



LANDMARKS *Preservationist*

FROM
SOLES
TO
WINGS

JETNET GIVING NEW LIFE TO HURD BUILDING

*Y*ou can say that the Hurd Building at the corner of First and Main streets in Utica has seen it all. When it comes to transportation, that is.

For decades a warehouse for footwear, the structure will soon welcome another business focused on a much faster mode of transportation – jet aircraft. By the end of the year, Utica-based JETNET LLC, one of the world’s major pro-

viders of data research to marketers of private jet aircraft, will have moved its headquarters from the Adirondack Bank building to the stately Hurd edifice.

JETNET will become the third business to occupy the 35,000-square-foot structure, which continues to carry the name of the

Hurd family who operated their well-known shoe business there for nearly 80 years. Designed by architect Frederick Gouge and constructed in 1911, the building is listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Originally known as the Hurd & Fitzgerald Building, it has carried addresses of 400 Main Street and 101 First Street, in the midst of the Bagg’s Square Historic District. The facility most recently housed a computer service firm until becoming available for JETNET’s purchase earlier this year.

JETNET Vice President Tony Esposito says he hopes to have his 35-person operation moved in “before the snow flies,” following a number of renovation projects already underway. Most of the infrastructure is being refurbished to comply with codes, with the improvements

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► *The Hurd Building at the corner of First and Main streets, soon to be the home of JETNET.*



► *JETNET Vice President Tony Esposito, left, and Ralph Squadrito, the firm’s Director of Information Technology Services, on one of the floors of the Hurd Building. Cleaning has revealed the beauty and exceptionally good condition of the wood and brick surroundings.*

MOTOR
COACH TOURS
RETURN
JULY 14 &
AUGUST 11

UTICA MONDAY NITES FEATURING LANDMARKS PROGRAMS

*W*ith summer 2003 getting into full swing, the Landmarks Society is again a major participant in the Utica Monday Nite program, offering the popular “Walks & Talks” each evening through the series’ conclusion on August 25. The flyer enclosed with this issue of *Landmarks Preservationist* lists the location and time for each program.

Back by popular demand will be the motor coach tours of Utica’s Scenic & Historic Districts, and Endangered Buildings, on July 14 and August 11. Both of these tours will depart at 6:00 p.m. from the Hotel Utica parking lot west on Lafayette Street.

CHATTER BOX HAS PEOPLE TALKING DOWNTOWN

*A*nother new business that has joined those cropping up in downtown Utica is The Chatter Box Lounge, a nighttime coffee shop located in the former Utica Floral site at the corner of Genesee Street and Bank Place.



► *The Chatter Box Lounge at the corner of Genesee Street and Bank Place, formerly the site of Utica Floral.*

Owner Greg Wurz attributes his decision to open in the downtown area to the success of new businesses in the vicinity and the desire to fill an entrepreneurial dream. He was inspired by the potential the location afforded.

“The open layout reminded me of night spots I’ve visited in Philadelphia, Boston and New York,” he explained, “and I wanted to replicate that look and feel here at home.”

CREATIVITY

With contractors working during the day, and Wurz and his friends and family working evenings, restoration of the space was undertaken in six labor-intensive weeks. The goal? Salvage as much of the original space as possible and be creative about it.

For example, a drop ceiling was removed to reveal the building’s original 14-foot ceiling and beautiful crown molding lining. A column situated in the center of the

area forced Wurz to be creative with this difficult space. So instead of a typical long bar extending across the room, Wurz created a curved bar which strategically avoids the column. The top of the bar was covered with wood that originally made up the flower shop’s walk-in cooler.

The result is an aesthetically unique centerpiece that Wurz says both he and customers find a positive use of the space.

He adds that other obstacles encountered during the restoration included cumbersome and unattractive heating and cooling systems. With resourcefulness, he masked the systems. Now what looks like a warm fireplace hides the air conditioner, while a built-in bookshelf — lined with vintage books — covers an old radiator.

“The most difficult part of the restoration,” he noted, “was hiding the defects while still being true to the original architecture. But I think we’ve succeeded in doing that.”



