

'Three Bears' Friends Meet Ovid, Romulus Boards

BY NEIL CHAFFIE

A busy month is ahead for the president of the recently formed Friends of the Three Bears.

Ovid artist Dan Motill is to address a village board, two town boards and the Seneca County board of supervisors in the next few days. In addition, he will continue meeting weekly with officers of the organization and then closes out the month with a meeting of the entire membership.

Motill will look to the Ovid village board on Aug. 11, the Ovid town board on Aug. 13 and the Romulus town board on Aug. 20 for resolutions supporting the Friends in their efforts to preserve and find new uses for three historic Seneca County office buildings in Ovid. Those buildings, known as the Three Bears, overlook Ovid's Main Street business district.

The board of supervisors will meet in the courthouse, one of those three buildings, on Tuesday, Aug. 12, beginning at 6 p. m. and have set aside time on the agenda for Motill to discuss the founding

of the Friends, what has been accomplished thus far and what the Friends hope to accomplish by working in cooperation with the county.

The Ovid village board opens its meeting at 6:30 p. m. on the second floor of the Municipal Building. The Ovid town board meets at 7 p. m. in the town offices on the ground floor of that building. The Romulus board meets at 7:30 p. m. at the town hall in Willard. Officers of the Friends meet each Tuesday at 1 at the Ovid office, National Bank of Geneva. The overall Friends membership meet the fourth Tuesday at 1 p. m. in the courthouse. The public is welcome to attend any one or all of the meetings.

Since its creation, the Friends have been in the process of drawing up by-laws, filing letters of incorporation with the state and getting other paperwork out of the way.

The Friends have set a membership fee of \$25 for an individual. To be listed as a founding member of Friends, an additional \$25 is required. A membership drive will shift into high gear with a community-wide event later this year.

In addition to a drive committee, others are looking into the structural needs of the three buildings and refurbishing of the courtroom. The courthouse no longer houses any offices, while the other two buildings are in use from time to time.

The care of all three, plus the grounds, sometimes referred to as Courthouse Square, remain a county

responsibility. The buildings were erected in the mid 1800s and are listed officially as historic structures. For additional information about the new organization and its goals, write Friends, PO Box 75, Ovid, NY 14521.

Future of Courthouse Complex Tops Agenda

BY NEIL CHAFFIE

The results of a workshop in Ovid on Saturday, Oct. 11, will be summarized in a recommendation aimed at creating a strategy for the preservation and care of Seneca County's courthouse complex in Ovid.

Architect Robert Corby of Bero Associates in Rochester will facilitate the workshop along with Janet Sure, Historic Ithaca architect and preservation director. The Preservation League of New York also will take part.

Mark Sawyer, director of Seneca County's Office of Economic Development and Planning, said the day-long program will open at 9 a.m. in front of the courthouse. After an introduction and tour, the group will convene at the South Seneca Middle-Senior High

School.

In talking at the school and considering future uses, Sawyer said the ideas proposed will have to meet basic criteria arrived at by county officials. These include finding productive roles for the three buildings, supporting Ovid's half-shire status, preserving the courtroom for public events, protecting the "unique exterior" of the buildings, and maintaining the vitality of Ovid, Seneca County and the Finger Lakes Region.

Sawyer noted that the county has already applied for a Small Cities Development Block Grant of \$40,000 "for a Main Street reinvestment strategy for the village of Ovid."

Sawyer went on to note that the county "anticipates using the findings of this workshop and the reuse of (the buildings) as a catalyst for encouraging new

investment-creating jobs and economic growth in Ovid and south Seneca County."

The block grant, if approved, would be used "for development of a detailed step-by-step strategy to spur Main Street investment," Sawyer said in a press release.

He said county officials agreed on the workshop "in an effort to address a wide variety of issues...in association with the county's decision to move county services out of the (buildings) and into other facilities, and because of the county's "limited financial capacity to absorb the costs of renovation and renewal..."

A strong supporter of the intended preservation and reuse of the buildings is Seneca County Manager Keith S. Ashby.

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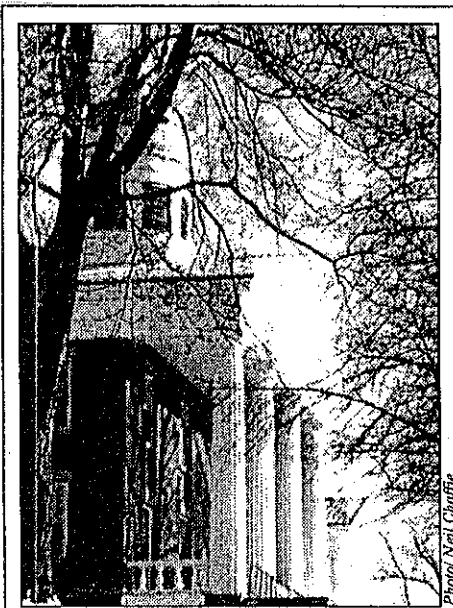


Photo: Neil Chaffie

Erected in 1845 and listed on the National Register of Historic Sites, the Seneca County Courthouse in Ovid (pictured here) and its two sister buildings will be the subject of a day-long workshop on Saturday, Oct. 11.

