Welcome to this self-guided tour of Main Street Oneonta, part of the Downtown Oneonta Historic District on the New York State and National Register of Historic Places. We're proud of our historic downtown, and are pleased to share it with you.

To learn more about Oneonta’s history visit the Oneonta History Center.

Compiled by Bob Brzozowski, Executive Director of the Greater Oneonta Historical Society, with help from Mary Joan Kevlin, Janet Potter, Bernic Richardson, Megan Steely, Printigree, Sweet Home Productions, and others.

For access to a free mobile app of this tour, go to www.gohstours.com.

Greater Oneonta Historical Society
PO Box 814/183 Main Street
Oneonta, NY 13820
www.OneontaHistory.org
info@OneontaHistory.org
607-432-0960

(2016) Made possible by a grant from Otsego County.
**Oneonta History Center, 183 Main**

This is the oldest brick building on Main St., built in 1866, the year after the railroad came to Oneonta. A hardware store for its first 50 years, in the mid-1870s, owner Walter Brown shared the space with David Wilber’s Bank. From 1916 to 1948, it was Laskaris Restaurant, soda fountain, and candy shop, run by John Laskaris and his son-in-law Gus Chrones. Next, Chrones’ wife Antonia ran Jo-Ann Dress Shop here. The last business on the first floor was Galinin’s Jewelry, owned by Carl Puylara. There is a ballroom on the third floor. It has been the home of the Greater Oneonta Historical Society since 2005. At 2 Dietz St., is the Destination Oneonta Welcome Center, the site of the Post Office from about 1890 to 1915.

**Oneonta Hotel, 189-201 Main**

The original hotel on this site was the Central Hotel, built in 1873. It burned in 1910 and was soon replaced by the Oneonta Hotel. Note the lion heads and the Ionic columns on the Beaux Arts building. The top floor of the Oneonta Hotel once housed the offices of the Delaware & Hudson railroad and a ballroom. Over the years several banks operated out of the first floor. SS Kresge department store was located on the east end of the first floor in the 1940s. The middle floor had rooms for rent – in 1928 for $2 without bath and $4 with bath. For more than 100 years, Broad Street ran from the hotel on this site to the Delaware & Hudson railroad depot on Market Street.

**FW Woolworth and JJ Newberry, 203-205 & 221-223 Main**

Woolworth’s and Newberry’s were among several national chains on Main Street in the middle of the 20th century. Others included the A & P, Grand Union, WT Grant, SS Kresge, JC Penney, and Sears Roebuck. Note the pressed metal parapet on the 1882 Lewis building and the faint nameplate of the 1884 Reynolds & Mulford building, originally a flour and feed store.

**Wilber National Bank, 233-241 Main**

David Wilber and his son George I. Wilber brought their bank to Oneonta in 1873. The bank at this site was built in four phases. The 1907 west wing was soon followed by a two-story brick addition, then the 1929 Beaux Arts style sandstone with the Doric style portico, and finally the modern addition in the 1960s. Wilber National Bank merged with Community Bank in 2011. Look up Ford Avenue to see two more sites on the National Register of Historic Places: The Wilber Mansion was built by George I. Wilber in 1875 and remodeled in the Queen Anne style in the 1890s. It now houses the Community Arts Network of Oneonta (CANO). Across the street from the Mansion is Chapin Memorial, built as a Universalist church in 1894.

**Fairchild Mansion/Masonic Lodge, 322 Main**

Built in 1867 by David Yager in the Italianate style, it was remodeled in 1891 in the Queen Anne style by George Fairchild. Fairchild was a US congressman and the first chairman of the board of IBM. Oneonta brothers Harlow and Willard Bundy’s Bundy Manufacturing Company was founded in 1888, with George Fairchild as a key investor and organizer. In 1895 their Time Recorders won a US government contract to supply post offices around the country. The company was one of three that merged in 1911 and became IBM. George Fairchild’s son Sherman made important contributions in aviation, aerial photography, and semiconductors. Oneonta Masonic Lodge No. 466 has occupied the building since 1929.

**Riverside Cemetery, 296 Main**

Behind the First Presbyterian Church is Oneonta’s most historic cemetery. In 1805 Frederick Brown deeded the land for the church, parsonage, and cemetery. It was called Riverside because it was by the side of the Susquehanna River until the river was diverted in 1815. In 1860 the cemetery became independent of the church. Many names from Oneonta’s history are found on the seven acres of gravestones: Baker, Dietz, Emmons, Fairchild, Ford, Huntington, McDonald, Walling, Watkins, and Yager among them. Buried here are more than a 100 veterans, back to the Revolutionary War.
**Old Post Office/City Hall, 258 Main**

Oneonta’s City Hall was added to the Register of Historic Places as the Old Post Office. The imposing building of Indiana limestone and New Hampshire granite was built in the Neo-Classical style in 1915 on the former site of Briggs Lumber Company. The architect, Oscar Wenderoth, designed several public buildings around the US during his short tenure as director of the Office of Supervising Architect (1912-1915) in Washington, DC. When the new post office was completed in 1967, the Old Post Office was slated for demolition, but community opposition saved it from Urban Renewal and led to its adaptive reuse as Oneonta’s City Hall.

