

Highlight of Geneva

Architecture

From salt box to modern commercial buildings, examples of almost every architectural style since the early 1800s can be found in Geneva.

- Adobe – Bradford House (629 South Main Street)
- Colonial Revival – Post Office and Bragdon House (527 South Main Street)
- Federal - Pulteney Land Office (106 Washington Street) and Row Houses
- Greek Revival - Rose Hill Mansion (3373Rt 96A) and President’s House (690 South Main Street)
- Gothic Revival – Balmanno Cottage (583 South Main Street) and St. Peter’s Church
- High Victorian Gothic – Dove House (512 South Main Street), Ashcroft (112 Jay Street) and Presbyterian Church
- Italianate – Parrott Hall (campus of Cornell AgriTech)
- Jacobean – Cox Hall and Medberry Hall on HWS campus
- Octagon – 760 Castle Street
- Prairie – 380 Washington Street
- Richardsonian Romanesque – former Elks Club (458 South Main Street) and Belhurst Castle

The Armory, 300 Main Street

Many New York State armories were built in the 1890s when labor strikes and increased immigration raised fears of civil unrest. Built as a military presence in the center of town, it was expanded several times up to 1917. The final change was a large garage in 1959. It is still used for the National Guard decades after other units moved to modern buildings outside their villages and cities.

Cornell AgriTech, 595-599 W. North Street

Cornell AgriTech is a state institution created by the New York State Legislature and opened in 1882. Its original aim was to use scientific investigation to determine the best practices for agricultural production and to share the results with the state’s farmers, thus improving the business of farming. Started with five staff, one building (now Parrott Hall), and 130 acres, the Station today employs over 300 people on a campus of more than 700 acres and its focus continues to be applied research.

The early scientists tried to determine the ideal methods of planting field crops like corn and wheat, as well as what types of equipment produced the best results in plowing and planting. Staff researched livestock, worked to identify and fight insects and plant diseases, and grew and developed varieties of fruit and vegetable plants for the state’s farmers. Later research expanded to include nursery plants and canned goods.

It became part of Cornell University’s College of Agriculture and Life Sciences in 1923. The animal research department moved to Ithaca after World War II and new departments were created for chemistry, insect study, food science, plant diseases, seed testing and vegetable production. Today the Geneva scientists focus not only on fruit and vegetable production and food safety, but the needs of the home gardener, wineries, craft brewers, cheese makers and on food innovation and technology.

Geneva General Hospital, 196 North Street

By 1892 the Church Home Hospital was inadequate for the village's growing population. The Medical & Surgical Hospital of Geneva was incorporated in March of that year. A community effort brought the facility to fruition. The estate of John Ditmars donated \$12,000, the land was donated, the Board of Women Managers did many fundraisers, and a house on North Main Street was auctioned, per the owner's will, with proceeds going to the hospital. Opened in 1898, the Hospital has undergone many name changes and expansions. The Finger Lakes Health System now has facilities in Seneca and Yates counties and manages several nursing homes.

Geneva Public Library, 244 Main Street

Built in 1835, the building was originally the Universalist Church. In 1910 it became home to the Geneva Free Library. Nine years later local World War I veterans met and voted on how they wished to be remembered. Rather than a statue, the group asked for a Soldiers and Sailors memorial building. There was to be a new building at the corner of Castle and North Main Streets incorporating a library, war memorial, and history museum. Though property was purchased, the existing library was renamed "Soldiers and Sailors Memorial Library" and an adjacent house was given to the American Legion for their first home. The Library operated as an association library until a vote was cast to become part of the Geneva City School District. On February 14, 2006 the library became the Geneva Public Library. Additions to the building were made in 1960 and 1995, but the original sanctuary area is still visible as a public reading area.

Genesee Park Historic District, Genesee and Lewis Streets

As Geneva grew north from the lake, well-to families developed a neighborhood that was distinct from the south side of town. Many architectural styles are represented including Greek Revival, Italianate, Gothic Revival, Italian Villa, and Stick. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2002, the district includes the former North Presbyterian Church, the St. Peter's Episcopal Church, Genesee Park, and several dwellings.