Courthouse

continued

"As part of the county's tourism and economic development efforts, the (buildings) should be restored and reused in a manner that ensures the long-term preservation of this important state, regional, county and village landmark," Ashby said.

"While the county believes these structures, as well as Ovid's half-shire status are important to Ovid's identity and future, these difficult fiscal times demand that the county must reach out to the community to help find a way to preserve the (buildings) for future generations through appropriate adaptive uses," he said.

While 110 invitations have gone out to

various people, the general public is welcome to attend.

The buildings are known to many as the Three Bears and currently have very limited use. Behind the drive to preserve the buildings and make them a vital part of the community once again is The Friends of the Three Bears. Nearly 100 members pay dues and meet monthly to conduct the business of an organization formed last July. Officers meet each Tuesday at 1 p.m. at the Ovid office, National Bank of Geneva.

As for Saturday's workshop, The New York State Council on the Arts has provided the needed funding.

Ovid Gazette
10-8-03

County hosts workshop on future of Three Bears

Seneca County, with funding from the New York State Council on the Arts, will hold a public workshop to identify potential reuse options and preservation strategies for the County's Courthouse Complex (commonly referred to as "The Three Bears") in Ovid. The workshop will be held Saturday (Oct. 11) from 9 a.m. until about 3 p.m. The workshop will begin on the steps of "Papa Bear" with an introduction and tour of the "Three Bears" and then move to South Seneca Central School for the remainder of the day.

The county has invited a wide variety of community interests to participate in the event. The general public is also invited and encouraged to attend the workshop to help the county define an appropriate future for the "Three Bears."

Around the county

The county committed to holding the workshop in an effort to address a wide variety of issues facing the "Three Bears" in association with the county's decision to move county services out of the "Three Bears" and into other facilities and the county's limited financial capacity to absorb the costs of renovation and renewal of the "Three Bears." Keith Ashby, Seneca County manager, stated, "As part of the county's tourism and economic development efforts, the Three Bears should be restored and reused in a manner that ensures the long-term preservation of this important state, regional, county and village landmark. While the county believes these structures, as well as, Ovid's half-shire status are important to Ovid's identity and future, these difficult fiscal times demand that the county must reach out to the community to help find a

way to preserve the Three Bears for future generations through appropriate adaptive reuse."

The Community Workshop participants will be asked to identify the potential uses of the "The Three Bears." The identified use must respond to five basic criteria identified by the county:

- Maintain the structures in productive use.
- Maintain the vitality of Ovid, Seneca County and the Finger Lakes region.
- Support Ovid's half-shire status.
- Preserve the courtroom, located in Papa Bear, in public use.
- Preserve the unique exterior visual identity of the site and structures.

The results of the workshop will be summarized in a recommendation, which will be used to develop an implementation strategy for achieving the desired reuse. Architect Robert Corby of Bero Architecture, Rochester, Historic Ithaca Architect and Preservation Director Janet Shure, and the Preservation League of New York will facilitate the workshop.

In anticipation of successfully developing a plan for reuse, Seneca County has also made application for a Small Cities Community Development Block Grant for a Mainstreet Reinvestment Strategy for the Village of Ovid. The county anticipates using the findings of this workshop and the reuse of the "Three Bears" as a catalyst for encourage new investment-creating jobs and economic growth in Ovid and south Seneca County. The Small Cities Grant if approved will provide \$40,000 for development of a detailed step-by-step strategy to spur mainstreet investment.

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Reverie

Three Bears to be saved

Continued from page 1 ♦

was erected in 1860-62.

“DESIGNATION AS ONE of the Preservation League of New York State’s ‘Seven to Save’ will bring attention to these important cultural, historic and architectural resources,” said Jill Henry of the Seneca County Department of Economic Development and planning. “We are looking forward to technical assistance from the Preservation League of New York State as we work to address the Three Bears’ specific structural design, and reuse issues.”

Kolb moves district office

New York state Assemblyman Brian Kolb is moving his district office to 607 West Washington Street, Suite 2, Geneva. The new district office will open Monday (Dec. 1).

According to Kolb, the new office is of comparable size to the former site at 481 Hamilton Street and is located in the same building that houses Unity Employment Services.

The district office phone number remains the same: (315)781-2030.

