owner of the building. Other times they carried the name of a famous individual, the state or country, implied dignity or classical learning, or proclaimed the fact that music might be found within it.⁵⁰ Opera houses were often built by leading citizens of a community to demonstrate success and civic pride. Many were located on the second or upper floors of a commercial or municipal building. While opera was rarely performed in these theatres, the name “opera house” “carried connotations of gentility, of higher quality entertainment, and of entertainment usually reserved for the upper classes.”⁵¹ They featured traveling theatrical troupes, community performances, and vaudeville shows and community gathering space for other activities.⁵² Through the years, opera houses also hosted high school graduations (before schools had their own auditoriums), poultry shows, dances, concerts, political rallies, roller skating, boxing matches, and basketball games⁵³ – nearly every type of event that required a large, open space.

The buildings themselves were usually designed in the latest architectural styles, such as Italianate, Second Empire, or Romanesque Revival. Seating varied; some had permanent seats, others had movable seats and a flat floor allowing flexibility of use (Figure 8). Additional seating was found in a three-sided gallery or a horseshoe-shaped balcony.⁵⁴ Whether simple or elaborate, opera houses, especially in smaller villages,

⁵⁰ Oakes, “Opera Houses of the Genesee Country,” 21.

⁵¹ Ibid., 37.

⁵² Hautaluoma and Schoenfeld, *Curtain Up*, 15.

⁵³ Oakes, “Opera House of the Genesee Country,” 47.

⁵⁴ Naylor and Dillon, *American Theaters*, 89.

served as anchors and provided a point of reference for the whole community. They showed the rest of the world that the community was economically and culturally successful.⁵⁵

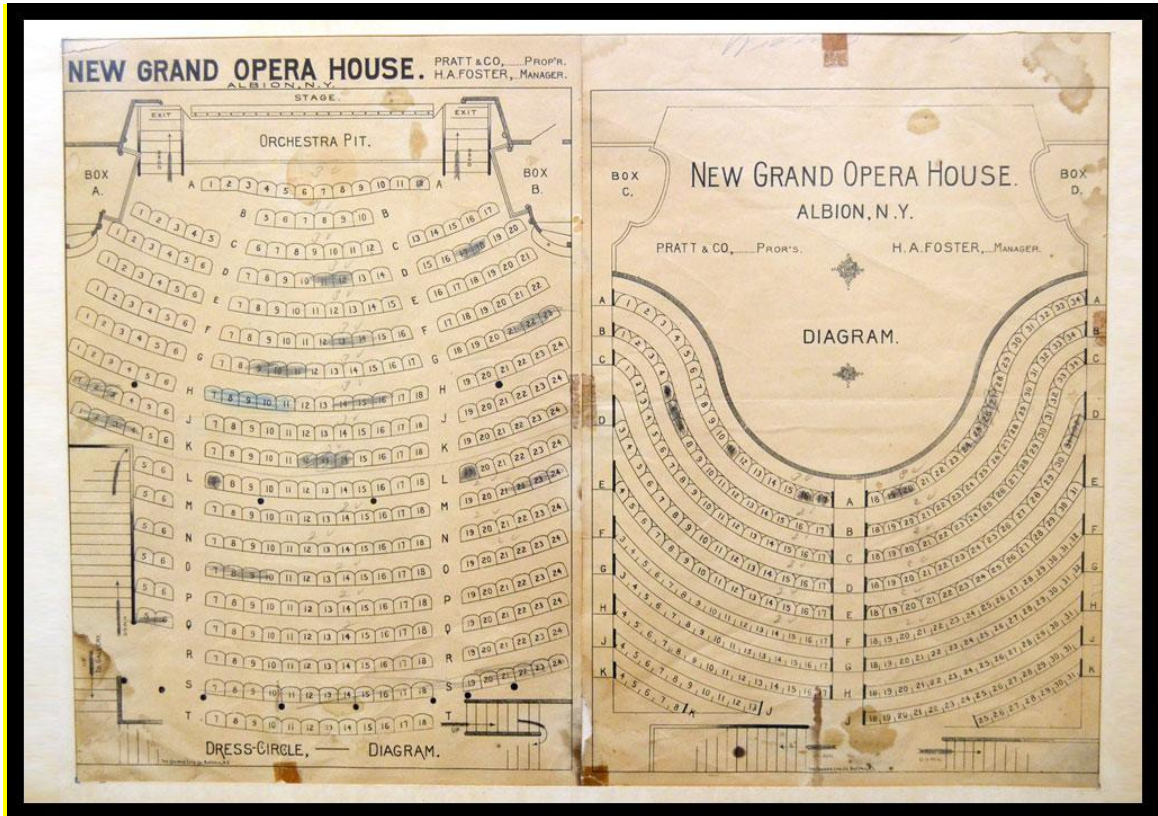


Figure 8: Floor plan from 1902 of the Pratt Opera House in Albion, New York. The Pratt originally had fixed seating on the floor and in the balcony [source: <http://theatrehistoricalsociety.wordpress.com>, May 10, 2012].

Over the years a large number of opera houses were lost to fire or deteriorated and were demolished, but many still remain, hiding in the dark on the upper floors of Main Street commercial buildings. Some of the oldest remaining theatres in America are opera houses.⁵⁶ While many Erie Canal communities have lost their opera houses, the Pratt in

⁵⁵ Ibid., 44, 50.

⁵⁶ Hautaluoma and Schoenfeld, *Curtain Up*, 15.

Albion and Bent's in Medina have survived. Several opera houses across New York State have experienced a revival over the past 30 years, including some outside of the Erie Canalway Corridor in Fredonia, Earlville, Hudson and Clayton, as well as Hubbard Hall in Cambridge. Their stories could prove helpful to similar size theatres in the corridor looking to bring a theatre back to use.

As the nineteenth century progressed, theatre technology advanced. Theatre patrons' sight lines improved with raked stages, sloping upwards away from the audience; raked auditoriums, with seating areas sloping upward away from the stage; and auditoriums that could switch from level to raked. Lighting evolved from candle to oil to gas to electric by the end of the century.⁵⁷ Advances in engineering and construction allowed balconies without support columns. Some theatres even had early forms of air conditioning systems.

With only a few exceptions, the design of early theatres was usually left up to local builders, not theatre specialists. The quality and amount of architectural features incorporated into these buildings depended on the skills of the available workers. Unlike pattern books for houses developed during this time, nineteenth century theatre builders did not have a publication available devoted to theatre design.⁵⁸ The design and construction of theatres by local craftsmen helped to advance the skills of local labor and added vernacular and regional architectural diversity to the landscape.

⁵⁷ Naylor and Dillon, *American Theaters*, 26-33.

⁵⁸ *Ibid.*, 17, 21.

Vaudeville Houses

The end of the nineteenth century and early years of the twentieth century brought the development of mixed-use houses, vaudeville houses, and Nickelodeons (the first indoor space dedicated to showing motion pictures). From the 1880s to the 1910s, vaudeville was the most popular form of entertainment in the country. Fast-paced variety shows of music, comedy, drama, specialty and novelty acts were combined to create a show appealing to mixed and family audiences.⁵⁹ These entertaining troupes often traveled from town to town on an established circuit of theatres.⁶⁰

Like the opera houses that came before them, vaudeville houses were built as facilities for live entertainment and community events. They had a stage for live programs, a fly space and rigging system for scenery drops used by traveling shows. Some were built to accommodate film as well. When motion pictures entered the scene, others adapted by installing projection equipment and new technology to allow for the screening of motion pictures. The Ohmann Theatre in Lyons started out as a vaudeville house.

Movie Palaces

New forms of entertainment such as vaudeville and motion pictures led to new types of theatre buildings. Theatres that survived into the twentieth century did so because they changed and adapted to new forms of entertainment. While vaudeville and

⁵⁹ Robert M. Lewis, ed. *From Traveling Show to Vaudeville: Theatrical Spectacle in America, 1830-1910* (Baltimore: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 2003), 315.

⁶⁰ Hautaluoma and Schoenfeld, *Curtain Up*, 17.

burlesque shows could be staged in the older venues, the movie business sought even larger and more ornate theatres to link the status of their presentations to those live entertainment venues. Opera house owners who foresaw the threat by the motion picture industry met the challenge by adapting their theatres for the projection of movies. Some hung bright electric signs off their classical facades; others revamped their entire interiors.⁶¹

As the motion picture industry grew, so did the venues where movies were shown. Some of the largest theatres ever constructed were the movie or picture palaces of the 1920s. Built in larger communities by movie studios and other entrepreneurs, design and construction was left up to architects, usually from outside the area, who specialized in these types of buildings. These elaborate theatres were usually multi-stories and featured grand foyers, ornate lobbies, encircling auditoriums that seated thousands, sweeping balconies, mezzanine areas with lounges, other intricately adorned public spaces, and elaborate facades with prominent marquees. All these features allowed the movie patrons to escape into romance and fantasy even before the feature film started.⁶²

The architects who designed these theatres became as well-known as the movie chains that hired them – Thomas W. Lamb, John Eberson, and brothers C.W. Rapp and George L. Rapp. They used elaborate murals, baroque and renaissance details with Moorish, Spanish, Mayan, Egyptian and Oriental styles. Some theatres were

⁶¹ Ibid., 35.

⁶² Stoddard, *Preservation of Concert Halls*, 18.

“atmospheric,” giving the illusion of an indoor garden with twinkling stars and clouds overhead.⁶³

Between the years of 1915 and 1945 more than 4,000 movie palaces were constructed in the United States. Those theatres played an important part in the rise of Hollywood’s Golden Age.⁶⁴ The Great Depression brought more streamlined styles, reflecting a change in architectural taste and an emphasis on operational efficiency.⁶⁵

Movie palaces, like the theatres of the nineteenth century that came before them, began to experience a decline in popularity in the 1950s. A number of factors figure into their fall from favor. As part of an anti-trust case in 1948, the Supreme Court ordered major movie studios who built the great theatre chains to divest themselves of these holdings. In the 1950s and 60s, the population began to relocate to the suburbs, leading to the decline of downtown areas, where most theatres were located. Audiences attended movies at multi-screen cinemas at malls and other locations outside of the downtown area. With the introduction of television, more and more movie patrons stayed home for their entertainment. Hundreds of inner-city theatres were abandoned or lost to urban renewal.⁶⁶

Many of the surviving historic theatres along the Erie Canalway Corridor were once motion picture palaces, including: the Capitol Theatre (Rome), the Landmark Theatre (formerly Loew’s State, Syracuse), Proctors (formerly Proctor’s Theatre,

⁶³ Ibid., 2.

⁶⁴ Joseph M. Valerio and Daniel Friedman, *Movie Palaces: Renaissance and Reuse* (New York: Academy for Educational Development, 1982), 9

⁶⁵ Stoddard, *Preservation of Concert Halls*, 16.

⁶⁶ Hautaluoma and Schoenfeld, *Curtain Up*, 2.

Schenectady), which was also home to vaudeville shows, the Riviera Theatre (North Tonawanda), Shea's Performing Arts Center (formerly Shea's Buffalo), and the Stanley Theatre (Utica). Today they serve as concert halls, multipurpose halls and performing arts centers.

Movie Houses

Not every movie theatre from the first half of the twentieth century was a palace. Movie houses, built in city neighborhoods, were more modest in scale, with seating capacity at less than 1000. Their designs included the crisp clean lines of Art Deco and Streamline Moderne styles or other unique designs by local architects. Ornamentation was usually done in paint rather than ornate plasterwork and sometimes featured elaborate murals and stencils on the walls. These theatres became an important center of community activity in neighborhoods and small towns.

The Palace Theatre in the Eastwood neighborhood of Syracuse, the Little Theatre in Rochester, and the Strand Theatre in Brockport are just a few examples of the many movie houses built in the first quarter of the twentieth century still in operation today.

Decline and Rebirth

Each of the historic theatres in the Erie Canalway Corridor that survives today has its own story to tell. Some started out as one form and converted to another to ensure their survival into the early part of the twentieth century. Built in 1894, the Smith Opera House in Geneva was converted by the Schine theatre chain to a movie palace in the

1930s. The State Theatre in Ithaca was an auto garage and dealership before being converted to a vaudeville theatre and motion picture palace in 1928.

Since the 1970s, historic theatres in the Canalway Corridor and across the country have begun to see a new life in part due to programs set up by the federal government such as the National Endowment for the Arts, National Endowment for the Humanities, and the Historic Preservation Act, which made preservation a national priority. Arts and preservation were integrated into state and local government agendas, arts groups received federal funding, and historic preservation projects benefited from government funds and federal rehabilitation tax credits.⁶⁷

Today large cities and small villages have taken on rescue operations. Some historic theatres in the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor were restored to their former glory and are used to entertain audiences once again. Others are in various stages of rehabilitation, with restoration and reuse being completed in stages. Still others sit empty as they wait to be brought back to life.

Historic Significance of Theatres along the Erie Canal Corridor

Whether an opera house in the rural village of Medina or an elaborate motion picture palace in the metropolitan area of Schenectady, historic theatres hold an important place in their communities. At the time they were constructed, historic theatres were focal points in their communities' cultural life and excellent examples of the architecture of a given period. Often they were the most elaborate buildings in town and built with the latest technological innovations.

⁶⁷ Hautaluoma and Schoenfield, *Curtain Up*, 2.

Theatres are historically significant for the roles they have played in the life of the community and the history of American architecture. They served as community gathering places for entertainment, but also for social events, educational lectures, political conventions and rallies, commencements and town meetings.⁶⁸ The theatre building was a delivery device for the spread of ideas such as abolition and women's rights. The opera house form offered the nineteenth century version of mixed-use, serving as commercial establishments and offices as well as an entertainment and meeting venue. The same people who shopped or worked in the Main Street shops and offices by day, most likely attended events in the second floor opera house or hall in the evening. Even those theatres built specifically to show motion pictures presented news and promotions for local businesses in addition to the feature presentation. That multi-use and community connection has carried into theatre reuse today as they serve as space for conventions, local meetings, recording studios, photo and video shoots, as well as retail operations.

As today's communities seek revitalization they might consider revisiting the mixed-use models of the nineteenth and early twentieth century. Both historic and new construction that serves multiple purposes could create more sustainable and pedestrian-friendly neighborhoods, where residents and visitors have the opportunity to live, work, eat, shop, and be entertained all within a comfortable walking distance. Many of the theatres in this study have already taken a step in the direction of mixed-use in that they share their buildings with other businesses and organizations. Some present day opera

⁶⁸ Stoddard, *Preservation of Concert Halls*, 1.

houses still serve as municipal offices and rent commercial space to other businesses and organizations.

Conclusion

As the Erie Canal facilitated the movement of agricultural goods and manufactured products between the eastern seaboard and the American heartland, the communities along its route boomed during the canal era. In addition to commercial transportation, the canal assisted in the migration of people from the east to the west and played a role in the spread of social ideas and cultural activities. The canal and its entertainment venues, whether traveling packet boats or the halls and theatres constructed in canal towns, influenced the music, literature, and other various forms of entertainment in the United States.

As new methods of transportation, such as the railroad and motorized vehicles, were introduced, the use of the canal as a transportation route declined as did the growth of canal communities. A parallel fate was seen in the theatres of these communities. First used for live entertainment, opera houses and vaudeville stages saw a decrease in popularity with the introduction of the motion picture and the grand movie palaces. Some adapted for use as movie theatres and survived a little longer. With the advent of television and the movement of the population from the cities to the suburbs, ornate downtown picture palaces also saw a decline in popularity and use.

In recent years, the canal system has reinvented itself as a recreational and tourist attraction. Cities, towns and villages along its route are working on ways to use this resource to bring their communities back to life. Just as the construction of a theatre

showed off a community's cultural and economic progress when it was built in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the reuse of these buildings can play a role in the revitalization of those same communities today, while maintaining a connection to its past. And as theatres in nearby communities are brought back to use perhaps they, too, can play a part in the revitalization of the region.

The next chapter introduces the first of the five areas of opportunity used to analyze historic theatre projects in this study. It examines how architectural and historic integrity can be affected when a theatre is reused; explores methods for retaining a building's integrity; and notes challenges in rehabilitating these historic buildings for use in the twenty-first century.

CHAPTER III

HISTORIC AND ARCHITECTURAL INTEGRITY

Theatres evoke feelings of another place and time and the historic theatres of Erie Canalway communities hold a special place in the hearts and memories of the residents of those cities, villages and towns. At the same time, rehabilitated theatres can serve as beautiful community gathering places for cultural events. The fact that some of these buildings survived into the twenty-first century speaks of the important role their rehabilitation can play in the revitalization of their communities and the Canalway as a region. And if the rehabilitation of a theatre can maintain the building's historic and architectural integrity while incorporating present-day amenities, it will also make for a richer experience for the audience.

Operating a historic theatre in the twenty-first century requires conforming to codes, adapting to the needs of the community, and being responsible to the environment. A key concern when considering the rehabilitation of a historic theatre is how the project will affect the building itself. Is it possible to rehabilitate the building and at the same time maintain the historic and architectural integrity and significance of the space? Determining what gives a building integrity and significance is a good place to start. Knowing the ways to recognize and protect a historic building before the work begins and using standards to insure the work is appropriate will also help.

Two types of groups often take on historic theatre projects: those that view it from a preservation angle, where saving the building is the priority and finding an appropriate use is secondary; and performing arts organizations in search of a suitable location to carry out its mission. A historic theatre can serve as a unique venue for performances and presentations, but retaining historic fabric and integrity might not be foremost in everyone's minds. However, when preservationists and arts organizations work together, a successful theatre rehabilitation can happen.

Significance and Integrity

Significance is the property's relative importance based on two factors: historical or cultural importance and architectural value. If both historical and architectural aspects contribute, overall significance is enhanced. Integrity is the ability of a property to convey its significance and illustrate how the property represents the period or theme for which it is being recognized.

Identifying a building's character-defining features – what makes it special – will help in determining its significance and integrity. In historic theatres those features are often found in the public spaces: the building's exterior, lobby (if it has one), and auditorium space. Also important are historic features that may not be visible to the public, but are necessary to theatres: the rigging system (for live production theatres), the projection booth (for movie theatres), theatre organs (for those theatres that screened silent films) and dressing rooms.

Assessing the strengths and challenges of each theatre building and identifying character-defining features will have an impact on whether those features should be

preserved, restored to their original condition, or rehabilitated. An assessment will help indicate where and how those changes can or should be made.

Evaluation of integrity is sometimes considered subjective. To lend more objectivity, the National Park Service has developed a list of seven qualities to help determine the level of integrity: location, setting, design, materials, workmanship, feeling and association. These aspects of integrity are used when evaluating properties for listing in the National Register of Historic Places. Since most of the theatres in this study are listed in the National Register, either individually or as a contributing property in a historic district, using those seven qualities is an appropriate way to analyze the integrity of a historic theatre.

Location and Setting

“Location is the place where the historic property was constructed or the place where the historic event occurred.”⁶⁹ Theatres in this study are located in communities in the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor (Figure 9), as well as other small communities sprinkled across the state of New York. In the case of the historic opera houses, the buildings were usually built on the main thoroughfare by a wealthy citizen, giving a high profile to both the building and the benefactor. All theatres in the study are situated in their original locations. None of the buildings have been moved and so the quality of location remains intact.

⁶⁹ National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1997), 45. Also available online at: <http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/index.htm>.

“Setting is the physical environment of a historic property.”⁷⁰ It is the character of the place in which the property had a historical role. Setting is not only where a property is located, but how it is positioned, and its relationship to features and space around it. Many of these historic theatres are located in what were once thriving Erie Canal communities that share similar characteristics. In most cases the communities developed and grew because of the canal. The opera houses were built by wealthy and prominent citizens, who may have directly or indirectly gained their wealth because of the canal. Motion picture palaces or neighborhood movie houses were usually constructed in commercial districts that were easily accessible to the public. Historic movie theatres were constructed after the heyday of the canal and in some cases after the canal was re-routed outside of a city or village. While the canal had an impact on the nineteenth century development of those communities, more than likely it was not key to their development during the 1920s and 1930s.



Figure 9: A lift bridge over the Erie Canal in Albion [source: Gina DiBella, July 2012].



Figure 10: Medina's Main Street lined with nineteenth century buildings [source: Gina DiBella, October 2012].

⁷⁰ Ibid.

Each of the theatres in this study was constructed on a main street or in a thriving commercial district (Figure 10). Main Streets in many small villages and city downtowns have declined over the years. Small, locally-owned village businesses have closed as big box stores have opened on the outskirts of town. In the cities, large chunks of urban fabric were lost to urban renewal and shopping and entertainment areas moved to the suburbs. Theatre buildings whose original settings remain intact are usually from smaller villages that were not affected by urban renewal.

Across from the Capitol Theatre on West Dominick Street in Rome, is a large open space where commercial buildings, demolished in the 1960s, once stood. Visible from this spot, one block to the south, is Erie Boulevard (Figure 11). This major thoroughfare follows the path of the original Erie Canal. By the time the Capitol opened in 1928, the canal had been re-routed to the outskirts of town. The settings of many historic theatres have been compromised in this way, their historic neighbors demolished, leaving empty spaces or modern buildings in their wake.



Figure 11: A vacant lot across from the Capitol Theatre on West Dominick Street in Rome backs up to Erie Boulevard, location of the Erie Canal before it was rerouted outside of downtown [source: Gina DiBella, November 2012].

While theatres cannot always benefit from the presence of original historic settings, hope for an “urban renaissance” exists as surrounding neighborhoods are slowly revitalized. Empty lots are being replaced with sensitively designed infill buildings and modern buildings converted to uses compatible with the historic neighborhood.

Design, Materials and Workmanship

“Design is the combination of elements that create the form, plan, space, structure, and style of a property.”⁷¹ Architects familiar with either the opera house or the motion picture palace form designed some of the theatres in this study. Leon H. Lempert from Rochester, known for his work on opera houses, designed the auditoriums of the Pratt Opera House in 1890 and the Smith Opera House for Geneva philanthropist William Smith in 1894. F. F. Proctor, the “dean of vaudeville,” hired well-known theatre designer Thomas Lamb for his showplace theatre in Schenectady in 1926. Lempert’s son, Leon Lempert, Jr., designed the Capitol Theatre in 1928. Schine’s Amusement Company, Inc. hired another famous designer, Victor Rigaumont in 1931, to remodel the Smith Opera House into Schine’s Geneva Theatre, an atmospheric movie palace. Over the years, a marquee and carrara glass were added to the facade. When work began in the 1990s to rehabilitate the space, the New York State State Historic Preservation Office, which reviewed the project, required the owners of the Smith to restore the original opera house exterior, but allowed them to keep the interior intact, giving the building design attributes from two periods of significance (Figure 12).

⁷¹ Ibid., 44.



Figure 12: Smith's Opera House in Geneva, New York maintains an opera house facade, but its interior was converted to a motion picture palace in the 1930s [source: Gina DiBella, November, 2012].

“Materials are the physical elements that were combined or deposited during a particular period of time and in a particular pattern or configuration to form a historic property.”⁷² Materials used on the construction of historic theatres include: brick, stone, terra cotta, precast concrete, iron, and wood on the exterior and tin, ornamental and plain plaster, glass, wood molding, other woodwork, various fabrics and wallpaper on the interior. Some materials were found in the theatre's own backyard. Bent's Opera House in Medina was constructed of Medina sandstone, quarried just outside the village and used in the construction of buildings throughout western New York and around the world. Buckingham Palace, the Brooklyn Bridge, Buffalo's H.H. Richardson Complex, and the New York State capitol are all constructed of Medina sandstone. Even the streets

⁷² Ibid., 45.

of Havana, Cuba were paved with it.⁷³ Because of their location on the waterway, nineteenth century theatres in canal communities also had easy access to construction materials from other areas of the country or even overseas.

Some materials used in historic theatres in the study represent the latest technology or result in an unexpected benefit. The facade of the Pratt Building in Albion is constructed with dyed concrete panels. Considered an inexpensive and plain building material today, it was cutting edge and a display of status when the Pratt was built in 1890.⁷⁴ Troy Savings Bank Music Hall was designed by New York City architect George B. Post and opened in 1875. A wooden structure was placed inside a heavy stone shell, with a vaulted ceiling and plaster walls. At first many complaints surfaced about the acoustics of the building. But the addition of an Odell concert organ in 1890 with the irregular back wall created by the organ case and the curved lip over the stage, combined with the other materials in the building, made it an acoustical wonder. Musical recordings account for a significant amount of the hall's use today.⁷⁵

The loss of historic materials can shape the plans for a historic theatre project. The opera houses in Albion, Avon, Hudson and Medina, lost much of the original fabric of their interior theatre spaces. When work begins on the rehabilitation of these theatres decisions will need to be made on whether or not to restore or replace it. The window

⁷³ WGRZ News, "Unknown Stories of Western New York: Medina Sandstone," http://www.wgrz.com/news/specials/WNY_Unknown_Stories/article/177059/434/Unknown-Stories-of-WNY-Medina-Sandstone (Buffalo, NY: posted August 7, 2012).

⁷⁴ Jerry Moule, "Preservation: Rebirth of a cultural landmark," *Rochester City Newspaper* (Rochester, NY), March 21-27, 2012, 8-9.

⁷⁵ Russell McClintock, *Troy Savings Bank Music Hall: A Brief History*, Brochure (Troy, NY: Troy Savings Bank, 1998).

fronts on the street-level facade of Bent's Opera House in Medina (Figures 13 and 14) were removed by a previous owner and a colonnade was created by covering the original cast iron fabric with concrete blocks. The concrete is currently being removed to expose the original cast iron with the intention of restoring the window fronts. The auditorium of the Pratt was once filled with fixed seats on the orchestra level and in the balcony. Neither the seats nor the balcony remain today. In putting together a rehabilitation plan, the owners must decide whether or not to replace these features.



Figure 13: Bent's Hall from the 1879 Historical Album of Orleans County [source: <http://www.eggstreet.org>].



Figure 14: Bent's Opera House prior to the removal of the facade's concrete arches [source: Gina DiBella, October 2012].

“Workmanship is the physical evidence of the crafts of a particular culture or people during any given period of history or prehistory.”⁷⁶ It shows an artisan’s labor and skill in the process of constructing or altering a property. Workmanship can appear as simple as vernacular construction methods and plain finishes, or it can be highly sophisticated and ornamental. Artists may use common traditions or techniques innovative to the period. In rehabilitating historic theatres, trained craftsmen have recast

⁷⁶ National Park Service, *Criteria for Evaluation*, 45.

terra cotta stone work; reapplied gold and silver leaf; repaired, replicated or replaced ornamental plaster designs; restored and refinished stone, wood and metal; conducted historic paint investigations to determine original paint schemes and then custom-mixed paint to achieve a match; and conserved historic murals.

Feeling and Association

“Feeling is a property’s expression of the aesthetic or historic sense of a particular period of time.”⁷⁷ While one of the more subjective of the seven aspects of integrity, “feeling” is formed when a property’s physical features are viewed together to convey its historic character. For example, walking from the ornate lobby of Proctors’ mainstage theatre into its grand auditorium transports patrons back to a time when the place audiences viewed a film was just as much a part of the experience as watching the film itself. While it might be difficult to imagine 2,700 people attending a screening of a film in one place at one time today, stepping into Proctors makes it seem possible.

Walking up the flight of stairs from Remsen Street, passing the single window ticket booth, and continuing to the balcony of the Cohoes Music Hall with its fixed bench seats in the shape of a horseshoe, one can almost sense what it was like to attend a nineteenth century stage production or listen to a speech by a popular orator of the time in that space (Figure 15). The proscenium arch is flanked with ornate fluted Corinthian columns and box seats; the ceiling is decorated with images of angels and faces, including that of the woman for whom the building was supposedly built.

⁷⁷ Ibid.



Figure 15: The balcony in Cohoes Music Hall has fixed seating and when it opened in 1874 could seat 500 [source: Gina DiBella, December 2012].

Another way feeling can be evoked is through the memories of residents and how they experienced the building. In Medina, the Orleans Renaissance Group created a video, “Bent’s Hall Bring It Back” that shows the emotional connection that can be made with a place. One resident recalls the Bent’s Hall where her wedding reception was held 60 years earlier. Using photographs from her wedding and present day footage of the building’s interior, viewers are brought back in time and experience similar feelings and memories as the woman in the video.⁷⁸

“Association is the direct link between an important historic event or person and a historic property.”⁷⁹ Association can also be identified with tangible items – the playbills advertising actors and plays performed at Bent’s Opera House, life size cardboard cut outs of Teddy Roosevelt, Ralph Waldo Emerson, Italian soprano Marietta Gazzaniga, and

⁷⁸ Orleans Renaissance Group, *Bent’s Hall. Bring It Back*, YouTube video, directed by Andrew Manzano, http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=iaFj_LXp5z8.

⁷⁹ National Park Service, *Criteria for Evaluation*, 45.

