

Winter 2018-19
Volume 7, Issue 4
A quarterly publication

MSF Gazette

MAIN STREET FIRST • LITTLE FALLS • NEW YORK



M S F B E G I N S I T S 1 0 T H Y E A R

Main Street First (MSF) came into existence as if by spontaneous combustion in September 2009, the spark being opposition to the proposed quarry project. That project would have created a second commercial district a mile and a half from our city center. Community reaction to this proposal was split, some residents supported the plan, others opposed it.

The name Main Street First captured the organization's initial priority, strong support for sustainable economic development in the City's historic commercial center.

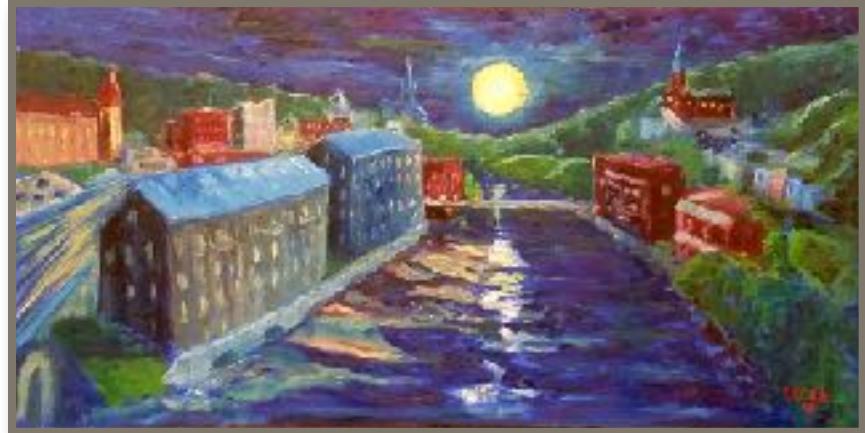
In May 2010, MSF sponsored (with the Community Foundation) a daylong community envisioning walkabout and evening workshop at Benton Hall conducted by urban planning professionals Synthesis, LLC. The Berke family, owners of Shoppers Square, was invited and attended this workshop. Afterwards, Jules Berke commented, "Little Falls has a new energy and is worthy of additional financial investment."

The quarry project eventually faded away and the Berke and Golub (owners of Price Chopper, Inc.) families combined resources, the western portion of Shoppers Square, including the Big M supermarket that had long served us well was demolished, and a new Price Chopper supermarket opened in 2014.

Collateral economic development throughout the commercial district has followed: The Copper Moose, Bonita's Sandwich Chef, That Little Place on Main, a new Stewart's, Fall Hill Bead and Gem, a digitized and remodeled Valley Cinema, Yoga and Wellness, CrossFit PSE, and various other establishments have opened for business, "mom and pop" and corporate business ownership alike.

Entrepreneurial-ism is flourishing in a reinvigorated commercial district and, all along Main Street, second and third floor residential revitalization is taking place. We are becoming a [Smart Growth](#) walkable community.

(continued on pages 4-5)



Curious? Have feedback or ideas for us? Want to help? PLEASE JOIN US!

Next scheduled meetings:

Monday, January 14

Monday, January 28

Monday, February 11

Monday, February 25

Monday, March 11

@ 6:30 pm

690 East Main Street,

Little Falls

(For more details about our group, please see the back cover/p. 8)

ELECTION DAY DINNER: “A SUCCESS BY EVERY MEASURE”

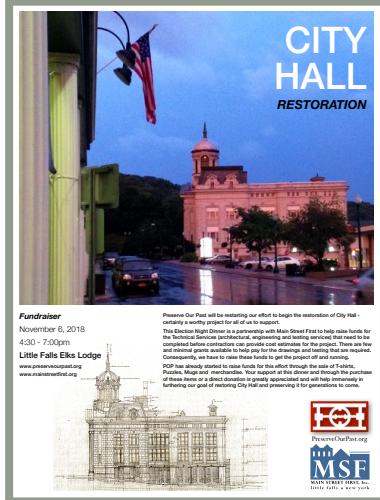
Every year on the first Tuesday after November 1, civic-minded folks come out to fulfill their duty: to cast a ballot for individuals who have offered their service, according to the Founders’ documents, for the Common Weal, the common good.