Other Seven to Save sites for 2003 are located in Buffalo, Garden City, lower Manhattan, midtown Manhattan and Troy. A statewide preservation issue will also be announced.

Since 1999, the Preservation League of New York State has identified 35 threatened historic sites in New York. Publicity surrounding the “Seven to Save” designation has led to the stabilization of St. Joseph’s Church in Albany; the rehabilitation of the Oswego City Public Library, the adaptive re-use of the former Niagara Falls High School as a cultural and arts center, and prevented the demolition of the Conger Goodyear House on Long Island.

The Preservation League of New York State, founded in 1974, is a not-for-profit organization dedicated to the protection of New York’s diverse and rich heritage of historic buildings, districts and landscapes. From its headquarters in Albany, it provides a unified voice for historic preservation. By leading a statewide movement and sharing information and expertise, the Preservation League of New York State promotes historic preservation as a tool to revitalize the Empire State’s neighborhoods and communities.

On ‘Seven To Save’ list

Three Bears to be saved

The Preservation League of New York State has named the Seneca County Courthouse Complex (also known as The Three Bears) in Ovid in Seneca County one of New York State’s “Seven to Save,” the nonprofit group’s annual list of New York’s most threatened historic places. Tania Werbizky, director of grant and technical programs for the Preservation League of New York State, made the announcement last Thursday evening (Nov. 20) at “Papa Bear.”

The three adjacent Greek Revival style buildings, with their distinctive porticos, have served as courthouse, county offices and museum in this half-shire county (the other seat is in Waterloo, 17 miles to the north). Consolidation and reduction in municipal services have resulted in excess office space and the buildings face deterioration without new uses.

“These buildings, affectionately known as

The Three Bears, are emblematic of the fate of too many of our downtown municipal buildings,” said Scott Heyl, president of the Preservation League of New York State. “Their ‘Seven to Save’ listing is recognition that a realistic reuse and management plan – one that includes a broad array of public and private stakeholders – is critical to preserving these structures, and to enhancing the downtown of this small Finger Lakes village.”

The Seneca County Courthouse Complex is listed on the State and National Register of Historic Places for its historic and architectural significance. This remarkable collection of public buildings is prominently located on a hillside overlooking downtown Ovid. Papa Bear (the courthouse) and Baby Bear (the first clerk’s office) were both built in 1845 while Mama Bear (the second clerk’s office)

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♦ Please turn to page 2



MAX SCHULTE staff photographer

A mid-19th century Seneca County building complex, known locally as "The Three Bears," overlooks the village of Ovid's Main Street. The Preservation League of New York State put the complex on its annual list of sites to save.

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Saving 3 from extinction

■ A historic Seneca County complex needs restoration.

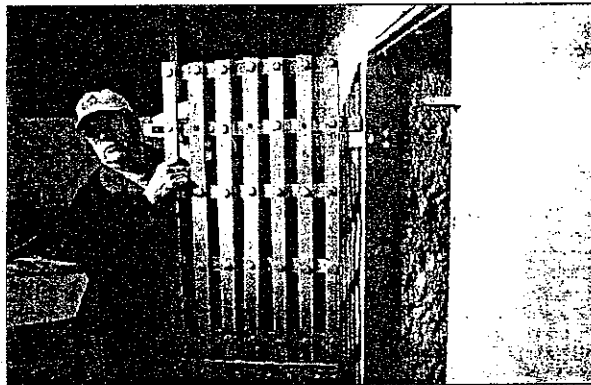
JACK JONES
STAFF WRITER

OVID — They're called "The Three Bears," but don't look for Goldilocks in their tiny, dungeon-like jail cells or in the painfully small rope-mattress bed.

The antique prisoner's bunk — measuring a punitive 17 inches wide and about 66 inches in length — along with copies of state penal and civil codes dating back to the mid-1800s and governing such offenses as dueling, are among the tell-tale historic items still to be found in the mid-19th century Seneca County office complex, known locally as "The Three Bears." It was named recently as a state architectural treasure in need of immediate care.

"It's a beloved place in the Finger Lakes region, and quite possibly a one-of-a-kind complex of Greek Revival-style buildings in the state," said Tania Werbizky, director of technical and grant programs for the Albany-based Preservation League of New York State.

Werbizky said the build-



MAX SCHULTE staff photographer

Dan Motill, president of Friends of The Three Bears, stands by a jail cell at one of the historic buildings.

ing complex, built between 1845 and 1850 on a scenic drumlin overlooking the village's Main Street, was a clear choice for inclusion on the league's "Seven to Save" list, an annual selection of historic buildings found to be among the state's most endangered.

"Across the state, local municipalities are facing fiscal difficulties and buildings such as these are becoming underutilized," and then falling like the Three Bears into disrepair, Werbizky said. "There is no money available to do any maintenance on them, much less rehabilitation."

