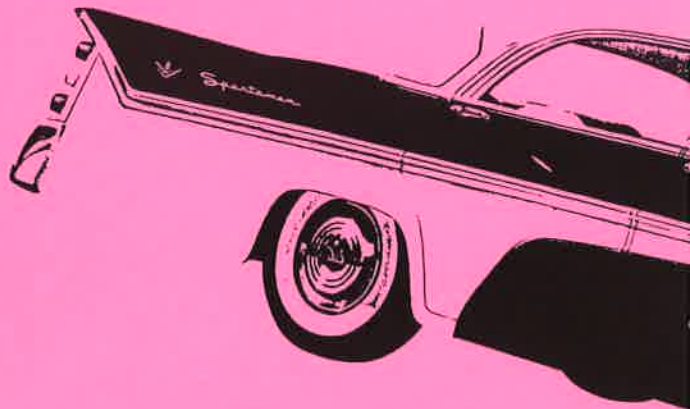


Historic Preservation Planning Alumni, Inc.,  
of Cornell University and the  
Society for Commercial Archeology present

**It's Only Yesterday:  
The Automobile-Related Environment of New York State**

*A bus tour of the Capital District*

**June 11, 1989**



Historic Preservation Planning Alumni, Inc.,  
Cornell University

and the

Society for Commercial Archeology

present

**It's Only Yesterday:**

**The Automobile-Related Environment of New York State**

**A B U S T O U R O F T H E**  
**C A P I T A L D I S T R I C T**

June 11, 1989

Prepared by:

Tony Opalka, Historic Preservation Consultant  
and

Tour Committee:

Robert Englert, Marcia Osterhout, Peter Phillips,  
Lorraine Weiss, Tania Werbizky

## INTRODUCTION

**ALBANY** is the largest and oldest of cities and towns which comprise New York State's Capital District. The location of the city on the west side of the Hudson River is believed to have been the final stop on Henry Hudson's 1609 search for the Northwest Passage to India. Permanently settled by Dutch traders in 1624 as a stockaded fort, Albany became an incorporated city in 1686 following English takeover of all Dutch claims in North America in 1664. The location at the head of navigation on the Hudson and at the eastern end of the Mohawk Valley guaranteed the city's importance as a center of transportation.

Early development of the area around Albany was characterized by the growth of independent cities and villages. Albany remained the largest city in the region and the second largest city in the state until the mid-nineteenth century. With the advent of mass transit in the nineteenth century, the area became more regionalized, a trend which only accelerated with the dawning of the first automobile age in the 1920s. With that came the development of auto suburbs and auto-related activities along the major streets and highways leading out from the center city. After World War II, the region's cities and towns became linked by suburban development.

Our tour is arranged so that we will view the auto-related development of three major routes out of Albany, each travelling in a different direction. We have chosen this route to illustrate the largest concentration of buildings and objects which remain to remind us of the auto-related environment in New York State's Capital District.

Broadway and Central Avenue were historically the primary routes between Albany and the cities of Troy and Schenectady, respectively. Both of these routes became early centers of motor vehicle sales and related businesses. Broadway, located near canal and rail transportation facilities and several factories, was the center for truck- and heavy-vehicle-related businesses. Central Avenue was the center for passenger car sales and their related facilities.

The tour begins in downtown Albany, the oldest settled area of the city. From here, we travel north along the Hudson River to Menands, a suburban village developed mainly in the 1920s. We will travel eastward along Interstate 90 to arrive at East Greenbush, along the U.S. Route 20. This former turnpike will then carry us back into downtown Albany, where

we will begin our journey along N.Y.S. Route 5, a major east-west route which travels through some of the largest cities in the state. We will detour off Route 5 on our way into Schenectady, have lunch, and reconnect with Route 5 to return to downtown Albany.

## THE TOUR

**NORTH PEARL STREET**, part of the Downtown Albany National Register Historic District, was once the major retail street of both the city and the region. With the decline of central cities nationwide, the street hit upon hard times in the 1960s and '70s. A revival of sorts is going on today, although current retail sales are aimed at the large population of weekday office workers. What remains from the 1920s and Depression Era are:

11: The former Home Savings Bank from 1927, the finest Art Deco commercial skyscraper in the city.

15: The former S. S. Kresge, (now Rite Aid) constructed 1924 and operated as such until the late 1970s; note the "V, X, XXV" inscribed along the top of this Art Deco facade, referring to 5¢, 10¢ and 25¢.

71: Famous Shoe Store neon sign.

**Corner of Clinton Ave.:** The 1931 Palace Theatre, one of the largest vaudeville houses in the country with nearly 3000 seats, listed in the National Register, and still an active concert hall. The marquee dates from the late 1950s.

**BROADWAY**, once the easternmost street of the stockaded city, was always a center of commercial activity. As the city expanded northward after the American Revolution, Broadway became the southern end of the Watervliet Turnpike, which paralleled the Hudson River for about eight miles to its northern terminus in present-day Watervliet. About one mile north of downtown, the vast estate of the Van Rensselaer family was located just east of Broadway. This family had owned over 240,000 acres--the entire land area now occupied by Albany and Rensselaer counties. In the late 19th century, due to its location near the Erie Canal and the Delaware and Hudson Railroad main line, Broadway began to experience large-scale industrial development; this may explain why the area became the location for truck showrooms constructed in the first quarter of the 20th century.