Susan B. Anthony on the stage of the Hudson Opera House, nineteenth century graffiti on the walls of the backstage area of the Pratt (Figures 16 and 17) or on the curtain at Hubbard Hall. All of these examples offer a tangible link to the people who worked and played there.

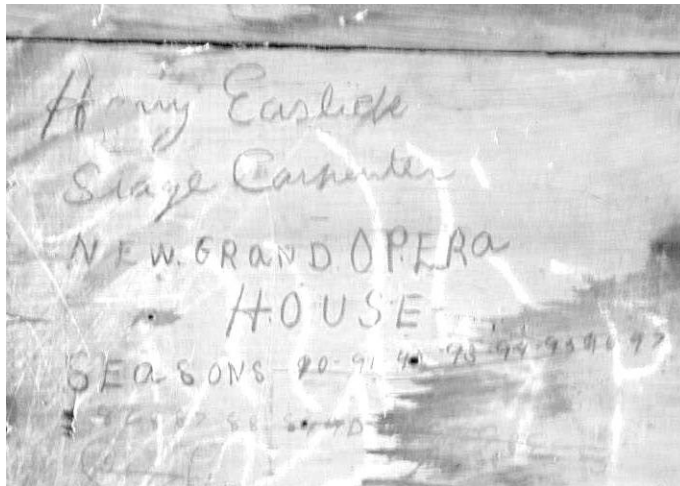


Figure 16: Graffiti found on the backstage walls of the Pratt Opera House in Albion, NY. The graffiti is signed by Henry Easlick, a stage carpenter who worked in the “New Grand Opera House” for the seasons of 1890 to 1898 [source: Dan Prichard, April 2013].



Figure 17: A program found on the backstage walls of the Pratt Opera House lists the cast for the production of “Two Little Waifs” in January 1903, along with advertising by local businesses [Source: Dan Prichard, April 2013].

To relay association, a property must convey to an observer that it is a place where a historic event or activity occurred. In the auditorium of the Troy Music Hall everything from the multiple-level box seats, to the decorative organ case above the stage, to the vaulted ceiling, evokes memories of performances by numerous world-renowned artists. In the early years of the twentieth century “rarely did a great musician of the day fail to include on his or her American tour an appearance at the celebrated

Music Hall atop the Troy Savings Bank.”⁸⁰ Upon entering Smith’s Opera House, one might be confused about the era of significance, but entering the auditorium and gazing up at the atmospheric ceiling, there can be no doubt that it was a 1930s motion picture palace.

Theatres in this study vary in their architectural and historic integrity. The strengths of their integrity are usually grounded in the tangible aspects of design and materials. The settings of some remain close to their nineteenth century streetscapes along the canal; others are working with the communities to help create a setting that can be adapted to the twenty-first century. As shown in the examples of this study, the most appropriate way to maintain a historic theatre’s integrity is by retaining its character-defining spaces and reusing it as a performance space.

National Register Listing and Landmark Designation

A property can be recognized for its historic and architectural significance in a number of ways: a plaque program by the local historical society, an awards ceremony by the city chamber of commerce, a survey of a particular building type by a regional planning organization, a marker program established by a state, or an award presented at a national conference by a historic preservation organization. When it comes to officially designating a property historic, the levels of designation include: local, state, and national. Each level of designation comes with different benefits, restrictions and forms of protection.

⁸⁰ McClintock, *Troy Savings Bank Music Hall*.

The Historic Sites Act of 1935 authorized the Secretary of the Interior to identify and recognize National Historic Landmarks, those properties of national significance in United States history and archeology. The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 continued that recognition by establishing the National Register of Historic Places and giving local governments the power to designate landmarks and historic districts. The most well-known of these designation levels is the National Register of Historic Places; but the most regulatory is local landmark designation, which is generally accompanied by the review and approval of proposed changes to a city's, town's or villages landmarks by a landmark commission or board.

National Register of Historic Places

The National Register of Historic Places is the official list of national, state and local properties determined to be significant in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture, and that are worthy of preservation. The National Park Service maintains and expands the National Register on behalf of the Secretary of the Interior.

The National Register Criteria for Evaluation was developed by the National Park Service to guide in the selection of properties for the National Register. These criteria are standards by which every property nominated is judged. A different set of criteria assists in the recognition of nationally significant properties, known as National Historic Landmarks. Both sets of criteria use the Secretary of the Interior's Standards and

Guidelines for Archeology and Historic Preservation for guidance in determining which properties qualify for listing.⁸¹

National Park Service Criteria for Evaluating a Property
for the National Register of Historic Places

The quality of significance in American history, architecture, archeology, engineering, and culture is present in districts, sites, buildings, structures, and objects that possess integrity of location, design, setting, materials, workmanship, feeling, and association, and:

- A. That are associated with events that have made a significant contribution to the broad patterns of our history; or
- B. That are associated with the lives of significant persons in or past; or
- C. That embody the distinctive characteristics of a type, period, or method of construction, or that represent the work of a master, or that possess high artistic values, or that represent a significant and distinguishable entity whose components may lack individual distinction; or
- D. That have yielded or may be likely to yield, information important in history or prehistory.⁸²

Of the fifteen historic theatres researched for this thesis, twelve are listed in the National Register either individually or as part of a district. Of those twelve, one (Troy Savings Bank Music Hall) is also a National Historic Landmark (Figure 18). Listing in the National Register recognizes a property with local, state or national historic significance. Depending on their ownership, some National Register properties may also

⁸¹ National Park Service. *National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1995), http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15_pre.htm.

⁸² National Park Service. *National Register Bulletin: How to Apply the National Register Criteria for Evaluation* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1995), http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb15/nrb15_2.htm.

qualify for state and federal historic preservation tax credits for expenses spent on rehabilitation.



Figure 18: The Beaux-Arts style Troy Savings Bank Music Hall, designed by George B. Post and completed in 1875, is a National Historic Landmark[source: <http://www.lakestolocks.org>].

The National Register nomination documentation is an excellent resource for those seeking to rehabilitate a historic theatre. Recent nominations go into great detail about the history, design and integrity of the properties, which can prove useful in planning a rehabilitation project. Of the theatres not listed in the National Register, two are privately owned and their rehabilitation was privately financed. Neither owner felt the need to seek tax credits that National Register listing makes possible. Both owners stated that they did not want to deal with the review process, or be told how to rehabilitate their properties.

Listing in the National Register does not guarantee a property protection from demolition or inappropriate alterations; but if a National Register-listed or National

Register-eligible property is seeking funding or a permit from a state or federal agency, the project will require a review under Section 106 of the National Historic Preservation Act or Section 14.09 of the New York State Historic Preservation Act. The New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO), which is part of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, conducts the review. For properties applying for federal preservation tax credits, after a New York SHPO review, the National Park Service gives final approval. It is through these evaluations, triggered by funding or permits, that the National Register may be able to help to protect a historic property from inappropriate changes.

Eight of the theatres in the study underwent reviews by the New York SHPO during their rehabilitation projects: Avon Opera Block, Clayton, Earlville, Fredonia, Hudson and Smith Opera Houses, Troy Music Hall and Proctors (Appendix 4). Reviews of these projects were important in helping to craft rehabilitation projects that maintained the integrity of the historic theatres. Some recent issues of maintaining integrity included adapting new LED message boards to historic theatre marquees, stage expansions, accessible seating, adapting new equipment, and design of theatre additions.

Local Landmark/District Designation

Historic resources are protected at the local level through historic preservation ordinances. Local landmark designation provides a stronger level of protection for historic properties than listing in the National Register of Historic Places. The National Historic Preservation Act of 1966 gave local governments the power to create regulatory historic districts and landmarks through a preservation ordinance. Such laws enable a

municipality to designate local landmarks and districts and protect those designated properties through a review process. The local preservation law usually establishes a historic preservation board or commission to carry out the work of local preservation, but the law and commission can only be established after a municipality has been given this right by state government through enabling legislation, often known as the state historic preservation act. As of 2008, more than 2,300 communities had enacted historic preservation ordinances in the United States.

New York State's Historic Preservation Act was enacted in 1980. "Section 119-dd: Local Historic Preservation Programs" gives municipalities the rights to regulate historic properties, establish a landmark or historic preservation board or commission, and designate historic buildings or structures.⁸³ According to the Preservation League of New York State, approximately 170 communities in New York State have adopted some form of a historic preservation ordinance.⁸⁴ Seven of the communities in this study have adopted preservation ordinances: Albion, Cohoes, Hudson, Medina, Schenectady, Syracuse and Troy. For those communities considering the adoption of a preservation law, the New York State Historic Preservation Office offers a model ordinance.⁸⁵

⁸³ New York State Legislature, *New York State Historic Preservation Act*, (L. 1980, c.354).

⁸⁴ Tania Werbizky (regional director of technical and grants programs, Preservation League of New York State) in an email message to the author on February 1, 2013.

⁸⁵ The New York State Model Historic Preservation Law can be found at New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, "Certified Local Governments," <http://nysparks.com/shpo/certified-local-governments/documents/ModelLawForLocalGovernments.pdf>.

Because of the different levels of political support for preservation, most ordinances are tailored to meet the individual needs of the community and its historic resources.⁸⁶

In general, once a property is designated a local landmark or a contributing property in a local historic district, owners seeking to alter the exterior of the historic property, must apply for permit, generally known as a certificate of appropriateness (COA), from the historic preservation commission or other authority. In most cases, the historic preservation commission only has the right to review exterior changes.

In the case of a historic theatre where the interior may be just as, if not more, significant than the exterior, local landmark review, which usually only comments on exterior work, should also make recommendations on the interior. While interior changes to some forms of historic buildings may not drastically effect the building (for example converting an office building to a hotel or a hotel building to offices), changes made to the interior of a theatre space, especially its character-defining auditorium, could significantly impact the building's integrity. In reviewing the COA, the historic preservation commission will take into consideration the proposed changes and how they will affect the historic integrity of the property. Some communities have established voluntary design guidelines or mandatory standards to follow during the review process. Others may refer to the Secretary of the Interior Standards.

⁸⁶ Julia Miller, *A Layperson's Guide to Historic Preservation Law* (Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2008), 9.

Use of the Secretary of the Interior Standards

The National Parks Service has identified four types of intervention strategies when dealing with historic properties: preservation, rehabilitation, restoration and reconstruction.

Preservation places a high premium on the retention of all historic fabric through conservation, maintenance and repair. It reflects a building's continuum over time, through successive occupancies, and the respectful changes and alterations that are made.

Rehabilitation emphasizes the retention and repair of historic materials, but more latitude is provided for replacement because it is assumed the property is more deteriorated prior to work. (Both Preservation and Rehabilitation standards focus attention on the preservation of those materials, features, finishes, spaces, and spatial relationships that, together, give a property its historic character.)

Restoration focuses on the retention of materials from the most significant time in a property's history, while permitting the removal of materials from other periods.

Reconstruction establishes limited opportunities to re-create a non-surviving site, landscape, building, structure, or object in all new materials.⁸⁷

For each intervention strategy, the National Park Service has established specific standards, known as The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties. Along with the standards are guidelines for the property owner or professional working on a historic project. The Standards are composed of six to ten points, followed by Guidelines for "Recommended" or "Not Recommend" actions based on the Standards. The Standards are intended to promote preservation practices that will help protect our country's cultural resources.

⁸⁷ Introduction to Standards and Guidelines," National Park Service, "http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/standguide/overview/choose_treat.htm.

The Standards apply to the exterior and interior, related landscape features, the building's site and environment as well as new construction. When choosing an appropriate treatment, the building's historical significance, relative importance in history, physical condition, historic integrity, proposed use, and current code requirements are considered. Economic and technical feasibility should also be considered. In the case of historic theatres, especially those that are no longer in use, have fallen into disrepair and may be missing many historic features, rehabilitation is often the treatment chosen. Once a treatment is selected, the Standards provide guidance and ensure consistency.

Rehabilitation is defined in The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties as "the act or process of making possible a compatible use for a property through repair, alterations, and additions while preserving those portions or features which convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values."⁸⁸ Rehabilitation is also known as adaptive use.

When rehabilitation is chosen, alterations and additions to the building are allowed. New designs should be compatible with but not duplicate the original historic elements. "The rehabilitation standards are intended to guide project designs so that

⁸⁸ Kay D. Weeks and Anne E. Grimmer, *The Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties with Guidelines for Preserving, Rehabilitating, Restoring & Reconstructing Historic Buildings* (Washington, DC: U.S. Department of the Interior National Park Service, 1995), 61.

alterations, additions, and related new construction are compatible with and protect the integrity of the historic property and surrounding context.”⁸⁹

When reviewing historic theatre projects involving State or Federal actions such as funding, permits, or tax credits, the New York State Historic Preservation Office uses the Standards for Rehabilitation “since the project either assumes a new use (adaptive use) or a continued theatrical use requiring retrofit of technology, safety and building codes, production needs, etc.”⁹⁰ The ten Secretary of the Interior’s Standards for Rehabilitation address building use, retaining historic fabric, and designing compatible additions and alterations (Appendix 5).

While there is a degree of subjectivity to applying the standards, according to staff members who review projects at the New York State Historic Preservation Office, two of the most important guidelines to follow are: striving to retain as much historic fabric as possible, and replacing historic fabric in kind when the original doesn’t exist or is too damaged to repair so the historic character is maintained.⁹¹

Most likely theatres undergoing rehabilitation projects today will seek some type of government funding, either through tax credits or grants and will therefore need to apply the Standards for Rehabilitation to the project. Even those projects that move

⁸⁹ Norman Tyler, Ted J. Ligibel and Ilene R. Tyler. *Historic Preservation: An Introduction to Its History, Principles, and Practice* (New York: W.W. Norton & Company, 2009), 198.

⁹⁰ Julian Adams (community liaison coordinator/investment tax credit program coordinator, New York State Historic Preservation Office) email message to author, January 28, 2013.

⁹¹ Christine Capella-Peters (historic sites restoration coordinator, New York State Historic Preservation Office) in phone discussion with author, June 14, 2013.

forward with private financing would do well to consider these Standards if they hope to retain the integrity of the historic building.

Reuse vs. Adaptive Use and Form Follows Function

Rehabilitation retains portions or features of a structure that convey its historical, cultural, or architectural values, while making the re-use of the property possible. In some cases, reusing a historic building in a way very similar to its original or historic use may be possible; if it is not, adaptive use is considered. Rehabilitation allows the freedom to assign a new use to the historic property and make changes that support that use without harming the integrity of the property.⁹²

Not all historic theatres can be re-used as theatres, but converting them to a different use without impacting their integrity can be difficult. Theatres are use-defined spaces. The form of the theatre building (large open auditoriums filled with seating and an expansive open area for the stage house) was dictated by its function or use. The principle of “form follows function” coined by architect Louis Sullivan at the end of the nineteenth century is often associated with modern architecture and industrial design in the twentieth century. But that principle could also be applied to the design of the opera houses of the 1860s-80s and the motion picture palaces of the 1920s and 1930s.

Theatres do not lend themselves well to adaptive use without the risk of harming the historic fabric of the building when dividing the character-defining main auditorium into smaller spaces. Research for this study did not come across theatres in the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor that were adapted to a different use. All were re-

⁹² Tyler, Ligibel and Tyler, *Historic Preservation*, 197.

used or have plans to be re-used as performing arts spaces. But some historic theatres around the country have been adapted to a new use just to ensure that the building survives. The most successful rehabilitation projects are able to preserve as much of the historic fabric as possible.

For example, The Alva Theater in Morganton, North Carolina was converted into a photographer's studio and residence. The Chateau Dodge Theater in Rochester, Minnesota was rehabilitated into a Barnes and Noble Bookstore. The Riviera Theater in Charleston, South Carolina serves as an event venue and conference center.⁹³ In each case, the auditorium space was compromised before the new owner took possession. The three theatres owners worked to keep as much remaining fabric intact, but use as a theatre was no longer possible. The Alva, which had been converted to a disco in the late 1970s, was designated a local landmark under its new owner and is a contributing property in the Downtown Historic District. Although listed in the National Register, the Chateau was denied tax credits by the National Park Service because it added a second floor in the auditorium space and removed original tile flooring in the lobby. The Riviera, which does not have national or local landmark recognition, lost some historic fabric to a fire in the 1980s and removed seating on the main floor. In each of these cases, the owner or developer chose a new use for the building. Although some of the integrity of these theaters was lost, the communities still benefited economically by putting these buildings back to use.

⁹³ Leigh Scoggins Scott, "Encore: New Life for Historic Movie Theaters," (master's thesis, Goucher College, 2008), 40-75.

An inventory conducted by the League of Historic American Theatres (LHAT), lists 123 extant theatre buildings in New York State and includes links to the websites of the 50 theatres that are LHAT members.⁹⁴ The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor itself has a wealth of these building types. Twenty-seven historic theatres are listed on its website as open to the public for use as a theatre.⁹⁵ An internal unpublished survey conducted by the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor also lists fourteen theatres that are closed, in various stages of disrepair, but still standing. The theatres researched for this study have evolved over time and adapted to the wants and needs of their communities.

For each of the communities included in this study, all expressed a need for a performance venue, not a large bookstore, convention center or other adapted use. With the exception of Avon, Bent and Pratt Opera Houses, all of the buildings are being used for arts entertainment, both live and recorded. Even the Hudson Opera House whose second floor has not yet been rehabilitated, uses spaces on the first to carry out its arts and entertainment mission. Bent's, Pratt, and Hudson Opera Houses all have immediate or long-range plans to reopen their theatre spaces for arts and entertainment. By choosing to rehabilitate their historic theatres, these communities demonstrated their value of historic buildings and arts spaces in their cities, villages and towns. While preservationists prefer to retain a theatre's historic integrity, sometimes it is just not there to begin with. Historic theatres that lost character-defining features at the hands of a

⁹⁴ "New York Historic Theatres," League of Historic American Theatres, http://www.lhat.org/historictheatres/theatre_inventory/NY.aspx.

⁹⁵ "Things To Do: Historic Theatres," Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, http://eriecanalway.org/explore_things-to-do_art_historic-theaters.php.

previous owner, can still function as performing arts spaces and contribute to a community.

In comparing the various theatre types, most opera houses in this study retain their original form: commercial spaces such as storefronts and offices on the street level and the theatre's auditorium on an upper-level. Smith's Opera House still has commercial spaces, but its original theatre space changed from an opera house to a movie palace. Clayton, Fredonia and Hudson started out as a town/city/village hall with a theatre or auditorium. As some municipalities outgrew the space, new uses were found for the lower levels and in some cases the theatre space as well, or the theatres were left unused. Clayton and Fredonia still share their opera houses with the village hall. The Town of Avon has converted two former commercial buildings (The Avon Opera Block and the State Bank of Avon) into the new home for the Avon town offices and courts, and offices for the Avon Area Preservation and Historical Society. (For details on the use of space in theatre buildings originally and currently, see Appendix 6.)

The Capitol Theatre in Rome and Proctors in Schenectady were constructed as motion picture palaces with commercial and theatre space: Proctors has an arcade of indoor shops; the Capitol has two store-fronts. One is currently a health food store; the other, originally a candy shop where patrons purchased refreshments for the movie before the theatre had a concession stand, is now the theatre office. Proctors recently completed a major rehabilitation and expansion project, adding more space to the stage house area and enabling the organization to bring in the larger Broadway touring companies. It also created an arts center by purchasing adjacent buildings, opening a black box theatre in what was once part of a former department store, and a banquet facility in a former bank

building. The Capitol is about to embark on a similar project on a slightly smaller scale. The purchase of adjacent buildings that will allow the organization to expand its concession and lobby areas, create a black box theatre, and add space for offices, storage, a café and even some outdoor seating areas (Figure 19).



Figure 19: The Capitol Theatre in Rome, New York (far right) and two of the buildings it purchased for expansion [source: Gina DiBella, November 2012].

The smaller movie houses, The Ohmann Theatre in Lyons and The Palace Theatre in the Eastwood section of Syracuse, retain their theatre space, with some changes being made to the lobby and other areas. At the Palace, reducing balcony seating allowed for more comfortable seating and the expansion of the upper-level, non-theatre spaces. The original second floor ballroom was converted to an event room, with a commercial kitchen and office (Figure 20). On the first floor, two storefronts were combined for a bistro setting (Figure 21). Another storefront is rented. Both theatres screen films and have occasional live entertainment.



Figure 20: An event room on the second floor at the Palace Theatre in the Eastwood neighborhood of Syracuse, NY was once a ballroom [source: Gina DiBella, November 2012].



Figure 21: The bistro at the Palace Theatre takes up two former street-level storefronts [source: Gina DiBella, November 2012].

The historic theatres in this study can be divided into two groups – opera houses and movie theatres, with the exception of the National Historic Landmark Troy Savings Bank Music Hall, which was built exclusively for musical performances (Figure 22). Constructed above the main office of the Troy Savings Bank in 1875, “it is one of the most celebrated musical auditoriums in the United States and Europe.”⁹⁶ First Niagara Bank bought Troy Savings Bank in 2003 and continued to occupy the first floor until 2012. The bank space is currently vacant. The music hall is one of only a handful of nineteenth century concert halls that have been in continuous operation in the United States.

⁹⁶McClintock, *Troy Savings Bank Music Hall*.

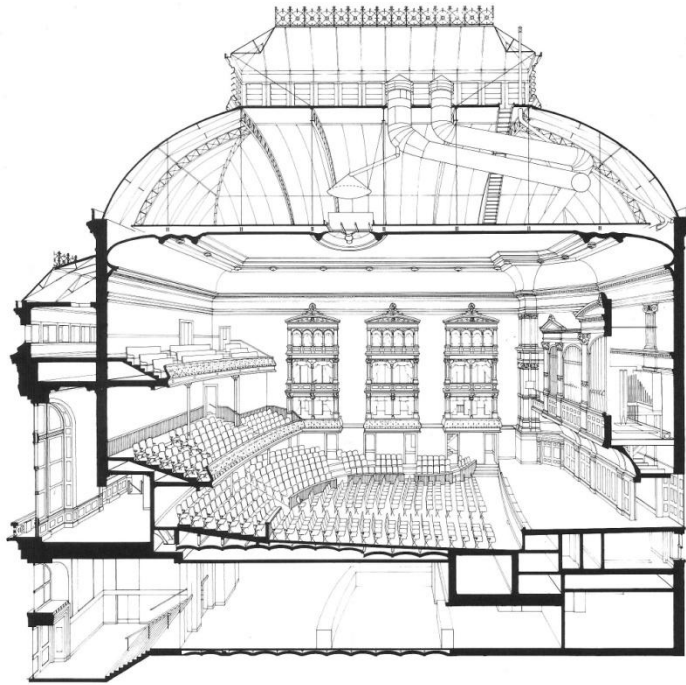


Figure 22: A drawing of the auditorium of the Troy Savings Bank Music Hall [source: Troy Savings Bank Music Hall].

Choosing to rehabilitate rather than restore or preserve a historic theatre allows for change and modernization without losing the building's historic integrity. At the same time, however, it still requires a need for careful planning to create a theatre building that can be used in the twenty-first century.

Moving into the Twenty-first Century: Codes, Technology and Green Practices

Some of the major challenges in a historic theatre rehabilitation project are the ability of the project to meet modern building codes, comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), and meet the needs of twenty-first century audiences. Along the way some projects may even incorporate practices that are environmentally responsible and resource-efficient.

Getting Up to Code

The cost of refurbishing the mechanical and electrical systems in a historic theatre is likely to be one of the largest expenditures of the restoration budget, often in the range of 20 to 50 percent of total project costs.⁹⁷ The heating, ventilation, and air conditioning (HVAC) system must provide adequate ventilation and temperature control for the comfort of the audience and performers. It must improve indoor air quality and accommodate new demands from stage lighting and technology added when a theatre is modernized. Most opera houses did not have air conditioning, and some motion picture palaces had an early form of air conditioning where air blown over ice cooled the building. When designing the HVAC system, noise should be kept to a minimum during operation, ensuring its operation does not impact the acoustic quality of the theatre.

Plumbing and electrical systems may need to be replaced or significantly upgraded to comply with modern codes and to accommodate performers and patrons. Fire safety (sprinkler) systems, restrooms, both in the dressing room area and at the front of the house, as well as concession areas, will require adequate plumbing. Bringing the electrical system up to modern requirements and code compliance is also critical. Power loads have increased significantly since opera houses and movie palaces were first built. “Today’s staging technology, lighting and theatrical equipment, as well as larger sized mechanical equipment; all demand more power and more efficiency.”⁹⁸

⁹⁷ Hautaluoma and Schoenfeld, *Curtain Up*, 7.

⁹⁸ V. Mitchell Lyles and David D. Woytek, Jr. “Re-Engineering America’s Historic Theatres.” *In League* 29, no. 4 (Winter 2006): 4.

Historic theatre rehabilitation projects must update to general building, fire and life safety codes. The most common codes concerning historic theatres are highlighted in Appendix 7.

The Americans with Disabilities Act of 1990 (ADA) which was amended in 2008, must also be considered when rehabilitating a historic theatre. The ADA is a civil rights law that prohibits, under certain circumstances, discrimination based on disability.

This law requires that all places of public accommodation (which includes theatres) “remove or mitigate architectural barriers – such as narrow doorways or inaccessible flights of steps, and communications barriers which are structural in nature – such as signage which does not have Braille characters, or alarm systems which have only audio alerts.”⁹⁹ Some theatres have installed elevators to allow access to their upper levels, but elevators can be a costly rehabilitation expense. According to the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, “the installation of an elevator in an altered facility that is less than three stories or has less than 3,000 square feet per story”¹⁰⁰ (except for shopping centers, malls, health care providers offices, stations used for public transportation or an airport terminal) is not required.

The Clayton Opera House added an elevator at the front of the building to access the basement and upper floors, but since the front of the building is only accessible through exterior steps up or down, a lift was installed in the new addition at the rear of the building to allow handicapped access into the building.

⁹⁹ Hautaluoma and Schoenfeld, *Curtain Up*, 5.

¹⁰⁰ Department of Justice, *2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design*, <http://www.ada.gov/regs2010/2010ADASTandards/2010ADASTandards.pdf>.

Restoration projects begun after January 26, 1992, must be fully accessible according to the ADA requirements. But there is a historic preservation clause:

In the case of a historic building, certain allowances may be made for the unique character of the building when determining what accessibility changes are necessary. Minimum requirements for accessibility must be met, however, and non-discriminatory programs and policies not related to the building's historic character must be implemented.¹⁰¹

There are several documents available from the Department of Justice including the current text of the ADA, the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design, and Guidance on the 2010 ADA Standards for Accessible Design.¹⁰² *Preservation Brief 32: Making Historic Properties Accessible* from Technical Preservation Services of the National Park Service is also a good reference for historic theatre owners.¹⁰³

Twenty-first Century Audiences and Performers

Besides improvements to mechanical and electrical systems and complying with modern building and safety codes, the theatre will also need to be brought up to the expectations of twenty-first century audiences and current requirements of present-day theatre business models. More often than not, the number and size of restrooms will have to be increased to accommodate patrons and reduce the wait in line during intermissions. If a theatre will be used for live productions, dressing rooms may need updating,

¹⁰¹ Hautaluoma and Schoenfeld, *Curtain Up*, 6.

¹⁰² The U.S. Department of Justice Americans with Disabilities Act website is accessible at <http://www.ada.gov>.

¹⁰³ *Preservation Brief 32* is available online at <http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/briefs/brief32.htm>.

increasing the number, size and amenities for today's performers. Besides the elevator lift for accessibility, the Clayton Opera House addition at the back of the building improved the dressing room area and increased storage and load-in space backstage.

The lobby and box office should also be studied. When they were built in the late nineteenth century, many opera houses either had a very small lobby or none at all. At the time, patrons usually did not leave their seats during a performance. As a result, opera house lobbies are rarely large enough to accommodate today's patrons. Motion picture palaces and movie houses were built with larger lobbies, but sometimes even they are not large enough to accommodate today's audiences who often purchase refreshments and use the restroom facilities during breaks in the performances.

In the same respect, original box offices, with one or two windows, might not be sufficient to accommodate impatient patrons of today. Proctors, which had three ticket windows, moved its ticketing area into the former Carl Company department store building, opening up the wall between the former store and the arcade. It now has six stations with computers to assist patrons with ticketing for all its venues and can add more if necessary.