Of the seven sites targeted statewide this year, The Three Bears, listed about 25 years ago on the state and national registries of

historic places, is the only one in the Rochester-Finger Lakes region.

Although Seneca County officials several years ago identified the buildings as historic structures in need of restoration, little has been done except for basic upkeep. Budget limitations dog the the rural county, still reeling from the shut-down more than a decade ago of its biggest economic resource, the former Seneca Army Depot.

The buildings — site of the original county seat, now located in Waterloo — are "unique because they're three structures built side by side in the same architectural style in three different sizes," said Seneca County historian Harriet Haynes.

Papa Bear, the largest of the buildings, is located near the site of the village of Ovid's former "whipping post" and gallows where a convict was last hanged in 1811 for killing a man who had refused to give him a pint of whiskey, said Dan Motill, president of Friends of the Three Bears, a local group formed this year to raise money for preservation of the buildings.

"There's a whole lot of history here in these buildings," said Motill, who describes the stately hilltop trio as "the soul of our community. Over the years, the surrounding village and town have had almost a spiritual link to the place, whose beauty is apparent to anyone who passes through our community."

Motill said the recently chartered, nonprofit friends group is in the process of raising money and updating county cost estimates.

According to a county estimate, it will cost between \$200,000 and \$750,000 to assure the buildings' survival, Motill said.

"These buildings are very sturdy structures with huge historical significance that could be used as offices or for any number of purposes," Motill said. □

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Grants will help save 'Three Bears'

By DENISE M. CHAMPAGNE
Times Staff Writer

OVID — The Three Bears courthouse complex has \$25,000 to proceed with preservation work, thanks to a new state grant.

Sen. Michael Nozzolio, R-54 of Fayette, said yesterday that he has secured \$25,000 in the current state budget which will be used as a match for other prospective grants.

"These structures are unique, a big part of Seneca County's history and a rich part of the region," he said. "As such, I believe they should be protected."

Nozzolio also honored former Ovid Supervisor Robert Favreau,

a founding member of the Friends of the Three Bears, who died Dec. 2.

"It was just a year ago when we both enjoyed the South Seneca Lady Falcons winning the state championship," Nozzolio said. "Bob and I watched the game together and he was so proud of the fact that a school from his home would win a state championship."

Nozzolio talked about Favreau's contributions to Ovid and the Seneca County community in a presentation to Favreau's widow, June, and daughter, Dawn.

Nozzolio said Favreau was part of a large effort to raise

funds to preserve the courthouse complex.

Nozzolio also met with supervisors Jay Dey, who succeeded Favreau; Barry O'Neill of Lodi and David Kaiser of Romulus, as well as school board representatives and residents in the South Seneca, Romulus and Waterloo school districts.

The Friends of the Three Bears is also the recipient of a \$1,500 grant the county received from the National Trust for Historic Preservation's John E. Streb Preservation Services Fund for New York.

That grant, which was accepted Tuesday by the Board of Supervisors, will be used to up-

date the Historic Structures Report prepared in 1998 for the complex.

Matches of \$350, \$250, \$100 and \$750, respectively, have been committed by the Friends of the Three Bears, town and village of Ovid and the county.

"We are proud of this collective achievement as a door opener for bigger challenges yet to come," said Dan Motill, president of Friends of Three Bears.

■■■
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Study Looks Into Costs Of Upgrading Ovid Buildings

BY NEIL CHAFFIE

An architectural firm is taking a second look at the dollars that will be needed to upgrade three Seneca County office buildings in Ovid and expects its report to be ready in about a month.

Michael Goebel-Bain, an architect with Bero Associates of Rochester, spent a day going over the interior and exterior of the Seneca County courthouse and its two adjacent buildings with the help of two county employees.

An historic structures report several years ago by Bero set down three different options for county officials to consider. Immediate stabilization, the report said, would cost an estimated \$120,500. Next is long term stabilization projected at \$426,900 and the third involves restoration of the historic detail, coupled with improvements, at \$687,800.

Those figures are based on visual inspections, research and observations during the spring of 1994 and the fall of 1996 at a cost of \$12,425. Goebel-Bain, the architect doing the update, said the information in the report still applies today and the only change needed is in the figures. Making those changes, he said, should take about a month.

It was during a May 2003 meeting in Ovid that Jill Henry, a county grant writer, and Mark Sawyer, a past executive director of the Seneca County Industrial Development Agency, said they felt the initial report by Bero merely needed to be updated and new repair figures arrived at to give everyone an idea of what it is going to take financially to put the three buildings back in shape. The decision was made to proceed with Bero being paid \$3,000 for an updated study.

With a \$1,500 grant in hand, county officials agreed to pay \$750, the Friends of the Three Bears contributed \$350, the town of Ovid \$250 and the village of Ovid \$150 to match the grant.