On November 6, 2018, two Little Falls not-for-profits, Preserve Our Past (POP) and Main Street First (MSF), with the generosity of the Elks Club, collaborated to sponsor an Election Day dinner. Members baked pies, supplied home-grown organic vegetables, and hired Ruth Petkovsek to work her magic on a harvest dinner of roast pork with dressing and gravy, mashed potatoes, beets, squash, sauerkraut, and applesauce. The groups hoped for 100 but fed 150 hungry voters—a success by every measure.

One purpose of the dinner was to raise funds to contribute to POP’s Restoration of City Hall account, and over \$1,150 was raised. Anchoring East Main Street, City Hall, completed in 1918 and listed on the National Register of Historic Places since 2011, is considered a cultural, historic, and architecturally significant building.

Another purpose of Election Day dinners is to help get out the vote; the promise of good food shared among neighbors is often just enough of a nudge to get folks to the voting booth. But the greatest outcome was the good cheer among friends and neighbors in the dining room, a sign that no matter how contentious the campaigns, small town friendships continue. In many ways, the Election Day dinner became a gift to the entire community.

—Barbara Albrecht



PO Box 65
Little Falls NY 13365

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Editor
Teri Chace

Layout/Art Direction
David Dardzinski

Editorial Staff
Jeffrey Gressler
Mike Evans
Pat Frezza-Gressler
Adrienne Neff

Photography/Art Credits
Andy McEvoy, David Dardzinski, Oscar Stivala, Kevin Mihaly, Rob Richard

MSF Gazette is published quarterly and distributed throughout the City of Little Falls, Herkimer County, New York. This issue, and an archive of back issues, are also available online at mainstreetfirst.org

Suggestions and contributions (articles and art) are always welcome; please contact someone on the staff or write to editor@mainstreetfirst.org

LITTLE FALLS LOSES OUR BUDDY

As the news of Kenny Gee's passing made its way through the Little Falls community in late October, many were deeply touched. Natives and newcomers alike who knew Kenny were moved and impacted by his passing just as they had been long impacted by his familiar friendly greeting to all of his LF buddies and best friends.

The sheer number of tributes and words of kindness expressed about Kenny Gee on the Chapman-Moser Funeral Home website and on Mayor Blask's Facebook posting attest to the loss of a special community member. (Links follow this article.)

As Joe DeLorenzo stated eloquently at the Church Street Cemetery graveside service for Ken: "his gift to others was his ability to be fully present and to make each encounter bring a smile to both Kenny and to whomever he was speaking with."

Many individuals regularly reached out to Kenny in different ways and although he was a frequent recipient of community goodwill, Kenny gave much more than he received. His kind heart, work ethic, innocence and love of his fellow citizens gave our community the opportunity to act on our better angels. We can be grateful to Kenny for this opportunity. May we remember his passing and keep his spirit alive by incorporating his same friendliness and good will to those who we encounter in our daily lives.

Rest in peace, Kenny.

—Pat Frezza-Gressler



Left: Kenny liked to march in the Canal Celebration parade wielding a snow shovel with "LET IT SNOW" written on it; the crowds loved it!

Below: He was proud to be officially recognized by the Little Falls Cheese Festival after he spent the day helping organize the recycling and trash removal.



TRIBUTES:

<https://www.chapmanmoser.com/notices/Kenneth-Gee>

Mayor Mark Blask's remarks on Facebook:

<https://www.facebook.com/mark.blask/posts/10214802291743144>

"It should tell us all that it doesn't matter how financially wealthy, how educated, how intelligent we are by worldly standards. It's who we are as a soul that defines us and how many people and lives we can touch and affect by being a good person. Kenny was a great example of that for us all, that we should remember and imitate." —anonymous from the Chapman-Moser tribute page

MSF BEGINS ITS 10TH YEAR *(continued from page 1)*

Little Falls would be a different place today if Shoppers Square had not been renovated with a new center city grocery market.