Seating is an essential component when rehabilitating a historic theatre. Basic considerations include: safety and code requirements, comfort of air temperature and of the seats, visibility of the stage throughout the auditorium, and the number and location of seats for people with disabilities.¹⁰⁴ Historic theatre seats were about sixteen to eighteen inches wide; today's seats average about 20.5 inches (Figure 23). Current codes require fewer seats between aisles and more legroom (at least thirty-four inches from

¹⁰⁴ Hautaluoma and Schoenfeld, *Curtains Up*, 6.

back to back). If a historic theatre's seats were removed, a modern seating arrangement can be incorporated when designing the rehabbed auditorium. If the original seats still exist and are in good condition, it may be possible to restore them. Because seats are a major historic fabric of a theatre, projects reviewed by the New York SHPO will often require theatres to maintain or repair its original seats. Removal of some seats are usually allowed for accessible seating and the installation of a sound board. But the SHPO is reluctant to approve reconfiguring the original seats, when reviewing projects.¹⁰⁵

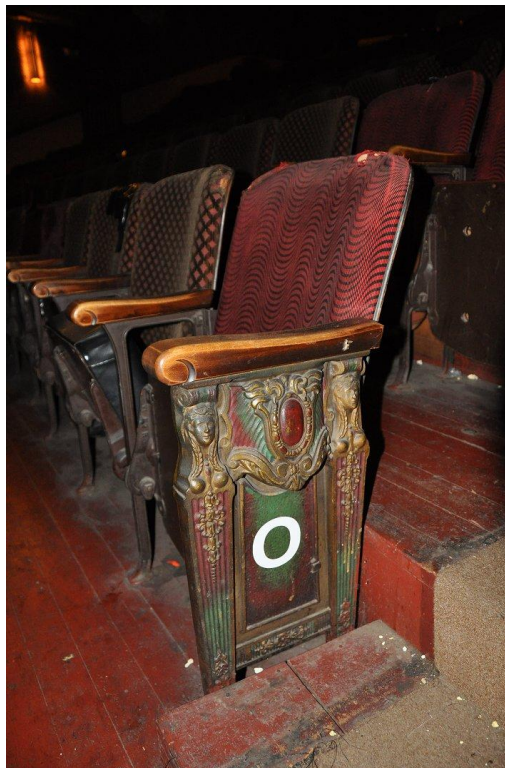


Figure 23: Original seats in the balcony of the Capitol Theatre [source: Gina DiBella, November 2012].

¹⁰⁵ Christine Capella-Peters (historic sites restoration coordinator, New York State Historic Preservation Office) in phone discussion with author, June 14, 2013.

Theatre Technology

Modern audiences may require more restrooms, larger lobbies and comfortable seats, but historic theatres will also need to consider the changes in theatre technology in order to bring their buildings into the twenty-first century. For those that remained functioning theatres, updates were probably made over the years; but vacant or underutilized theatres may require a total overhaul to accommodate today's entertainers and film screenings. In updating a theatre for new technology, care must be taken to make sound equipment, lighting equipment, and other necessary modern technology as inconspicuous as possible so the historic integrity of the theatre is not compromised. Modern equipment should be placed so that it appears natural and blocks as little of the architectural details as possible.¹⁰⁶ Many opera houses are noted for their excellent acoustics and care should be taken to maintain nineteenth century acoustics while adapting twenty-first century sound.

For theatres that retain the infrastructure of original technology, such as hemp ropes for rigging or the metal trough for gas footlights, decisions will need to be made on whether or not to incorporate them into the rehabilitation. Certainly today's fire codes will not allow for lighting powered by gas and flames, but perhaps these features can be retained in some way. For example, if the rigging is updated with modern ropes or cables, one or two lines of hemp could be retained. Or the in place of gas footlights, electrical footlights can be installed in the metal trough.

The types of programming that occur or will occur in the historic theatre are an important consideration in planning for technological upgrades. Some questions to ask at

¹⁰⁶ Hautaluoma and Schoenfeld, *Curtains Up*, 9.

the beginning of the planning process include: Will the theatre organization host small theatrical productions or does it want to bring in Broadway touring shows? Will it welcome stand-up comedians and solo musicians, or stage dance performances and rock concerts? If movies are screened in the theatre, will they be classics or first runs?

The size of the stage house area, which includes the stage itself, the wings on either side of the stage, and the fly space where the rigging is located and drops are suspended when not in use, needs to be taken into consideration. Historic theatre stages are sometimes too small to accommodate modern performances. For those theatres that keep their programming on a small scale, the size of the stage house may work out fine. For others who hope to bring in large-scale productions, some alterations may be needed to enlarge the stage house. Here is where a group of theatres can work together to meet the needs of their nearby communities. Broadway tours and big-named acts could perform at the larger venues, while more intimate entertainment can be hosted at the smaller theatres.

Proctors wanted the capability to bring in Broadway shows. During its most recent rehabilitation and expansion, the size of the main stage house was enlarged (Figures 24, 25, 26). The onstage deck area was increased by 65 percent; the stage right wing was widened by more than 30 feet. Three loading doors now give access to a 20 foot by 30 foot crossover area behind the stage house.¹⁰⁷ While making such changes to the stage house did not reduce the integrity of the historic theatre's auditorium space, Proctors wanted to demolish a building behind the original theatre to gain this extra space

¹⁰⁷ John Faust, "Proctors: A Performing Arts Center Turning Around Downtown Schenectady with Historic Preservation," Submission to the League of Historic American Theatres for Outstanding Historic Theatre award, 2009.

and negotiated with the New York State Historic Preservation Office in order to get approval.



Figure 24: The 2005 stage house addition to Proctors from the exterior [source: Gina DiBella, December 2012].



Figure 25: The stage area increased by 65 percent, with thirty feet added to the stage right wing [source: Gina DiBella, December 2012].



Figure 26: A new load-in area runs the length of the back of the stage and has three garage doors to allow easy access from the exterior [source: Gina DiBella, December 2012].

Theatres that screen films face another technological challenge, the switch to digital projection. By the end of 2013, movie studios will stop distributing their products on 35mm film and switch to digital technology. Digital movies are higher quality and less expensive to produce and distribute. If a theatre wants to continue to show films made after 2013, it must replace its film projector with a digital one. While the Proctors mainstage was adapted from a film palace to an enlarged live performance venue, the organization did not eliminate movie screenings. Instead, it converted part of an adjacent former department store into a state-of-the-art film venue and black box theatre. The GE Theatre can screen movies (film, digital, and large format) and host live theatrical performances, meetings and conferences.

However, the switch to digital is a costly proposition for small independent theatres, with the cost of digital projectors ranging from \$75,000 to \$100,000. Small theatres around the country and in the Canalway Corridor are trying to find ways to fund the switch. The Palace Theatre in Lockport has started a fundraising campaign called “Project Projector” to raise money for the purchase of new digital equipment.¹⁰⁸ Ten small-town theatres in New York’s North Country have joined together to raise funds for digital projectors. “Go Digital or Go Dark” is a collaboration between the theatres and the Adirondack North Country Association, the Adirondack Film Society, and the state of New York.¹⁰⁹ This is an excellent example of how theatres that might be thought of as

¹⁰⁸ “Project Projector,” Historic Palace Theatre (Lockport), <http://www.lockportpalacetheatre.org/projectprojector/index.php>.

¹⁰⁹ Keith Lobdell, “Local theaters unite to raise funds for digital equipment,” *Adirondack Journal*, April 25, 2013, <http://www.adirondackjournal.com/news/2013/apr/25/local-theaters-unite-raise-funds/?page=1&>.

competitors can work together to retain a quality of life in their region. Small, independently-owned movie theatres might not be able to raise funds for such an endeavor on their own, but as is often said, there is strength in numbers and a combined effort could very well result in a successful fundraising campaign for all involved, with the end result being that the theatres stay open for business, showing current films and classic films.

Sustainability Through Green Practices

Green building practices aim to reduce the environmental impact of buildings. While sustainability proponents claim the greenest building is the building that doesn't get built, historic preservationists contend that "the greenest building is the one that is already built." In itself, reusing or reopening a historic theatre is a green practice. The green building movement in the U.S. originated from the need and desire for more energy efficient and environmentally friendly construction practices. Also known as sustainable design, building (or retrofitting) green offers environmental, economic, and social benefits. Green building combines a number of practices, techniques, and skills to reduce and eliminate the impact buildings have on the environment and human health. It often emphasizes the use of renewable resources.¹¹⁰

Energy savings ideas should be implemented into any historic theatre rehabilitation project. The U.S. Green Building Council has outlined energy savings design concepts in its Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED)

¹¹⁰ "Green Building," U.S. Environmental Protection Agency, <http://www.epa.gov/greenbuilding/index.htm>.

program.¹¹¹ LEED is intended to provide building owners and operators guidance in identifying and implementing practical and measurable green building design, construction, operations and maintenance solutions.¹¹² None of the theatres in the study have sought LEED certification, but most are taking sustainability into consideration by incorporating environmentally friendly practices, such as recycling paper, cardboard, glass and plastic, using energy efficient light bulbs or switching to LED lights which use less electricity, monitoring their heating and cooling, and using serving products such as glasses that are guaranteed to decompose. These small actions can add up to significant savings in operating costs.

During the rehabilitation project at the Avon Opera Block, the town of Avon discussed incorporating green initiatives into their plans. A geothermal exchange system was installed for heating and cooling the rehabilitated building. The system uses the constant fifty degree temperature of the ground and draws heat or cooling from the water to provide to the office area.

In addition to a concern for the environment, theatres seek “green” solutions because their complex business models require them to reduce costs associated with energy consumption. Proctors is the largest theatre in the study and perhaps the most conscious of the impact it might have on the environment and on ways it can save on energy costs. On Proctors’ website, a section on “Proctors and the Environment” states

¹¹¹ Mitchell and Woytek, “Re-Engineering Theatres,” 5.

¹¹² “LEED,” U.S. Green Building Council, <http://www.usgbc.org/leed>.

that “we are committed to reducing the impact we have as substantially as we can and consider new ways to accomplish that on a continuous basis.”¹¹³

Proctors has a central heating/cooling and electric generation facility on site that uses natural gas, but is able to reduce the organization’s carbon footprint (Figures 27 and 28). The plant supplies electricity to Proctors, and uses the waste heat from that power generation along with traditional boilers to supply hot and cold water to seven neighboring businesses for heating and cooling. In winter, the sidewalks around the Proctors block are heated from its energy plant, melting snow on public walkways, eliminating the need for two-cycle snow blowers, chemical and salt applications to the sidewalks, and reducing the risk of slipping and falls by its patrons.



Figure 27: The Proctors energy plant from the exterior. The new building is on the right, the theatre on the left [source: Gina DiBella, December 2012].



Figure 28: Interior of the Proctors energy plant [source: Gina DiBella, December 2012].

¹¹³ “Proctors and the Environment,” Proctors, <http://www.proctors.org/proctors-and-environment>.

Conclusion

Historic theatre buildings are significant to their communities culturally, historically and architecturally. Challenges await an organization taking on the rehabilitation of a historic theatre. Whether approaching it from a preservation point-of-view or a performing arts angle, compatible goals can be set and compromises made by both disciplines that will fulfill the needs of a performing arts organization and maintain the integrity of the building. Before a project begins, careful consideration should be given to the building's location, setting, design, materials and workmanship, as well as the feelings the building presents and the historic people and events that are associated with it.

Most historic theatre projects focus on rehabilitation and adaptive use rather than complete restoration or preservation. Adapting a historic theatre for modern use while maintaining architectural and historic integrity is key to a successful restoration project and involves making careful decisions on the work to rehabilitate its historic features, bring it up to code, and make it comfortable for today's audiences and performers. Consideration should also be given to how the theatre will impact the environment.

For theatres listed in the National Register or designated local landmarks, the National Register or local landmark documentation can serve as a guide to maintaining integrity. But whether or not the building has any type of landmark designation, understanding and using the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation as a resource will ensure that the rehabilitation work is being done appropriately.

For help and guidance through the maze of standards, guidelines, codes, requirements, and design issues, owners and organizations involved with the

preservation, rehabilitation and operation of historic theatres can seek the advice of experienced professionals in the field: architects, engineers, theatre designers and historic preservation consultants. These professionals understand when to repair, replace, or refurbish materials and equipment. They also know the impact systems, equipment and changes can have on the historic fabric of the structure.

Another set of challenges exist for theatre owners/organizations as they seek to craft business plans. The following chapter focuses on the planning involved in bringing a theatre space/building back to life. It examines the structure of the theatre organization through its ownership, management and business models. The chapter also explores what is needed to sustain the building and its programs including marketing and programming strategies.

CHAPTER IV BUSINESS PLANNING

Theatres, like churches, were built with a specific use in mind. Adapting a theatre for a contemporary use is challenging, especially if maintaining architectural and historic integrity is a priority. As the theatres in this study show, the best use of a historic theatre is as a theatre or performing arts venue. But it's one thing to dream of restoring a historic theatre and another to actually do it. Some would-be theatre owners may hold that "field of dreams" philosophy that if you restore it, "they" will come. Planning on many different levels – from determining ownership and management, to devising how it will stay in business – is necessary before one can even imagine opening night.

When contemplating a historic theatre project the motivation behind the project is important to consider. Is this a building requiring a use, a use in need of a building, or a city seeking a redevelopment anchor? The project can be approached from a preservation or a use angle. A village may be home to a vacant theatre building waiting to be brought back to life. A community might want a venue for live entertainment and concerts, or to exhibit films. Or perhaps a city is searching for a catalyst to spur on the rebirth of its downtown. A combination of factors were present in many communities in this study: a historic theatre needing rehabilitation, a desire to open a performing arts venue, and the hope that such a project could revitalize the commercial district.

Determining the motivating factors behind a historic theatre project also brings up questions regarding its management needs: Who will manage the building through its

rehabilitation? Who will manage programming and maintenance of the building once the theatre is functioning? Can it be the same organization? Whether a group approaches the challenge from a preservation perspective or a programming perspective, both sides should be kept in mind during the planning process.

Revitalizing a historic theatre is a process that can be approached and designed in several different ways. The outcome of the project is as particular to a community as the theatre itself. Janis A. Barlow, a theatre research, planning and management consultant from Toronto, Ontario, Canada, details a ten-part process in the paper “Steps in Theatre Project Planning.” The process is “a framework for theatre planning based on conventional business and project management models. The plan itself is a tool, a snapshot in time which is the basis for action, communication and replanning the project as necessary.”¹¹⁴ The plan, however, should be flexible and able to change when necessary.

The League of Historic American Theatres (LHAT) outlines Barlow’s ten-step process by dividing it into three areas: Assessing Project Potential, Developing the Project Plan, and Implementing the Project Plan (Table 3). The order taken may differ from project to project and many components may be completed at the same time, but all should be considered for a successful theatre project. Many theatres included in this study demonstrate the importance of planning for the use and operation of a theatre facility and carefully examined the feasibility of the success of their projects.

¹¹⁴ Janis A. Barlow, “Steps in Theatre Project Planning,” Janis A. Barlow & Associates, <http://www.barlowandassociates.com/STEPS%20IN%20THEATRE%20PROJECT%20PLANNING.htm>.

10 Steps in Historic Theatre Rescue, Restoration,
Rehabilitation, and Adaptive Reuse

Assessing Project Potential

1. Research and Goal Setting
2. Community Consultations
3. Financial Planning
4. Site Stabilization

Developing the Project Plan

5. Planning and Feasibility Studies
6. Implementation
7. Consultant Selection

Implementing the Project Plan

8. Architectural Services
9. Business Start Up
10. Project Communications and Opening Night

Table 3: An outline of the ten steps recommended when considering a historic theatre project.¹¹⁵

Barlow recommends that a feasibility study be undertaken by an objective professional. The study will advise the community of the viability of the project, and will help it to qualify for funding through government agencies or private foundations.¹¹⁶ Such an evaluation can help determine if there's strong support for the arts in a community, who will use the theatre, who will manage the theatre, who might want to rent the theatre, and the size of the market from which the theatre will draw an audience. A study will also help with the perception of the theatre, how it fits into the community,

¹¹⁵ League of Historic American Theatres, *Historic Theatre Reuse, Rescue, Restoration, Rehabilitation and Adaptive Reuse Manual*, http://www.lhat.org/Libraries/Program_RFP_Docs/LHAT_Rescue_Rehab_Manual.sflb.ashx.

¹¹⁶ Barlow, "Steps in Theatre Planning," 4.

and how much the community is willing to support both the restoration and the on-going operation of the theatre.¹¹⁷

Several theatres in the study area conducted feasibility studies prior to beginning a rehabilitation project: the Capitol Theatre, Earlville Opera House, Hudson Opera House, and Proctors. Such studies illustrate the importance of determining the need for the project and continue to guide a community as it works through the various phases of the rehabilitation.

The feasibility of a historic theatre project goes beyond the physical rehabilitation of the building. This chapter examines the three areas of a historic theatre project that will impact its ability to continue into the future after the initial rehabilitation project is completed: structure, sustainability, and innovative programming and marketing strategies.

Structure: Ownership, Management and Business Models

Before embarking on the restoration or rehabilitation of a theatre building, determining who will own the building, who will manage the theatre, and what the theatre's core business will be, are important to the project's success. Once a structure is in place it will guide future decisions for both the theatre project and organization.

¹¹⁷ Hautaluoma and Schoenfeld, *Curtain Up*, 3, 10.

Forms of Ownership and Management

Theatre buildings can be owned and/operated by municipalities, private commercial enterprises, nonprofit organizations, condominiums, or even cooperatives. In many instances the organization that owns the building may not be responsible for managing the theatre's operation. Forms of ownership and management structure for both the building and the theatre organization are as varied as the communities in which they are located.

Successful historic theatre rehabilitations can take a variety of ownership and management forms. They can be for-profit or nonprofit corporations, partnerships, or sole proprietorships, or a combination of ownership and operating entities. Cities, counties, states and even the federal government can be involved. Ownership might even change during the rehabilitation process.

A nonprofit organization is a useful choice for the type of entity to coordinate the public campaign to save a theatre and structure a planning process for the future operation of a theatre. A nonprofit educational institution, organized under section 501-c-3 of the Internal Revenue Code, does not have to pay sales or income taxes on profits related to its mission and can receive tax-exempt gifts from individuals, corporations and foundations, in addition to grants from government agencies.¹¹⁸

Sometimes the nonprofit's board of directors that guides and manages the rehabilitation process may not be the same board that will manage the operation of the theatre once it is open and running. The League of Historic American Theatres recommends that those chosen for the board of directors of a historic theatre

¹¹⁸ League of Historic American Theatres, *Manual*, 25.

rehabilitation project “should be knowledgeable enough about the organization’s goals to be effective advocates, and make a convincing case for your project.”¹¹⁹ At the same time, board members should understand that once the theatre is saved, the arts organization may end up having a completely different structure, run by different people.

Once a theatre is up and running, a variety of management scenarios and partnerships can be successful. Some municipalities own and operate historic theatres, other cities, towns or villages may own the theatre building, but contract with an independent organization to manage or rent the space. These organizations can include: downtown development authorities, community redevelopment agencies, or nonprofit organizations. Some nonprofit organizations may own and manage a theatre building, and get financial assistance from government subsidies, foundations and the community. Even private commercial operations can successfully own and operate a historic theatre.

In the study area, several examples of ownership/management scenarios exist (Appendix 8). The town of Avon owns the buildings in the Avon Opera Block (also known as Hall’s Opera Block and Clark’s Opera House). The buildings are managed by the town. The theatre itself has yet to be rehabilitated, but options are available for the town to manage the theatre or for a nonprofit organization to take over. The town of Clayton and village of Fredonia own their historic theatre buildings, but nonprofit organizations manage the theatres. These municipalities also use non-theatre spaces for their village offices (Figures 29 and 30).

¹¹⁹ Ibid.



Figure 29: The Town of Clayton offices are located in the lower level of the opera house [source: Gina DiBella, September 2012].



Figure 30: The Village of Fredonia Police and the Village Hall are both located in the 1891 Fredonia Opera House [source: Gina DiBella, October 2012].

In Rome, Earlville, Cambridge, Hudson and Geneva, the buildings are owned and managed by a nonprofit organization. The Hudson Opera House still shows evidence of its original use as the city hall with the words “City Hall” engraved in the sidewalk outside the main entrance. But while it stands on the corner of Warren Street and City Hall Place (Figure 31), the offices for the City of Hudson moved a quarter of a mile down Warren Street and the opera house building is now owned and operated by the nonprofit Hudson Opera House, Inc.



Figure 31: The Hudson Opera House was once the Hudson City Hall. It stands on the corner of City Hall Place and Warren Street [source: Gina DiBella, December 2012].

Four entities are involved with the Troy Savings Bank Music Hall. The performance hall is housed on the second, third and fourth floors of a commercial building originally owned by Troy Savings Bank and currently owned by First Niagara Bank. When Troy Savings Bank still owned the building, its board voted to split the property into condominiums. The Troy Savings Bank Music Hall Foundation became owner of the hall space and Troy Savings Bank retained the bank space on the first floor. Both share building systems. The maintenance and upkeep of the building is provided by the Troy Savings Bank Charitable Foundation, which also underwrites some programming. In the late 1970s, when there was concern about how the music hall would survive, Troy Savings Bank Music Hall Corporation, a nonprofit organization, was created to facilitate the continued use of the hall. Today it is the presenting organization and provides management services for all other users of the hall.

Proctors in Schenectady is managed by the nonprofit Arts Center and Theatre of Schenectady (ACTS). PT Redevelopment, a wholly-owned subsidiary of ACTS and for-profit LLC, owns the buildings in order to take advantage of tax credits.

Two of the theatres in the study are owned by private individuals and operated commercially. Both were owned and operated for most of their existence by the families who built them. The Palace Theatre in the Eastwood neighborhood of Syracuse has been owned and operated by members of the DiBella family for all but 16 years, from 1939 to 1955 when it was leased by the Schine theatre chain (Figure 32). Alfred DiBella, grandfather of the current owner, Michael Heagerty, built the neighborhood movie house in 1924. Mr. Heagerty's aunt, Frances DiBella, operated the theatre until the mid-2000s. She left the theatre to Michael who now operates it as a theatre and event facility.



Figure 32: Exterior of the Palace Theatre in the Eastwood neighborhood of Syracuse, NY [source: Gina DiBella, November 2012].

The Ohmann Theatre was built in 1915 by Burt C. Ohmann (Figure 33). In addition to showing silent films, it also was host to vaudeville shows. The Ohmann family owned and operated the theatre through the 1980s when it was sold. The theatre closed in 1993 and sat vacant for several years. In 2005, Bob Ohmann, grandson of the builder and original owner, bought the building and rehabilitated it, hoping it would help bring life back to the village of Lyons. Since he lives in North Carolina, Mr. Ohmann hired a manager to take care of the day-to-day management of the building.



Figure 33: The Ohmann Theatre in Lyons, NY was rehabilitated by the grandson of its builder [source: <http://www.waymarking.com>].

The current owners, both descendents of the families who built the theatres, used private funding to rehabilitate their theatres. The theatres remain privately owned, commercial entities. Neither is listed in the National Register or as a local landmark. For the owners, that meant they were able to move their plans forward without design reviews or limitation on changes or improvements they wanted to make. Both felt that was important. At the same time, however, they were financially responsible for the

entire project during its rehabilitation and continue to be financially responsible for the continued operation of the theatre business.

The two opera houses in the study about to embark on rehabilitation projects have different forms of ownership. Bent's Opera House is owned by the Orleans Renaissance Group, Inc., a nonprofit organization. Pratt's Opera House is owned by private individuals Michael Bonafede and Judy Koehler, who are making plans to transfer ownership to a nonprofit organization.

Each form of ownership/management has its benefits and disadvantages. For example, a nonprofit might reap the benefits of a municipally-owned building having little or no rent, free utilities, and maintenance covered by the municipality, but sometimes the repairs and alterations that a theatre needs aren't always considered important expenditures by the municipality and may be put off for several years. Nonprofit organizations and governmental agencies can qualify for certain grants and funding not available to commercially-owned organizations, but they cannot apply for tax credits (which is one reason why Proctors is currently owned by a for-profit LLC). Private owners might qualify for tax credits, but usually cannot get the grants or other funding that may only be available to nonprofits. If private owners aren't interested in tax credits, and decide to finance their rehabilitation projects completely with private money, they do not need to deal with review and approvals often required of projects receiving tax credits or other government funding.

Primary Business Model

Knowing who will own and manage a historic theatre is an important piece of the puzzle, but equally important is determining how it will operate. A feasibility study that includes a needs analysis can assist in determining the best business model for a theatre in a particular community. Depending on the size of the theatre and the market it will serve, three possible programming arrangements exist: rental house, presenting house, and producing house. Most theatres in the study are a combination of these arrangements.

A rental house is a theatre that rents its space to other groups who hold performances or special events.¹²⁰ The facility is rented to a user for a fixed rate or a minimum amount, plus a percentage of box office receipts. The theatre is not responsible for the choice or promotion of the event. This type of arrangement has the least possible risk for a theatre.

The Palace Theatre in Eastwood/Syracuse is a rental house. Other groups and organizations rent out the theatre or one of the event areas for a film screenings, concerts, comedy shows, private parties, weddings, and even church services.

A presenting house contracts with performers, puts together a calendar of events, and is responsible for promoting the events, selling the tickets and sometimes raising program sponsors. The theatre organization pays a fixed fee or forms a cost-profit sharing agreement with the performing group. It is responsible for promoting the event and hopes to recover costs and make a profit from ticket sales. A presenting house assumes more risk for the success of a particular event than a rental house.¹²¹

¹²⁰ Smith, "Rescuing Main Street Theatres," 7.

¹²¹ Ibid.

Most of the theatres in the study are primarily presenting theatres. Proctors mainstage brings in touring Broadway shows, concerts and other entertainers. On a smaller scale, the other theatres book musicians, comedians, dance troupes, films and small theatre groups to perform at their venues.

A producing house produces its own performances, hiring or contracting with actors, musicians, scriptwriters and technical staff.¹²² A resident producing company will create, finance and promote a show. Costs will be recovered through ticket sales, sponsorships, and funding from corporations, foundations, investors, and/or licensing agreements. Producing involves more financial risk, but if a show or performance is a success the rewards can be great.¹²³

Cohoes Music Hall has its own resident producing company, C-R Productions and Hubbard Hall in Cambridge has two: the Hubbard Hall Opera Theatre and Hubbard Hall Theatre Company (Figure 34).

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Ibid.



Figure 34: Hubbard Hall has two resident producing theatre companies that perform at the Hall and at other sites in the area [source: Gina DiBella, December 2012].

Many of the theatres in the study operate as a combination of these three models. Most operate primarily as presenting houses, but supplement their income by renting their facilities to outside groups. Those theatres that primarily produce programs will also rent to other organizations.

Developing a Business Plan

Once a theatre's operation and use are determined, a business plan should be developed. The business plan addresses: mission statement and company profile, community needs/industry trends, marketing plan, operating policies, human resources and financial plans.¹²⁴

Mission, values, and vision should be considered when establishing a theatre organization, or as soon as possible, if it is already up and running.

¹²⁴ Barlow, "Steps in Theatre Project Planning," 6.

Mission, values, and vision are the glue that holds an organization together. They describe what you're trying to do, how you want to go about it, and where you're headed. Knowing these things helps to keep your organization on track. It gives you a yardstick you can always use to measure your present performance and plans against your aspirations.¹²⁵

Mission is why an organization exists. For an organization to remain dynamic it must be reexamined and refreshed on a regular basis. A group's values manifest in everything it does, from its public programs to how it operates. Values help an organization choose among priorities and provide guidelines for working together. Vision is a powerful motivator and keeps an organization moving forward.¹²⁶

The eleven nonprofit organizations that own or manage theaters in this study refer to culture, art and the performing arts in their mission statements (Appendix 9). Eight statements reference the historic theatre itself, including its preservation, restoration or reuse. The fact that the statements mention being located in a historic building is proof that the building is a vital part of the reason these organizations exist. Two organizations (Hudson Opera House and Proctors) don't mention preservation or the building, but focus on economic development. Incidentally, these theatres have had a tremendous impact on the revitalization of their communities. As theatres play more and more of a role in community development, existing and new theatre organizations should consider incorporating all these aspects – the arts, preservation, and economic development – into their missions.

¹²⁵ Don Adams, "The Pillars of Planning: Mission, Values, Vision," National Endowment for the Arts, <http://www.nea.gov/resources/Lessons/ADAMS.HTML>.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

A business plan is key to enabling donors (including individuals, corporations and foundations) to take an organization seriously. The plan should outline how the theatre will be rehabilitated, and once it is reopened, how it will operate, be managed, and be marketed.

Two financial statements are important to a business plan: a sources and uses of financing budget and an operating *pro forma*. The sources and uses budget is a spreadsheet that details the major sources of financing for the rehabilitation project and the ways that financing will be used. An operating *pro forma* shows how the theatre will make money and includes such information as: number of people who will attend different types of events, ticket costs for those events, income earned from renting the theatre to other groups, income from annual fundraising, income from food and beverage sales, and so forth. The *pro forma* should extend at least seven years into the future.¹²⁷

Sustainability

Determining a historic theatre's ownership and management, its primary business model, and business plans for both the rehabilitation phase and the reuse phase, are only the beginning of the planning process. For a historic theatre project to be truly successful it should also be sustainable. While environmental sustainability was addressed in the previous chapter, a historic theatre also needs economic and social sustainability. It needs the support of the community; it needs funding to keep it going; and it needs to connect with a number of organizations that can offer expertise in a variety of areas.