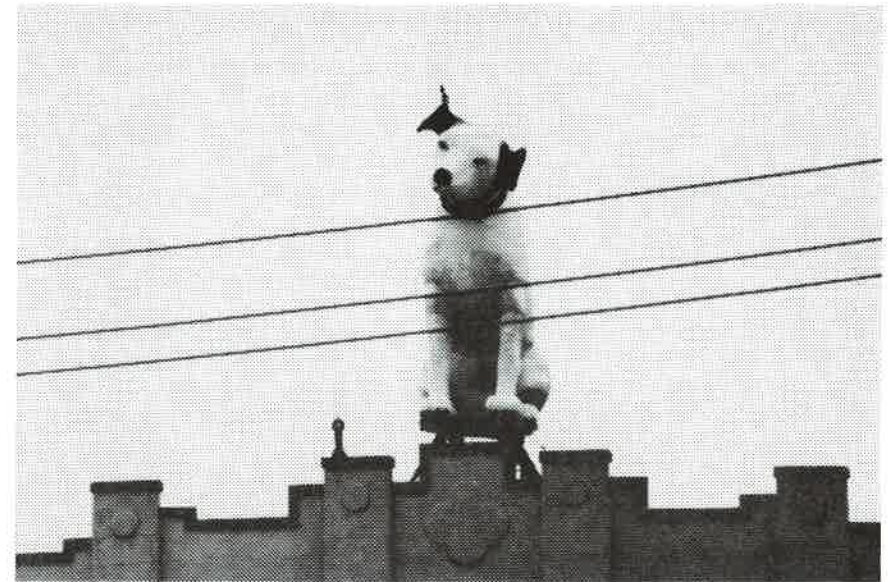
**\*\* Denotes photo stops, as time permits.**



**Miss Albany Diner, constructed 1941 (T. Opalka).**

**\*\* 893:** This Silk City Diner, constructed in Paterson, New Jersey, was brought here in 1941. It was known until 1965 as Lil's Diner, after its owner Lillian McAuliffe. Subsequent names included Elaine's, Fusco's, the Streetcar and the Firehouse. When "Ironweed" was being filmed in Albany in 1987, this diner was rehabilitated inside and out, and renamed the Miss Albany. This name did actually exist in Albany in a chain of 7 diners around town, but was never applied to this particular building. If you remember the movie at all, Meryl Streep, aka Helen Archer, gave an older woman her order of toast and coffee in this diner. It was purchased in December 1988 by its current owners and operators, Cliff, Jane and their son Bill Brown, who have graciously opened it for the tour.

**952:** This small tapestry brick building with tile roof was constructed c. 1917 and housed the Redmond & Bramley Oil Company gas station until the late 1960s. It was the G. W. Morton gas station in the late 1970s and has been unoccupied since about 1980.



**Nipper, installed 1958 (T. Opalka).**

**\*\* 991:** Seated at the top of the former RCA building since 1958 is Nipper, perhaps the most distinctive example of outdoor art of the automobile age in Albany. Over 25 feet tall and weighing 4 tons, Nipper, the symbol of the Victor Company since the 1910s, was built by the W. L. Stansgaard Company of Chicago for this location. He has a steel skeleton and a special composition exterior, according to a 1958 newspaper article, and was shipped on flat cars in five sections. Upon his arrival in Albany, he was erected by James McKinney & Company, a Albany structural steel company located just south of this site and dating back to the 1850s. They used a ten-story crane to haul the dog to the top of the building.

**980:** Directly opposite Nipper is the former International Harvester Company, a one-story pressed brick and concrete complex built in the late 1920s. This building, and others further up Broadway, form an impressive grouping of large-scale truck showrooms of the period. Note the interlocking "I H" logo in the gable. This company moved to a suburban location in the '80s.



**1043:** Constructed as B.F. Goodrich Tire Company c. 1935, this one-story brick building exhibits Art Deco detailing at the roofline.



**Mack Truck Sales** under construction, late 1920s (Albany Public Library).

**\*\* 1064:** This impressive tapestry brick and terra-cotta complex was constructed in the late 1920s to house Mack Truck Sales. Note former display windows and the lettering. Mack moved from here in the early 1980s to a site on Route 20 in Rensselaer, which we will pass later.

**1201:** This massive brick building was constructed in the 1890s by the Albany Railway Company to house electric streetcars. It is the sole survivor of three such buildings which occupied this site. Ironically, construction of a spur of Interstate 90 in the late 1960s displaced the United Traction Company, successor to Albany Railway, from its office and bus garages here.

**1260:** This one-story tapestry brick building served as the Brockway Motor Company showroom between the early 1920s and the late 1940s.

**1268:** J. Becker & Sons, truck bodies, has been the sole occupant of this one-story brick building since the late 1920s.