Glenwood Cemetery, 1000 Lochland Road

Glenwood Cemetery is a beautiful example of a Victorian era garden cemetery. Originally opened in 1873 on about 50 acres of land, Glenwood was designed to be a place of quiet family gatherings and picnics as well as a burial ground for loved ones. A landscape architectural drawing for the cemetery suggests it was designed by H. W. S. Cleveland, a friend of Frederick Law Olmsted who designed of Central Park.

Why use a cemetery as a picnic ground and park? The idea started in the late 18th to early 19th century when people became uncomfortable with churchyard cemeteries in urban settings. Moving graveyards to the outskirts of cities and towns was seen as a solution. Victorian era garden cemeteries were designed as places of pilgrimage and nature spaces for the public to enjoy.

When the Geneva school district acquired the Pulteney Street Cemetery as the site for the new Geneva High School (now FLCC campus) in the 1920s, nearly 630 bodies were re-interred at Glenwood Cemetery. That section of the cemetery is known at Pulteney-in-Glenwood.

Hobart and William Smith Colleges

Hobart and William Smith Colleges are coordinate colleges. While sharing faculty, staff, and facilities, they are separate institutions with their own admissions and degrees. Hobart College

for men was founded as Geneva College, with instruction beginning in 1822. William Smith College for women was founded in 1906 by Geneva businessman William Smith. With few exceptions, the Colleges own most of the buildings from 573 to 780 South Main Street. This includes five fraternity houses, classroom and administration buildings, and a variety of student housing.

Neighborhoods

During the mid-1800s and early 1900s, with family and friends often following one another, ethnic neighborhoods developed around Geneva. The neighborhoods were often near work and a church. For example, the Irish settled near the Cayuga and Seneca Canal outlet and St. Frances DeSales Church, the Italians created Torrey Park and the Syrian community centered around Geneva, Tillman, and Exchange Streets. Today Geneva has eleven neighborhoods – Arbors, Castle Heights, Downtown, East Lakeview, Founders Square, Hildreth Hill, Historic North, Historic South, Lehigh Gardens, and South Lake.

Nursery Industry in Geneva, Area between Washington and North Streets

The earliest record of a nursery in Geneva dates to 1817. Between the 1850s and 1950s nurseries were a major industry in Geneva. During its prime there were over 30 nursery firms in Geneva with over 4,000 acres in and around Geneva devoted to growing flower, shrubbery, and fruit, shade, and ornamental trees. During the 1870s Geneva was recognized as the nation's nursery center. It was said "Where trees are grown Geneva is known. Geneva's nurseries held on to the mid-20th century. The last major nursery was Stern's who made the idea of selling by catalog famous. In the 1950s he also invented "Miracle Grow." Geneva's other nurseries included Bronson, Hopkins & Company, Cass Nurseries, Chase Nurseries, Maxwell Nurseries, Rice Brothers Co., Sears, Henry & Company, Seneca Nurseries, Smith Nurseries, Van Dusen Nurseries, and Washington Street Nurseries.

Pulteney Apartments, 40 Park Place

The Geneva Hotel, now the Pulteney Apartments, was constructed in 1796. As a stop on the stagecoach route from Utica to Batavia, travelers wrote in diaries and letters that it was the finest hotel in this part of New York State. The building was the Geneva Water Cure and Hygienic Institute from 1854 to 1909 and has been an apartment building since 1917.

Pulteney Park

Laid out in 1793 the park was the original village green at the center of Geneva. By 1800, the Geneva Hotel (now the Pulteney Apartments), the post office, a grocery store, and the Geneva Academy (forerunner of Hobart College) stood around the square. During the 1820s row houses were built around the green with businesses on the lower level.

The current pool and statue "*Our Lady of Peace*" by Jean McKay were installed in 1939. Other war memorials were added in the mid-20th century on the south end of the park.

Row Houses

The row houses around Pulteney Park and on South Main Street are not seen anywhere else in the Finger Lakes. Built between 1800 and 1830 most of the row houses are Federal style. . Outside decoration is limited to the entrance. Some of these homes have been converted into apartments with several rental units while others are still single owner homes among them.