¹²⁷ Smith, "Rescuing Main Street Theatres," 8.

Community Engagement

Getting the community to buy into a historic theatre project is key to its success. And the best way for community members to embrace a project is to be involved with it right from the start. Residents from the community, from neighboring communities, and others with ties to the community should be asked for their thoughts and ideas about the theatre and its potential uses. Their input will allow a theatre organization to determine what types of theatre uses and programming will draw people to the facility.

Those who have been through the process advise: “Listen to your community, involve them early on, and they will invest emotionally in the success of the project. Build relationships that will serve the project now, and after the theatre is open.”¹²⁸ If community members develop a feeling of ownership and truly embrace the theatre as their own, they will support saving the building; they will vote for a bond issue that might benefit the project; they will donate their time and money, and eventually they will become ticket-buying patrons.

Beyond asking members of the community for their thoughts and ideas, finding a way to get them to participate directly in the rehabilitation project and running of the theatre is important. Involvement can range from being a member of the board of directors, to serving on a particular committee, to offering advice in an area of expertise, to volunteering at one or more events. All of the working theatres in the study that are run by nonprofit organizations make use of members of the community in these ways.

Most of the working theatres in the study, except those that are privately owned and operated, are nonprofit organizations, governed by a board of directors. The board of

¹²⁸ League of Historic American Theatres, *Manual*, 18.

directors is responsible for overseeing the organization and connecting it to the community. Maintaining a connection to the community and being accountable to it is the responsibility of the theatre nonprofit organization and its board. Many members of an organization's board of directors are local residents and usually have the greatest responsibility and greatest potential for making the organization successful.¹²⁹ Beyond the board of directors, community members can get involved with the theatre organization in a number of ways: serving on committees such as programming, arts and education, finance, membership, development, public relations, or building issues; or participating in focus groups that discuss topics regarding the theatre. As advisors, they can share their knowledge and expertise. Those wanting to help on a limited basis can be supporters, giving something tangible such as money, in-kind donations, or their time to move forward the organization's purpose.

All the nonprofit theatres in the study depend greatly on volunteers to assist with events and even day-to-day operations at the theatre. Typically, the paid staff at historic theatres is small, consisting of an executive director, technical theatre manager, box office manager, and possibly a director of development. So volunteers are a very important part of their operation. Earlville Opera House (Figure 35) has 300 volunteers who contributed over 3,000 hours of their time to the opera house. Smith's Opera House's 135 volunteers assist with concessions, fundraising, office work, distributing marketing materials, building maintenance, coordinating special events, working in the

¹²⁹ Marc Smiley, *Board Development for Nonprofit Preservation Organizations* (Washington, DC: National Trust for Historic Preservation, 2000), 7-9.

gift shop and serving as ushers. Even with its full time staff of 72 and part-time staff of 30, Proctors still has 1,200 volunteers who help out in all aspects of the organization.

Having the support and involvement of the community is vital to moving a theatre project forward and enabling it to endure into the future.



Figure 35: The Earlville Opera House has operated as a volunteer-based nonprofit since 1971 [source: <http://www.panoramio.com>, date unknown].

Financial/Fundraising

Equally important to the sustainability of a historic theatre project is funding. Money is needed for both the rehabilitation of the building and for its continued operation and programming. In both cases, financing should be sought from a variety of sources. A capital campaign is one of the first sources of funding for a historic theatre project. A good portion of a capital campaign starts with contributions from the community. Each contribution, no matter how large or small, represents a vote of support for the project. Sometimes those who are unable to give of their time to the theatre will give of their money.

Earlville Opera House’s “A+ Campaign” is working at “keeping the past present,” by telling potential donors that “only you can help us make the grade” ... A+ for Arts, Accessibility, Architecture, All Ages, Air Conditioning and Audiences – all areas that will benefit from the campaign and use of the facility.

Smith’s Opera House’s “Center Stage Act II – Raise The Curtain” capital campaign (which follows its Centennial campaign in 1994 and its Center Stage campaign in 1998) enables donors “To Be A Star” and sponsor a star in its atmospheric ceiling; “Take a Seat” and sponsor a seat in the theatre; or “Pave the Way,” with an engraved brick that will line the sidewalk. All donations will assist in the next phase of rehabilitation and capital improvements planned for the theatre (Figure 36).



Figure 36: Progress of the Smith Opera House fundraising campaign is publicized on a poster in the ticket office [source: Gina DiBella, November 2013].

Hudson Opera House’s “Open the Door” campaign was held in 1996 as the theatre building rehabilitation was getting underway. Its current “Next Stage” campaign is geared at rehabbing the second floor, roof, restrooms, fire stairs and installing an

elevator. Each of these campaigns gives donors a sense that they have a role in the theatre rehabilitation – making the theatre more accessible, repairing or replacing seats, or re-lighting an iconic motion picture palace ceiling.

Besides individual donors, corporations and foundations often contribute to such campaigns. Corporations may support community development projects and arts-related activities, especially if they are publicly recognized for their involvement. A corporation might sponsor rehabilitation work on a particular feature of the building such as the marquee or the lobby; or it might want to sponsor the costs of a particular production or series. The black box GE Theatre at Proctors is named for General Electric, a corporation with important ties to Schenectady. Foundations often seek to support community-based activities and especially arts-related activities. Theatres in the study benefit from support of a wide range of corporations and foundations, in return they are recognized in the event programs, advertisements and announcements.

Gaining the support of local and state politicians early on in the project can help increase community support, and might also lead to appropriations from town, city, county or even state legislative bodies, if monies are available in their budgets.

Grants

The federal government's Community Development Block Grant program from the U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development (HUD) may be another option for funding. A project must meet one or more national criteria, which include eliminating slum and blight conditions and providing jobs for low-income residents. Historic theatre projects often fit those criteria. Communities with populations of 50,000 or more

automatically receive CDBG funds from HUD; other communities compete for funds at the state level.

New York's Environmental Protection Fund (EPF) Municipal Grant program offers matching grants to improve, protect, preserve, rehabilitate, restore or acquire properties listed on the State or National Registers of Historic Places and for structural assessments and/or planning for such projects (Figure 37). Funds are available to municipalities or not-for-profits with an ownership interest. The maximum award is \$500,000.



Figure 37: The Town of Avon received a New York State Environmental Protection Fund grant when it rehabilitated the Avon Opera Block and State Bank of Avon buildings for its town hall [source: Bero Architecture, 2009].

Communities designated Certified Local Governments (CLGs) may benefit from ten percent of the state's allocation of federal historic preservation funds. Along the Erie Canalway, nineteen communities have earned the status of CLGs, including those with

theatres in the study: Albion, Schenectady and Syracuse. In the past, grant awards have ranged from \$1,200 to \$29,000, with most in the \$5,000 to \$15,000 range. CLG funding may be applied to projects that address the goals of identifying, evaluating, nominating, and protecting a community's cultural resources.¹³⁰

State and local preservation nonprofits also offer grant options for historic theatre projects. For example, the Preservation League of New York State's grant programs, Preserve NY Grants and Technical Assistance Grants, have already impacted theatres in the survey. The Preserve NY grant program provides support for three types of projects: cultural resource surveys, historic structure reports, and historic landscape reports. The applicant must be a not-for-profit group with tax-exempt status or a unit of local government. Grants are likely to range between \$3,000 and \$10,000.

The Technical Assistance Grant (TAG) program was launched in 2012 to support projects that preserve New York State's cultural and historic resources. Grants of up to \$3,000 are available to not-for-profit arts and cultural groups and municipalities managing historic sites, museums, arts facilities and other culturally important institutions that are located in historic buildings and structures open to the public. Orleans Renaissance Group received a technical assistance grant to hire an architect for a building code study to determine how potential uses and rehabilitation plans could impact the function and integrity of the building. Many years ago, the Earlville Opera House also received assistance for an accessibility study through the Preservation League's former Rural New York grant program. (For a list of funding sources see Appendix 10.)

¹³⁰ "Certified Local Governments," New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, <http://nysparks.com/shpo/certified-local-governments/>.

Tax Credit Programs

The Federal government and New York State offer tax credit programs that can provide funding for historic theatre rehabilitation projects: the Federal Historic Tax Credit is a credit of ten or twenty percent of qualified rehabilitation expenses for income-producing buildings; the New York State Historic Tax Credit is twenty percent for residential or income-producing properties in a qualifying Census tract; and the New Markets Tax Credit is up to 39 percent for properties in a qualifying Census tract. A tax credit lowers the amount of tax owed, as opposed to an income tax deduction, which lowers the amount of income subject to taxation.

Congress established the New Markets tax credit program in 2002; in January 2013 the House of Representatives passed the American Taxpayer Relief Act, which included the extension of New Markets Tax Credits for 2012 and 2013.

In most cases, the organizations that rescue and rehabilitate historic theatres are usually nonprofit organizations or local governments, which have no income liability in which to apply the tax credits. Usually a for-profit partnership is formed between the nonprofit and an investor who is interested in using the tax credits. The investor uses the tax credits earned by the project and in turn invests cash into the project. In order to avoid the IRS reclaiming the tax credits earned, the new partnership must stay in place for five years (for historic preservation credits) or seven years (for New Markets credits) after the completion of the project. (See Table 4 for a summary of each program.)

Tax Incentives for Historic Theatre Projects

Name of Program	Amount of Tax Credit	Requirements	Review
Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit (20%)	20% of qualified rehabilitation expenditures	Non-residential, income-producing, certified historic structure (listed in or eligible for listing in the National Register of Historic Places).	Must meet Federal standards for rehabilitation as established by the Secretary of the Interior. Project reviewed by the NYSHPO and the NPS.
Federal Rehabilitation Tax Credit (10%)	10% of rehabilitation expenses	Non-residential, income-producing structure built before 1936. 50% of existing external walls must remain in place as external walls; 75% existing external walls must remain in place as external or internal walls; 75% of internal structural framework must remain in place.	No formal review process.
New York State Commercial Rehabilitation Tax Credit Program	20% of certified rehabilitation expenses	Income-producing, certified historic structure (listed in or eligible for listing in the State or National Register of Historic Places), located in a Federal Qualified Census Tract having a medium family income at or below State Medium Income level.	Must meet Federal standards for rehabilitation as established by the Secretary of the Interior. Project reviewed by the NYSHPO.
New Markets Tax Credits	39% on qualified equity investment in a community development entity. Funding capped by US government.	No historic requirement; can also be used on new construction. Must be located in Federal Census tract with at least a 20% poverty rate or household median income at or below 80% of the area or statewide median (whichever is greater).	No historic review required.

Table 4: Comparison of the various tax incentives available for historic theatre projects.

However, the amount of equity an investor contributes is rarely 100 percent of the total tax credits. The project's risk, competition from other tax credit investors, and the amount of legal work required will determine the amount an investor will pay on tax credits. Typically they pay between 90-95 cents per dollar of federal historic rehabilitation tax credits and only 50 to 65 cents per dollar for state historic tax credits or New Markets credits.¹³¹

Because of the many requirements and obstacles surrounding the various tax credits, it is highly recommended that a historic theatre project includes as part of its team an architect, accountant and attorney familiar with tax credits.

Other Tax-Related Financing Options

In New York State, payment in lieu of tax (PILOT) agreements provide a ten-year tax abatement to developers, encouraging development in particular areas. PILOT agreements give additional cash flow on a yearly basis and might make a site more attractive to a developer. Tax Incremented Financing (TIF), on the other hand, is a tool for leveraging private investment in redeveloping targeted distressed areas. A municipality will designate a particular area blighted and identify a private developer committed to investing in the areas redevelopment. When a building is rehabilitated, the value of the property and the volume of retail sales usually increase, enabling the local government to collect more in tax revenue. The municipality issues revenue bonds or notes to provide capital to pay for site preparation, parking garages, sidewalk

¹³¹ Smith, "Rescuing Main Street Theatres," 9.

improvements, and utility infrastructure that might be related to a particular project. The municipality then pays the bondholders out of the increment for the term of the bonds.

While TIF has been used for decades in other states, it hasn't been taken advantage of very often in New York. A recent amendment to New York's TIF statute allowing for the dedication of school taxes might make it another option to help with the historic theatre projects. School taxes are a large part of the local tax bill. If school districts opt into the program they will benefit from the redevelopment and gradual increase in the tax base.¹³²

Collaborations, Alliances and Partnerships

Working together with other organizations in a community helps to build up the strength and sustainability of a historic theatre and its programming. Collaborating, partnering or forming alliances can end up being mutually beneficial to all involved. New York State and the Erie Canalway area in particular have a wealth of programs that can assist both historic preservation projects and arts-related projects. Every area has some form of an arts or cultural council that can offer advice and assistance in programming. Looking to a wider network, the New York Council on the Arts has programming expertise and even financial assistance. Chambers of commerce and visitor's centers are found in most municipalities and New York State has several regional tourist bureaus that can help promote cultural sites and events. Local colleges, universities and even school districts with theatre programs would be formidable partners

¹³² Kelly Lamendola and Sharon Gay, "Tax Increment Financing: An Opportunity for Municipalities in New York," *Advanced/NY: The Bi-Monthly Newsletter of the New York State Economic Development Council* 1, no. 12 (June 2012): 2. Smith, "Rescuing Main Street Theatres," 10.

both for developing arts programming and bringing in audiences. A theatre organization just starting out, or one that has been around for decades, can always benefit from the advice of others. (A list of potential partners for historic theatre projects can be found in Appendix 11.)

To guarantee the success and sustainability of a historic theatre project and program, theatre organizations should work to involve the community, take advantage of a variety of funding opportunities, and be willing to seek the advice and assistance of people and organizations within and outside the theatre world.

Innovative Programming and Marketing Strategies

Once a historic theatre is up and running, programming will be at the heart of its operation. Programming will determine the theatre's success and future. A beautifully restored theatre is something to be proud of and worth boasting about, but without programming to draw the community into the building, no one will ever reap the benefits of the rehabilitation process.

Programming does not have to wait until the historic theatre is rehabilitated. Some theatres in this study began programs for their communities before their theatres opened to the public. For example the Orleans Renaissance Group, the nonprofit that has taken on the rehabilitation of Bent's Opera House, has been working for years to bring the arts to Orleans County. While the rehabilitation of the opera house is just beginning, programs are hosted around the community at area churches and establishments, including St. Mary's Roman Catholic Church. The theatre space of the Hudson Opera House is not yet rehabilitated, but that organization continues very successful

programming in the first floor rooms of the building – the Center Hall Gallery, the workshop, the West Room, and even in the East Room administrative offices, as well as venues off-site.

And for those organizations with finished theatre spaces, some programming goes beyond the auditorium walls. The theatre in the Earlville Opera House is not heated during the winter, so events are held in the more intimate galleries, workshop and Arts Café. The programs at Hubbard Hall in Cambridge have grown so much that they have expanded to the Beacon Feed Studio (dance and visual arts studio) and Freight Depot (black box theatre and gallery), which are on property adjacent to the hall.

Bringing programs to the community, even before completing a rehabilitation project, enables people to begin to value the organization's programming and demonstrated service to the community. As a result, participants may feel compelled to give to the rehabilitation project.

Another way nonprofit performing arts organizations can address their missions and serve their communities while building audiences for the future is through arts education programming. Several nonprofit theatres in the study offer some form of arts education. For example, Cohoes Music Hall, through C-R Productions, has a theatre summer camp for children and a resident youth acting company, where children can learn all aspects of theatre production. Earlville Opera House and Hubbard Hall offer classes and workshops for children and adults in everything from visual arts to music to dance, taught by local artisans and craftspeople. At the Hudson Opera House, programming also consists of lectures and readings, art workshops and activities for youth from toddlers to teens and adults. If a theatre hopes to sustain its mission over several years, it must look

to its future patrons. By developing programs for youth, pulling them away from their computers, televisions and videogames, it can foster interest in the theatre for a new generation.

A variety of programming can also help make a theatre a vibrant part of its community again. Programming supports the theatre organization, allowing it to continue into the future. While programming is key to sustainability, equally important is finding the right way to market the programs and the theatre itself.

Programming Strategies

Finding the right programming fit for a theatre and its community is an important step. Theatre organizations need to understand their communities and the type of programming that interest their markets. While the New York State Capital region will support a Broadway theatre series coming to the Proctors mainstage in Schenectady (which is just 15 miles from Albany and has a target market area of 850,000), the Capitol Theatre in Rome realizes that its location, between Syracuse and Utica (both with theatres that can accommodate Broadway productions), wouldn't work for Broadway productions at its theatre.

The theatres in this study examined their communities and planned programming around the existing facilities and the wants and needs of members of the community. Events include: musical artists, dance programs, films, small stage shows, lectures, comedians, magicians, concerts, and even live feed programs such as "Live from the Met" or TEDx (Technology, Entertainment, Design) conferences.

Some theatres are known for a special program or niche. The Capitol Theatre in Rome has a restored Möller Theatre Organ, originally used to accompany silent films. (Figure 38). Each summer at Capitolfest, films of the silent and early-talkie era are featured. This festival brings in patrons from as far away as Connecticut and Massachusetts. Cohoes Music Hall, known for its musical theatre productions, packs its season with shows like *Guys and Dolls*, *Hello Dolly*, *Rent*, and *Sleeping Beauty*, all produced by resident theatre company C-R Productions.



Figure 38: The Capitol Theatre's Möller theatre organ is used to accompany silent films [source: Gina DiBella, November 2012].

The majority of theatres in the study are presenting theatres, scheduling the performers, marketing the programs, and selling the tickets. Only a few, like Cohoes Music Hall and Hubbard Hall in Cambridge, produce programs with their own resident theatre groups. Hubbard Hall's Opera Theatre has performed in Cambridge and taken its

productions on the road to such places as the GE Theatre at Proctors and the Dorset Playhouse in Vermont.

But even a full season of entertainment might not be enough to support the day-to-day running of a theatre organization, so in-between performances these theatres also rent out their facilities for weddings, meetings, lectures, private parties, proms, memorial services, dance recitals and community meetings.

The Clayton Opera House, located on the banks of the St. Lawrence River in the 1000 Island Region of New York State, is rented for weddings with the ceremony in the theatre on the first floor and the reception in the large ballroom on the third floor (Figures 39 and 40). The 1891 Fredonia Opera House was chosen by New York Senator Kirsten Gillibrand when she needed a location in Western New York for a grants workshop for nonprofits. Smith's Opera House hosts the Geneva High School graduation. Proctors' Key Hall is a popular location for high school proms, while high school graduations are held in the mainstage theatre.



Figure 39: Setting up for a wedding ceremony in the Clayton Opera House [source: Gina DiBella, September 2012].



Figure 40: The third floor ballroom in the Clayton Opera House can be used for wedding receptions and other events [source: Gina DiBella, September 2012].

Most of these theatre organizations have expressed an interest in working with other theatres to share programming, but are concerned about which ones to partner with. To enable success for all organizations, they felt programming should be shared with theatres outside their markets. Programming would also need to fit the wants and needs of their communities. For the most part, theatres in the study arrange their own programming. Occasionally some partner with other theatre organizations to arrange for “block booking,” where presenting theatres or venues work together to book the same performer. This works best when the performer is touring through a certain geographical area by cutting costs for both the performer and the theatres. Venues get better deals from performers and entertainers are able to schedule more performances. Block booking is often arranged on an independent basis between one or two theatres, other times a networking organization such as the New York State Presenters Network or the New York Multi Arts Centers Consortium is involved.

The New York State Presenters Network was “developed to broaden access to artists, increase statewide touring and presenting, serve as a catalyst to develop performance opportunities for New York State based performing artists, and facilitate block booking and collaboration among presenters throughout the state.”¹³³ Presenters are those organizations that select and engage professional touring artists for a public audience.

The Network is working to identify specific challenges faced by presenters and develop solutions; create a New York State Performing Arts roster; and develop

¹³³ “About The New York State Presenters Network,” New York State Presenters Network, <http://www.nyspresenters.org/about.html>.

programs that will benefit New York State presenters. The organization has hosted meetings in New York City and Upstate New York and is working to facilitate communication between presenters and between presenters and artists. Its advisory committee consists of representatives from ten regions in New York State, including those in or near the Erie Canalway: Capital-Saratoga, Central-Leatherstocking, Chautauqua-Allegheny, and the Hudson Valley. The Network's Presenter/Artist Partnership Project is intended to develop the roster of New York State-based performing artists and offer financial support to New York State presenting organizations who partner with other presenters to engage roster artists in significant audience development initiatives in their communities.¹³⁴

The New York Multi-Arts Centers Consortium is a network for community arts center administrators, connecting them to the information, network and skills needed to deliver arts programming of the highest caliber for the benefit of a broad public in local and diverse communities across New York State. The consortium arranges professional development programs, peer-to-peer learning exchanges, mentorships, collaborative partnerships, and advocates for the benefits of multi-arts centers across the state.¹³⁵

Both the Network and the Consortium could be beneficial to historic theatre owners, directors, and managers in the canalway. These organizations may be able to assist with the development of shared programming among theatres, and can also

¹³⁴ "Presenter/Artist Partnership Project," New York State Presenters Network, <http://www.nyspresenters.org/presenterartist-partnership-project.html>.

¹³⁵ New York Multi Arts Centers Consortium, <http://nymacc.memberlodge.com/>.

facilitate networking opportunities, giving theatre staff the opportunity to make connections with similar organizations across the state.

Marketing Strategies

Keeping a historic theatre in business long after the rehabilitation project is completed depends on a number of components, some of which have been discussed throughout this chapter: community engagement, fundraising, collaboration with other organizations, and programming. Central to all these components is successful marketing: how a theatre organization gets the word out about itself and its programs.

The usual routes include: brochures, newsletters, and postcards announcing the season or a particular event; press releases and paid advertisements to the local media and other publications. In this high tech age, successful theatre organizations use websites, email blasts and social media such as blogs, Facebook, Twitter and YouTube to reach out to potential patrons and publicize upcoming events. Most of the theatres surveyed use many of these outlets to reach audiences.

Other strategies involve planning events or campaigns that grab the attention of the public, bringing patrons into the building or the area for an activity other than a performance. Guided tours are available at some theatres. Special events such as the Haunted Opera House program or the Holiday Artists Sale in Earlville are open to the public at no charge (although the sale is a great fundraiser for the organization). At Hubbard Hall, a Barbeque Spookfest in the fall and a Holiday Community Breakfast at Christmas help to raise funds for programs at that arts center, but also make the community more aware of its facilities. Winter Walk is a major event in Hudson,

bringing 20,000 or more people into the city each December. The Hudson Opera House is at the center of the event.

The Orleans Renaissance Group (ORG), owners of Bent's Opera House, created videos about the history of the opera house and the community and posted them on YouTube. Taking advantage of the recent popularity of ghost hunts, ORG planned a ghost hunt raffle as a fundraiser for the opera house. The winner will attend an investigation in the opera house with a paranormal investigation group from Buffalo.

Regionally, other organizations also help spread the word about local theatres. The Clayton Opera House is located in a community highly dependent on its summer residents. Programs are advertised in the 1000 Islands Performing Arts Brochure, along with twelve other performing arts venues in the 1000 Islands region of New York and Canada. The twenty Western New York theatre organizations in the Theatre Alliance of Buffalo work together to provide market awareness and support for the region's theatrical productions. At TheatreRocs.org, twenty-two theatre groups from the Rochester area share a website and information about programs. Instead of competing for each other's audiences, the shared publicity enhances the quality of programming in those regions.

Another project in the works with the potential to assist historic theaters is the New York State Movie Theater Corridor. Established in 2008 as part of the Buffalo International Film Festival, it is described as "an international tourist destination for lovers of movies, architecture, theatre, music, dance and all forms of media and performing arts."¹³⁶ Stretching from Buffalo to New York City, theatres included in the

¹³⁶ "New York State Movie Theater Corridor," Buffalo International Film Festival, <http://www.buffalofilmfestival.com/filmfestivalhome/nysmtc.html>.

corridor will be any that showed moving images at some point in their history. Plans are in the works to document theatres along the trail, produce brass markers, guidebooks to the theatres, and passports similar to the National Park Service passport program. With further development, this program can provide historic theatres with another marketing and networking opportunity.

Conclusion

Planning is the key to success for any theatre project. From the moment the idea of rehabilitating a historic theatre is conceived, until the doors open for performances and activities, time and effort must be spent planning. In addition to the coordination of the actual rehabilitation, during the planning process the organizational structure is formed, business models chosen, programming developed, and the whole package marketed. All these plans will help ensure the theatre program will endure long after the rehab work is completed.

While one might wonder what the optimum structure for ownership, management and operations of a historic theatre would be, a single definitive answer does not exist. What works for one theatre organization might not for another. The ideal structure depends on a number of variables: size of the community, size of the theatre building, whether or not other spaces are available in the building for rental or use, and programming plans. If an owner or organization wants to take advantage of financial incentives (grants, tax credits), a combination of entities would be a favorable choice. A nonprofit would allow fundraising and grant receipts, a for-profit partner could capture various tax credits. If an organization wants to run a theatre program but cannot afford

the upkeep of an entire building, it may look to partner with a municipality that owns a space adaptable for performances.

Community involvement, programming and partnerships are also important to creating a successful and sustainable theatre organization. By engaging members of the community during the inception of the plan, the organization will gain supporters, both volunteers and donors, who feel an ownership for the project and will stay on for the long run. Reaching out to organizations both in and beyond the community such as arts organizations, chambers of commerce, tourist bureaus, colleges and school districts, and even state-wide organizations and networks will also help to expand the reach of theatre organizations and contribute to its future. Examples show that programming is important to sustainability. A variety of courses and activities can be presented even before the theatre space is completed. These programs acquaint potential patrons with the theatre and assist in the building of audiences for the future.

Moving away from the nuts and bolts of theatre rehabilitation and organization planning, the next chapter examines how the reuse of a historic theatre building can impact its community and serve as a catalyst for revitalization. Facts and figures gathered nationally and regionally, as well as examples from this study, are presented to show that the arts and historic preservation are viable options for bringing about the rebirth of cities, villages and towns in this area.

CHAPTER V

IMPACT OF HISTORIC THEATRES ON ERIE CANALWAY COMMUNITIES

The Erie Canal prompted settlement, development and economic growth in the communities that grew up along its banks during the nineteenth century. Besides physical and economic growth, the canal helped to spread culture by bringing tourism, art, music, literature and even social movements to its towns and villages. Halls and opera houses were at the center of many of these canal communities during this era as residents gathered to hear speeches, attend town meetings, participate in agricultural shows, or enjoy concerts and theatrical performances.

Rich in the architecture and history that developed along the canal, today these communities are working toward revitalization. Although the canal is not the economic engine it once was, combining the recreational and historic draw of this waterway with the rehabilitation of architectural resources could bring back the tourism, arts, music, literature, culture and economic stability that were important to these communities.

Both the arts and historic preservation industries generate economic vitality and are powerful tools for community revitalization and development. As will be seen in the information that follows, the rehabilitation of a historic theatre building makes use of both disciplines to create jobs, generate tax revenue, increase tourism and as a result act

as a catalyst for community revitalization and at the same time increase the pride residents have of their cities, towns and villages.

The Arts and Economic Development

A review of the economic impact of the arts provides context for examining the important role that the historic theatres in this study – all arts-focused – have played in revitalizing the communities.

The arts generate economic vitality in underperforming regions. They restore and revitalize communities by serving as a centerpiece for downtown redevelopment and cultural renewal. Arts programs can create exciting public spaces, improve a region's quality of life, and permit new forms of creativity to flourish.¹³⁷ Artistic and cultural assets promote quality of life, which in turn, keep a community vibrant.

National and regional studies attest to the impact the arts have on local economies. One of the most recent, *Arts & Economic Prosperity IV*, conducted in 2010 by Americans for the Arts, shows that the nonprofit arts and cultural industry is an economic driver, supporting jobs, generating government revenue, and serving as a cornerstone of the tourism industry.

Arts & Economic Prosperity IV is the fourth study of the nonprofit arts and culture industry's impact on the economy conducted by Americans for the Arts. It includes study regions representing all 50 states and the District of Columbia. In addition

¹³⁷ National Governor's Association Center for Best Practices, "The Role of Arts in Economic Development," Issue Brief (Washington, DC: National Governor's Association, 2001), 1.

to providing economic impact information on those regions, it also gives estimates of economic impact nationally.¹³⁸

The study used four economic measures to define economic impact: full-time equivalent jobs (FTE), resident household (or personal) income, revenue to local government, and revenue to state government (taxes and fees). Input-output analysis was used to measure economic impact, which enabled researchers to track how many times a dollar is “re-spent” within a local economy. Data was collected from 182 study regions, including 9,721 arts and cultural organizations and 151,802 audience attendees.