► *Owner Greg Wurz used wood from Utica Floral’s walk-in cooler to make the top of Chatter Box’s custom bar.*

KEEPING IT LOCAL

He also remained loyal to local businesses and artists — area contractors completed the remodeling, Adirondack Coffee provides the lounge’s coffee and a Washington Mills chocolatier makes the shop’s sweet treats. Artwork from local artists is displayed on a rotating schedule — changing every two months — and music is provided by area bands and deejays.

“Showcasing local talent further demonstrates the variety that this community has to offer — and the downtown area is the ideal place in which to show off that medley of talent,” he said.

The Chatter Box Lounge’s summer hours are Monday through Thursday, 7 p.m. to midnight; Friday, 10 a.m. to midnight; and Saturday, 7 p.m. to midnight.

► *Landmarks Membership:* RIGHT FOR THE TIMES!

With exciting investments being made in downtown Utica and unprecedented interest in local historic preservation, now’s the time to be part of Landmarks! If you’re a member, tell someone else about us. If your membership has lapsed, now’s the time to renew. And if you’re considering membership, there’s never been a better time to act. Various categories of membership are available and dues are reasonable in each.

For an informative brochure that explains all the benefits of membership, or to renew yours, call the Landmarks office at 732-7376.

Contributing to UTICA'S PROMINENCE

"The Hurd & Fitzgerald Building is significant under criterion A (commerce) for its association with the extensive business development that occurred in Bagg's Square East in the early 20th century. During this period Utica rose to national prominence as an industrial center. The Hurd & Fitzgerald Company was a jobber in shoes and rubber goods and, like other area businesses, benefited from its location immediately across from the railroad yards. The building is a product of the distinctive combination of resources that propelled Bagg's Square to local prominence in the early 1900s."*

Frederick H. Gouge (1845-1927) became known as the dean of Utica's architects. Besides the Hurd Building, his work includes the Doyle Hardware and Utica Daily Press (Gaffney Communications) buildings; Byington Mill; Plymouth Congregational Church; the Commercial Travelers Insurance Building; and several structures at Hamilton College, his alma mater.

* From the nomination that placed the Hurd Building on the National Register of Historic Places in 1993.

STANLEY ORNAMENT RECEPTION NOVEMBER 2

With fall calendars already filling up, now's the time to reserve Sunday, November 2 for the reception that will mark the public unveiling of Landmarks' 2003 commemorative ornament featuring the Stanley Performing Arts Center. A specific time will be announced soon. Appropriately, the event will be held at the Stanley, which this year is marking its 75th anniversary.

The 2003 ornament is already promising to be one of the most popular yet in the series that includes Old Main, Hotel Utica and SBU Bank.



► The Stanley Performing Arts Center, celebrating its 75th anniversary this year, will be featured on Landmarks' 2003 commemorative ornament.

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including new plumbing, heating, electrical systems, windows, a roof, stairwell and elevator.

A GOOD INVESTMENT

Esposito notes that the building's remarkably sound and well-preserved condition overall makes the improvements a good investment. He said JETNET will use two of the structure's five floors for its own operations, allowing room to grow, will convert the fifth floor into residential space and intends to rent the remaining space to other businesses.

"We were outgrowing our current space, but wanted to stay downtown," the Utica native explains. "The nature of our business doesn't require a storefront presence, so we looked at several buildings in the area and this one stood out in suitability, quality and flexibility."

SPECIAL APPEAL

He was also drawn to the structure's character and atmosphere. "The architectural blend of wood and brick is an appealing contrast to the computer-oriented nature of our company," Esposito

points out. "It's exactly what we were looking for. You can't replicate these qualities in a new building. You find the combination of high-tech and historic in bigger cities. We also have buildings here where it can happen."

A related potential is mixing commercial and residential use in the same facility, which Esposito is doing by turning the fifth floor into a loft-style apartment. "It's another way to make productive use of a terrific old building like this one," he adds.

The Hurd Building isn't Esposito's first venture into reviving an older Utica structure. He recently opened the Manhattan-style martini bar, *Space 26*, on Bank Place. Its success has pleased and even pleasantly surprised him. Needless to say, he's become an advocate of others following his lead.

SEEING THE POTENTIAL

"Somebody has to step out first and in at least these two instances, we've tried to do that," he says. "There's still a lot of potential for others and the community at large to develop and benefit from."