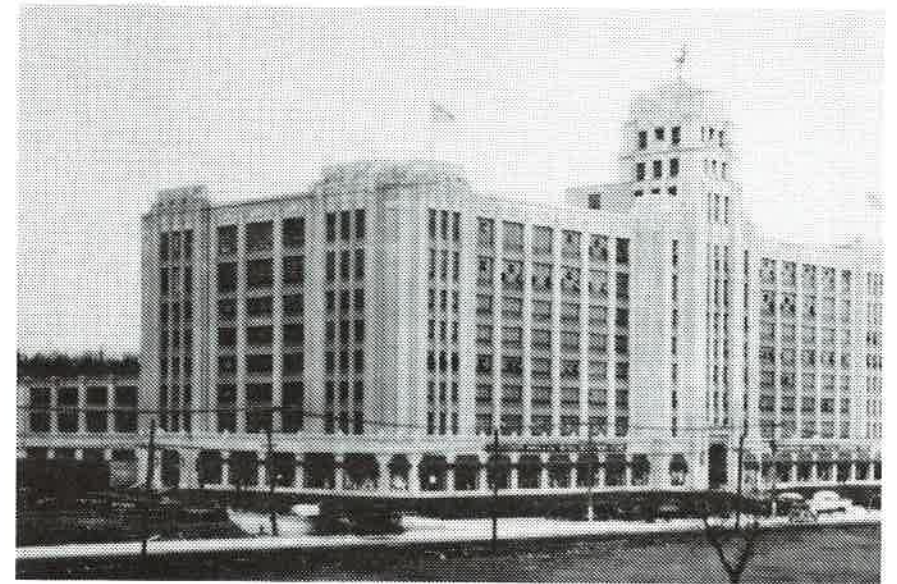
## MENANDS

**1332-1336/4 Wolfert Avenue:** A complex of two showroom buildings with adjacent repair shops, this classically-inspired group was constructed just before 1940. It housed Gateway Motors, most likely named because the building abuts the northern city limit. It had been used recently as a printing establishment and later a diaper service.

**5 Wolfert Avenue:** Directly opposite Gateway was the GM Truck & Coach Division, housed in a tapestry brick building.

**14 North Broadway:** The curved building once housed Capitol City Motor Cars, Ford and Lincoln (1935).

**100 North Broadway:** Mid-City Shopping Center was constructed c. 1960 on the site of Mid-City Park, an amusement park, and Hawkins Stadium, once the home of the Albany Senators baseball team. Note the neon sign.



**Montgomery Wards**, constructed 1929 (Albany Public Library).



**\*\* 150 North Broadway:** Looming nine stories above the flat plain of the Hudson River and visible for miles around is the former Montgomery Wards building, constructed in 1929. It was located almost midway between downtown Albany and Troy so that the streetcar fare from each city would be the minimum local fare of 5¢. Originally nine floors of retail and catalog sales, it was remodeled c. 1965 and the upper six floors were converted to solely catalog sales. At that time, the first floor was altered and the adjacent parking garage constructed. The Wards building is the most outstanding example of Art Deco retail design in the Capital District. The concrete structure has virtually no decorative detailing on the interior but the exterior is embellished with bas reliefs in typical Art Deco patterns. Note also the tower which is reminiscent of the tower of the Alfred E. Smith State Office Building in downtown Albany, which we will pass later in the tour. The complex, which has one million square feet, is waiting for redevelopment. A White Tower restaurant stood directly across from the main entrance at the bus stop. It was torn down late in 1988 as the material for this tour was being assembled.

As we continue north on Broadway for approximately one more mile, look for the following:

(Right): A c. 1930 stone-faced gas station;

(Left): A street marked by stone posts and containing a good group of carpenter/craftsman homes from c. 1920;

(Right): Elsie the Cow, a 3D sign on the Borden's plant, c. 1960;

(Left): An Art Moderne style former International Harvester building constructed 1950-51.

**\*\* Tri-City Twin Drive-In** was constructed in the mid-1960s and one of the few remaining drive-in theaters in a metropolitan area that boasted over ten drive-ins.

#### **EAST GREENBUSH**

This town is one of the fastest-growing suburban towns east of Albany. Once a rural settlement along the Columbia Turnpike, it has become a bedroom community for Albany. Prior to construction of the Massachusetts Turnpike and the Berkshire Spur of the New York State Thruway, Columbia Turnpike--now part of U.S. Route 20--was the major highway connecting the Capital District with New England. As a result, the typical assortment of highway businesses sprouted along the road. Among the most important are:

**\*\* Twilite Motel:** The business began when proprietress Marion Keller opened the "Twilite Cottage for Overnight Guests" in her home in 1924. Traffic was steady on Route 20 so in 1932, she designed and had five cottages built. These were unheated and had no running water; there was a separate bath house. Three more cabins were built c. 1936. By 1939, the first five had received rear additions housing private baths and were rated "Class A" by the Automobile Association of America. In response to the growing popularity of motels, Mrs. Keller designed the Twilite Motel in 1955, one year after the New York State Thruway opened, bypassing Route 20. Her "motel," however, is actually a facade which visually links the original five cabins; there is no interior connection. The business is still operated by Mrs. Keller.