Nationally, the arts industry generated \$135.2 billion of economic activity. That amount included \$61.1 billion by nonprofit and cultural organizations and \$74.1 billion in expenditures by their audiences. This economic activity supports 4.1 million full-time jobs and generates \$22.3 billion in revenue to local, state and federal governments every year.

A customized input-output analysis model was created for each region in the study. Five regions from New York State (Auburn, Chenango County, Greater Syracuse area, Tompkins County and Westchester County) participated. Of those regions, three (Syracuse, Tompkins and Chenango) are either in the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor or have a historic theatre in this study. The results of that study show the significant contributions the arts and culture make to those regions.

The study results show the total industry expenditures by nonprofit arts and cultural organizations and their audiences and the total economic impact of all five

¹³⁸ Americans for the Arts, *Arts & Economic Prosperity IV: The Economic Impact of Nonprofit Arts and Cultural Organizations and Their Audiences* (Washington, DC: Americans for the Arts, 2010).

regions (Tables 5 and 6). The figures indicate that arts and cultural organizations and their audiences make significant contributions to a community. Spending stimulates tourism, adds jobs, increases household incomes, and generates tax revenue.

Region	Arts & Cultural Organizations	Arts & Cultural Audiences	Total Industry Expenditures
Auburn	\$1,954,515	\$1,634,048	\$3,588,563
Chenango Co.	\$1,019,269	\$811,106	\$1,830,375
Greater Syracuse	\$33,892,963	\$99,467,778	\$133,360,641
Tompkins Co.	\$13,378,656	\$7,336,956	\$20,715,612
Westchester Co.	\$96,846,062	\$59,594,940	\$156,441,002

Table 5: Total industry expenditures by arts and cultural organizations and their audiences from regions in New York State that participated in Arts & Economic Prosperity IV.¹³⁹

Region	Full-Time Job Equivalent	Household Income	Local Gov't Revenue	State Gov't Revenue
Auburn	104	\$1,999,000	\$299,000	\$144,000
Chenango Co.	41	\$933,000	\$117,000	\$59,000
Greater Syracuse	5117	\$110,362,000	\$12,627,000	\$7,470,000
Tompkins Co.	789	\$14,519,000	\$1,552,000	\$837,000
Westchester Co.	4,800	\$114,667,000	\$12,466,000	\$10,640,000

Table 6: Total economic impact of spending by arts and cultural organizations from regions in New York State that participated in Arts & Economic Prosperity IV.¹⁴⁰

Another study, *HUD and the Arts in New York State*, completed in August 2011 by the now defunct Alliance for the Arts, takes a look at the economic impact of nonprofit cultural organizations in four HUD-designated communities in New York State: Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse and New York City. These areas were chosen because they have more nonprofit cultural organizations than other HUD communities in

¹³⁹ Data obtained from individual economic impact summaries at Americans for the Arts, “Arts and Economic Prosperity IV,” http://www.americansforthearts.org/information_services/research/services/economic_impact/default.asp.

¹⁴⁰ Ibid.

the state. Three of those communities, Buffalo, Rochester and Syracuse are located in the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

HUD-designated communities are in areas of high economic distress with a declining population and stagnating or declining economic base. The four communities in this study, however, are home to vibrant nonprofit cultural organizations, some of which are located in the heart of declining downtown districts. Data from the study (Table 7) supported the conclusion that “the economic contribution of these cultural organizations to their regions is a significant addition to the benefit that these organizations have on the communities’ quality of life.”¹⁴¹

Economic Impact (in Millions of Dollars) of Nonprofit Cultural Organizations in NYS HUD-Designated Communities					
Community	Direct Spending	Indirect Impact	Total Impact	Total Earnings	Total FTE
Buffalo	\$29.7	\$41.0	\$70.7	\$26.0	678
Rochester	\$32.5	\$39.4	\$71.9	\$25.7	694
Syracuse	\$23.6	\$30.3	\$53.9	\$18.4	501
NYC	\$44.8	\$52.2	\$97.7	\$32.0	764

Table 7: Economic impact of nonprofit cultural organizations in four HUD-designated communities in New York State from a 2011 study.¹⁴²

Arts and cultural organizations are rooted locally. Both studies found that these organizations employ local residents, purchase goods and services within the community, draw people to them and neighboring businesses, and are good at marketing and

¹⁴¹ Alliance for the Arts, *HUD and the Arts in New York State: The Economic Impact of Nonprofit Cultural Organizations in HUD-Designated Renewal Communities, Empowerment Zones and Enterprise Communities in New York State*, 2011. Accessed at http://www.nyc-arts.org/pdfs/HUD_and_Arts_in_NY.pdf.

¹⁴² Ibid.

promoting their regions. The contributions they make to their area's economic health and community life is significant.

Data from *Arts & Economic Prosperity IV* also showed that cultural events attract new dollars from cultural tourists and help retain local dollars from residents who will stay in town for their arts experiences. When an area attracts cultural tourists it gains great economic rewards. Non-local audiences spend twice as much as local patrons. Tourists are attracted to arts and culture and research shows that cultural travelers stay longer and spend more. Nonprofit arts and cultural organizations leverage a significant amount of event-related spending by their audiences who visit area restaurants, hotels, retail stores, parking garages and other local merchants before or after a cultural event. If a region can promote more than one option for performing arts events, cultural tourists may stay in the area even longer, or make travel plans that follow a route of activities in a region.

In May 2013, New York Governor Andrew Cuomo announced that \$60 million in state and federal money would be made available to boost tourism in the state by promoting the state's sites, products and history. With 50 million visitors to New York City and 20 million people visiting upstate each year, tourism is the fifth largest industry in the state. In 2012, it provided \$54 billion a year to the state's economy, supported more than 700,000 jobs and generated about \$29 billion in wages.¹⁴³

Historic theatres and other nonprofit arts and cultural organizations interested in estimating the possible economic impact they could have on their communities, can make

¹⁴³ Haley Viccaro, "Albany summit promotes upstate tourism," *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, May 8, 2013 and Haley Viccaro, "Ads seek to bring revenue to upstate tourism," *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, May 13, 2013.

use of the Arts & Economic Prosperity Calculator¹⁴⁴ (Appendix 12). Using data input on population of the community, total expenses of the organization and total attendance at the organizations arts events, the total economic impact on full-time jobs, household income, and local and state government revenues can be estimated. The results could be used by theatre and arts organizations to solicit community support of their programs or as data to include in grant applications. The estimates are based on the research findings from the 182 communities and regions that were part of *Arts & Economic Prosperity IV*. These studies show that communities that invest in the arts strengthen their economy, promote tourism and enrich the quality of their residents' lives.

Economic Benefits of Historic Preservation

Just as the existence of an arts organization can have an economic impact in a community, so can the act of rehabilitating a historic theatre. Historic preservation is recognized as a powerful tool for community revitalization and economic development. The economic benefits of historic preservation are numerous and increasingly studied and documented. Donovan D. Rypkema's *The Economics of Historic Preservation: A Community Leader's Guide*, lists 100 arguments in support of the economics of historic preservation. Rypkema, Caroline Cheong and Randall Mason also recently completed a study on *Measuring the Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation* for the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation, which identifies a "number of indicators (jobs/household income, property values, heritage tourism, environmental measures and

¹⁴⁴ Arts & Economic Prosperity IV Calculator can be accessed at Americans for the Arts, "Arts & Economic Prosperity IV," http://www.americansforthearts.org/information_services/research/services/economic_impact/default.asp#.

downtown revitalization) that can be used to regularly, consistently, meaningfully, and credibly measure the economic impact of historic preservation over time”¹⁴⁵ and allows us to better understand the economic roles and impact of historic preservation.

Since the early 2000s, dozens of economic impact studies have been completed at the state and local levels. The Preservation League of New York State’s study in 2000, *New York Profiting Through Preservation*, concluded that \$1 million spent rehabbing historic buildings in New York State adds \$1.9 million to the state’s economy. The rehabilitation of historic structures is labor intensive. As a result, \$1 million spent on rehabilitation in New York State adds \$86,000 more to local household income than the same amount spent on new construction. In addition, \$1 million invested in preservation construction in New York City creates five more construction jobs and three more permanent jobs than does the same amount invested in new construction.¹⁴⁶

The *New York State Historic Preservation Plan 2009-2013* lists several reasons why historic preservation is important, many of those reasons center around economics:

Historic preservation is an essential component of economic development, smart growth, sustainability and environmental stewardship.

Historic preservation is a proven, incremental, asset-based approach to downtown revitalization in urban commercial districts, villages, and rural hamlets.

¹⁴⁵ Donovan Rypkema, Caroline Cheong and Randall Mason, *Measuring Economic Impacts of Historic Preservation: A Report to the Advisory Council on Historic Preservation*, (Washington, DC: Place Economics, 2011), 1, <http://www.placeeconomics.com/wp-content/uploads/2012/02/economic-impacts-of-hp.pdf>.

¹⁴⁶ Donovan Rypkema and Preservation League of New York State, *New York Profiting Through Preservation* (2000), 10, <http://www.placeeconomics.com/pub/placeeconomicspub2001.pdf>.

Dollar for dollar, historic preservation is one of the highest job-generating economic development options available.

Job creation by historic preservation (building rehabilitation and similar activities) exceeds job creation by new construction, with more local economic benefits.

Historic preservation increases retail sales and the amount of revenue returned to communities.

Property values almost always increase in areas with architectural protection or access to tax incentives, and appreciation rates for historic buildings often outperform the real estate market as a whole.

Historic preservation strengthens and enhances a community's existing tax base by encouraging and investing in building maintenance and improvement.

Heritage tourism generally ranks in the top three economic sectors of most states and nations worldwide. (It ranks second in New York State.)¹⁴⁷

To forecast the total economic effects of the rehabilitation of commercial historic buildings, the Preservation Economic Impact Model (PEIM) is available to download at no cost. Created by the Center for Urban Policy and Research at Rutgers University, it calculates the economic benefits of historic rehabilitation projects and can also forecast the economic benefits of projects for heritage tourism, Main Street programs and historic sites and museums. The PEIM calculates job creation, employee wages, and state and local tax benefits generated from a historic rehabilitation investment through the completion of the construction project, but not after the building is placed in service. It calculates direct impact such as labor and material purchased; indirect impact, including goods and services by industries that produce items purchased for the project; and

¹⁴⁷ New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, *Historic Preservation at a Crossroads: New York State Historic Preservation Plan 2009-2013*, 56-59, <http://nysparks.com/publications/documents/NewYorkStateHistoricPreservationPlan.pdf>.

induced impact, expenditures made by the households of workers directly or indirectly involved with the project.

The National Park Service's National Center for Preservation Technology and Training uses the PEIM. Rutgers University projects national economic benefits of the federal Historic Tax Credit program with it. And both the National Trust Community Investment Corporation and the National Trust for Historic Preservation recommend it.¹⁴⁸ The PEIM can be a valuable tool for historic theatre owners to determine the economic impact their particular rehabilitation project might have on its community and to convince potential supporters and investors that historic preservation projects can be a tool for community revitalization and economic development.

Historic Theatres and Community Revitalization

The rehabilitation of historic theatres can play a role in the revitalization of their communities; however theatres cannot do it alone. Several players are needed to make up a successful community revitalization plan. A mixed development strategy involving a partnership of several stakeholders in the community is required. Stakeholders include: arts and cultural organizations, government agencies, foundations, downtown business groups, educational institutions, development agencies, developers and banks. The revival of any struggling community requires the development of a mix of retail boutiques, hotels, grocery stores, housing, offices, artists' studios, restaurants and entertainment venues. Visitors should be able to find enough to do for four to six hours;

¹⁴⁸ Instructions on how to use PEIM and a link to download the model are available on the National Trust Community Investment Corporation (NTCIC) website at <http://ntcicfunds.com/services/preservation-economic-impact-model-2-0/>.

the daily needs of residents should be met; and rents and sales should justify new construction or renovation of space.¹⁴⁹

Successful community revitalizations are generally private/public partnerships with support and funding from multiple private and public sources. While a revitalization project will most likely be funded by the private and non-profit sector, the public sector's involvement is equally important. It has a stake in and can give legitimacy to the process. Community leaders must be committed in word and deed, but the project should not become over-political. Public officials might begin the planning process, and local government could assist with infrastructure improvements such as street and sidewalk improvements, mixed-use zoning, and other supportive activities that will help to make the process run smoother. But in the end, it should be led by private enterprises whose time and money will determine the revitalization's success.¹⁵⁰

One proven way to revitalize a community is the creation of an urban entertainment or cultural district. Entertainment venues and retail businesses within walking distance of one another help to form such a district. These entertainment options can include: arenas, performing arts centers, stadiums, movie theaters, restaurants, specialty retail, festivals, arts, and night clubs. All these activities give people a reason to come downtown, or visit a smaller community. The most important benefit of

¹⁴⁹ Paul Westlake, Jr. "Restoring Our Theatres; Rebuilding Our Communities," Paper presented at National Trust for Historic Preservation Conference, Savannah, GA, October, 1998, 2-3.

¹⁵⁰ Christopher B. Leinberger, *Turning Around Downtown: 12 Steps to Revitalization*, (Washington, DC: The Brookings Institute, 2005), 8-9.

entertainment is that it gets “feet on the street,” giving a sense of a safe environment, and providing excitement that draws people to the area.

A theatre rehabilitation expert asserts: “Investment in the arts is investment in communities. Restored historic theatres create social and economic value. They have a ripple effect on other properties and become a catalyst for development, vitality, and new cultural districts.”¹⁵¹ The rehabilitation of a historic theatre might not be the one and only way to revitalize a community, but it certainly can play a leading role. A historic theatre will bring in a large number of patrons to its events who will, in turn, visit auxiliary businesses before or after the performances, providing a year-round sustainable opportunity to attract visitors for art and cultural events

The benefits of a successful rebirth of a historic theatre are two-fold. It attracts people to the area, not only to attend events at the theatre, but to also support businesses that surround the theatre such as restaurants, coffee shops and hotels or inns. In addition, rehabbing a historic theatre reverses urban decay and stimulates preservation of other buildings in and around the theatre neighborhood. A theatre located in a historic district or near other buildings that are eligible for designation, could stimulate the restoration or rehabilitation of those potential landmarks.

An Example from Cleveland

Playhouse Square in Cleveland, Ohio is often held up as the model for public and private investment in the revitalization of historic theatres (Figure 41). In the 1970s five vaudeville theatres built in the 1920s (the Ohio, the Palace, the State, the Allen and the

¹⁵¹ Westlake, *Restoring Our Theatres*, 1.

Hanna) were in danger of becoming parking lots. A small group of people formed the nonprofit Playhouse Square Foundation and saved them from the wrecking ball. Today Playhouse Square is home to ten performance spaces with a total of 9,000 seats and attracts more than one million visitors to about 1,000 performing arts events each year. The organization owns office and retail space in five buildings, a 205-room hotel, and manages additional real estate throughout the city. Playhouse Square also converted a former department store into headquarters for the public television and radio stations, with additional rental space. Next, the organization is planning to get into housing.¹⁵²



Figure 41: Playhouse Square in Cleveland is an example of the role historic theatres can play in community revitalization [source: <http://wrlsdesign.com>, date unknown].

Over the years, the core mission of Playhouse Square has changed from rescue and rehabilitation to education, real estate and the operation of theatres. What started out

¹⁵² Joel Henning, "In Cleveland, A Model of Economic Viability in the Arts," *InLEAGUE: Creating the Future* 6, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 32-33.

as a plan to preserve a group of historic theatres has become proof that historic theatres can play a leading role as economic and cultural engines. Of its \$60 million budget, two-thirds supports the performing arts and one-third is reinvested in real estate.

In the 40 years since its inception, Playhouse Square has fostered a generation of historic theatre projects across the country, projects that have each served as catalysts for urban renewal and economic development.¹⁵³ The model of Playhouse Square can be applied to other historic theatre projects today, even smaller ones, not located in large urban areas. In fact, examples in this study offer positive proof of the role historic theatres can play in community revitalization.

Examples from In and Near the Canalway

Proctors in Schenectady may well be considered the Playhouse Square of New York State. Designed by theatre architect Thomas Lamb and opened in 1926, Proctor's Theatre cost theatre magnate Frederick Freeman Proctor \$1.5 million to build. The original vaudeville theatre could seat 2,700, had state-of-the-art equipment, a lavish interior, and was the showplace of the Proctor chain. Three years after it opened, Proctor sold it to Radio Keith Orpheum Corporation (RKO) and in 1930, it was the site of the first public demonstration of television.

At the time, the city of Schenectady was a thriving community, home to General Electric and the American Locomotive Company, and known as the "City that Lights and Hauls the World." But as manufacturing moved south or out of the country, Schenectady declined like so many other Rust Belt cities of the Northeast and Great Lakes. The same

¹⁵³ Westlake, *Restoring Our Theatres*, 4-6.

was true for its theatre, which ironically suffered from the decline of the movie industry due to television. The city took over and closed the theatre in the 1970s for unpaid taxes. Destined for demolition, it was saved by a group of citizens who formed the Arts Center and Theatre of Schenectady (ACTS) and purchased the theatre for one dollar in 1979. The theatre underwent some much-needed improvements and reopened to the public to a sell-out crowd.

As the economy of Schenectady hit rock bottom, community leaders began planning a redevelopment and expansion effort where the theatre would be the anchor in the revitalization of the city's central business district. A \$30 million expansion project completed in 2005 enabled the theatre to accommodate touring Broadway shows. Two years later, renovations were made to the adjacent former Carl Company department store, as it was converted to the 434-seat black box GE Theatre, conference spaces, an education center, offices, and retail and exhibition space. At that time Proctors also built a district energy plant, which supplies heat not only to Proctors' buildings, but also to neighboring hotels, an office complex, and the YMCA. In 2010, Proctors bought the adjacent Key Bank building for less than market price and converted it to Key Hall, a multi-use, community gathering place, banquet hall, and performance space with offices (Figure 42). Proctors chief executive officer Philip Morris, who has been the driving force behind the organization's expansion projects, refers to Proctors as "the poster child" for community development and pride.



Figure 42: Proctors purchased the former Key Bank building to create Key Hall, a multiple-use space [source: Gina DiBella, December 2012].

Proctors' investment of \$42 million leveraged over \$150 million more of other private and public expenditures. Office buildings, a six-screen movie theatre, shops, restaurants, and, most recently, a hotel were built. Buildings along State Street that were once vacant are occupied once again. People came back to downtown for entertainment, to shop, to eat, to spend their time. Schenectady has become a community revitalized through the efforts of a single historic theatre¹⁵⁴ (Figure 43). Pride in Proctors has transformed Schenectady into a community in which people and businesses work together to enhance the visitor's experience.

¹⁵⁴ League of Historic American Theatres, "Theatre Tours – Conference Host," *InLEAGUE: Creating the Future* 6, no. 2 (Summer 2011): 22-23.



Figure 43: The revitalization of State Street in Schenectady, including the rehabilitation of older buildings and the construction of new ones, is due in part to Proctors [source: <http://www.eriecanalway.org>, June 2013].

The Hudson Opera House, known as the oldest surviving theatre in New York State, is located on the Hudson River, the waterway linking the canal and New York City. Hudson is the first chartered city in the United States, settled by the Dutch in the mid-seventeenth century. It flourished even before the canal thanks to a deep water port and whaling, sealing, fishing and shipbuilding industries. Hudson remained a shipping and manufacturing center well into the twentieth century, but declined in the 1960s and 1970s. The city's hundreds of historic buildings represent every American architectural style of the last three centuries. Many abandoned buildings were reclaimed in the 1980s

and today Hudson is a vital arts and antiques center.¹⁵⁵ Some of that successful revitalization can be attributed to the Hudson Opera House.

Built in 1855 as the Hudson City Hall, it adopted the name “Opera House” when a stage was added around 1880, a few years after Paris built its new Opera House, the Palais Garnier (Figures 44 and 45). In its early years, the building was also home to the post office, the Franklin Library, the First National Bank of Hudson, and often used as an art gallery. The performance hall on the second floor hosted traveling lecture presentations including those by Susan B. Anthony and Henry Ward Beecher, musical and theatrical events, and local functions such as dances, cotillions, poultry shows, and graduations. When City Hall moved up the street in 1962, the building served as a Moose Lodge and was later sold to an out-of-town developer. It sat vacant and decaying for nearly 30 years.



Figure 44: Exterior of Hudson Opera House, once the city hall, now a catalyst for revitalization [source: Gina DiBella, December 2012].



Figure 45: Interior of the Hudson Opera House performance hall, looking toward the balcony [source: Gina DiBella, December 2012].

¹⁵⁵ “About Hudson,” Hudson, NY Upstate’s Downtown, <http://www.gotohudson.net/about.php>.

Threatened with demolition, in 1992 a group of citizens formed Hudson Opera House, Inc. (HOH), a not-for-profit organization dedicated to restoring and returning the building to a cultural and civic center. The first restored room opened in December 1997, with four additional spaces on the first floor opening since then. HOH is currently in the planning phase to rehabilitate the remainder of the building, including the performance hall. Even without a completed theatre space, the Hudson Opera House has become a community multi-arts center, providing more than 1,000 cultural and arts educational programs a year, all low cost and the majority of them free, to Hudson's economically disadvantaged population.

Hudson is a short train ride from New York City and easily accessible by car from many upstate communities such as Albany. The economic impact the Opera House has on Hudson is apparent in the more than 52,000 visitors it attracts annually. A study by Americans for the Arts in 2007 indicated that HOH is fostering an economic impact of \$2 million annually and generating fifty-two full-time equivalent jobs. Prior to 1997, most of the storefronts on the 300 block of Warren Street were vacant. Since the Opera House reopened, almost every one is filled, many with businesses compatible with the work of HOH (Figure 46).



Figure 46: Illustration of occupied storefronts before Hudson Opera House opened in 1997 and since its reopening [source: Hudson Opera House Economic Impact Study, 2007].

Galleries and retail stores see an increase in activity when there is an event at the Opera House. Area restaurants report increased business both before and after HOH events. When the second floor performance hall is completed, the economic impact of the Opera House on the local economy will increase to an estimated \$3.1 million annually and generate eighty-five full-time equivalent jobs. The construction project itself will generate 145 construction jobs.¹⁵⁶

The owner of the Palace Theatre in the Eastwood neighborhood of Syracuse didn't have community revitalization in mind when he inherited the theatre from his aunt.

¹⁵⁶ Americans for the Arts, *Hudson Opera House Economic Impact*, Report, 2007.

Michael Heagerty just wanted to give new life to his family's business. Today the neighborhood surrounding the theatre is benefiting from a little revitalization of its own. The block of buildings across the street from the theatre underwent a facade improvement project and new construction has added retail to the block northwest of the theatre.

Bob Ohmann purchased and reopened his family's theatre, The Ohmann, in the village of Lyons because he wanted to help revitalize his hometown. Lyons was a booming place when he was growing up, but not so anymore. Bringing back The Ohmann was a labor of love for him. But he realizes that it will take more than his theatre to bring that Erie Canal village back to life. Mr. Ohmann feels more of the community must get involved before Lyons will turn around.

The Troy Savings Bank Music Hall has been in continuous operation since opening in 1875, yet its presence is adding to what executive director Jon Elbaum calls an urban renaissance. "Historic buildings are being restored and occupied. New residents are filling apartments and homes... There is a terrific synergy among the businesses, cultural institutions, residents, workers and visitors. A new office opens, and new stores follow."¹⁵⁷ Before concerts, Music Hall patrons eat at restaurants and shop in nearby stores. All the activity adds energy and life to the Troy community.

Plans for the future expansion of the Capitol Theatre in Rome include the addition of three mid-century buildings, forming an arts center with an expanded concession area, multi-purpose black box theatre, two digital cinemas for screening independent and art house films and office space. This expansion may stimulate development of a cultural

¹⁵⁷ Troy Savings Bank Music Hall, *Troy Savings Bank Music Hall 2012-2013 Season* (Troy, NY: Troy Savings Bank Music Hall, 2012), 3.

district in the West Dominick Street section of downtown Rome. Several businesses that hope to attract theatre patrons are already in place, including a natural food store/cafe and music shop. Other businesses have recently opened in the theatre's vicinity: restaurants, an insurance office, a financial consultant and a bakery.

Revitalization began several years ago in the village of Medina. Today very few first floor vacancies exist along the several blocks of Main Street. The rehabilitation of Bent's Opera House will benefit from and add to this redeveloping community. Andrew Meier, mayor of the village, touts the benefits of historic preservation and leads by example. He purchased the former Newell Shirt Factory building in 2005, converted it to a cafe and knitting shop on the first floor, Meier's law offices and two loft apartments on the second, and nine boutique hotel rooms on the second and third floors (Figure 47).

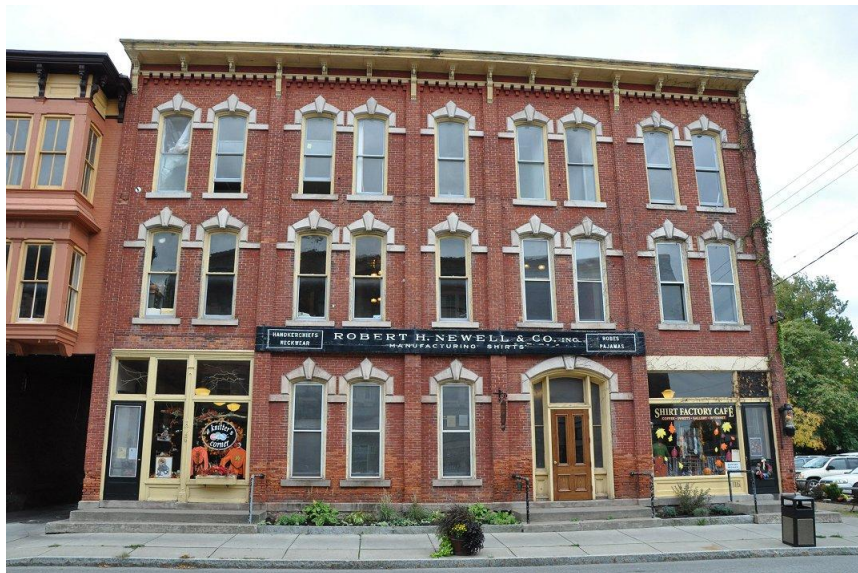


Figure 47: The rehabilitation of the Newell Shirt Factory building, directly across West Center Street from the Opera House entrance to Bent's Hall, is playing a part in the revitalization of Medina, NY [source: Gina DiBella, November 2012].

Meier is also the treasurer and general counsel for the Orleans Renaissance Group (ORG), the nonprofit that has taken on the responsibility of rehabilitating the Opera House.

Current plans for the Bent's Opera House building include a market on the first floor, a restaurant and lounge on the second, and the eventual rehabilitation of the theatre space on the third floor. ORG hopes the Opera House's designation on the Preservation League of New York State's "Seven to Save" list stimulates additional interest in this historic building and ongoing revitalization of this Erie Canal village.

Historic Theatres and Community Pride

The rehabilitation of a historic theatre is both an economic and cultural asset. The building can serve as a catalyst for economic development and as an anchor in an already growing revitalization project. Bringing a historic theatre or any historic building back to life in a useful way also impacts community pride. Most of the theatre directors in the study agreed that the reopening and/or rehabilitation of their theatres affected the way the residents felt about their communities.

In Earlville, the community considers its opera house the gem or jewel of that village. People from the community and beyond have come to identify the village of Fredonia with its opera house. The effect Hudson Opera House has on pride of the community is significant. Residents are excited that it is being brought back to life and integrated back into the life of the city. While staff members at Rome's Capitol believe that theatre has enhanced community pride, they think that completion of its expansion project will have an even greater impact. According to Art Pierce, executive director,

“People are becoming passionate about the Capitol and getting excited about revitalizing the downtown area.” At the Ohmann Theatre in Lyons, older residents seem to show more pride than the younger ones. When they come back to view movies today they reminisce about first dates or other visits to the theatre in their youth. Sometimes pride is hard to explain as in the case of Hubbard Hall in Cambridge. Benjie White, the executive director, is not quite sure how to measure community pride, but he knows the organization has helped it increase. Proctors used to be the butt of jokes; today it has gained a great deal of respect and has impacted the pride of the people of Schenectady. In Troy, the Music Hall contributes to a feeling of synergy that is alive on the surrounding streets. People attending events at the Music Hall and frequenting other businesses make the community feel alive again.

For the owner of the Palace Theatre in Syracuse and the executive director of Smith’s Opera House in Geneva, community pride is visible in tangible ways right on the street. In Geneva, city properties are starting to turn around, landlords are becoming more committed and people are raving about businesses and restaurants in the area. The Eastwood neighborhood surrounding the Palace is walkable, safe and well-maintained, attracting new stores and additional rehabilitation of the area.