The economic benefit of this activity to the City has been substantial. Many commercial and residential properties have increased in value; a transformed downtown commercial center and a vibrant Canal Place have helped make Little Falls a destination place to visit and a great community to live in. Visitors spend money in our stores and restaurants.

From early on, MSF meetings have always been a place where people with diverse interests can air their views and ideas to a receptive audience. People listen. Discussions take place. Votes are taken and decisions are made.

Ideas for annual community cleanups, including the 2013 Bud Lite and Keep America Beautiful “Do Good, Have Fun” project, Think Local and Third Thursday, a community kitchen, the annual Cheese Festival, the Little Falls Micro Fund, the Moss Island composting toilet, the Canal-side art benches, the water fountain outside our public library, Little Falls Radio, Complete Streets, the Vlad Iftinca fund raising concert at the Masonic Temple, and several public art murals all originated at MSF meetings.

MSF has also sponsored (or co-sponsored) a number of important community workshops. The Energy Fair at Benton Hall, Mark Fenton’s Healthy and Vibrant Communities workshop (with Bassett Healthcare Network) at Travelodge, the Facebook, Google and Up Selling workshops (with the Small Business Development Center) for business owners at the high school, and the Home Ownership Center workshop (with the Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank) at Little Falls Construction were all MSF initiatives.

Additionally, MSF launched its first Think Local Little Falls event on Small Business Saturday in November, 2012. Think Local Third Thursday events have become a highly popular community staple featuring various monthly themes. An active committee of tireless volunteers makes it all happen!



Community Picnics

There is a committed core MSF membership of 15 to 20 people, but twice-monthly meetings are not for everyone. Many other individuals and families instead choose to help out by participating in various MSF programs and events like the annual community clean-up. Overall, MSF membership is an eclectic blend of natives and longtime residents with deep community roots and newcomers who have decided to call Little Falls home.

Along the way, MSF absorbed the citizen activists group CARE, officially became a not-for-profit organization in 2013 and, in 2015, the group incorporated. Recently, after months of debate and at great expense, MSF became a “worthy partner” of the Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank and stands ready to assist the City with that work.

Despite these changes, the group still retains its egalitarian character and most meetings are followed by a little socializing at a local bar. There is no “typical MSF’er”; the common bonds are love of community and a desire to give time and effort for the greater good. This altruism, dedication, inspiration, risk taking, and collaboration have resulted in literally thousands of hours of community service put forth for the benefit of the City of Little Falls.

The organization has consistently modeled its core mission to address what its membership perceives to be of greatest community importance: commercial sprawl, housing blight, sluggish commercial activity, deteriorating historic buildings.

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PLEASE RECYCLE, DON'T LITTER!



Clean-up Days



Think Local



Cheese Festival

MSF has even inspired residents in other communities to take collective action for community betterment. Bob Smith of Friends of St. Johnsville credits MSF for being the inspiration and model for his group.

MSF owes a special debt of gratitude to George and Faye Bunk, Fred “Chico” Urich, and Chuck Heron, who have graciously allowed office space and equipment at 690 East Main Street (“the clubhouse”) to host group meetings and related support activity.

As the organization enters its tenth year, we must also take a moment to remember a number of MSF members who have passed away: Nick Veeder, Bill Babenic, Kate Sprenger, Darryl Harrington, and Terry Tippin all made solid contributions.

This article has to end with mention of the very quarterly newsletter that you are presently reading; the Main Street First Gazette’s first issue hit the streets in December of 2011 and its staff and various contributing writers have faithfully chronicled virtually every event discussed in this article. Long live the MSF Gazette, Main Street First, and the spirit of community volunteerism that helps make Little Falls the special place that it is!

NOTE: Main Street First welcomes new members and visitors alike to all of its meetings.

—Jeffrey Gressler

“I alone cannot change the world, but I can cast a stone across the waters to create many ripples.” —Mother Teresa

A FEW HIGHLIGHTS

Main Street First began publishing our quarterly Gazette in late 2011. Listed below is a sample of just a few of the many articles from 9 of the past 27 issues.