(Left): 1920s cottage style gas station;



**Catalpa Garden Cabins**, begun c. 1935 (T. Opalka).

**\*\* 630:** Catalpa Garden Cabins. Constructed c. 1935 by Harvey Taylor, this restaurant and cabin complex offered Gulf gasoline, rooms (presumably in the house), cabins with running water, a light menu and a public telephone in 1936. By 1945, all seven cabins had been

constructed, by then with private toilets and showers. The gasoline business was discontinued and pumps removed in the mid-1950s. The cabins and lunch room operated through 1982. The cabins remain in good repair and retain a high degree of integrity with their original shiplap sheathing, porches, and gable roofs with hexagonal black and green asphalt shingles.

Near the junction of U.S. Route 4:

(Left): 1960s double-gabled former Shell Gas Station, now Citgo;

(Right): 1960s vacant Carvel Ice Cream store with an angular front;

(Left): c. 1950, Mount Vernon Motel;

**337:** Constructed c. 1950 as the Turnpike Snackbar, this business was purchased in 1986 by Dave Paloski, who changed the name to the Roadhouse but maintained the original character of the establishment. Refreshment and rest stop: coffee, 50¢; tea, 35¢; donuts/pastries: 50¢-95¢. Dutch treat--how appropriate, here in "Oost Greenebos!"

(Right): Carpinello Liquor Store, neon sign;

(Left): Fort Crailo Motel, notable for its neon sign and its namesake. Crailo is a manor house used by the Van Rensselaer family, constructed on the east bank of the river c. 1680 and now a New York State Historic Site.

(Left): Pat & Bob's Diner. Originally known as John & Pat's, this diner was owned by other members of the Carpinello family who also owned the liquor store and several other nearby businesses.

(Right): The new location of Albany Mack Sales and Service; notice the bulldog.

#### **DOWNTOWN ALBANY**

We now travel up **STATE STREET**, the eastern terminus of New York State Route 5. The New York State Capitol stands in front of us. Built between 1867 and 1899, this National Historic Landmark, designed by H. H. Richardson, Leopold Eidlitz and others, is currently undergoing restoration of its most significant interior areas. Across the street is the State Education Building (Henry Hornbostel, 1912) with the largest colonnade in the world, and west of the Capitol is the Art Deco style Alfred E. Smith State Office Building, designed by State Architects Jones and Haugaard. Note the similarity of this tower to the Montgomery Wards building we saw earlier.

**CENTRAL AVENUE** begins a few blocks above the Capitol and is the next leg in Route 5. The history of this street is truly the history of transportation in Albany. It was built as the first turnpike in New York State, (the Mohawk and Hudson or Albany and Schenectady), begun in 1797 and completed to Schenectady by 1803. Its fifteen-mile distance is characterized by a perfectly straight line from one end to the other. The former turnpike is known as Central Avenue in Albany County and State Street in Schenectady County.

Despite the opening of the Erie Canal in 1825, this road remained as the preferred mode of travel between Albany and Schenectady throughout the nineteenth century, since the canal trip between the two cities took one whole day. Twenty-five of the entire canal's 77 locks were located in this 20-mile section.

With the establishment of the West Albany railyards and stockyards just north of Central Avenue in the 1850s, the street took on more importance as a route for shipment of cattle. It was not unusual in the mid-19th century for whole herds of cattle to be driven down Central Avenue!