The Clayton Opera House brings in a number of well-known acts throughout the busy summer season and the remainder of the year, but some of the most well-attended events are concerts by the Clayton Community Band. Audience members line up long before the house opens, waiting on the street in all kinds of weather, just to be sure they get a seat. C-R Productions, the nonprofit organization affiliated with Cohoes Music Hall, seeks to serve the community by providing musical theatre programming in an intimate

venue and turns to the community when planning programming. Residents and visitors from all over the Capital Region visit the Music Hall because its productions fill a niche that is not found anywhere else in the area.

Although the historic theatre spaces are not yet rehabilitated at Avon, Bent and Pratt Opera Houses, the buildings are already impacting those communities: Avon Opera Block serves as new offices for the town; in Albion and Medina both villages are buzzing about the potential the theatre spaces have to bring about changes in the community. And while most theatre organizations in the study are focused on sustaining their own programs for the long run, whether they realize it or not, their success can have a positive effect on revitalizing their communities.

Partners in Revitalization

The designation of the Erie Canal and the lateral Cayuga-Seneca, Champlain and Oswego canals as a National Heritage Corridor may also help to leverage economic development and stimulate cultural innovation through the partnerships of businesses, organizations, municipalities and people. Historic theatres can play a role in the revitalization and rebuilding of these canal communities as well, serving as a place for both residents and visitors to gather for cultural performances and everyday activities, making an impact both locally and beyond.

In so doing, theatres fit into the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor's vision for its future where

... working through a wide range of partnerships, is preserving and interpreting our nation's past, providing world class recreational and educational opportunities, fostering economic revitalization, improving

quality of life in Corridor communities, and guiding the reemergence of the Erie Canalway as a 21st-century “river of Commerce and Culture.”¹⁵⁸

Partnerships between the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor and historic theatres can bring about revitalization and economic development. Theatres and the Canalway Corridor preserve and interpret the past. Theatre programming offers educational opportunities to all members of the community, as well as visitors. Economic revitalization results in an improved quality of life in the Canalway Corridor. And, as theatres are rehabilitated and programming reestablished, they will play a part in revitalizing the culture of the canalway.

Through its mission, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor can assist in the historic preservation of theatres with financial support (grants) and professional guidance. By promoting interpretation of tourism to Erie Canal communities, it will help increase historic theatre audiences, which in turn will lead to further community and economic development. (For more information on the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor’s mission, goals and objectives, see Appendix 13.)

Historic theatre owners, executive directors, and others interviewed for this study were aware of the influence the Erie Canal or related waterways had on early development of their communities. However, since the early twentieth century realignment moved the canal route outside the larger communities nearly a century ago, most did not think of the Erie Canal or even the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor as directly affecting their current situation. And, critical for this study, many had not even considered the role the Corridor could play in the development of their theatre

¹⁵⁸ Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, *Manifest*, 8. A detailed outline of the Preservation and Management plan is available at <http://www.eriecanalway.org/>

and their community. Despite the fact that the National Heritage Corridor has been in existence for more than ten years, it is still necessary to educate canal communities about the Corridor – what it is, how it can help them, and how they can be a part of it.

Conclusion

Studies have shown the positive impact both the arts and historic preservation can have on a community, providing further evidence that the two disciplines can work together toward a common goal – the rehabilitation and reuse of historic theatres. Some of the theatres in this study are veterans in the historic theatre business, others are just starting out, but the potential impact the reuse of a historic theatre can have on a community is three-fold. It can serve as a cornerstone/anchor for the redevelopment of the rest of the neighborhood where it is located; it can help spur on economic development through the business, both direct and indirect, that it brings into the community; and it can create community pride where it was once lacking.

But a historic theatre cannot perform the miracle of economic revitalization on its own. It will take the support of all members of the community – residents, other business owners, community leaders, and even visitors to make it happen. Cases of this impact exist on a national scale, but more importantly, a variety of examples are evident in communities in this study. Whether improving the cultural life of its residents, serving as a catalyst for the revitalization of a struggling downtown district, increasing economic prosperity of the region, or making residents feel good about their hometown, historic theatres can have a far-reaching positive effect on all they touch.

CHAPTER VI

CONCLUSIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Historic theatre buildings can be found in almost every community in the United States. In some instances the theatre spaces have been in continual use since the day they were built; in other cases they wait for resurrection on the upper levels of Main Street buildings. Some theatre buildings are abandoned and deteriorating along once-thriving streetscapes; others have undergone rehabilitation, taken on a new life, and are contributing to the revitalization of their neighborhoods.

In New York State, along the man-made and natural waterways that make up the national heritage corridor known as the Erie Canalway, are cities, towns and villages that grew and prospered during the canal era of the nineteenth century. During that period and into the early decades of the twentieth century, a variety of theatres sprang up in these communities. Opera houses built by wealthy benefactors came first, followed by vaudeville stages, and eventually ornate motion picture palaces and more modest neighborhood movie houses. In each instance, they offered a place for the community to gather and share a common experience through live stage productions, musical performances, speeches and later the fantasy world of motion pictures.

Those three entities: the canals, the communities, and the theatres seem to have been tied to a common fate. As use of the canals began to decline, so eventually did the

prosperity of the canalway communities. With fewer people able to support the local theatres (and the introduction of television), eventually many theatres went dark or operated on a limited basis. With the recent resurgence of the canal as a recreational waterway and heritage tourism destination, its communities are also working for a comeback. If carefully researched and planned, the rehabilitation of historic theatres in the canalway can play an important role in the revitalization of those communities and at the same time maintain a vital connection to the past.

Limitations and Omissions

As a historic preservation thesis, this study set out to explore how the rehabilitation and reuse or adaptive use of historic theatre buildings can play an important role in revitalizing their communities. Of the theatres chosen for this study, none was adapted for a different use such as large retail store, residence, shopping mall or convention center. All examples in the study are being used, or have plans to be used, in a capacity similar to their original use – as performing arts, cultural and/or community gathering spaces. Consequently, adaptive use was not part of this study.

So what does that say about the theatres and communities in this study region? These particular communities value both historic resources and the arts. Some communities identified historic buildings needing rehabilitation and saw the arts as a way to make those buildings a viable part of their community once again. Others were looking for a performing arts venue and recognized an existing building that could be reused in that capacity. Community leaders understand the importance of historic buildings in their midst and are aware that rehabilitating these buildings could have a

positive impact on their villages, cities and towns. Realizing that such projects do not happen overnight, these communities have the patience to plan and work for their success.

Originally, this study was intended to focus on communities within the borders of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor. Upon the recommendation of others involved in the arts, theatre, and historic preservation fields, classic examples of theatre reuse that impacted community revitalization from outside the focus area were added to the list. Initially, more than two dozen theatres were contacted for inclusion in the study. Some expressed a willingness to participate, but following up with so many organizations proved to be difficult. If time had been unlimited, interviews and site visits would have been conducted for all theatres on the list. More details on the theatres that were part of this study, including interior/exterior photos, architectural styles, dates of construction, National Register information and current uses, are highlighted in Appendix 14.

Findings: Best Practices of the Five Areas of Opportunity

In determining whether or not a historic theatre could play a major role in the revitalization of a community, this study explored five areas of opportunity, highlighting the best practices of each. Those areas are: architectural and historic integrity, forms of ownership and management, sustainability, programming, and community impact. Coincidentally, the League of Historic American Theatres uses three similar criteria when evaluating nominees for its Outstanding Theatre Award: community impact, quality of programs and services, and quality of rehabilitation of its historic structure.

Historic and Architectural Integrity

A high quality theatre rehabilitation is one that maintains the historic and architectural integrity of the building while adapting it for use in the twenty-first century. Challenges include: choosing the appropriate treatment and materials, conforming to current code requirements, and meeting the needs and comforts of a modern audience. In the quest to maintain integrity, those planning a historic theatre project should understand the qualities that contribute to the historic building's integrity and use the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation.

Most of the theatres in the study are listed in the National Register of Historic Places, either individually or as a contributing building in a district. One building is also a National Historic Landmark. Listing in the National Register does not guarantee a property's historic and architectural integrity will be preserved during the rehabilitation process, but if the owner hopes to take advantage of historic preservation tax credits or receive some type of funding from the state or federal government, all work must meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The rehabilitation treatment enables the theatre project to accommodate the changes necessary to meet codes and modern requirements and at the same time maintain the historic character of the building. The New York State Historic Preservation Office (SHPO) ensures that the standards are met when public funding or state or federal permits are involved. The SHPO reviews the plans for historic properties and monitors the project as it progresses.

Using the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation guarantees that these buildings will undergo appropriate and sensitive treatments that will maintain the building's historic and architectural integrity and result in a successful theatre

rehabilitation. A successful historic theatre rehabilitation project relies on a team of professionals with experience in historic preservation, including historic preservation architects and crafts people accomplished in working with historic materials and finishes, as well as experienced theatre professionals with knowledge of theatre technology and operations.

Local landmark designation offers a higher level of protection to historic properties than National Register listing. If a building is an officially designated local landmark or is part of a local historic district, the project may have additional review by a landmark board or commission or another municipal board charged with that task. This review is not dependent on government funding or tax credits, but by the local historic preservation ordinance. Seven of the communities in the study have local historic preservation ordinances: Albion, Cohoes, Hudson, Medina, Schenectady, Syracuse and Troy.

Whether or not a property is listed in the National Register or designated a local landmark, the Secretary of the Interior Standards for Rehabilitation offer appropriate guidelines to follow. Support and recommendations are available from the New York State Historic Preservation Office, and resources on theatre history, restoration and management are available from both the Theatre Historical Society of America and the League of Historic American Theatres.

Historic theatres are special places. Patrons enjoy attending performances in auditoriums that carry such a sense of time and place and reflect the heritage of a region. In rehabilitating these spaces for modern use, most code requirements can be worked out

without harm to the historic fabric of these buildings, making historic preservationists and arts organizations suitable collaborators for such projects.

Forms of Ownership, Management, and Business Models

A number of ownership and management options are available when setting up a business plan for a historic theatre. Examples of most of those options were found in theatres in this study. Types of ownership include: municipal, nonprofit, individual or commercial. Management varied as well: managed by the owner, managed by a nonprofit organization, or managed by a commercial organization. While the most prevalent model for theatres in this study was nonprofit owned and operated that does not necessarily mean it is the best model for every theatre. The current mission of an organization and the way it plans to finance a theatre's restoration and future operation will determine an appropriate ownership and management model.

For example, if a theatre organization wants to take advantage of grants for restoration and/or programming, it may choose ownership and/or management by a nonprofit or municipality. If the use of tax credits (historic preservation or new markets) is part of the rehabilitation financing, the owner needs to be or partner with a for-profit entity.

Some theatres in the study have multiple organizations involved with their ownership and operation. Proctors has a combination of for-profit and nonprofit organizations that own and manage its venues and energy plant. Troy Music Hall has three nonprofits with the responsibilities of ownership, management, and maintenance. Other theatre buildings such as Clayton, Cohoes and Fredonia are owned by

municipalities, but managed by nonprofits. And the owners of the Ohmann and the Palace preferred to avoid the reviews and approvals that are required for tax credits and grants, and funded their theatre rehabilitation projects and theatre operation with private funds.

Whatever path a theatre rehab project takes, professionals experienced in theatre rehabilitation and various forms of tax credits and financing should be members of the theatre rehabilitation team. These professionals can offer advice on formulating the best ownership/management plan for the theatre.

Also considered part of the business plan for a historic theatre is its primary business model. Will it be a presenting, producing, or renting theatre? Or will it be a combination of two or more types? To determine its business model, a theatre organization must refer to its mission and its resources. Are there acting troupes, musicians or other artists who could produce shows locally on regular basis? Some examples exist in the study, but they often supplemented their income by bringing in artists from outside the area and renting the facility to other groups for weddings, parties, meetings, fundraisers, screenings and other community activities. Risks are involved with each business model. Individual theatres must weigh those risks against what the organization hopes to achieve and determine which will work best for them. More than likely a combination of the models will emerge.

All of the operating theatres in the study combine at least two, and sometimes three, of these models. For a local acting troupe that needs a home, a historic theatre might be the place. But it is more likely that if a theatre organization wants to fill the building on a regular basis, it will bring in artists from outside the area and/or rent it out

to other groups needing the space. By using the theatre space in that way, it once again becomes a community resource and gathering place.

Sustainability

Sustainability is often discussed as having a triple bottom line, affecting social, environmental, and economic aspects. Best practices for economic sustainability ensure that the theatre organization has the finances to complete a rehabilitation project, and the ability to operate it for several years to come. Theatre organizations need financial support, the support of the community, and the support of other organizations. Developing a sound fundraising plan, combined with options that include grants, tax credits, fundraising campaigns, and in-kind donations can help sustain the organization into the future. Soliciting support from the community – as volunteers, as patrons, as individual donors, as board members, as possible renters or users of the facility, adds to its social sustainability.

Partnering or collaborating with organizations directly related to theatre and the arts, as well as local and regional organizations without a direct connection to the arts, such as chambers of commerce, visitor's centers, colleges and school districts, and senior centers, can be mutually beneficial and add to cultural and social development.

Any organization in today's world should be aware of the impact it has on the environment and formulate plans to reduce that impact. Shared resource agreements are one way to assist in environmental sustainability, including shared parking, snow removal, and heating and cooling. Some theatres share the building with other businesses and can collaborate on such agreements. Examples of theatres in the study taking steps to

reduce their environmental impact include major initiatives such as Proctors' energy plant, and Avon's geothermal exchange system, to more simple cases of adjusting thermostat controls or using recyclable products.

Programming

High quality programming and services, another criterion the League of Historic American Theatre uses when granting its outstanding theatre award, is also explored in this study. The type of programming presented by a theatre organization brings patrons into the building. For programming to be successful, an organization must understand its community and determine the types of activities that will draw those people through its doors.

Educational programs actively engage community members, encourage theatre attendance and deepen arts experiences. Beyond performances, educational activities provide opportunities for children and adults to learn more about the arts. Theatres in the study have developed arts programming that ranges from classes and workshops to discussions with visiting artists and theatre summer camps. These programs play a part in building audiences for the future and ensuring that the interest in the arts and live theatre remains active.

Engaging the local community will contribute to the success of a theatre program, but equally important is reaching out to neighboring communities and potential visitors. Creative marketing strategies can welcome non-residents to the mix. Going beyond the traditional print and media advertising campaigns, today theatre organizations should make use of the internet and social networking to promote their programming. Successful

promotion may lead to audiences traveling more than an hour by car to attend an event. A historic theatre with active programming brings a vibrant cultural scene to a town, city or village. A vibrant cultural scene attracts more people into the area. Those visitors frequent local businesses and contribute to the economy.

When the canal first opened, travel between cities and villages took a half day or more. Today the drive from one canal community to another takes ten minutes to a half hour. Because of their proximity, neighboring canal communities with historic theatres and arts programs need to work together to coordinate their programming and plan to complement not compete with each other. In the late 1800s a traveling troupe might make a one or two-night stop at a village's opera house, perform to sell-out crowds and then move on down the canal to the next village with similar success. That wouldn't happen today. Working together, neighboring theatres might consider using their buildings as venues for a collaboration of a music or theatre festival. Or perhaps one theatre might become noted as a music/concert hall, while its neighbor is known for theatrical productions. Theatres at opposite ends of the canalway might consider block booking artists, which will save money and expose communities that are a little further apart to the same quality of programming.

Community Impact

Another area of opportunity explored in this study and criterion that the League of Historic American Theatres uses in reviewing applicants for its outstanding theatre award was the impact a theatre can have on its community. Because there are many ways to measure it, economic impact first comes to mind. Models such as the Arts and Economic

Prosperity calculator¹⁵⁸ or the Preservation Economic Impact Model¹⁵⁹ allow organizations to calculate the economic impact a nonprofit arts organization or even a historic preservation project can have on a community.

Several theatres in this study have a positive economic impact on their communities. Proctors, which was the 2009 recipient of the League of Historic American Theatre's Outstanding Historic Theatre Award, is at the top of that list. It has played a major role in the revitalization of Schenectady, helping to bring life back to the downtown area. Smaller theatres have also given a boost to their community's economy. Hudson Opera House, which has not yet reopened its historic theatre, had a hand in the revitalization of the city of Hudson by bringing not only residents, but also visitors from surrounding communities and beyond, to its events. People who attend Hudson Opera House programs also frequent Hudson's shops, restaurants and other businesses and their expenditures have a ripple effect in the community.

Reviving a historic theatre also brings a feeling of pride to the community. When people get involved in the rehabilitation planning process they develop a feeling of ownership for the project. Once the rehabilitation is completed, they may stay on and assist in the theatre's operations, programming, or even governance. At the same time, others hear about the project and want to get involved as volunteers. Volunteers are the backbone of many of the theatres in the study. Their responsibilities range from ushering,

¹⁵⁸ Americans for the Arts, "Arts & Economic Prosperity IV Calculator," http://www.americansforthearts.org/information_services/research/services/economic_impact/default.asp#

¹⁵⁹ National Trust Community Investment Corporation, "Preservation Economic Impact Model," <http://ntcicfunds.com/services/preservation-economic-impact-model-2-0/>.

to operating concessions or gift shops, and assisting with office work, building maintenance and fundraising.

Erie Canalway Connections

Most of the theatres in this study are located along the Erie Canalway or a current or former waterway that was accessible to it (e.g. the Hudson River and the former Chenango Canal). While all of the theatre owners, directors, and managers interviewed for this study acknowledge the impact the Erie Canal and feeder canals had on the development of their communities, they do not consider the canal as important to community development today. For some, the reason is because the canal no longer flows through the center of their city. Others think the canal can be a means to attract more visitors to their sites, but soliciting canal tourists is not a top priority. Work needs to be done to spread the word to these communities and their businesses and cultural organizations that the canal's presence can be beneficial and should be given a more in-depth look.

The canal is a sizable recreational and tourist attraction. In 2012, boat traffic through the canal's locks and lift bridges exceeded 106,000. Of that, 83 percent were recreational or tour boats.¹⁶⁰ Capturing some of those tourists as theatre patrons may prove beneficial. For communities and theatres located within walking distance of the current canal system, placing theatre brochures and performance schedules at the visitor's centers along the waterway may attract patrons. In areas where the canal by-passes a city,

¹⁶⁰ Matthew Daneman, "Canal pulls more weight," *Rochester Democrat and Chronicle*, May 1, 2013.

arranging public transportation or taxi service might bring in boaters who wish to take advantage of activities in the downtown area, including programs at the historic theatre.

Today more people travel by car than by boat, and getting the word out about historic theatres to anyone traveling along the Canalway Corridor is important. The Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor website's list of historic theatres has links to theatre websites. In addition, a booklet or brochure could be created that includes a map of the canalway, pinpointing the theatres within driving distance and highlighting upcoming events at those sites. Literature could be distributed through tourist bureaus, chambers of commerce, travel agencies, automobile clubs, at New York State Thruway rest stops, in libraries and community centers, anywhere people stop for information, even the theatres themselves.

Albion and Medina: An Update on Pratt and Bent's

The idea for this thesis began when the opera houses in two Erie Canal communities just ten miles apart, received recognition to help move their projects forward. Since Bent's Opera House was named to the Preservation League of New York's "Seven to Save" list in Spring 2012, the Orleans Renaissance Group has developed preliminary plans for the rehabilitation of the building, hired a preservation architect to conduct a code study and structural survey, and began removing the late-twentieth century concrete block and arches from the Main Street facade to expose the original cast iron columns. All-the-while, it continues to host concerts and fundraisers at various locations to benefit the project.

Although Albion's plans for Theatre on Main Street were put on hold until June 2013, the owners of the Pratt have moved forward, engaging a number of community members in the project: a photographic history and a brochure about the Pratt are in the works and a technical theatre/production manager has joined the team. The owners are close to transferring ownership to a nonprofit organization and are working with a preservation architect to put together drawings that will enable them to obtain a certificate of compliance (a document stating that the proposed use of the building conforms to the village's zoning requirements) and apply for grants for the project from the Main Street Program and the New York State Historic Preservation Office. In April 2013, the Historic Preservation Planning program at Cornell University chose the Pratt Opera House as the site of its annual work weekend (Figures 48, 49, 50). Thirty-five Cornell graduate students, alumni and faculty members converged on the village of Albion to spend four days working in the opera house and the neighboring Day & Day building – pointing stone and brick, glazing windows, painting, and documenting the former meeting room of the Grand Army of the Republic.



Figure 48: The owners of the Pratt Opera House (right) and Day & Day Building (left) hope that the buildings' rehabilitation will help to revitalize the village of Albion [source: Gina DiBella, July 2012].



Figure 49: Cornell University students learn to glaze windows at the Pratt during their 2013 work weekend [source: Gina DiBella, April 2013].



Figure 50: Cornell University students work on pointing the stone wall at the back of the Pratt Opera House stage [source: Gina DiBella, April 2013].

The findings and recommendations of this thesis might assist the owners of Bent's and the Pratt as they embark on their own theatre rehabilitation projects. The study might also interest others who are contemplating similar projects in the future. The examples of the five areas of opportunity displayed through the other theatres in the study can serve as a reference or an inspiration, connecting would-be owners and managers with those already working in the field. The appendices and bibliography are also intended to be resources for future theatre projects.

Because of their close proximity and the fact that they are embarking on similar historic theatre projects, working together to promote the arts, community revitalization and historic preservation could prove vital to the success of both the Albion and Medina projects.

Contributions to Existing Research

The internet held a great deal of information for this study, especially through the websites of the League of Historic American Theatres and the Theatre Historical Society of America, professionals in the field of historic theatre restoration such as Janis A. Barlow and Associates and EverGreene Architectural Arts. Each operating theatre in the study had a website. The League of Historic American Theatres makes available to anyone who visits its website the "Historic Theatre Rescue, Restoration, Rehabilitation and Adaptive Reuse Manual" as well as a nationwide inventory of historic theatres.¹⁶¹ More resources are available with various levels of membership including access to a

¹⁶¹ League of Historic American Theatres, *Historic Theatre Rescue, Restoration, Rehabilitation and Adaptive Reuse Manual*, <http://www.lhat.org/RRManual/index.aspx>; "Historic Theatre Inventory," http://www.lhat.org/historictheatres/theatre_inventory.aspx.

monthly online newsletter, *inLeague*, an online theatre network/chatroom, webinars and resources from past conferences. The Theatre Historical Society's blog gives updates on historic theatres that are being rehabbed or threatened with demolition on a daily basis. Theatre Historical Society members also receive a quarterly journal, *Marquee*, a quarterly newsletter, and discounts on other publications and theatre conclaves.

While gathering printed resources for this study, a few coffee table books on historic theatres published in recent years were discovered, but a great deal of the practical literature found on how to rehabilitate historic theatres was written in the late-1970s and early-1980s during the first phase of theatre rehabilitations, before the internet, social networking, websites, and even the New York State historic preservation tax credits. Graduate theses studying historic theatres spanned three decades, from 1981 to 2008, and covered such topics as theatre revitalization, adaptive use, operation and management, preservation and restoration, and perceived indicators of cultural and economic success. Two booklets published by the National Trust for Historic Preservation: *Preservation of Concert Hall, Opera Houses and Movie Palaces* (1981) and *Curtain Up: New Life for Historic Theatres* (1993) presented background on what was necessary to rehabilitate a theatre.

The ideas contained in this literature are still valuable today, but could use some updating. This study has identified some ways to update this literature and shows examples of recent theatre rehabilitations, collaborations between arts and cultural districts and Main Street programs, second generation theatre rehabilitations, and relationships between theatres and community.

Each of the theatres in this study, as well as those that were not included, offer telling and interesting stories worth exploring further. Feature articles could be written for local publications, tourist guide books, and the League of Historic American Theatres and the Theatre Historical Society journals about those theatres and the people who work behind-the-scenes. A photographer and writer might even consider collaborating on a photographic book focusing on historic theatres along the Erie Canal, or Opera Houses of New York State.

Recommendations for Further Research and Development

This study examined fifteen theatres along the Erie Canal and other New York State waterways. Since most New York communities had opera houses or movie theatres at one point or another, hundreds of historic theatres are still in existence, some in use, others waiting rehabilitation. Documenting these buildings, exploring other transportation routes that may have helped with theatre development or could impact theatre development today, finding a way to link the theatres across the state, and moving from the focus on individual communities to regional connections are all possibilities for future research and development.

Surveys and National Register Listings

Conducting a historic resources survey of theatres in New York State would add to the research this study began. Jane Oakes of Mt. Morris, New York has done extensive research on the location of opera houses in the state (both those still in existence and those that have been lost). Data from her research could be combined with information

from this study, as well as new survey information collected to identify: theatres in existence but not in use; those in use as theatres or performance spaces; and those that have been adapted to a new use. By identifying these building types and examining how they are currently being used (or not used), the survey could be used as a tool for community planning and development.

Although most of the theatres in this study are listed in the National Register individually or as a contributing part of a district, once a New York theatre resource survey is completed a Multiple Property Documentation Form (MPDF) could be written. The Multiple Property Documentation Form is a cover document that serves as a basis for evaluating the eligibility of related properties to be listed in the National Register. It can be used to simultaneously nominate and register historic properties that are thematically related, or it can be used to establish requirements for future nominations.¹⁶² At least one state, Kansas, has documented historic theatres through a Multiple Property Documentation Form.

A New York State Theatre MPDF could include the types of historic theatres that were identified in the survey – opera houses, vaudeville stages, movie palaces, neighborhood movie houses – or just the most common. Such forms may be helpful to owners of theatre buildings not currently listed in the National Register but contemplating a rehabilitation that could benefit from tax credits or certain grants.

¹⁶² National Park Service, *National Register Bulletin: How to Complete the National Register Multiple Property Documentation Form* (Washington, DC: National Park Service, 1999), http://www.nps.gov/nr/publications/bulletins/nrb16b/nrb16b_IIintroduction.htm.

Cultural and Historic Tourism

Cultural and historic tourism are of great significance to both historic preservation and the arts. Studies show that cultural tourists stay longer and spend more money in an area than regular tourists. In 2012, New York State created the *Path Through History*, designed to showcase the state's history and cultural significance and promote tourism and economic development in every region of the state.¹⁶³ That initiative, along with the recent announcement of the state's commitment to boosting tourism, especially in the upstate area, indicates the importance of cultural tourists in the push for tourism.

Many of the smaller communities along the canalway do not think of themselves as tourist destinations, but in fact they have amenities that many cultural and historic tourist crave. Tourist bureaus, local chambers of commerce and visitor's centers could join together to help educate local businesses and community members on how to promote themselves to the traveler as well as the local population.

The Railroad Connection

While this study investigated the connection of the canal and historic theatres, railroads were also important to canal communities. The canal transported performers and visitors from town-to-town in the mid-to-late nineteenth century, but by the time many vaudeville theatres and picture palaces came into existence, it had been rerouted outside of major New York cities and the railroad became a more popular means of transportation. The railroad passed through all the canal communities in this study and today some railroad lines are still in existence. Canal communities could benefit from

¹⁶³ New York State Path Through History, <http://www.paththroughhistory.ny.gov>.

further examination of the railroads' impact on them and their historic theatres, as well as identification of potential promotional opportunities.

Erie Canal communities might consider tying into the existing railroads to bring tourists into the area. For example, the Falls Railroad runs from Brockport to Lockport and then on to Niagara Falls. Today the Medina Railroad Museum has occasional two-hour round trip train excursions between Medina and Lockport, advertised as "Falls Branch Railroad and Erie Canal Excursions along the Erie Canal Heritage Corridor."¹⁶⁴ A historic theatre tour could utilize the railway, taking visitors to historic theatres along that route: Lockport's Palace Theatre, the opera houses in Medina and Albion, and even the Strand movie theatre in Brockport.

Other Routes through the Canalway Corridor

With the advent of the automobile, the train lost its popularity as a means for passenger transportation. Today several major automobile routes run through the Erie Canalway National Corridor: the New York State Thruway (I-90), and New York State Routes 5, 20 and 31. The trail along the towpath with bikers and walkers, and the canal itself as a waterway, serve as slow travel routes to various canal cities and villages. Bus trips, boat trips, even hiking or biking trips planned along any of these routes could incorporate historic theatres into their itineraries. The state and regional tourism bureaus, local chambers of commerce, the New York Thruway Authority, New York State Canal Corporation, and the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, might collaborate on

¹⁶⁴ "Events & Excursions," Medina Railroad Museum, <http://railroadmuseum.net/wp/events-excursions/>.

brochures and internet information enabling drivers, boaters and bikers to plan their own itineraries.

Regional Programming

Since the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor threads through or near several of the theatres in this study an opportunity exists to make use of those venues to develop an Erie Canal performing arts heritage program that could travel the canal, similar to the acting troupes that came through in the nineteenth century. Perhaps a new work or works (theatrical, musical, or visual ... or a combination of all three) could be commissioned that focused on Erie Canal history and travelled from canal town to canal town. While not every canal community has an operating theatre, many do have their own canal days celebrations and arts festivals where such a program could be staged either outdoors or at a school auditorium. Even a traveling art exhibit that visited canal days festivals could set the ground for a larger program to be developed later.