The three buildings, overlooking Ovid's Main Street, are known locally

as the Three Bears. The courthouse, largest of the three, is vacant. Next door is the former county clerk's office now used as a Seneca County sheriff's department satellite station. The smaller of the three buildings is used as a meeting place for the Caywood Camp, Sons of Union Veterans.

The county board of supervisors approved the expenditure of \$5,000, and with the approval of the state Legislature, built the existing courthouse (Papa Bear).

The smaller building (Baby Bear) was built at the same time with private donations and both buildings completed in 1845. The middle building (Mama Bear) was built in 1860-1862. Pinched for space, the county did consider remodeling Baby Bear but decided the cost was such that they might as well put up a new building and Mama Bear became a reality.

The Rochester architects said in their initial report that they were asked to research and document the history and architectural development of the three buildings, develop a maintenance plan, and outline restoration work

Buildings

Continued

needed to preserve the historic nature of the buildings. An organization formed a little over a year ago, the Friends of the Three Bears, hopes to find the funds to rehabilitate the three buildings and designate uses for them. There is office space, mostly in the courthouse, that could house certain types of businesses. The Sons of the Union Veterans would probably stay where they are while the sheriff's substation is expected to one day locate in space at the former Seneca Army Depot and thus free up the Mama Bear for new uses.

To comment on this story, e-mail flcn1@lightlink.com.

Ovid Gazette
10-13-04

Three Bears wines being released tomorrow

By DENISE M. CHAMPAGNE
Times Staff Writer

OVID — Special edition Knapp Vineyard wines, featuring the Three Bears of the historic Ovid courtroom complex, will be available beginning Thursday.

The white, pink and red wines, which correspond with the Papa, Mama and Baby Bear buildings, will be sold at Knapp Vineyard, Winery and Restaurant in Varick and the Ovid Liquor Store.

Knapp Owner Gene Pierce will present the first set of three to Sen. Michael Nozzolio, R-54 of Fayette, in a kick-off ceremony at 1 p.m. Thursday at the court-

house, known as Papa Bear.

Dan Motill, president of the Friends of the Three Bears, said the bottles will be sold individually, but can be packaged into nice holiday gift sets. Little "bear hugger" key chains are being placed on the bottlenecks as part of the promotion.

Some of the proceeds will go to the Friends of the Three Bears.

Pierce, who is also president of the Cayuga Wine Trail, will give a second set to Tania Werbitzky, director of Technical and Grant Programs, Preservation League of New York State.

"In both cases, they are receiving this unique first offering

because of outstanding support of the restoration effort on the Three Bears," Motill said.

Nozzolio secured \$25,000 in state funding as part of a 50 percent — \$60,000 match — for a \$120,000 grant from the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation.

The money will be used to begin restoration work on Mama Bear, the second clerk's building, built in 1860.

Motill said the Friends of the Three Bears has raised \$15,000; the county will contribute up to \$14,500; Assemblyman Brian Kolb, R-129 of Canandaigua, \$5,000; and Sons of the Civil War

Veterans, \$500.

"So, we're very close to having the required match," he said. "We're within shouting distance."

Money also is being raised for Papa and Baby bears, built in 1845. The cost to renovate all three buildings is being updated. It was estimated at about \$700,000 in studies done six to eight years ago.

In the meantime, the Friends keep doing fund-raisers. They're currently working on a calendar for next year and planning three summer community concerts instead of one.

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Designing of Tourist Center Begins

BY NEIL CHAFFIE

Design sketches and preliminary cost estimates for the conversion of the former Seneca County clerk's office (Mama Bear) into a tourist information center are expected to be in hand by a mid-January deadline.

Officers and trustees of the Friends of the Three Bears were involved in a series of daily meetings during the holiday week between Christmas and New Year's Day to clear the way for work to commence on the sketches and dollar estimate.

The mid-January deadline is one suggested by state Senator Michael F. Nozzolio (Fayette-Republican) during a visit here in November. With sketches and cost estimates in hand, he would be in a position during the coming legislative session to search for some state financing.

The cost estimate is expected to be in the upper five figures and possibly even higher. The idea is to convert the building back to the way it looked when it served as the community's library. The interior would feature historical displays from local communities and historical societies, computers for the use of volunteer staffers and also for use to visitors anxious to check their e-mail messages, a kitchenette, restroom facilities, a site to taste wines and information about the grape and wine industry, hunting and fishing, sight seeing and other things to do in the lake country.

On the north side of the former Seneca County clerk's office (Mama Bear) is a vacant courthouse. On the south side of the clerk's office is a third building erected as a county clerk's office and used until it was deemed too

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Center

Continued

small. The new clerk's office was built next door. Together, they make up what are known locally as the Three Bears.