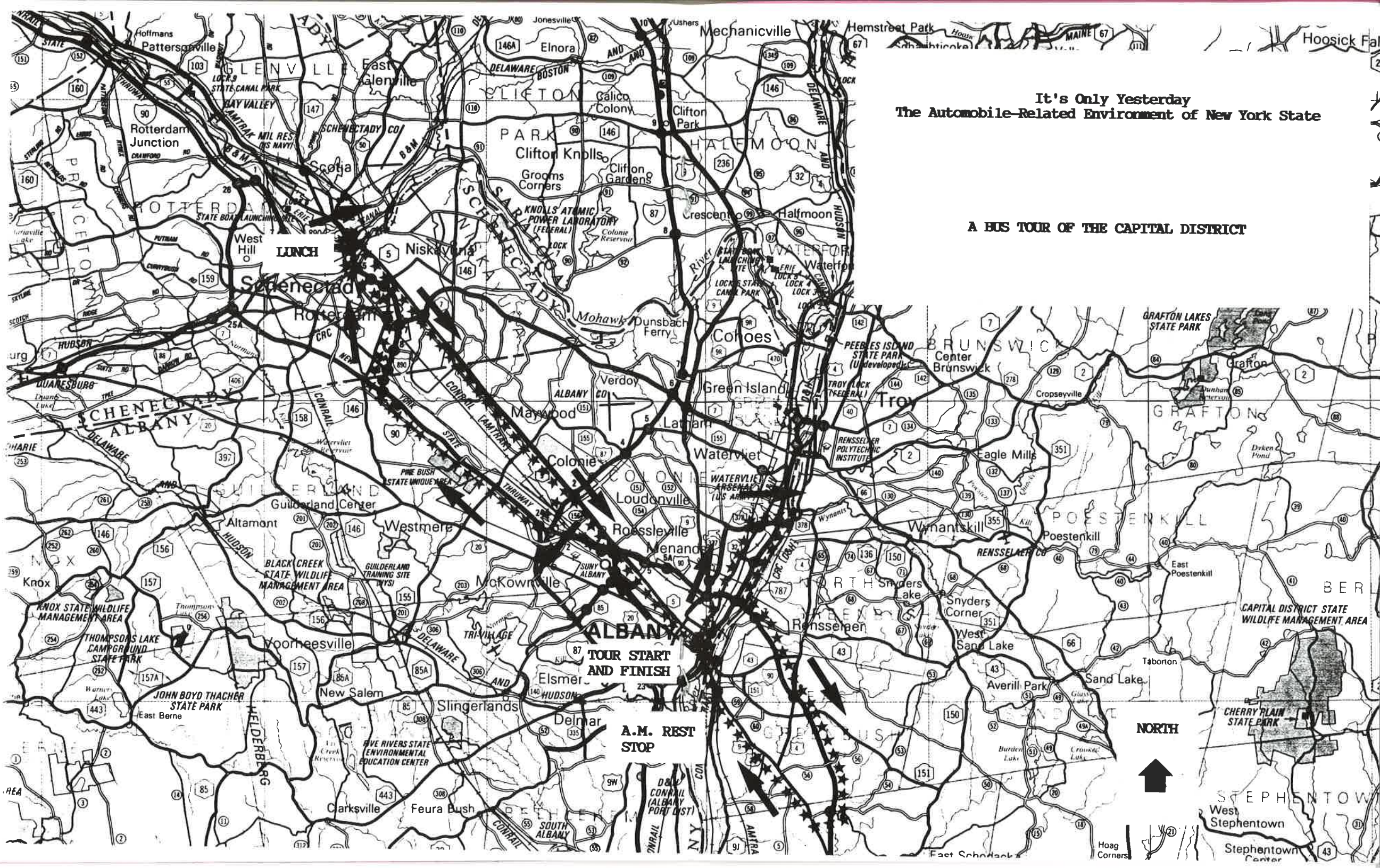
As the main east-west route through Albany and the major route to Schenectady, Central Avenue quickly developed into the principal access to western development. As such it was the logical location for one of the city's first horsecar lines. In 1864, the Albany Railway was chartered and its first line travelled along Central Avenue, eventually reaching the rail and stockyards. By 1901, the entire length of the former turnpike was served by electric streetcars when the Schenectady Railway constructed a line from the end of the Albany line to downtown Schenectady.

As transportation modes changed following World War I, Central Avenue became the area where this phenomenon was reflected most clearly. The first two miles of the Avenue became the location of most of Albany's early auto dealerships, and parts and service retailers.



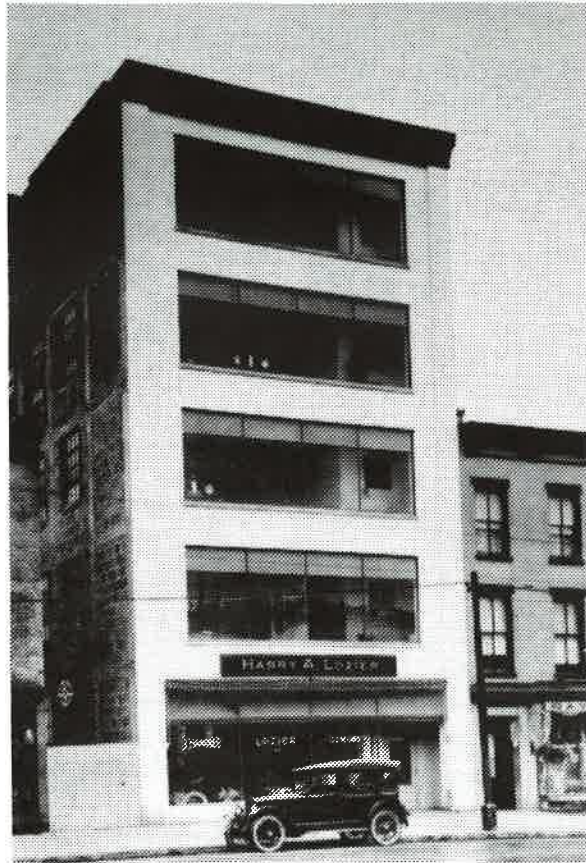
It's Only Yesterday  
The Automobile-Related Environment of New York State

A BUS TOUR OF THE CAPITAL DISTRICT





## CENTRAL AVENUE



11 Central Avenue, constructed 1930s (Albany Public Library).

**\*\* 11:** This 5-story glazed brick structure was constructed in the late 1930s. It was a dealership of Harry A. Lozier autos and later Chrysler-Plymouth autos. It was known as Armory Garage because of its proximity to the Washington Avenue Armory at the corner of Lark Street. The dealership has been in Albany for more than 70 years and vacated this building in the late 1940s when it moved farther out on Central.

**\*\* 12:** The only remaining of its type in the area, this former White Tower was constructed in the late 1930s at Washington near Swan, opposite the Alfred E. Smith State Office Building. It was moved to its present site in the early 1960s for construction of an office building on the site. It ceased operation as a White Tower in the early 1980s and was used as a luncheonette for a few years. It is currently used as the entrance to a larger bar, the QE2, and retains virtually all its original interior details.