Another option might be to form an Erie Canalway Theatre Festival modeled after the Adirondack Summer Playhouse. Local and professional actors could stage a number of different types of productions throughout a season traveling to several different towns throughout the canalway to perform them. The Adirondack Summer Playhouse features more than forty performances in twenty towns throughout the Adirondacks throughout the summer. Its season consists of popular musicals, Shakespeare, musical cabarets, and

audience participation performances. Venues include local schools, theatres, parks and pavilions.¹⁶⁵

Establishing a Historic Theatre Trail

The creation of a corridor or trail of historic performing arts venues, modeled after the art trails found across the country, is also worth exploring. New York State has a few examples to draw from including: the Hudson River School Art Trail, the Chautauqua Lake Erie Art Trail, and the Ithaca Art Trail. The Hudson River School Art Trail, which is also located in Massachusetts and New Hampshire, recognizes the creative and historical significance of the Hudson River School painters such as Thomas Cole and Frederic Church. Publicized on the internet and through brochures, a map indicates New York State points of interest along the Hudson River that are connected to these artists. The Chautauqua Lake Erie and Ithaca art trails offer recognition to present day artists with maps and guides to several artist studios in those areas.

Currently a New York State Movie Theatre Corridor stretching from Buffalo to New York City is in its planning stages.¹⁶⁶ A historic theatre trail, serving live performance theatres and movie theatres, could serve three purposes: enhance networking and information exchange between venues, facilitate joint marketing efforts, and promote tourism along the trail or corridor. Two large metropolitan areas know for their theatre

¹⁶⁵ “Summer Playhouse on tour of region,” *Summer Fun – Watertown Daily Times*, June 26, 2013.

¹⁶⁶ “New York Movie Theater Corridor presentation,” Buffalo International Film Festival, http://www.buffalofilmfestival.com/images/08-12-08-NYSMTC-Presentation_1.00_-1of2.pdf and http://www.buffalofilmfestival.com/images/08-12-08-NYSMTC-Presentation_1.00_-2of2.pdf.

expertise, Toronto and New York City, could anchor the trail with a brochure, map and internet information pinpointing the location of such venues.

Until an official trail can be established, the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor, working with historic theatre owners and possibly the New York State Presenters Network or New York Multi-Arts Consortium, could initiate networking opportunities through day-long workshops, webinars, video conferences or conference calls to discuss issues that pertain to the operation of historic theatres in New York State.

Encore

Just as a curtain call at the end of theatrical production is a way for the audience to celebrate the work of the cast, orchestra and crew, this study recognizes the impact the rehabilitation and reuse of historic theatres can have on their communities. The examples in this study demonstrate the power rehabilitating historic theatres has to affect community change. They prove the positive impact these buildings can have on their communities as catalysts for economic development and community revitalization.

As with any thesis project, this treatise is the beginning rather than the conclusion of the examination of this topic. No doubt, this writer and others will continue the study; tracking down more theatres, exploring other possibilities, and promoting the preservation and reuse of these buildings that hold such a special place in the hearts of their communities.

APPENDIX I

RECORDS OF INTERVIEWS/CONTACTS

Name	Title/Organization	Type	Date
Julian Adams	Certified Local Government Coordinator/ New York State Historic Preservation Office	Email	Jan. 17, 2013 Jan. 25, 2013 Jan. 28, 2013 Feb. 1, 2013 June 11, 2013
John Bero	Founder, Senior Architect Bero Architecture	Email	May 3, 2013
Hannah Blake	Director of Planning & Heritage Development/Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor	Phone	Mar. 1, 2012 Mar. 30, 2012 Aug. 30, 2012
Michael Bonafede	Owner Pratt Opera House	Site	July 11, 2012 Apr. 19, 2013
Kelly Bradley	Executive Director Smith's Opera House	Site	Nov. 15, 2012
Jayme Breschard Thomann	Senior Planner/Genesee/Finger Lakes Regional Planning Council	Email	Mar. 19, 2012
Christopher Busch	Vice Chairman/Orleans Renaissance Group	Site	Nov. 10, 2012
Christine Capella-Peters	Historic Sites Restoration Coordinator/NYS Historic Preservation Office	Email Phone	Jan. 22, 2013 June 14, 2013
Kelly Cole	Former Assistant Supervisor/ Town of Avon	Email	Dec. 6, 2012 June 19, 2013
Karen Colizzi Noonan	President/Theatre Historical Society of America	Phone Site	July 12, 2012 Nov. 15, 2013
Rick Davis	Executive Director/1891 Fredonia Opera House	Phone	Oct. 11, 2012
Jon Elbaum	Executive Director/Troy Savings Bank Music Hall	Site	Dec. 11, 2012
Joseph Gleason	Executive Director/Clayton Opera House	Site	Sept. 22, 2012
Michael Heagerty	Owner/Palace Theatre (Syracuse)	Phone Site	Sept. 27, 2012 Nov. 19, 2012
Fran Holden	Former Executive Director/ League of Historic American Theatres	Email Site	April 26, 2012 May 11, 2012 Aug. 5, 2012
Andy Kitzmann	Project Manager/Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor	Phone	Aug. 23, 2012

Name	Title/Organization	Type	Date
Judy Koehler	Owner/Pratt Opera House	Email	July 31, 2012 Aug. 17, 2012 Sept. 20, 2012 April 17, 2013
Patti Lockwood-Blaise	Executive Director/Earlville Opera House	Phone Site	Oct. 25, 2012 Dec. 12, 2012
Andrew Meier	Treasurer/General Counsel Orleans Renaissance Group Mayor/Village of Medina	Site	Nov. 10, 2012
Philip Morris	CEO/Proctors	Phone	Sept. 24, 2012
Jane Oakes	Author/Thesis on Opera Houses Consultant, Avon Opera Block	Email Phone	Oct. 11, 2012 Oct. 23, 2012
Bob Ohmann	Owner/Ohmann Theatre	Phone	Oct. 8, 2012
Katelin Olson	Executive Director/Albion Main Street Alliance	Site Email	July 11, 2012 July 31, 2012
Art Pierce	Executive Director/Capitol Theatre	Phone Site	Sept. 29, 2012 Nov. 19, 2012
Kylie Pierce	Marketing Director/Capitol Theatre	Phone Site	Sept. 29, 2012 Nov. 19, 2012
Tony Rivera	Managing Director/Cohoes Music Hall	Site	Dec. 11, 2012
Gary Schiro	Executive Director/Hudson Opera House	Phone Site	Oct. 26, 2012 Dec. 10, 2012
Virginia Searl	Principal Bero Architecture	Email	April 2, 2012 April 29, 2013
Dan Sheehan	Director of Operations/Proctors	Site	Dec. 12, 2012
Kennedy Smith	Principal/The Clue Group	Phone	Oct. 11, 2012
Dan Ward	Curator/Erie Canal Museum	Phone	Aug. 15, 2012
Tania Werbizsky	Regional Director, Technical & Grants Programs/Preservation League of New York State	Email Phone	Mar. 19, 2012 Mar. 28, 2012 Mar. 27, 2013
Benjie White	Executive Director/Hubbard Hall	Site	Dec. 11, 2012

Phone – Telephone interview

Site – Interview on-site or in-person

Email – Detailed information provided through email

APPENDIX II

HISTORIC THEATRE QUESTIONNAIRE

The questionnaire that follows was sent to each theatre whose executive director, manager or owner agreed to participate in the study. A few questionnaires were completed and returned via email/US mail. In most cases, however, the questions were answered during a phone or on-site interview. Even during the interviews, not all questions in the survey were answered.

Historic Theatre Questionnaire

Return to: Gina DiBella at gdibella@rochester.rr.com

Answers obtained from this survey will be used in the research for a thesis on the reuse of historic theatres.

Basic Information

Name of Theatre:

Organization Name (if different than theatre):

Location of Theatre (Address/City/State/Zip):

Website:

Primary Contact:

Primary Contact Title:

Contact Phone:

Contact Email:

Type of Historic Theatre: (check all that apply)

<input type="checkbox"/>	Playhouse	<input type="checkbox"/>	Vaudeville	<input type="checkbox"/>	Opera House
<input type="checkbox"/>	Movie Palace	<input type="checkbox"/>	Cinema	<input type="checkbox"/>	Town Hall
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:				

Original Architect:

Original Builder/Owner:

Date Theatre Built:

Architectural Style:

Is there a written history of theatre? Name of publication? How to get a copy?

Current Status:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Open to Public	<input type="checkbox"/>	Closed to Public
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Seating Capacity of Theatre Auditorium:

Is /was there a balcony? ☐ Yes ☐ No

Key Support Facilities on-site (in addition to front-of-house and backstage services):

<input type="checkbox"/>	Reception rooms	<input type="checkbox"/>	Parking	<input type="checkbox"/>	Rehearsal Hall
<input type="checkbox"/>	Commercial/Rental	<input type="checkbox"/>	Studio Theatre	<input type="checkbox"/>	Administration
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:				

Type and Scope of Operation

Ownership

Name of organization:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Private, commercial
<input type="checkbox"/>	Private, not-for-profit [501(c)3]
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public (government or government agency)

Size of Board:

Governance

Name of organization:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Private, commercial
<input type="checkbox"/>	Private, not-for-profit [501(c)3]
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public (government or government agency)

Size of Board:

Management

Name of organization:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Private, commercial
<input type="checkbox"/>	Private, not-for-profit [501(c)3]
<input type="checkbox"/>	Public (government or government agency)

Size of Board:

Current number of paid personnel:

Current number of volunteer personnel:

Annual net operating budget:

Sources of operating support: *(check all that apply)*

<input type="checkbox"/>	Municipal	<input type="checkbox"/>	County	<input type="checkbox"/>	State	<input type="checkbox"/>	Federal
<input type="checkbox"/>	In-Kind						
<input type="checkbox"/>	Corporations (names)						
<input type="checkbox"/>	Foundations (names)						
<input type="checkbox"/>	Individuals (names)						
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:						

Annual Facility Operation Costs:

(including lease, mortgage, utility, insurance, janitorial, taxes and other expenses directly related to the operation of the facility)

Annual Programming Costs:

Current Fund Raising Goals:

Fundraising goals for operation costs:

Fundraising goals for programming:

Theatre Rehabilitation

Date of Last Major Rehabilitation:

OR ☐ Pending ☐ Ongoing ☐ Never

Architectural Firm and/or Other Professionals used during rehabilitation:

Was a feasibility study conducted prior to rehabilitation?

Date (Year) Theatre Reopened to Public:

Type of Rehabilitation Approach to Public Spaces:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Conservation (cleaned)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Preservation (restored as-is)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Adaptive Re-use (changed original primary use)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Restoration (to a particular era)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Renovation (changed the décor)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Combination:

Costs of Rehabilitation:

Rehabilitation Schedule (from initial feasibility or concept to completion):

<input type="checkbox"/>	Under 2 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	2-4 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	4-6 years
<input type="checkbox"/>	7-8 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	Over 8 years	<input type="checkbox"/>	Ongoing

Sources of rehabilitation funding: *(check all that apply)*

<input type="checkbox"/>	Grants (names)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Loans (names)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Historic Preservation Tax Credits (state, federal, or both)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other Tax Credits (names)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Fundraising Campaigns (examples)
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:

Awards the building, an individual or group has received for the rehab/reuse of the building:

Architectural and Historic Integrity/Challenges

Current/rehabbed use of theatre building:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Same as original use
<input type="checkbox"/>	Adapted to a different use (What is new use?)

Is the theatre listed in the National Register of Historic Places?

<input type="checkbox"/>	Individually
<input type="checkbox"/>	Part of a Historic District/Name of District:

Date/Year of Listing in NR:

Is the theatre designated a local landmark?

Year of designation:

Were the Secretary of the Interior's Standards used for the theatre rehabilitation?

What challenges were encountered while ...

... trying to maintain the historic and architectural integrity of the building and adapt the building for use in the 21st century?

... conforming to ADA requirements?

... adapting your theatre to hosting larger productions?

Technology & Green Practices

What technological changes were required to make the theatre useful for the 21st century?

What (if any) green practices are in place now as a result of the rehab of the theatre?

Did green practices lead to financial incentives such as grants, tax credits, loans, etc.?

Programming Information

Current use of theatre building: *(check all that apply)*

<input type="checkbox"/>	Theatre	<input type="checkbox"/>	Offices	<input type="checkbox"/>	Commercial/Businesses
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:				

If used as a theatre, current primary business model of anchor business:

<input type="checkbox"/>	Rental	<input type="checkbox"/>	Presenting	<input type="checkbox"/>	Producing	<input type="checkbox"/>	Exhibiting
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Are there other tenants in the theatre building?

(Names of other businesses/organizations occupying building)

Current primary programming priorities (if closed, programming objectives):

<input type="checkbox"/>	Theatre	<input type="checkbox"/>	Music	<input type="checkbox"/>	Variety	<input type="checkbox"/>	Opera
<input type="checkbox"/>	Dance	<input type="checkbox"/>	Film	<input type="checkbox"/>	Community Events		
<input type="checkbox"/>	Other:						

Non-theatre uses for your building: (e.g. weddings, special events, meetings, lectures, conferences, theatre or education classes)

Is the theatre building used as a community gathering space?

(Examples of community uses)

Target Audience Market Size:

Primary audience proximity:

<input type="checkbox"/>	10 minutes by car	<input type="checkbox"/>	Up to 20 minutes by car	<input type="checkbox"/>	Up to 30 minutes by car
<input type="checkbox"/>	Up to 1 hour by car	<input type="checkbox"/>	Over 1 hour by car		

Do you share programming with theatres in other communities? Examples.

Do you offer remote programming? (e.g. Opera from the Met via feeds)

Approximately how many days of the year does programming occur in the theatre?

Is the theatre open year-round?

Is there a busy season?

Community Engagement and Impact

Size/Population of Host Community:

Was a marketing and needs assessment conducted prior to, during, or after the theatre rehabilitation?

If so, what were the results of the assessment?

How were/are members of the community involved with the theatre building? (prior to/during rehab and currently)

What types of leadership roles do community members have in the theatre organization?

How are volunteers used to support the theatre building/organization?

Comment on the importance of volunteers to the theatre/organization.

**Has the rehabilitation/reuse of the theatre building ...
....helped to promote additional revitalization in the community? Examples.**

... affected the economic development in the community? Examples.

... affected residents' pride in their community? Examples

Does the theatre serve as an anchor building/organization in the community?

In what ways do you think the rehabilitation/reuse of the theatre building had or can have a ripple effect on the revitalization of the community?

Collaborations/Alliances/Partnerships

Have you worked with any particular organizations that are/were helpful in providing advice/support during the restoration process or for the current operation of the theatre?

Erie Canal *(disregard if theatre is not located in the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor)*

Did the Erie Canal have an effect on the theatre historically?

Does the Erie Canal or Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor have an effect on the theatre currently?

Do you think the Erie Canal corridor could play a role in the future of the theatre building and its community?

Are visitors to the Erie Canal corridor considered part of the theatre's potential audience?

Advice

When forming a plan for your theatre, did you look to examples of other theatres? Which one(s)?

What advice would you offer to historic theatre building owners who are contemplating a rehab of their building?

Looking back, is there anything you would do differently?

APPENDIX III THEATRES CONSIDERED FOR STUDY

Name of Theatre (City, Town or Village)	Response to Initial Contact	Questionnaire Response	Site Visit
Allendale Theatre (Buffalo)	Yes	No	No
Avon Opera House (Avon)*	Yes	Phone interview	No
Bent's Opera House (Medina)	Yes	On-site interview	Yes
Capitol Theatre (Rome)	Yes	Phone interview	Yes
Cinema Theatre (Rochester)	No	No	No
Clayton Opera House (Clayton)*	Yes	On-site interview	Yes
Cohoes Music Hall (Cohoes)	Yes	On-site interview	Yes
Earlville Opera House (Earlville)*	Yes	Phone interview	Yes
1891 Fredonia Opera House (Fredonia)*	Yes	Phone interview	Exterior only
Hubbard Hall (Cambridge)*	Yes	On-site interview	Yes
Hudson Opera House (Hudson)*	Yes	Phone interview	Yes
Lancaster Opera House (Lancaster)*	No	No	No
Landmark Theatre (Syracuse)	No	No	No
Little Theatre (Rochester)	No	No	No
Ohmann Theatre (Lyons)	Yes	Phone interview	No
Palace Theatre (Albany)	No	No	No
Palace Theatre (Lockport)	No	No	No
Palace Theatre (Syracuse)	Yes	Phone interview	Yes
Pratt Opera House (Albion)	Yes	On-site interview	Yes
Proctors (Schenectady)	Yes	Phone interview	Yes
Riviera Theatre (North Tonawanda)	Yes	No	No
Shea's Theatre (Buffalo)	No	No	No
Smith Opera House (Geneva)	Yes	On-site interview	Yes
Stanley Theatre (Utica)	No	No	No
State Theatre (Ithaca)	Yes	No	No
Troy Savings Bank Music Hall (Troy)	Yes	On-site interview	Yes

* Theatres located outside of Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor.

APPENDIX IV
HISTORIC THEATRE PROJECTS THAT RECEIVED
GOVERNMENT FUNDING AND REQUIRED REVIEW BY NYSHPO

Theatre	NR status	Type of Government Funding	Amount/Date
Avon Opera Block	NR listed	NYS EPF-HP grant for exterior & interior rehab of building.	\$500,000 (2007)
Clayton Opera House	NR listed	NYS EPF-HP grant for exterior & interior rehab of building	\$200,000 (2005)
Earlville Opera House	NR listed	NYS EPF-HP grant for exterior & interior rehab of building	\$115,000 (1998)
1891 Fredonia Opera House	NR district (Fredonia Commons)	NYS EQBA-HP grant NYS EPF-HP grant for exterior rehab of the building	\$262,000 (1988) \$175,000 (2006)
Hudson Opera House	NR district (City of Hudson)	NYS EPF-HP grant for exterior & interior rehab of building Tax Credit Project – still in progress	\$50,000 (1995) \$12,960 (1996) \$231,250 (2002) \$200,000 (2008)
Proctors	NR listed	NYS EPF-HP grant for exterior & interior rehab of building Tax Credit Project (2003)	\$400,000 (2009) \$100,000 (2011) Amount unknown (pre-2009)
Smith Opera House	NR listed	NYS EPF-HP grant for exterior & interior rehab of building	Amount/year unknown
Troy Music Hall	NR & NHL	Tax Credit Project for exterior & interior rehab of building	Pre-1996

NYS EPF-HP = New York State Environmental Protection Fund – Historic Preservation Grant –administered by NYS Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation (OPRHP); most, if not all, projects funded under the EQBA have been closed out.
NYS EQBA-HP = New York State Environmental Quality Bond Act- Historic Preservation Grant – is administered by NYS OPRHP, which is one of many state agencies to receive appropriated funds from the EPF.

Information for this table supplied by Christine Capella-Peters and Julian Adams from the New York State Historic Preservation Office.

APPENDIX V

SECRETARY OF THE INTERIOR'S STANDARDS FOR REHABILITATION

1. A property will be used as it was historically or be given a new use that requires minimal change to its distinctive materials, features, spaces, and spatial relationships.
2. The historic character of a property will be retained and preserved. The removal of distinctive materials or alteration of features, spaces, and spatial relationships that characterize a property will be avoided.
3. Each property will be recognized as a physical record of its time, place, and use. Changes that create a false sense of historical development, such as adding conjectural features or elements from other historic properties, will not be undertaken.
4. Changes to a property that have acquired historic significance in their own right will be retained and preserved.
5. Distinctive materials, features, finishes, and construction techniques or examples of craftsmanship that characterize a property will be preserved.
6. Deteriorated historic features will be repaired rather than replaced. Where the severity of deterioration requires replacement of a distinctive feature, the new feature will match the old in design, color, texture, and, where possible, materials. Replacement of missing features will be substantiated by documentary and physical evidence.
7. Chemical or physical treatments, if appropriate, will be undertaken using the gentlest means possible. Treatments that cause damage to historic materials will not be used.
8. Archeological resources will be protected and preserved in place. If such resources must be disturbed, mitigation measures will be undertaken.
9. New additions, exterior alterations, or related new construction will not destroy historic materials, features, and spatial relationships that characterize the property. The new work shall be differentiated from the old and will be compatible with the historic materials, features, size, scale and proportion, and massing to protect the integrity of the property and its environment.
10. New additions and adjacent or related new construction will be undertaken in such a manner that, if removed in the future, the essential form and integrity of the historic property and its environment would be unimpaired.

Source: http://www.nps.gov/hps/tps/standguide/rehab/rehab_standards.htm.

APPENDIX VI
ORIGINAL AND CURRENT USES FOR THEATRES IN STUDY

Name of Theatre	Original Use Street Level	Current/Recent Use Street Level	Original Use Upper Levels	Current Use Upper Levels
Avon Opera Block	Commercial	Town Offices	2: Commercial 3: Theatre	2: Town Offices 3: Theatre waiting rehab
Bent's Opera House	Commercial	Commercial with some vacant storefronts	2: Meeting rooms 3: Theatre	2: Vacant 3: Theatre waiting rehab
Capitol Theatre	Theatre, Commercial	Theatre, Commercial, Offices	2: Theatre, Offices	2: Theatre, Dance Studio
Clayton Opera House	LL: Town Hall, Commercial	LL: Town Hall	1: Theatre 2: Theatre 3: Meeting Room	1: Theatre 2: Theatre, Offices 3: Ballroom, Offices
Cohoes Music Hall	Commercial, Post Office	Visitor's Center, Museum	2: Offices 3: Theatre	2: Offices 3: Theatre
Earlville Opera House	Commercial	Offices, Arts-Related Spaces (Galleries, Workshops)	2: Theatre	2: Theatre, Arts Cafe
1891 Fredonia Opera House	Village Hall	Village Hall, Police Department	2: Theatre, Village Hall	2: Theatre, Village Hall
Hubbard Hall	Commercial	Arts-Related Spaces (Gallery, Gift Shop), Offices	2: Theatre	2: Theatre

Name of Theatre	Original Use Street Level	Current/Recent Use Street Level	Original Use Upper Levels	Current Use Upper Levels
Hudson Opera House	City Hall, Post Office, Library, Bank	Offices, Arts-Related Spaces (Gallery, Workshops, Performance Spaces)	2: Theatre	2: Theatre waiting rehab
Ohmann Theatre	Theatre	Theatre	Theatre	Theatre
Palace Theatre	Theatre, Commercial	Theatre, Commercial, Entertainment Space	Theatre, Ballroom	Theatre, Offices, Entertainment Space
Pratt Opera House	Commercial	Commercial	2: Commercial, Offices 3: Theatre	2: Offices, Dance Studio 3: Theatre waiting rehab
Proctors	Theatre, Commercial (Arcade)	Theatre, Commercial (Arcade)	Theatre, Offices	Theatre, Offices
Smith Opera House	Commercial	Commercial, Offices, Theatre	2: Theatre, Offices 3: Theatre	2. Theatre, Offices, Studio 3. Theatre, Offices
Troy Music Hall	Commercial (bank)	Vacant	2: Theatre 3: Theatre 4: Theatre	2: Theatre 3: Theatre, offices 4: Theatre

LL: Lower Level
1: First floor
2: Second floor
3: Third floor
4: Fourth floor

APPENDIX VII

BUILDING, FIRE AND LIFE SAFETY CODES TO CONSIDER IN A THEATRE REHABILITATION

Code Concern	Explanation/Requirement
Means of Egress Illumination	The amount of lighting required for egress (coming in or going out) and emergency evacuation of the theatre.
Fire Alarm and Detection Systems	Theatres with occupancy of 300 or more people are required to have a fire alarm system. Those that seat more than 1000 must have a more sophisticated system with voice communications
National Electrical Code	Article 520 is specific to theatres and addresses everything from dressing tables to theatrical support. Most theatre projects will involve updates to meet this code.
ASHRAE 62 Ventilation	The American Society of Heating, Refrigerating and Air Conditioning Engineers has established a code for ventilation for acceptable indoor air quality, which pertains to the outside air in the theatre audience chamber.
National Fire Protection Agency Systems	This includes the installation of sprinklers, in both the stage house area and audience chambers. New sprinkler heads have been designed to meet code and at the same time be sensitive to the historic fabric and appearance of the theatre.
Energy Conservation Codes	Today's mechanical and electrical systems are required to be energy conserving. In some situations, historic theatres may be exempt from certain energy codes, as long as the building's fire/life safety systems have been updated.

Source: Lyles, V. Mitchell and David D. Woytek, Jr., "Re-Engineering America's Historic Theatres," InLEAGUE (Winter 2006): 4-7.

APPENDIX VIII
STRUCTURE OF THEATRE
MANAGEMENT/OWNERSHIP/BUSINESS MODEL

Theatre	Management	Ownership	Primary Theatre Business Model
Avon Opera Block	N/A	Municipality: Town of Avon	N/A
Bent's Opera House	N/A	Nonprofit: Orleans Renaissance Group	N/A
Capitol Theatre	Nonprofit: Capitol Civic Center, Inc.	Nonprofit: Capitol Civic Center, Inc	Presenting
Clayton Opera House	Nonprofit: Thousand Islands Performing Arts Fund	Municipality: Town of Clayton	Presenting
Cohoes Music Hall	Nonprofit: C-R Productions, Inc.*	Municipality: City of Cohoes	Producing*
Earlville Opera House	Nonprofit: Earlville Opera House, Inc.	Nonprofit: Earlville Opera House	Presenting
1891 Fredonia Opera House	Nonprofit: 1891 Fredonia Opera House, Inc.	Municipality: Village of Fredonia	Presenting
Hubbard Hall	Nonprofit: Hubbard Hall Projects, Inc.	Nonprofit: Hubbard Hall Projects, Inc.	Producing, Presenting
Hudson Opera House	Nonprofit: Hudson Opera House, Inc.	Nonprofit: Hudson Opera House, Inc.	Presenting
Ohmann Theatre	N/A	For Profit/Private: Bob Ohmann	Presenting

* The City of Cohoes announced the hiring of a consulting executive director to manage the Cohoes Music Hall in April 2013. C-R Productions will continue to produce shows at the venue, but will no longer manage the Music Hall.

Theatre	Management	Ownership	Primary Theatre Business Model
Palace Theatre	N/A	For Profit/Private: Michael Heagerty	Rental
Pratt Opera House	N/A	Private/Transferring to Nonprofit: Michael Bonafede Judy Koehler	N/A
Proctors	Nonprofit: Arts Center & Theatre of Schenectady (ACTS)	For Profit: PT Redevelopment, a wholly-owned subsidiary of ACTS	Presenting, Rental (also energy sales and fundraising)
Smith Opera House	Nonprofit: The Smith Center for the Arts, Inc.	Nonprofit: The Smith Center for the Arts, Inc.	Presenting
Troy Music Hall	Nonprofit: Troy Savings Bank Music Hall Corporation	Nonprofit: Troy Savings Bank Music Hall Foundation	Presenting

APPENDIX IX

MISSION STATEMENTS OF HISTORIC THEATRE ORGANIZATIONS

Name of Theatre	Mission
Avon Opera Block	Not applicable
Bent Opera House <i>Orleans Renaissance Group</i>	The Orleans Renaissance Group, Inc., a 501(c)(3) volunteer organization, is dedicated to promoting preservation, the arts, and cultural events in the greater Medina, NY area.
Capitol Theatre (Rome) <i>Capitol Civic Center, Inc.</i>	The Capitol Theatre provides cultural and educational opportunities to the community through the performing and visual arts in Rome, NY's historic 1928 theater.
Clayton Opera House <i>Thousand Islands Performing Arts Fund</i>	To foster appreciation of the performing arts in the Thousand Islands region by offering and promoting outstanding performances and events.
Cohoes Music Hall <i>C-R Productions, Inc.</i>	The organization's mission is to revitalize the <i>Cohoes Music Hall</i> through the presentation of high quality, professional theatre and educational programs.
Earlville Opera House <i>Earlville Opera House, Inc.</i>	The Earlville Opera House Arts Center enriches the Central New York community through the visual and performing arts while preserving its historic building.
1891 Fredonia Opera House <i>1891 Fredonia Opera House, Inc.</i>	Our mission is to present the performing arts for the benefit of our community and region, while preserving one of our region's historically significant landmarks.
Hubbard Hall <i>Hubbard Hall Projects, Inc.</i>	Making art and community happen in an 1878 rural opera house.
Hudson Opera House <i>Hudson Opera House, Inc.</i>	The mission of the Hudson Opera House is to inspire and promote the arts and to play a pivotal role in the cultural and economic advancement of the region.
Ohmann Theatre	Not applicable
Palace Theatre	Not applicable
Pratt Opera House	Not available yet
Proctors <i>Arts Center and Theatre of Schenectady</i>	Through arts and community leadership be a catalyst for excellence in education, sustainable economic development and rich civic engagement to enhance the quality of life in the greater capital region.
Smith Opera House <i>The Smith Center for the Arts, Inc.</i>	The Smith Center for the Arts, Inc. is committed to providing and sustaining diverse arts and education enrichment opportunities for Finger Lakes residents and visitors, while maintaining its historic venue - the Smith Opera House.
Troy Music Hall <i>Troy Savings Bank Music Hall Corp.</i>	As one of the rare few continuously operating 19th century concert halls still in the U.S., the mission of the Troy Savings Bank Music Hall is to promote and protect this acoustically acclaimed 1,200 seat concert hall.