The colorful homes on the east side of South Main Street are often referred to as “rainbow row.”

Seneca Lake

At 634 feet deep, Seneca Lake is the deepest lake east of the Mississippi River. Taking in water from Keuka Lake and hillside streams, it drains north to Lake Ontario, so Geneva is at the “foot” of the lake. Because of its depth, the lake’s entire surface has only frozen over four times since 1800.

As canals were built at the north and south ends of the lake, Geneva became an inland port. Farmers brought produce such as wheat, corn, and fruits to load onto canal barges. The Seneca-Cayuga Canal began at Lake Street and went around the north end of the lake to connect with the outlet. This entrance and several piers in the harbor protected canal boats from the sometimes choppy lake water.

Beginning in the 1840s, railroads built their depots downtown to be near the canal and its warehouses. Industry developed on the waterfront in the 1850s to be closer to both forms of transportation. For the next century, the lakefront’s purpose was commercial, not recreational.

In the early 1950s, 900,000 tons of dirt filled in the lakeshore to make space for the Routes 5 & 20 arterial around downtown. The road occupied all of the new lakefront. In 1988, the road was relocated to make space for development and recreation.

Smith Opera House, 82 Seneca Street

From concerts to graduations, movies to benefits and lectures to sporting events, the Smith Opera House has served multiple purposes for the community since 1894. When a fire forced Linden Hall, Geneva’s first public hall, to close in December 1892 a need within the community was created for a public entertainment space. As a gift to Geneva nurseryman William Smith financed the building of the Smith Opera House.

During its early years the Smith primarily served as an opera house and vaudeville theater. In 1927 Schine’s Amusement Company bought the theater. After extensive renovations, Schine’s Geneva Theater opened as a movie palace in 1931 and closed in 1978. The building was saved from demolition by the Finger Lakes Regional Arts Council and is now operated by the Smith Center for the Arts. Listed on the National Register of Historic Places, the Smith has been restored to its 1931 appearance. Among the performers who have graced the Smith’s stage are George M. Cohan, John Philip Sousa, Itzhak Perlman, Billy Joel, Bruce Springsteen, and Dave Matthews.

St. Patrick’s Roman Catholic Cemetery, East North Street

Associated with St. Francis DeSales Church (now part of Our Lady of Peace Parish), St. Patrick’s burials consist of mostly Italian and Irish immigrants and their descendants. Before the mid-1800s, many Irish were leaving Ireland for the United States for various reasons, most frequently due to British oppression and the potato famine. The Irish community established local Catholic institutions including St. Frances DeSales Church (1832), St. Francis De Sales Parochial School (1875), St. Stephen’s Church and Parochial School (1904), and DeSales High School (1912-2012). Over 200 of the Irish buried in St. Patrick’s were born in Ireland, reflecting 19th-century immigration trends.

As Irish immigration declined in the late 19th and early 20th centuries, Italian immigrants began making their way to Geneva. Many Italians moved to Geneva between 1901 and 1914 and began worshipping at St. Francis De Sales. Some of the Italians in St. Patrick's Cemetery were born in Italy, but the majority seems to be descendants of those immigrants who first came to Geneva.

Washington Street Cemetery, corner of Madison and Washington Streets

Washington Street Cemetery is the third burial ground in Geneva. The earliest burial spot was on the site of Trinity Church on South Main Street. Another early burial ground was on Pulteney Street, the old Geneva High School once stood and the site of the new FLCC campus. Property for the Washington Street Burial Ground was purchased in September 1832 when it became evident that the Pulteney Street Cemetery would soon be completely full.

Approximately 2,200 burials are contained in the Cemetery including the graves of many locally and regionally prominent citizens (about twenty ministers, several Senators, the first police chief of the city, five Revolutionary War veterans, four War of 1812 veterans, and 63 Civil War veterans). The Cemetery also has many different styles of headstones including marble, slate, and granite carved with symbolic images representing death and resurrection. In 2002 the Cemetery was listed on the New York State and National Registers of Historic Places.