Please visit <https://www.mainstreetfirst.org/gazette/#archives> to read these articles and many more.

Fall/Winter 2011, “What Does ‘Smart Growth’ Mean?”

Winter 2012-2013, “Think Local, Shop Local, Promote Local”

Spring 2013, “Volunteerism, LF and You”

Fall 2014, “‘Do Good, Have Fun Day’ a Success”

Summer 2014, “How Residents Can Help Shape Public Policy”

Spring 2015, “Expatriate? Here are Some Ways to Help Your Hometown”

Summer 2016, “Google Workshop Empowers LF Businesses”

Fall 2017, “At Home on Main Street: Residential Revitalization Builds Momentum”

Fall 2017, “About Little Falls: Think Local Reflections”

Spring 2018, “Responsible Landlords Help Fight Blight”

ABOUT LITTLE FALLS: POP UPDATES ITS ARCHITECTURAL TOUR

Our rather small city is blessed with an extensive and varied sampling of architecturally beautiful buildings. Have you ever walked by one and wondered what style it is? Have you thought about who built it, or who lived there in the past? Or perhaps, what was the original use of the building?

Well, Preserve Our Past is working to uncover answers to some of these questions. A few years ago, the group published a walking tour booklet with a selection of buildings with brief notes about each: date constructed, style of architecture, and some tidbits about its history. Two years ago, they updated and reorganized it to be self-guided with a location map. It features 20 city buildings, not all of which are residences; the walk is under a mile and takes approximately 20 minutes.

Recently POP lead walking tours for two groups, The Landmark Society of Utica and the Victorian Cultural Society of Greater Albany.

For instance, some people may not know how the Little Falls Library ended up in that beautiful 1878 Second Empire styled building (2018 Historic Preservation Award winner) on East Main Street.

Frank Bramer (1834-1888) built the mansard-roofed brick home as a private residence for his family. His daughter, Nellie, married Judge Rollin Smith. After her early demise at age 42, the widowed Judge Smith continued to reside there until his death in 1911. A year earlier, Smith quickly moved legal proceedings along to ensure that the public library, which was located elsewhere, would have a permanent home, his home. No one at that time knew he was dying of cancer. He bequeathed the building to the City along with \$12,000 for its upkeep, over \$300,000 in 2018 dollars.



Little Falls Public Library

If you're interested in the city's architecture or its history, stop by Rochette's in Canal Place to buy a copy of the tour book, or contact Preserve Our Past (preserveourpast.org); it costs \$8 and proceeds go to support POP's work. We can even arrange for a tour if you have a group!

—David Dardzinski

David Dardzinski is the current president of Preserve Our Past.

"The longer I live the more beautiful life becomes. If you foolishly ignore beauty, you will soon find yourself without it. Your life will be impoverished. But if you invest in beauty, it will remain with you all the days of your life."

—Frank Lloyd Wright

UPCOMING COMMUNITY EVENTS

DECEMBER 2018

- ❖ Saturday, 12/8, from 10 am to 5 pm. “Christmas in Little Falls” annual citywide celebration. Holiday shopping and festive family fun at many locations downtown and at Canal Place. Santa visits, horse & carriage rides, scavenger hunt, Red Nose Reindeer 5K run, indoor farmer’s market, craft fair, Soup Fest, Christmas cards for soldiers, and much more. Please visit christmasinlittlefalls.com for full details.
- ❖ Saturday, 12/8, 11 am to 4 pm. MVCA Open House in the Selective Eye shop and Winter Bedazzled Sale—just in time for last-minute stocking stuffers.. 401/403 Canal Place. For more information: mohawkvalleyarts.org or call (315) 823-0808.
- ❖ Tuesday, 12/11. 12 noon. Little Falls Historical Society annual holiday luncheon. Travelodge, 20 Albany St. Call Jeff Gressler at (315) 823-2799 for tickets.
- ❖ Saturday, 12/15, 7:30 pm. A free concert with donations (\$10.00 suggested) being accepted for restoration of the church organ. St. Paul’s Universalist Church, 565 Albany St. (315) 823-2284
- ❖ Sunday, 12/16, 2 pm. Christmas concert. Holy Trinity Lutheran Church, 512 E. Gansevoort St. (315) 823-4091
- ❖ Tuesday, 12/18. Annual Senior Citizen Breakfast at Little Falls High School. Breakfast in the High School Cafeteria at 9 am, followed by a concert in the Auditorium at 10 am. Snow date, 12/19. For more information, please call (315) 823-1167.
- ❖ Thursday, 12/20. “Third Thursday” at participating area businesses. Please visit shoplittlefallsny.com or the Think Local Little Falls Facebook page for full details.
- ❖ Saturday, 12/22, 2 to 4 pm. Opening Reception for MVCA Winter Faculty & Student Art Show. Show continues till February 2, 2019. 401 Canal Place.