Senator Nozzolio often describes the buildings, in a park overlooking Ovid's Main Street business district, as the "southern gateway to Seneca County."

Preservation monies are being sought and so are suggestions and ideas having to do with uses for the courthouse.

The series of holiday week meetings setting the stage to begin work on design sketches and cost estimates involving the Mama Bear began on Monday, Dec. 27th, with representatives of the Friends going over photos and other information showing how the interior of the Mama Bear looked in its days as a library.

A Tuesday morning meeting of the executive committee of the Friends was held to prepare for a Wednesday night meeting of the trustees. A dozen trustees gathered in the courthouse for a 90-minute session Wednesday night.

Thursday morning was set aside to meet with preservation architect John Bero of Bero Architecture in Rochester. That meeting drew officers and members of the Friends re-use team along with Harriet Haynes, a planner with the Seneca County Department of Planning and Development. After talking with the group about its thoughts on the conversion of the interior of the Mama Bear into a tourist information center, Bero began the job of measuring and gather-

ing information about the building.

Bero is going to be paid \$1,800 for his work. The New York State Council on the Arts approved the expenditure of \$1,200. The other \$600 will be paid by the Friends from the organization's own bank account.

With one day left in the week, a fifth and final meeting took place on Friday with Dan Motill, president of the Friends, requesting from the Ovid town board the use of microfilm equipment to track down in the Edith B. Ford Memorial Library anything and everything ever written about the Mama Bear. The town board gave its approval for use of the equipment. A high school student will be retained to do the research, Motill said.

The Friends even found time during the week to set down a proposed calendar of events for the New Year and hold a quarterly business meeting. The Friends will visit the Phelps mansion in Binghamton on Feb. 11, hope to finally put Goldilocks on trial in March, scheduled a Herkimer, N. Y. preservation conference on May 23, set a June 18 date for the Ovid Strawberry Festival, and scheduled concerts on the lawn in front of the Three Bears for July 19, Aug. 16 and Sept. 4, talked of a proposed Halloween event Oct. 31 and added something new, a Christmas bazaar on Veteran's Day, Nov. 11, a proposal by Sally Tillinghast.

The public, members of the Friends organization and others should not hesitate to offer their own suggestions and ideas involving re-use and preservation of the buildings or the schedule of events.

*To comment on this story, e-mail
f1cn1@lightlink.com.*

Historic Mama Bear needs a new roof

By DENISE M. CHAMPAGNE
Times Staff Writer

OVID — Friends of the Three Bears is hoping Seneca County will chip in \$1,500 for a new roof on Mama Bear, the centerpiece of the historic county-owned courthouse complex.

President Dan Motill said Thursday that Friends has received an emergency \$3,000 award from the National Trust for Historic Preservation. The money can be used for some patchwork repairs, but twice that amount would fund a new roof that could last 50 years.

Friends would need to match the county's share to make up the \$6,000 needed.

Motill said nobody had been between the roof and second floor before because there was no access. On Thursday, however, a hatch was cut into the area to survey the damage.

"It was very important to us to do that," he said. "Either the roof would be a simple job of changing in nails and fixing flashing or it would be a job where we would fix the whole roof, and that was more than the Trust was offering."

He said the structure seems very sound, but he is concerned

about evidence of water staining.

He is going to ask the Planning, Development, Agriculture and Tourism Committee Tuesday to consider forwarding the request for \$1,500 to the full Board of Supervisors, which meets at 6 p.m. March 8. Committee meetings Tuesday also begin at 6 p.m.

Motill said the National Trust for Historic Preservation, a private nonprofit organization, considered providing seed money for four potential Three Bears projects: repairing Mama Bear's foundation or roof work on one of the three buildings. He said there was a limit of \$3,000 to \$5,000, which the other projects exceeded by more than \$10,000.

Motill has also finished a building-stabilization proposal for a \$141,600 member request to Sen. Michael Nozzolio, R-54 of Fayette, to continue working on Mama Bear, which is planned as the site of a future visitors center. Motill said the proposal includes 12 support letters and documentation, including personal interviews with elderly residents to determine what the building looked like inside in the early 1900s when it was the Ovid Free Library. An answer



File photo

Friends of the Three Bears is trying to raise enough money for a new roof on Mama Bear (middle), one of the three buildings that make up the historic Seneca County courthouse complex in Ovid.

on the request is expected this summer.

Motill said a student is also volunteering time to pore through microfilm of the for-

mer *Ovid Bee*, *Ovid Independent* and *Interlaken Review* for any references to the buildings, such as a recently discovered article lauding two women for

wallpaper work they did inside one of the buildings in 1898. Motill said no one ever knew walls had been wallpapered.

