

Liberty Museum & Arts Center



HISTORY OF THE LIBERTY MUSEUM

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The Liberty History and Art Center Building was built in 1894 when “summer boarders” were coming to the area by the trainload on the old Ontario and Western Railway.

The building was built by two of Liberty’s best contractors, Robert D. Kinne and Edward W. Grant for Daniel Poellman. Mr. Poellman left Germany in 1873 and settled in New York City where he became the largest manufacturer of mirrors in the United States.

The Poellman House, as the hotel was known, contained 30 rooms with baths, steam heat, all “sanitary arrangements” and a first class Cafe and Bowling Alley. There also was a large meeting room called the Union Room that was used by the Civil War veterans to conduct their G.A.K. meetings.

Harvey DeMeyer married Emma, the Poellman’s daughter and together they operated the hotel until it closed about 1936.

After the closing of the hotel the property was acquired by Sidney Pierson who, with his brother, conducted a large hardware store in the building.

This hardware store was to be owned, operated and enlarged by three other owners, Henry E. Webber, Richard Yaun and Milton Gabriel and finally the Sabloff Brothers who opened for business in 1941 and stayed there until they opened their large store on Route 52, the present site of the Trading Post.

Katz Bakery was the next and last to take over the building, which was converted to a first class bakery. Katz had

their grand opening on April 11, 1969 and remained in business until they closed in 1989.

The building was acquired by the Greater Liberty Chamber of Commerce in 1995 as part of a redevelopment plan for Main Street, Liberty and as a home for a museum and arts center.

The Liberty Chamber, on December 19 1995 had a symbolic ground breaking ceremony at the site with opening remarks by past president, Robert Dadras, then Mayor, Ron Gozza, and former Supervisor, Jack Simons. The Chamber became firmly committed to the challenge of heading this critical project.

The Grand Opening took place on Friday, June 25, 1997 when the mayor closed Main Street to traffic as the ribbon Cutting ceremony took place at 46 South Main Street. 1999, the Museum’s second full year was crammed with exhibits and programs. The season began with a remarkable exhibit of vintage Liberty region post-cards by acclaimed photographer Otto Hillig, followed by an historical retrospective of the American Red Cross including a live portrayal of Clara Barton, music of the 1940’s performed by Annie Hat and the late Sam Seelig and a Civil War era reenactment. A stunning exhibit of the larger-than-life theatrical art by the students of Cobalt Studios of White Lake provided a perfect backdrop to the annual Museum raffle and silent auction party. Other exhibits included the art of talented Liberty Elementary and Middle school students; our annual Members’ “Show Themes of Woodstock”; Catskill Main Street: Memory and Meaning, an exploration of the importance of main streets to heir communities; a photo exhibit reserving Sullivan County’s Historic synagogues, coordinated with the placing of 8 local synagogues on both the state and federal registers; an exhibit of the works of some of the area’s most accomplished photographers, “Light Expressions”; and the multimedia creations of students at the Sullivan County summer employment program, “Liberty Through Our Eyes”.

Programs at the Museum included a poetry reading by Walter Keller, the Poet Laureate of Liberty; Walter Keller’s writer’s workshop; the Folk Arts for families series, and a joint venture with the Liberty Public Library, “Children’s Literature for Adults”. On New Year’s Eve, a large crowd welcomed the year 2000

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The municipal corner is basically nutty.