JANUARY 2019

- ❖ Saturday, 1/5, starting at 6:30 pm. Ole Sal’s monthly “Open Mic Night.” For more information or to inquire about reserving a performance slot, please go to the Ole Sal’s Open Mic Facebook page, facebook.com/olesalsopenmic.
- ❖ Tuesday, 1/8 at 7 pm. Monthly Common Council meeting. Little Falls City Hall, second floor chambers.
- ❖ Thursday, 1/17. “Third Thursday” at participating area businesses. Please visit shoplittlefallsny.com or the Think Local Little Falls Facebook page for full details.

FEBRUARY 2019

- ❖ Saturday, 2/2, starting at 6:30 pm. Ole Sal’s monthly “Open Mic Night.” For more information or to inquire about reserving a performance slot, please go to the Ole Sal’s Open Mic Facebook page, facebook.com/olesalsopenmic.
- ❖ Tuesday, 2/5 at 7 pm. Monthly Common Council meeting. Little Falls City Hall, second floor chambers.
- ❖ Thursday, 2/21. “Third Thursday” at participating area businesses. Please visit shoplittlefallsny.com or the Think Local Little Falls Facebook page for full details.
- ❖ Coming in February 2019, dates TBD: Herkimer County Student/Faculty Art Exhibition for Youth Art Month at the MVCA, Canal Place.

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MAIN STREET FIRST, Inc.
little falls • new york

PO Box 65
Little Falls NY 13365

Main Street First, Inc. is an organization of Little Falls residents as well as other stakeholders in the cultural and commercial life of our city.

Main Street First, Inc. does not act on the behalf of individual businesses in Little Falls, but is dedicated to the interests of our residents in preserving and revitalizing the Little Falls City Center.

PURPOSES: The purposes for which the Corporation is formed are to combat community deterioration in the city by organizing the community to create sustainable initiatives to revitalize the city, by supporting city revitalization through smart growth principles, the creation of a comprehensive master plan, the participation of all interested parties in directing the city's future, citywide residential revitalization, the development of green and sustainable technologies throughout the city, to provide financial assistance and volunteers for the improvement and maintenance of the city's buildings and homes, and to increase recreational facilities. To do any other act or thing incidental to or connected with the foregoing purposes or in the advancement thereof, but not for the pecuniary profit or financial gain of its members, directors, or officers.

MSF'S SHORT-TERM GOALS

- Work with the Greater Mohawk Valley Land Bank and City of Little Falls to fight blight in our neighborhoods.
- Partner with Bassett Research Institute to develop and present a PhotoVoice project highlighting community development best practices.
- Work with the Little Falls NFP Coalition to develop a Little Falls community website highlighting local resources.
- Work with the City in support of a tree survey and urban reforestation project.

These are the sorts of things we discuss and plan at our meetings. Join us! Bring your ideas, skills, and energy and help us reach these and other good goals for our community.



HOW TO JOIN MSF

If you would like to get involved, have questions or ideas, or are thinking of joining, we invite you to come to our meetings — everyone is welcome!

Email us at:
contact@mainstreetfirst.org
Visit our website at:
mainstreetfirst.org

Facebook:
“like” the Main Street First page
“like” the Think Local Little Falls page

To receive a copy of this quarterly newsletter electronically, please send your request to:
gazette@mainstreetfirst.org

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