

April 21, 2017

Reconstructing Hamilton's Train Depot

Hamilton, NY – After almost 100 years of being located at 16 Broad Street in the center of the Village of Hamilton, the town made an unequivocal move to purchase a building to serve as the new town hall. A new town hall would provide an appropriate meeting space, accommodate staff needs, be handicap accessible for constituents and create a climate controlled, fire protected room for its historic records. Fortunately, on the market at the time was the original train depot built in 1870 by Henry J. Powers.

The depot was built as a passenger station of a cost of \$1,700. After the great fire in 1895, the depot was moved to its current location in 1899 and repurposed as a freight station to accommodate the numerous materials to rebuild downtown. On March 29, 1957, the last train made its way through Hamilton as the New York, Ontario & Western Railway stopped its operation.

Since that time, the building has seen numerous uses including the most recent as an office for public radio. When the town purchased the building in 2015, they had a vision to ensure the project of converting it to a town hall honored the building's history. That vision remains while the approach of the project has changed. After careful consideration, what began as a rehabilitation project evolved into a reconstruction venture.

Hearing about the latest plans, John Taibi, local author and notable expert on the railroad, asked to take a look at the building. On April 10, John Taibi along with Madison County Historian Matt Urtz, Village of Hamilton Historian Joan Prindle, local historian enthusiast Chuck Hall, railroad enthusiast Jim Georges, Peter Darby, Town Councilmember and Sue Reymers, Town Clerk for the Town of Hamilton gathered to look at the drafted plans and see the building. John's response to the project was, "I think this is wonderful and I support this plan!" Taibi knows very well what it's like to live in a renovated train station as he calls the Munnsville Station his home.

The town has faced challenges as the plans progressed with the old building and the costs began to mount for rehabilitation. So the difficult choice was made to shift the plans from rehab to new construction. In order to preserve the historic elements, the town is salvaging the essential depot artifacts to reuse – the decorative brackets, sliding freight doors, as well as a few of the wooden pieces with graffiti from employees who worked there in the 1800's. These artifacts will be installed into the new building which will look exactly the same as the train depot in the same location. The train depot will still be there in the end, but as a functional town hall which will meet and exceed energy code, featuring many original artifacts all at an affordable investment that will be enjoyed for another 100 years. Please check the website in the near future for additional updates at www.townofhamiltonny.org. Contact Sue Reymers, Town Clerk at the Town Office at (315) 824-3380 if you have any questions.