



## SCHENECTADY

# Group honors restoration work on 19th century city building

BY KATHLEEN MOORE  
Gazette Reporter

The original facade for 109 S. Ferry St. was gone, and four “renovations” had removed almost every other piece of the 1800s building.

But that didn’t stop a New York City professor from restoring it to its original form.

Owner Ammiel Alcalay, as well as local restorer Doug Thorpe, won a Schenectady Heritage Foundation award Thursday for their two-year labor of love to restore the building, which had been in danger of collapse. “It was about a year away. There was some severe structural damage,” Thorpe said.

### Award winners

*The Schenectady Heritage Foundation on Thursday handed out awards for restoration work at five city locations:*

109 S. Ferry St.

611 Union St.

14 S. Church St.

The portico of Elston Hall at SCCC.

The fence at St. George’s Episcopal Church, 30 N. Ferry St.

He shored it up, then began working his way down to whatever remained of the original building.

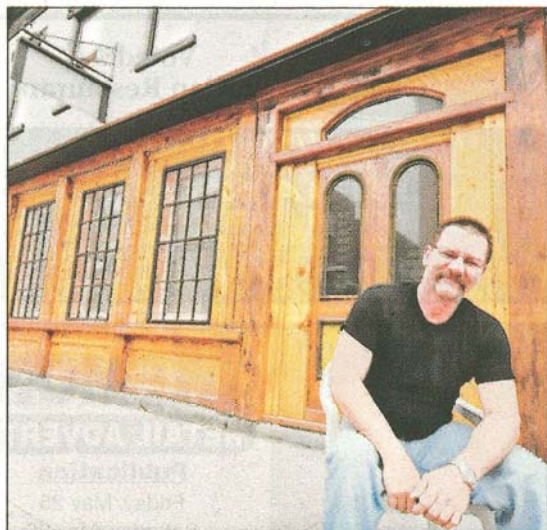
“We removed four renovations. We basically stripped it down to the original structure, and that’s what we worked from,” he said.

There wasn’t much left. He spent two years searching for early-1800s materials. The windows came from an 1830 mill in New Hampshire. He found one pair of doors in Maine.

“I found components throughout the Northeast,” he said.

He also wound up with interesting items from the building itself, including a credit book used by the man who ran a meat market there in 1820. The book listed the names of customers who bought

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MARC SCHULTZ/GAZETTE PHOTOGRAPHER

Doug Thorpe’s restoration work at 109 South Ferry St. earned a Schenectady Heritage Foundation award.





MARC SCHULTZ/GAZETTE PHOTOGRAPHER

St. George's Church in the Stockade was awarded the Schenectady Heritage Foundation award for its preservation of the historic wrought-iron fence in front of the church.

## Awards

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meat on credit, as well as tracking how much they owed and when they paid. Thorpe found it under the floor.

From later renovations, they found Civil War-era newspapers, perhaps used as insulation.

Alcalay didn't mind the long

wait for authentic 1800s materials.

"He was committed to salvage and save that building," Thorpe said.

The building is now usable in its original form, with a first-floor commercial space and a second-floor apartment. Alcalay plans to live there.

Four other buildings also received awards for outstanding restoration work: 611 Union St.; 14 S. Church St.; the portico of Elston Hall at Schenectady County Com-

munity College; and the fence at St. George's Episcopal Church, 30 N. Ferry St.

The badly deteriorated fence has been a work in progress since 2006, when church members donated the money to fix it. It's 126 years old and one of only a few left — most having succumbed to rust or been melted down for iron during the world wars.

But at St. George's, when the fence began to fall apart, parishioners collected the pieces and stacked them in storage, hoping to

eventually raise the money to fix them. In the end, the many pieces had to be recast, using the broken segments as models.

Congregant Fred Krings donated the first sum of money in memory of his wife, Virginia, but Fred died soon after his wife. Their children kept the project going.

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