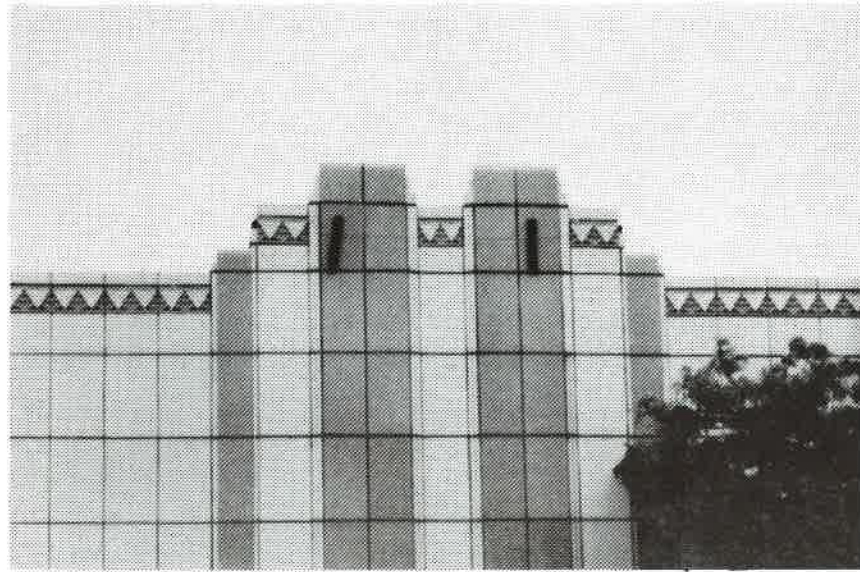


Detroit Supply Company, constructed c. 1924 (Albany Public Library).

**78-80:** This unusual brick building was constructed in the mid-1920s as the Detroit Supply Company and used as such until the early 1960s. It has had various occupants since that time. Note the two-story columns, recessed entrance and large plate glass windows.

**104:** Constructed in the early 1930s, this simple brick building housed Chevrolet dealerships of George Trendley and Don Allen until about 1960. It is presently A. & B. Auto Supply.





**153 Central Avenue**, former Neisner's, constructed 1940 (T. Opalka).

**149:** F.W. Woolworth--What can be said? Constructed in the late 1930s and remodelled c. 1950 when some of its Art Deco detailing was removed, this building and its neighbor from 1940, the former Neisner's 5 & 10 at 153 recall the Central Avenue of the World War II era like few other groups of buildings. The interior of Woolworth's retains its early '50s flavor as well.

**196:** Firestone Tires, constructed in 1955, retains its original character as well as its classic neon sign.

**268:** The Berkshire Motor Car Company, Chrysler and Plymouth dealer, was located in this building for about ten years following its construction in the early '30s. The last auto-related business here, Goodyear Tires, lasted through the 1940s.

**272:** This building was constructed c. 1912 for the Adirondack Motor Car Company, sellers of Overland, Garford and Moyer autos. Between 1919 and c. 1930, it was the home of Carpenter Autos, Overland dealers.

**292:** Another two-story brick structure dating from the early teens, this building once housed the Hamilton Motor Truck Company and a Chevrolet dealership. Firestone Tires was located here between the late 1910s and the early '50s, when they constructed a new building east of this site.

**314:** This two-story pressed brick building was constructed in the early 1910s as the first home of William Schupp Autos, a use which lasted into the late 1920s. It later became Beverwyck Motors, in honor of the Dutch name of Albany, and by 1935 was Burlingame Motors, sellers of Studebaker. In 1950, another car dealership was located here and after that time was used for non-auto-related businesses.

**318:** Constructed in the late 1920s, this three-story pressed brick and concrete building originally housed Harry Witte, Oakland and Pontiac. From about 1940 until the late 1950s, it was a Nash dealership under the names of Hakes & Magee and later Hakes and LeBourveau. Lafayettes were also sold here in the early '40s. Just a few years ago, the building was adapted for the offices and studios of WAMC, the local National Public Radio affiliate.

**330:** Constructed in the late 1910s, the building alternated between auto- and non-auto-related uses in its early years. In 1919, it was listed as A. A. Franklin, auto tires; in 1925, Eastern Distributors, autos: Willys-Knight, Overland, Peerless; and in 1940, Dunlop Tire and Rubber.

**340:** This is one of the few buildings on Central Avenue which still houses its original occupant, Steinhardt Auto Accessories, who have been here since the late 1920s.

**351:** Constructed in the early 1920s, this simple two-story concrete building was once the home of James Bussey, Chevrolet (1920s), A & B Garage, service station and general maintenance (1930), Lawrence Clarke, Pierce-Arrow, and Jarret Motors, Lincoln-Mercury.