APPENDIX X

HISTORIC PRESERVATION FUNDING SOURCES

National Funding Sources

National Park Service

Certified Local Government Program (CLG)	Supports local preservation activities and establishes a link between municipalities and state and national preservation programs. Most grants are used for planning and public education projects. <i>Administered by New York State Historic Preservation Office.</i>	http://nysparks.com/grants/certified-local-government/default.aspx
Save America's Treasures	A competitive matching grant program to fund bricks and mortar preservation and/or conservation work on nationally significant intellectual and cultural artifacts and historic structures and sites. <i>Authorized but not currently funded.</i>	http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/treasures/index.htm
Preserve America	A competitive matching-grant program to fund designated Preserve America Communities to support preservation efforts through heritage tourism, education, and historic preservation planning. <i>Authorized but not currently funded.</i>	http://www.nps.gov/history/hps/hpg/PreserveAmerica/index.htm

National Endowment for the Arts (NEA)

NEA Grants	Supports artistic excellence, creativity, and innovation for the benefit of individuals and communities. Extends its work through partnerships with state arts agencies, local leaders, other federal agencies, and the philanthropic sector.	http://www.nea.gov/grants/apply/index.html
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NEA Our Town Grants	Organizations may apply for creative placemaking projects that contribute to the livability of communities and place the arts at their core. An organization may request a grant amount from \$25,000 to \$200,000.	http://www.nea.gov/grants/apply/OurTown/index.html
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U.S. Department of Housing and Urban Development

Community Development Block Grant program	Provides communities with resources to address community development needs. Works to ensure decent affordable housing, to provide services to the most vulnerable in our communities, and to create jobs through the expansion and retention of businesses.	http://portal.hud.gov/hudportal/HUD?src=/program_offices/comm_planning/communitydevelopment/programs
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National Trust Funds

Cynthia Woods Mitchell Fund for Historic Interiors	Assists in the preservation, restoration, and interpretation of historic interiors. Grants range from \$2,500 to \$10,000.	http://www.preservationnation.org/resources/find-funding/special-funds/cynthia-woods-mitchell.html
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Hart Family Fund for Small Towns	Provides seed money for preservation projects in small towns. Grants range from \$2,500 to \$10,000.	http://www.preservationnation.org/resources/find-funding/special-funds/hart-fund.html#.UbVBD5ycPbg
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Johanna Favrot Fund for Historic Preservation	Aims to save historic environments in order to foster an appreciation of our nation's diverse cultural heritage and to preserve and revitalize the livability of the nation's communities. Grants range from \$2,500 to \$10,000.	http://www.preservationnation.org/resources/find-funding/special-funds/johanna-favrot-fund.html#.UbVB7pycPbg
National Trust Preservation Fund	Intended to encourage preservation at the local level by providing seed money for preservation projects. Grants generally start at \$2,500 and range up to \$5,000.	http://www.preservationnation.org/resources/find-funding/preservation-funds-guidelines-eligibility.html#.UbVCjZycPbg

New York State Funding Sources

Environmental Protection Fund (EPF)	Assists municipalities and nonprofit organizations in the acquisition, restoration, preservation, rehabilitation and improvement of parks and historic properties.	http://nysparks.com/grants/
New York State Energy Research and Development Authority (NYSERDA)	Aim is to help New York meet its energy goals: reducing energy consumption, promoting the use of renewable energy sources, and protecting the environment. A variety of funding opportunities are available to businesses.	http://www.nyscrda.ny.gov/Funding-Opportunities.aspx
New York Main Street Program	Revitalizing NYS downtowns through commercial/residential improvements such as facade renovations, interior commercial and residential building upgrades, and streetscape enhancements. Requests: \$50,000 - \$250,000.	http://www.nyshcr.org/Programs/NYMainStreet/

New York State Council on the Arts (NYSCA) Grants	Provides funding for a variety of preservation activities, including design services and building condition studies through its Architecture, Planning and Design/Capital Projects Program. Must be a not-for-profit organization or municipality.	http://www.nysca.org/public/grants/index.htm
NYS Industrial Development Agencies (IDA)	Promote, develop, encourage and assist in acquiring, constructing, improving, maintaining or equipping certain facilities, thereby advancing the job opportunities, health, general prosperity and the economic welfare of the people of New York.	A directory of NYS IDAs is available at: http://www.abo.ny.gov/paw/paw_weblistingIDA.html
Preservation League of New York State Preserve NY Grants	Provides support for cultural resource surveys, historic structure reports, and historic landscape reports. Applicant must be a not-for-profit group with tax-exempt status or a unit of local government. Grants are likely to range between \$3,000 and \$10,000.	http://www.preservenys.org/01_what_grants_presny.html
Technical Assistance Grants	Supports professional services of architects, engineers and other design and preservation professionals working with not-for-profit groups and municipalities to preserve their buildings, structures, and other resources that serve an arts and/or cultural function. Grants to \$3,000.	http://www.preservenys.org/01_what_grants_tag.html

EPIP (Endangered Properties Intervention Program) Loans

Created to foster the revitalization and protection of historic resources and neighborhoods throughout New York, and to facilitate the purchase and rehabilitation of this threatened historic structure by sympathetic owners.

http://www.preservenys.org/01_what_grants_endangrd.html

Local Funding Sources

Local Foundations
such as: The Community
Foundation (Rochester)

Historical Preservation
Funds
Historic Preservation,
Restoration and Literature
Fund

<http://www.racf.org/Grants/SearchforFunding/tabid/278/Default.aspx?sm=441>

Local Preservation
Organizations such as:
Landmark Society of
Western New York
Preservation Grant Fund

Offers funds for preliminary design and planning studies to help make positive improvements to at-risk buildings. Preferred applicants: a nonprofit, charitable organization or a local unit of government. Request may not exceed \$3,500

<http://landmarksociety.org/programs/preservation-grant-fund-new/>

APPENDIX XI

POTENTIAL PARTNERS IN HISTORIC THEATRE PROJECTS

National Organizations	Website
American Institute of Architects	www.aia.org
American Planning Association	www.planning.org
Association for Preservation Technology	www.apti.org
Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor	www.eriecanalway.org
League of Historic American Theatres	www.lhat.org
National Endowment for the Arts	www.nea.gov
National Park Service	www.nps.gov
National Trust for Historic Preservation	www.preservationnation.org
National Trust Main Street Program	www.mainstreet.org
In NYS: Albion, Lockport, Lyons, Western Erie	
Society of Architectural Historians	www.sah.org
Theatre Historical Society of America	www.historictheatres.org
State Organizations	Website
New York State Canal Corporation	www.canals.ny.gov
New York State Council on the Arts	www.nysca.org
New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation – State Historic Preservation Office	www.nysparks.com/shpo
Preservation League of New York State	www.preservenys.org
Regional/Local Organizations	
Arts & Cultural Councils	
Chambers of Commerce	
Colleges and Universities	
Historical Societies	
Historic Preservation Commissions or Architectural Review Boards	
Preservation Nonprofits	
Regional Planning Councils	
School Districts	
Visitor's Centers	

APPENDIX XII

ARTS & ECONOMIC PROSPERITY CALCULATOR

The calculator can be found at:

http://www.americansforthearts.org/information_services/research/services/economic_impact/default.asp#

ARTS & ECONOMIC PROSPERITY IV
ECONOMIC IMPACT OF THE NONPROFIT ARTS & CULTURE INDUSTRY > CALCULATOR

INFORMATION

STEP 1: POPULATION

POPULATION of your community: Choose one

STEP 2: TOTAL EXPENSES

Your Organization's TOTAL EXPENSES (please do not use commas): \$

STEP 3: TOTAL ATTENDANCE (OPTIONAL)

TOTAL ATTENDANCE to your organization's arts events (again, do not use commas):

TOTAL ECONOMIC IMPACT OF:

	<u>Total Expenditures</u>	<u>FTE Jobs</u>	<u>Household Income</u>	<u>Local Government Revenue</u>	<u>State Government Revenue</u>
Nonprofit Arts and Culture Organizations:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Nonprofit Arts and Culture Audiences:	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>
Total Industry Impact: (The Sum of Organizations and Audiences)	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>	<input type="text"/>

Please see the fine print below.

DEFINITIONS

Total Expenditures:	The total dollars spent by your nonprofit arts and culture organization and its audiences; event-related spending by arts and culture audiences is estimated using the average dollars spent per person by arts event attendees in similarly populated communities.
FTE Jobs:	The total number of full-time equivalent (FTE) jobs in your community that are supported by the expenditures made by your arts and culture organization and/or its audiences. An FTE can be one full-time employee, two half-time employees, four employees who work quarter-time, etc.
Household Income:	The total dollars paid to community residents as a result of the expenditures made by your arts and culture organization and/or its audiences. Household income includes salaries, wages, and proprietary income.
Government Revenue:	The total dollars received by your local and state governments (e.g., license fees, taxes) as a result of the expenditures made by your arts and culture organization and/or its audiences.

When using estimates derived from this calculator, always keep the following caveats in mind: (1) the results of this analysis are based upon the averages of similarly populated communities, (2) input/output models were customized for each of these similarly populated communities, providing very specific employment, household income, and government revenue data, and (3) your results are therefore estimates, and should not be used as a substitute for conducting an economic impact study that is customized for your community.

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APPENDIX XIII

GOALS AND OBJECTIVES OF THE ERIE CANALWAY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR

Mission Statement:

The mission of the Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Commission is to plan for, encourage, and assist historic preservation, conservation, recreation, interpretation, tourism, and community development in ways that promote partnerships among the Corridor's many stakeholders, and reflects, celebrates, and enhances the Corridor's national significance for all to use and enjoy.

Goals	Objectives
The Corridor's historic and distinctive sense of place will be widely expressed and consistently protected.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Build public support for preservation ● Protect and enhance the canals and related resources ● Encourage investment in sustainable development ● Help Corridor communities plan for heritage development
The Corridor's natural resources will reflect the highest standards of environmental quality.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase public awareness and support for conservation ● Encourage quality stewardship policies and practices
The Corridor's recreational opportunities will achieve maximum scope and diversity, in harmony with the protection of heritage resources.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Increase access to and diversity of recreational opportunities ● Improve the quality of the Corridor experience ● Enhance connectivity between Corridor resources
The Corridor's current and future generations of residents and visitors will value and support preservation of its heritage.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Develop a Corridor-wide thematic framework ● Integrate communities and sites into the larger Corridor story ● Improve educational and interpretive programs and media ● Extend awareness and interest beyond Corridor boundaries
The Corridor's economic growth and heritage development will be balanced and self-sustaining.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Harness tourism and development to reinforce sense of place ● Increase local capacity to undertake heritage development ● Establish a unifying Corridor identity of place and quality of life ● Integrate a heritage-based perspective into every message
The Corridor will be a "must-do" travel experience for regional, national and international visitors.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● Attract visitors to maximize economic impact ● Help develop a memorable Corridor tourism product ● Provide coordination and assistance to marketing efforts ● Communicate to stakeholders the benefits of heritage tourism

Information for this table is from *Erie Canalway National Heritage Corridor Manifest for a 21st Century Canalway: Highlights of the Preservation and Management Plan*, available at http://www.eriecanalway.org/documents/Book_3-EBook.pdf.

APPENDIX XIV

SURVEY OF HISTORIC THEATRES IN/NEAR THE ERIE CANALWAY NATIONAL HERITAGE CORRIDOR

The following survey includes basic information on each of the theatres included in this study. Information about each theatre was obtained from the theatre questionnaires (Appendix 2), phone or on-site interviews, site visits, theatre websites, and other internet sources. Unless noted, all photos are by the author.

Avon Opera Block
23 Genesee Street
Avon, New York 14414

Opera House

<http://www.avon-ny.org/>



Avon Opera Block, exterior [source: Bero Architecture].



Avon Opera Block, interior [source: Bero Architecture].

Architectural Style:	Italianate
Year Constructed:	1876
Original Owner:	William E. Hall
Architect:	N/A
Builder:	Long and Watkins
National Register Status:	Individual Listing
Year Listed:	2006
NR#:	06000884
Current Use:	Town Hall, theatre waiting rehabilitation
Year(s) of Rehabilitation:	2009
Current Owner:	Town of Avon
Phone:	585.226.2425
Interesting Fact:	Also known as Hall's Opera Block and Clark's Opera House.

Bent's Opera House
444 Main Street
Medina, New York 14103

Opera House

<http://www.eggstreet.org>



Bent's Opera House, exterior.



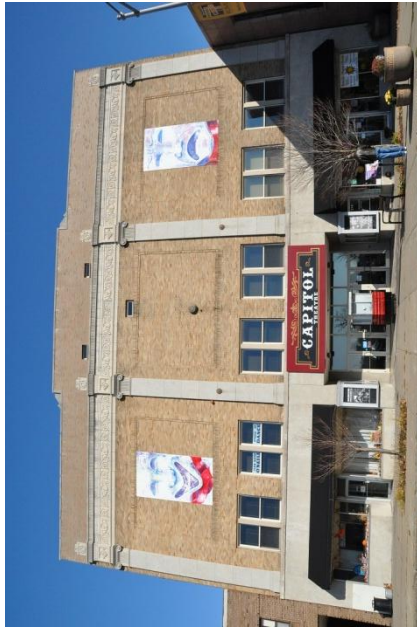
Bent's Opera House, interior.

Architectural Style:	Italianate
Year Constructed:	1864
Original Owner:	Don C. Bent
Architect:	N/A
Builder:	N/A
National Register Status:	Contributing property in the Main Street Historic District
Year Listed:	1995
NR#:	95000213
Current Use:	Theatre waiting rehabilitation
Year(s) of Rehabilitation:	2012-present
Current Owner/Manager:	Orleans Renaissance Group
Contact:	Christopher Busch, Vice Chair
Phone:	N/A
Interesting Facts:	Constructed of Medina sandstone. Building donated to ORG by previous owner. Included on Preservation League of New York State's "Seven to Save" list in 2012.

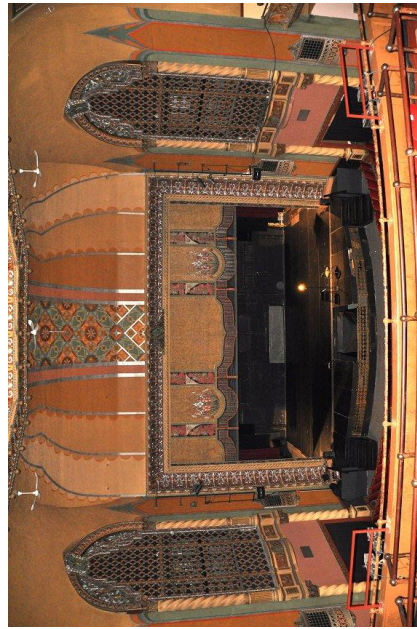
Capitol Theatre
220 West Dominick Street
Rome, New York 13440

Movie Palace

<http://www.romecapitol.com>



Capitol Theatre, exterior.



Capitol Theatre, interior.

Architectural Style:	Original: Spanish-Moorish 1939: Art Moderne 1928
Year Constructed:	Michael J. and Joseph S. Kallet
Original Owner:	Leon H. Lempert, Jr.
Architect:	N/A
Builder:	Original: 2000/Current: 1788
Number of Seats:	
National Register Status:	Not yet listed
Year Listed:	N/A
NR#:	N/A
Current Use:	Theatre
Year(s) of Rehabilitation:	1985, ongoing
Current Owner/Manager:	Capitol Civic Center, Inc.
Executive Director:	Art Pierce
Phone:	315.337.6277
Interesting Facts:	Leon H. Lempert, father of the Capitol's architect, designed Rome's Washington Street Opera House. The annual Capitolfest attracts patrons from as far away as England.

Clayton Opera House
405 Riverside Drive
Clayton, New York 13624

Opera House

<http://www.claytonoperahouse.com>



Clayton Opera House, exterior.



Clayton Opera House, interior.

Architectural Style:	Romanesque Revival
Year Constructed:	1903-1904
Original Owner:	Town of Clayton
Architect:	Frank T. Lent
Builder:	George Kenyon
Number of Seats:	Original: 750/Current: 450
National Register Status:	Contributing property in the Clayton Historic District
Year Listed:	1997
NR#:	97NR01187
Current Use:	Theatre, town offices
Year(s) of Rehabilitation:	2004-2007
Current Owner:	Town of Clayton
Current Manager:	Thousand Islands Performing Arts Fund
Executive Director:	Joseph M. Gleason
Phone:	315.686.1037 ext.10

Interesting Facts:
The Opera House was once home to three Clayton museums: Antique Boat Museum, Thousand Islands Museum, and Handweaving Museum and Arts Center. Town offices are in the lower level.

Cohoes Music Hall
 58 Remsen Street
 Cohoes, NY 12047

Opera House
<http://www.cohoesmusicichall.com>



Cohoes Music Hall, exterior.



Cohoes Music Hall, interior.

Architectural Style:	Second Empire
Year Constructed:	1874
Original Owner:	James Masten, William Acheson
Architect:	Nichols and Halcott
Builder:	N/A
Number of Seats:	1000
National Register Status:	Individual and contributing property in Downtown Cohoes District
Year Listed:	1971 (individual); 1984 (district)
NR#:	71000527; 84002060
Current Use:	Theatre, visitor's center, museum
Year(s) of Rehabilitation:	Early 1970s
Current Owner:	City of Cohoes
Current Manager:	C-R Productions, Inc.*
Managing Director:	Tony Rivera
Phone:	518.237.5858 ext. 2
Interesting Fact:	Still uses hemp ropes in its rigging system.
* City of Cohoes appointed a new consulting executive director to take over management of the theatre from C-R Productions in April 2013.	

Earlville Opera House
 18 East Main Street
 Earlville, New York 13332

Opera House
<http://www.earlvilleoperahouse.com>



Earlville Opera House, exterior
 [source: <http://www.panoramio.com>].



Earlville Opera House, interior.

Architectural Style:	Romanesque Revival/ Second Empire
Year Constructed:	1892
Original Owner:	Newell L. Douglas, Earlville Opera House Company
Architect:	N/A
Builder:	N/A
Number of Seats:	300
National Register Status:	Individually listed
Year Listed:	1973
NR#:	730001169
Current Use:	Theatre, art galleries, workshops
Year(s) of Rehabilitation:	1971-76, 1994-95, 2003-05, 2007-10
Current Owner/Manager:	Earlville Opera House Center
Executive Director:	Patti Lockwood-Blaise
Phone:	315.691.3550
Interesting Facts:	It is the third opera house on the site. The previous two were lost to fires. Called the “Grand-daddy of Opera Houses” by Preservation League of New York State staff.

1891 Fredonia Opera House
9 Church Street
Fredonia, New York 14063

Opera House
<http://www.fredopera.org>



Fredonia Opera House, exterior.



Fredonia Opera House, interior [source: <http://cinematreasures.org>].

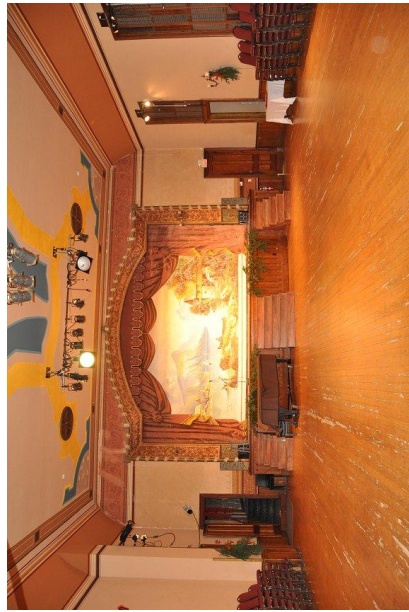
Architectural Style:	Queen Anne
Year Constructed:	1891
Original Owner:	Village of Fredonia
Architect:	Enoch A. Curtis
Builder:	N/A
Number of Seats:	444
National Register Status:	Contributing property in Fredonia Commons Historic District
Year Listed:	1978
NR#:	78001843
Current Use:	Theatre, village offices
Year(s) of Rehabilitation:	1985-1994
Current Owner:	Village of Fredonia
Current Manager:	1891 Fredonia Opera House
Executive Director:	Rick A. Davis
Phone:	716.679.0819
Interesting Fact:	The theatre was redecorated in 1905 and in the 1920s. The interior colors today are similar to the 1904-05 design.

Hubbard Hall
25 East Main Street
Cambridge, New York 12816

Opera House
<http://www.hubbardhall.org>



Hubbard Hall, exterior.



Hubbard Hall, interior.

Architectural Style:	Second Empire
Year Constructed:	1878
Original Owner:	Martin Hubbard
Architect:	Marcus Cummings
Builder:	Thomas Oviatt
Number of Seats:	Original: 700/Current: 150
National Register Status:	Contributing property in the Cambridge Historic District
Year Listed:	1978
NR#:	78001922
Current Use:	Theatre, art gallery, gift shop
Year(s) of Rehabilitation:	1978, ongoing
Current Owner/Manager:	Hubbard Hall Projects, Inc.
Executive Director:	Benjie White
Phone:	518.677.2495
Interesting Facts:	The home of the original owner, Martin Hubbard, still stands across the street from the Hall. Hubbard Hall's programs have branched out to the nearby Freight Yard Project.

Hudson Opera House
327 Warren Street
Hudson, New York 12534

Opera House
<http://www.hudsonoperahouse.org>



Hudson Opera House, exterior.



Hudson Opera House, interior.

Architectural Style:	Greek Revival
Year Constructed:	1854
Original Owner:	City of Hudson
Architect:	Peter Avery
Builder:	N/A
Number of Seats:	Current: none
National Register Status:	Contributing property in the City of Hudson Historic District
Year Listed:	1985
NR#:	85003363
Current Use:	Performing arts programs; theatre waiting rehabilitation
Year(s) of Rehabilitation:	1992 – present
Current Owner/Manager:	Hudson Opera House, Inc.
Executive Director:	Gary Schiro
Phone:	518.822.1438
Interesting Fact:	Hudson Opera House presented more than 1000 programs to its community in 2012.

Ohmann Theatre
65 William Street
Lyons, New York 14489

Movie House
<http://www.ohmanntheatre.com>



Ohmann Theatre, exterior
[source: <http://www.waymarking.com>].



Ohmann Theatre, interior. [source: <http://www.qscaudi.com>].

Architectural Style:	Neo-Classical Revival
Year Constructed:	1915
Original Owner:	Burt C. Ohmann
Architect:	N/A
Builder:	Burt C. Ohmann
Number of Seats:	Original: 900/Current: 490
National Register Status:	Not listed
Year Listed:	N/A
NR#:	N/A
Current Use:	Theatre
Year(s) of Rehabilitation:	2005
Current Owner:	Bob Ohmann
Theatre Manager:	Tom Herendeen
Phone:	315.946.4604
Interesting Fact:	The Ohmann was built by the grandfather of the current owner.

Palace Theatre
2384 James Street
Syracuse, New York 13206

Movie House
<http://www.palaceonjames.com>



Palace Theatre, exterior.



Palace Theatre, interior.

Architectural Style:	Mediterranean Revival/ Jacobean/Tudor Revival
Year Constructed:	1922
Original Owner:	Alfred DiBella
Architect:	N/A
Builder:	Alfred DiBella
Number of Seats:	Original: 1100/Current: 700
National Register Status:	Not listed
Year Listed:	N/A
NR#:	N/A
Current Use:	Theatre and event space
Year(s) of Rehabilitation:	2005
Current Owner/Manager:	Michael Heagerty
Phone:	315.395.2515
Interesting Fact:	The Palace was built by the current owner's grandfather.

Pratt Opera House
114-120 North Main Street
Albion, New York 14441

Opera House



Pratt Opera House (right), exterior.



Pratt Opera House, interior.

Architectural Style: Romanesque Revival
Year Constructed: 1880/building; 1890/opera house
Original Owner: John Pratt
Architect: Leon H. Lempert/opera house
Builder: H.A. Foster/opera house
Number of Seats: Original: 800/Current: none
National Register Status: Contributing property in the North Main-Bank Streets Historic District
Year Listed: 1994
NR#: 94001341
Current Use: Theatre waiting rehabilitation; offices; commercial space
Year(s) of Rehabilitation: 2004-present
Current Owners: Michael Bonafede, Judy Koehler
Executive Director: N/A
Phone: N/A

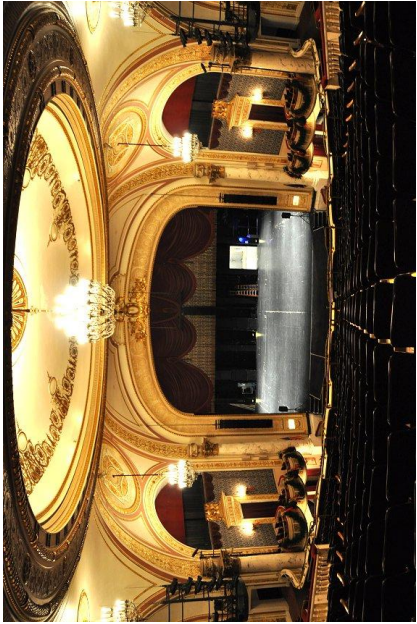
Interesting Fact:
The Pratt Building was constructed in 1880, but the Opera House on the third floor was not completed until 1890.

Proctors (formerly Proctor's Theatre)
432 State Street
Schenectady, New York 12305

Movie Palace
<http://www.proctors.org>



Proctors State Street entrance, exterior.



Proctors, interior.

Architectural Style:	Ext.: Adamesque/Neoclassical Interior: Italian Baroque with Egyptian influences 1926
Year Constructed:	F. F. Proctor
Original Owner:	Thomas Lamb
Architect:	C. P. Boland and Sons Co.
Builder:	Mainstage: 2646; GE: 434; Studio: 120
Number of Seats:	Individually listed
National Register Status:	1980
Year Listed:	79003237
NR#:	
Current Use:	Theatre
Year(s) of Rehabilitation:	1970s, 1980, 2005, 2007
Current Owner:	PT Redevelopment, LLC
Current Manager:	Arts Center & Theatre of Schenectady
Chief Executive Office:	Philip Morris
Phone:	518.346.6204
Interesting Fact:	Proctors also built and operates an energy plant that services seven businesses in the area.

Smith Opera House
82 Seneca Street
Geneva, New York 14456

Opera House/Movie Palace

<http://www.thesmith.org>



Smith Opera House, exterior.



Smith Opera House, interior.

Architectural Style:

Exterior: Richardsonian
Renaissance

Interior: Art Deco, Baroque
and Moorish motifs

Year Constructed:

1894

Original Owner:

William Smith

Architect:

Joseph Pierce & Henry
Bickford

1930s: Victor Rigaumont

Builder:

N/A

Number of Seats:

1408

National Register Status:

Individually listed

Year Listed:

1979

NR#:

02001454

Current Use:

Theatre

Year(s) of Rehabilitation:

1979, ongoing

Current Owner/Manager:

The Smith Center for the Arts,
Inc.

Executive Director:

Kelly A. Bradley

Phone:

315.781.5483

Interesting Fact:

The Smith was built as an opera house and converted to an
atmospheric movie palace in the 1930s.

Troy Savings Bank Music Hall
30 Second Street
Troy, New York 12180

Large Music Hall
<http://www.troymusichall.org>



Troy Savings Bank Music Hall, exterior.



Troy Savings Bank Music Hall, interior.

Architectural Style:	Beaux Arts
Year Constructed:	1875
Original Owner:	Troy Savings Bank
Architect:	George B. Post
Builder:	N/A
Number of Seats:	Original: 1253/Current: 1180
National Register Status:	National Historic Landmark; Contributing property in Central Troy Historic District
Year Listed:	1989
NR#:	89001066
Current Use:	Music Hall
Year(s) of Rehabilitation:	1940s, 1980s, early 2000s
Current Owner:	Troy Savings Bank Music Hall Foundation
Current Manager:	Troy Savings Bank Music Hall Corporation
Executive Director:	Jon Elbaum
Phone:	518.273.8945

Interesting Fact:

The Music Hall is renowned for its acoustic qualities today, however prior to the installation of the Odell Opus 190 organ in 1890, critics claimed the sound was weak and inconsistent.

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