Papa Bear (the courthouse)

and Baby Bear (the first clerk's office) were built in 1845 while Mama Bear (the second clerk's office) went up in 1860.

Although not quite as old, Mama Bear is the most deteriorated. She will eventually also house a business directory and displays by Seneca County, local wine trails and the Ovid, Romulus, Lodi and Interlaken historical societies.

Motill said Baby Bear continues to be used by the Sons of Civil War Veterans as a meeting site and Papa Bear is being used for educational and community programs.

A lot of the planning for the three buildings is based on a 1997 study the county commissioned by John Bero of Bero Associates of Pittsford, which estimated then it would cost \$687,800 to fix all three. Motill said that price tag is now at \$1.2 million, but that the Friends organization is consistently growing.

"I'm always flattered and impressed by the level of support we're getting from the community," he said. "There are people coming forward from a variety of sources in the community."

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Turning 'Mama Bear' into Visitor's Center

Proposal on former Ovid clerk's office to reach Senator Nozzolio soon

A packet scheduled to have reached the Seneca Falls office of state Senator Michael F. Nozzolio of Fayette (R-54th District) on Monday, Feb. 7, proposes the conversion of the former Seneca County clerk's office in Ovid into a visitors center at a projected cost of \$141,600.

That figure comes from the office of Bero Architecture PC of Rochester and follows a detailed study of the building by John Bero, an architect known for his work with historic buildings.

Bero's estimate to convert the office into a visitor's center "is \$141,600 for which we seek support," Dan Motill of Ovid notes in a letter included in the packet for Nozzolio.

Motill said the idea behind the work on the clerk's building and the two adjacent buildings, referred to often as the Three Bears, is to stimulate the south Seneca County economy "and to create a magnet for tourism..."

Motill, president of the Friends of the Three Bears, and others met Saturday morning, Feb. 5, at the Ovid office, National Bank of Geneva to go over the Nozzolio packet and make sure nothing had been left out. Motill said he planned to deliver the packet to the senator's Seneca Falls office on Monday, Feb. 7.

Here is what the Friends of the Three Bears have in mind for those buildings. The middle building (Mama Bear) would become a visitors center staffed by volunteers. The nearby courthouse (Papa Bear) would have certain educational roles to play and also would be done over with the idea of drawing tourists and others. The third and smallest building (Baby Bear) was once a county clerk's office that outgrew its available space. It's now a Civil War museum and would retain that role.

Motill noted in his letter to the senator that "we chose a strategy that focuses on each building individually and selected the most endangered structure" the Mama Bear. Motill said the Friends have about half of the money needed to

stabilize the Mama Bear and has filed with the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation for additional stabilization monies.

What is planned for the Mama Bear is the removal of existing non-historic interior wall partitions and the unused second floor. Display cases and kiosks would be installed for various displays. The second floor mezzanine would be rebuilt to provide for storage and limited meeting space.

Mama Bear would be restored to its 1902 library configuration. Volunteer staffers would have the job of discussing local attractions, business and history with visitors. Local products could be sold there and internet access provided as a fund raiser.

Motill notes in his letter that 2003 workshop results showed "the most popular adaptive use of Mama Bear calls for a preservation sensitive interior conversion to a regional visitor center. No such

continued on page 10

public service exists within the landmass between the two largest (Seneca and Cayuga) Finger Lakes."

With that information in hand, the Rochester architectural firm was retained "to conceptually design this conversion," Motill added in his letter.

Motill said he sees the design as "the foundation to continue developing these historic landmarks... There is ample business to draw from, Motill notes, with the Cayuga Wine Trail seeing some 358,000 visitors a year and the Seneca Lake Wine Trail catering to 849,000."

To comment on this story, e-mail flcn1@lightlink.com.

2-9-05
Ovid Gazette

Three Bears Have New Website

BY NEIL CHAFFIE

A website designer, a landscape architect and a roofing contractor are all part of the team at work now on the preservation and upgrading of the buildings and acreage making up Seneca County's courthouse complex and park on Main Street in Ovid.

A website (www.friends.ofthethreebears.com) is up and running, a landscape architect has volunteered his time to help develop a master plan for the courthouse complex park and a Waterloo firm has been awarded a contract to replace the roof on the former county clerk's office (Mama Bear). Roof work is expected to begin shortly and completed within 30 days.

At the same time, Debra DiLallo, resource educator with the Seneca County Cornell Cooperative Extension, and Patti Payne, coordinator of the Seneca County Master Gardener Club, have said they'll check to see what role they might play in the "Three Bears Restoration" project.

The website, introduced during a quarterly meeting of the Friends of the Three Bears Wednesday night, March 30, at the Ovid courthouse, is being put together at no cost by a former Ovid resident, Robert Myers, a senior software engineer with Eastman Kodak in Rochester.