The block of Central between Partridge Street and Manning Boulevard qualifies as the block with the highest concentration of auto-related businesses on the Avenue. The architectural integrity which remains varies, but here is a rundown of the establishments that once existed:



**450:** Constructed in the late 1910s as Central Auto, this building was eventually listed as a Dodge and Plymouth dealership. In 1945, it housed the New York State Automobile Rationing Committee, and from c. 1950 to the late 1970s, it was the home of John D. Wendell, Cadillac. It was recently insensitively altered into a post office branch, which obliterated its architectural character.



**470 Central Avenue**, constructed early 1920s (Albany Public Library).

**470:** Constructed in the late 1920s as the Charles Barnes dealership for REO Speedwagon, by 1940 this two-story concrete building was Mosher Brothers Used Cars. During the late 1940s, it became Yager Pontiac, a business which lasted for nearly 30 years. It was recently altered by the removal of some of its detailing.

**476:** One of the finest and most intact examples of its type on Central, this two-story classically inspired building was constructed in the early 1920s as Gahrn-Pinchbeck Company, autos. By 1930 it was Gahrn Buick, and in the late '30s it became Capitol Buick, a dealership which lasted here more than 30 years.

**482:** This building was one of the stops (late '20s-'30s) of the William Schupp Company, auto body manufacturers, as it continued to move west on Central. Any architectural detail it may have had was covered when the building became a supermarket in the 1940s.

**486:** Constructed in the late 1930s, this impressive 3-story brick building housed the William Schupp auto body manufacturing establishment (see 314 and 482 above). Not surprisingly, a Packard dealership was located next door at 504, as Packard owners often purchased custom body parts for their cars. The building, which recently underwent a sensitive rehabilitation for office use, is notable for its Gothic style detailing and use of tapestry brick.

**504:** Apparently constructed as the second location of L. R. Mack Packard and Dodge in the late 1920s, this simple one-story pressed brick building became the Albany district office of the New York State Bureau of Motor Vehicles by 1950. It served that purpose for about ten years and has recently been converted to housing.

**526:** A two-story tapestry brick complex which now houses the traffic safety division of the Albany Police Department, this building dates from the late 1920s when it was built for Witbeck Brothers, Graham Motor Cars. By the late '40s, it housed Rose Oldsmobile, a use which carried into the late 1950s.

**527:** This two-story brick building was built in the early 1920s as Capitol Lexington Motor Company and Breslin & Kulzer auto repairs and tires, a use which lasted into the early '40s. By 1945, it became the third and perhaps final location of L.R. Mack, Studebaker dealer, in this area of Central Avenue.

**543:** This simple tapestry brick building was constructed in the late 1920s as the American Glass Company, located here because of its proximity to so many auto dealerships.

**\*\* 549:** Jack's Diner, a Comac brand diner constructed in New Jersey, was brought here in 1949 and replaced an earlier streetcar-type diner of the same name. It was originally owned by Jack Saunders, and since 1964 has coincidentally been owned by John "Jack" Murtagh.



**Jack's Diner** under construction, 1949 (J. Murtagh).

The period after World War II witnessed major changes in the American landscape as a result of the proliferation of automobile ownership. One of the earliest changes was the way in which autos were sold, and this point was not lost on Central Avenue. Smaller dealerships closed, and those that survived moved from showrooms on lower Central to large open-air lots west of Allen Street. With the suburbanization of the residential population and the demand for parking near shopping, the shopping center came into vogue. Not surprisingly, the first shopping center in the Capital District was located along Central Avenue, directly opposite a car dealership that had moved up from the lower end of the street in the late 1940s.

**911:** Westgate Shopping Center, constructed in 1957, was the first such center in the Albany area. Although many of its original stores (W.T. Grant, J.C. Penney, Albany Public Market, among others) have departed, the center retains its original colossal sign and some detailing, as well as the open character typical of shopping centers of the period. It is scheduled to undergo rehabilitation in the near future.

**\*\* 1,3,5,7,8 Jermain Street:** A cluster of Lustron houses constructed in 1949, this group may one day qualify as a historic district.

#### **CENTRAL AVENUE, CONTINUED:**

**926:** Armory Garage Chrysler Plymouth had a branch operation here immediately after WWII, but closed the downtown operation by 1950 and centralized facilities here at that time.

**1007:** Bob and Ron's Fish Fry has been in business since the 1940s. Note the neon sign.

**\*\* 1025:** Albany Supersonic Car Wash, constructed in the 1960s, has an outstanding neon and incandescent sign from the period.

#### **COLONIE**

As we continue our journey west on Central Avenue, notice the following:

(Left): **1120:** Sunset Bowling Alley, c. 1950, with its neon sign;  
 (Right): **1289:** Norge Village, c. 1960, with its plastic globe sign;  
 (Left): **1330:** Central Beverage, c. 1960, with its free-form sign;  
 (Left): **1384:** Central Motel, a representative early 1960s design;  
 (Right): **1425:** Colonie Center, the first enclosed shopping mall in the Capital District, constructed in 1966, and still one of the most successful in the country in its gross sales per square foot ratio.

We leave Route 5 for a while at this point and travel to Schenectady to have lunch. We will travel on the Adirondack Northway, the New York State Thruway and local Interstate highways into Schenectady to arrive in time for lunch. We will return to Albany via Route 5.