**Municipal Building, 242 Main**

Built in 1906, Oneonta’s first city hall is a mix of the Neo-Classical Revival and Beaux Arts styles. It served as seat of municipal government and the police and fire departments until 1980 when city offices moved to the Old Post Office. The Oneonta Fire Department that once stood here was purposely set on fire in 1906 to act as a fire break during one of the many fires along Main Street in the early years.

**Westcott Block**

The parking lot here was the site of the Westcott Block, a four-story building with a clock tower. James Westcott came to the area in 1783. His son Joseph was one of Oneonta’s first shopkeepers. Hops merchants Luzerne and Munro Westcott had the building constructed in 1886 for their offices. The building was razed in 1968. The clock tower was saved and restored, and is now on display at 190 Main, thanks to the efforts of the Lions Club, the Upper Susquehanna (now Greater Oneonta) Historical Society, the Young Yorkers Club, and local businesses.

**Broad Street**

Broad Street with its hotels, bars, restaurants, and the city's first YMCA had connected the railroad station to Main Street for more than 100 years. It disappeared without a trace between 1974 and 1976, a victim of urban renewal, which was sweeping through US cities in the 1950s and 60s. In 1968 Oneonta’s Urban Renewal Agency was formed after the City received a large grant from the US Department of Housing and Urban Development. The plan was not without controversy, but those arguing for rehabilitation found that urban renewal grants could only be used for demolition. The large, empty lot was not filled until more than a quarter century later when Muller Plaza was dedicated and the Clarion Hotel built.

**Ford Block, 192-202 Main**

Eliakim Ford had a stone store on the site in 1840. After a disastrous Main Street fire in 1881, his grandson Newton Ford and others built the Ford Block. Because of the railroad, cigar making was an Oneonta industry from 1875 to 1945. The upper floors of downtown buildings, including the Ford Block and many along Broad Street, housed cigar manufacturers. The block was slated for demolition during urban renewal, with plans to use the space for a shopping center.

**Wooden Row, 140-168 Main**

The string of light-colored brick buildings was once the site of Wooden Row, among the last wooden buildings downtown. Periodic fires downtown precipitated the move from wood to brick building materials. The worst of these fires destroyed Wooden Row on December 27, 1908. Wooden Row included many buildings important in Oneonta’s history. Solon and Collins Huntington had a store in one building until Collins left to seek his fortune in California. Henry Huntington ran a hotel in one of the buildings. And Blend Hall’s third floor was the site of many community events. The Brotherhood of Railway Trainmen met there, as well as the Grand Army of the Republic. The GAR’s Civil War collection was destroyed in the 1908 fire.
Clinton Plaza

In the late 19th century, residences and businesses lined this section of Main. Landowners included Harvey Baker, who was instrumental in bringing the railroad to Oneonta, and S.S. Burnside, a Major General during the Civil War. This 1903 map mistakenly shows Market St. as Marle St. In 1921 part of this area became Brown Park, donated to the city by Walter Brown, who lived across the street at 97 Main. Much of the land became a parking lot in the 1950s, then the Clinton Avenue development in the 1970s. The only remnant of the park is the site of land around the monument to the 1779 Clinton-Sullivan Expedition.

Chestnut and Main intersection

Peter Dinniny had a general store at this corner in 1790, the first in what would become the commercial district. In 1872 the Stanton Opera House was built on the same site. The Opera House was razed in 1973, the first building downtown to fall to urban renewal. On Chestnut Street is the Oneonta Theatre, built for vaudeville in 1897 and the Huntington Memorial Library. In 1918 railroad magnate Henry Huntington gave the family home and surrounding land to the city for a library and park.

Novelty Lounge, 149 Main

This is the oldest building on Main Street, originally stone with a wood front. The two-story stone building, now enveloped by the existing structure, dates to the 1830s. After a fire in 1890 a third floor was added along with the metal façade. For 74 years it was the City Drug Store. The late 1960s photo shows Frew's Bakery at 149 Main. The Novelty Lounge has been at this site since 1970. The Novelty Lounge had been on Chestnut Street near the Oneonta Theatre since 1954, but was forced to move when its building was demolished during urban renewal.

Stevens, 153 Main

Stevens was a Main Street institution for 130 years. Founded by T. Waldo Stevens in 1882, it changed with the times, from repairing carriages, to selling hardware, to being a fish and game store. John Stevens (1918-2012), grandson of the founder, ran the family business until 2012. Note the building's ornate façade. Walking into Stevens was like stepping back in time, from the old-fashioned customer service to the vintage cash register on the wood counter, to the timeless fish and game merchandise. The original work bench from the days of repairing wagon wheels and carriages is now at the Oneonta History Center.

Breeze's Oneonta Department Store, 135-165 Main

Breeze's department store was a mecca for area shoppers for a century. Frank Breeze (1864-1943), born in Middlefield, was a peddler in his youth. He opened his first store in Hartwick in 1885, with the first Oneonta store opening in 1899, and moving to this location in 1908. At its height, Breeze's Oneonta Department Store offered a wide variety of goods and services from clothing and furniture to a beauty shop and bookstore. It was the place to shop on Thursday nights and Saturdays. The Health Bar restaurant was also a local favorite. A 1949 article in Collier's Magazine compared the store owned by the Breeze family to Macy's and Gimbel's. Breeze's closed in 2005. Only one third of the department store complex remains, with retail on the first floor and apartment living on the upper floors.