Landmarks Apparel NOW AVAILABLE

Landmarks Society Trustee Ron Draper models one of the new polo shirts featuring the Landmarks logo that are now available from Starline Embroidery & Graphics, 215 Oriskany Boulevard in Whitesboro. The shirts are available in a variety of styles and colors — and the logo can also be placed on hats, sweatshirts and jackets. Todd Martin or any of the Starline staff can show samples and provide more information.

Starline is open 7 a.m. — 5 p.m. Monday through Friday; phone 768-6845, fax 736-1661, e-mail starline@aol.com. Customized apparel is a great way to demonstrate your affiliation with Landmarks and interest in historic preservation!



3 STEUBEN PARK RESTORATION NEARING COMPLETION

Just as its name implies, The Rescue Mission of Utica serves those in need. Within the last year-and-a-half, the nonprofit group added a historic Utica property to its list of “rescues.”



▮ The refurbishing of 3 Steuben Park nears completion.

As reported in the Winter 2002 edition of *Landmarks Preservationist*, the proud, mid-19th century home at 3 Steuben Park faced demolition before the Landmarks Society, City of Utica and Rescue Mission came together in a group effort to save the structure.

Once vacant and suffering from graffiti and other vandalism, the site has undergone restoration and will soon re-open as administrative offices for the Mission’s Enriched Living Center for individuals in need of mental health services.

“Improvements were extensive and thorough,” said Fred Farrokh, the Mission’s director of communications. “The interior and exterior have been freshly painted, the porch has been reconstructed and all brickwork was pointed and sealed. The building now houses new heating, electrical and sprinkler systems and new windows have been installed.”

He noted that in addition to the restoration of the old building, the Mission has constructed two other buildings, adjacent to 3 Steuben Park, to be used as onsite living facilities for individuals utilizing the Center’s services.

“The Rescue Mission is happy to have a part in the restoration of this beautiful home,” Farrokh added, “and to see its historical grandeur recaptured.”

WALKING TOURS PLANNED FOR SEPTEMBER

The best way to see the variety of details and architectural styles of Utica’s domestic architecture is by strolling down its neighborhood streets. Join Landmarks Trustees JoAnn Jacobson and Judith Olney on Mondays in September for walking tours of residential areas. The first tour will be held on Monday, September 8. Meet at 6 p.m. in the parking lot of the Unitarian Universalist Church, 10 Higby Road, Utica. For more information on meeting places the following Mondays call JoAnn at 737-5064 or Judith at 826-3742.



DID YOU KNOW...

The National Register of Historic Places includes 21 listings within the City of Utica. They are:

- *Byington Mill (Frisbie & Stansfield Knitting Company)*
421-423 Broad Street
- *Roscoe Conkling House**
3 Rutger Park
- *Doyle Hardware Building*
330-334 Main Street/
100 First Street
- *First Baptist Church*
515 Herkimer Road
- *First Presbyterian Church*
1605 Genesee Street
- *Fountain Elms*
318 Genesee Street
- *Grace Church*
193 Genesee Street
- *Holy Cross Ukrainian Orthodox Church*
841 Bleecker Street
- *Hurd & Fitzgerald Building*
400 Main Street/101 First Street
- *Lower Genesee Street Historic District*
- *Miller-Wheeler House*
1423 Genesee Street
- *New Century Club Building*
253 Genesee Street
- *Rutger-Steuben Park Historic District*
- *St. Joseph & St. Patrick Church*
704-708 Columbia Street
- *Stanley Performing Arts Center*
259 Genesee Street
- *Union Station*
321 Main Street
- *Utica Armory*
1700 Parkway Blvd. East/
Culver Avenue
- *Utica Daily Press Building*
(Gaffney Communications)
310-312 Main Street
- *Utica Public Library*
303 Genesee Street
- *Old Main Building*/
Utica State Hospital*
1213 Court Street
- *Gen. John G. Weaver House*
711 Herkimer Road

*also a National Historic Landmark

The Landmarks Society of Greater Utica was chartered by the State of New York on October 25, 1974, as a non-profit educational corporation to preserve historic buildings and districts in the Utica area. Offices at 1124 State Street, Utica, New York 13502; 315-732-7376.

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