#### **SCHENECTADY**

**ERIE BOULEVARD**, like so many streets in New York State with this name, was the path of the Erie Canal through Schenectady, thus explaining its extraordinary width. The canal was rerouted and renamed the New York State Barge Canal in the 1910s, and the old section was filled and developed as a street in this area. The General Electric Company had existed in Schenectady since the late 1880s, but the spectacular sign (**\*\***) at the south end of the Boulevard dates from the twentieth century.



**225:** Wallace-Armer Hardware has been located here since the early 1920s. The stone facade is notable for its exuberant decoration and neon sign. The interior boasts a mechanical change-making system using wires and change boxes which have been in use since the store opened.

**165:** Next to Ruby's Diner is Kem Cleaners, featuring a representative 1960s neon sign.

**\*\* Ruby's Silver Diner:** This diner was constructed in 1936 using a passenger car purchased from the Delaware and Hudson Railroad. Owner Dominick Cecilian had to cut the car apart and reassemble it in a different configuration in order for it to fit on the foundation. He opened the diner on Election Day, 1936. Rubin Michelson, the present owner and our host for lunch, purchased the business in 1975 after operating a restaurant at the corner of State Street and Erie Boulevard for many years.

**STATE STREET** is the name of the former Albany and Schenectady Turnpike in Schenectady County and is also New York State Route 5. At the eastern end of Schenectady's downtown (Nott Terrace), the perfectly straight 1803 turnpike joins the former King's Road, the original main road between Albany and Schenectady, dating from 1661. This has been the principal shopping street in "The Electric City" since the nineteenth century.

**315:** Jay Jewelers, a long-established business in the city, boasts a neon and incandescent sign on its roof.

**403:** F.W. Woolworth dates from c. 1950. Look familiar?

**432:** Proctor's Theatre was Schenectady's premiere vaudeville house, constructed in 1926. The style of the interior is Adamesque with extensive use of applied plaster decoration. It has recently been restored and is listed in the National Register.

**703:** At the corner of State Street and Nott Terrace on the street leading to Union College is the WonderBurger, a White Tower constructed in the 1950s and converted to this use within the last few years. Note the white and turquoise color scheme with the corner tower and the box-like form of the building.

**850:** This handsome tapestry brick building was constructed c. 1935 as

the Wedekind-Knight Motor Company. By the mid-1950s, it had become Norris Auto Top Shop, its current occupant. The building shows the influence of the Arts and Crafts style in its use of tapestry brick as well as the wood trim along the roofline and multi-paned casement windows.

**927:** Imperial 400 Motel, constructed c. 1963 shows the strong influences of the period in its use of block, thin iron balconies, a porte cochere and angled roofline in the front portion.

**\*\* 1016:** This finely detailed red tapestry brick building was constructed in 1926 for R. D. Thomson, Inc., a Studebaker dealer. In 1939, it was listed as Guy Buick and through the '40s and '50s it was the home of Englert Motors, DeSoto and Plymouth. Notice the wheels within the classically pedimented corner towers and the Studebaker banners.

**1038-40:** Located next door to a former Studebaker dealership is this two-story pressed brick building which was constructed in the late 1920s as the Johnston-Tongue Motor Company, a Nash dealership. It became Cummings Chrysler-Plymouth by 1940 and continued that use through the 1950s. Note the extensive use of glass block on the second floor.

**1044:** Constructed in the early '20s adjacent to the previously mentioned dealerships was Webster Motor Company, a dealer in Ford, Fordson Tractors, Lincoln, and Lincoln-Zephyr. This business lasted here past the 1950s. Note the decorative terra cotta trim, including the name "Webster" in the center of the facade.

**1329:** Scholz Market, an establishment which has been in Schenectady for more than 60 years, features a fine example of 3D stainless steel lettering which probably dates from the 1940s.

**\*\* 1595:** Wedekind Motors has been at this location since the construction of this building in the mid-1930s. Originally selling Nash-Willys, after World War II only Nash cars were sold. After 1956, the dealership became Wedekind Pontiac, which continues to this day. The building is a good example of its type, with multi-colored brick bands and the Art Deco ziggurat form in the center. The recent alterations are not sympathetic with the character of the building.

**3428:** Note the Gallery nightclub, with its free-form 1960s sign and the pink Cadillac parked below it.

**3631:** Canal Paper Company appears to be an auto dealership from the late 1940s.

## **ALBANY COUNTY LINE**

### **CENTRAL AVENUE:**

**1975:** Farmer Boy Diner is typical of 1960s diner design.

**1946:** Colonie Animal Hospital is a good example of the Art Moderne style in its use of white stucco and industrial sash windows.

**1890:** Colonie Diner is reminiscent of the Farmer Boy, above, and dates from the same period.

**1810:** L-Ken's Restaurant, from the 1950s, has a period neon sign.

**1529:** Northway Inn, from the same time, has a similar period sign.

\* \* \* \* \*

Conference assistance provided by:

Historic Albany Foundation, Inc.

Historic Ithaca and Tompkins County, Inc.

Preservation League of New York State

Turpin Bannister Chapter, Society of Architectural Historians

All conference events are supported in part by the  
**New York State Council on the Arts.**

Cover design by Jennifer Carney