The idea behind the website, according to Dan Motill, president of the Friends, "is to sell us and what we are doing" to tourists, history buffs, preservation groups and others "in a professional way." Among the Friends membership will be "editors" assigned the chore of keeping the site up to date.

The site will deal with history of the area, re-use plans for the courthouse complex, how to find Ovid and its courthouse complex, items for sale in a gift shop and a description of a visitor center at Mama Bear.

Bears

Continued from front

Myers said the website will provide the Web visitor "an enjoyable and educational experience with a desire to become a supporting member." He said the site "embraces everything the Three Bears are about." His offer to continue the site was accepted by the trustees.

The development of a master plan involving the acreage the Three Bears overlook comes from Robert Corning Jr., a former Ovid resident now a landscape architect and partner with Geller DeVellis Inc., of Boston. In an e-mail to Motill, Corning wrote that he "would be pleased to assist in developing a master plan for the park. I'm pleased and excited to get involved."

"With this commitment," Motill told the trustees Wednesday night, "we have an expert to develop the park as we work on the buildings." Corning, the son of Robert and Karen Corning of Ovid, is expected here sometime this summer.

In other action Wednesday night, the trustees chose Bowen Construction of Waterloo to replace Mama Bear's roof. The Friends will spend \$6,950 on that project. A second bid was from Mike Bowen Contracting LLC of Seneca Falls.

The National Trust for Historic Preservation has made a \$3,000 emergency grant available for the work. The Seneca County board of supervisors approved a \$1,600 expenditure. Another \$1,600 is coming from funds donated by local people and the remainder will be paid by the Friends from their own treasury.

On another topic, Motill e-mailed DiLallo at the cooperative extension office in Waterloo that her interest in the Three Bears project comes at just the right time. "Your timing is right and your enthusiasm is wonderful." He welcomed her to "a growing group of caring people."

In addition to enlisting the help of the master gardeners in the landscape work, DiLallo said it might also be possible to draw youngsters from the after-school program at South Seneca as well Willard Drug Treatment Campus personnel involved in landscape work. Flowers and plants from the Willard greenhouse are often donated to local community projects.

Later, in discussing membership in the Friends organization, Motill said he had hoped to be able to report Wednesday night that the membership rolls topped the 250 mark. The Friends remain a little shy of that number. The newest member is Seneca Meadows Inc. of Waterloo.

To comment on this story, e-mail flen1@lightlink.com.

Ovid Gazette

Finger Lakes Community Newspapers

April 20, 2005

Grant to Fund Three Bears

BY NEIL CHAFFIE

Meeting Monday morning, April 18, to plan a series of summer Concerts in the Park, officials representing the Friends of the Three Bears had more than the concerts on their mind.

State officials had just confirmed that their Environmental Protection Fund would include \$60,000 to help with the expected \$120,000 structural repair of the former Seneca County clerk's office in Ovid, known locally as the Mama Bear.

Dan Motill, president of the Friends, said the \$60,000 state grant will have to be matched by local funds. Some of those funds are already in hand with more to be raised through the Concerts in the Park this summer and via other fund raisers.

Motill was meeting with Barry Roach of Willard and Scott B. Adams of Ovid, owner of Orchard Park Recording in Ovid to plan the concert series. Adams, owner of Orchard Park Recording in Ovid, and Roach are concert committee members. Word of the state grant had just been confirmed minutes earlier.

The \$60,000 grant comes just as the Friends are preparing to have a new roof installed on the Mama Bear. That work is to begin within a few days upon the arrival of the shingles.

Motill said a second roofing project is ahead this summer. The smaller of the three buildings, the Baby Bear, is also to get a new roof. Contractors said they could not count on the existing roof to last through another winter. That project is expected to run about \$2,500.

The larger of the three buildings overlooking Ovid's central business district is a courthouse known locally as the Papa Bear and is due in the future for a major overhaul.

The middle building, Mama Bear is to be converted into a visitor's center. The roofing projects, along with the \$60,000 grant, come just in front of National Preservation Month in May.

The Friends of the Three Bears is a non-profit agency striving to find the funds to upgrade the Three Bears, Seneca County structures that currently receive little use with the county now headquartered largely in Waterloo.

Mama Bear gets \$60K boost

Mama Bear received some much-needed life support last week.

The middle building in the county complex in Ovid – which formerly housed the county's first courthouse – was the beneficiary of a \$60,000 grant announced by Governor George Pataki Monday.

The governor said the funding will come from Environmental Protection Fund grants. The county project was part of five preservation, recreation and waterfront revitalization projects in Seneca, Cayuga and Yates counties.

The \$60,000 will match funds raised by the Friends of the Three Bears to make structural repairs. The walls are bowing and the foundation is shifting. Work was expected to begin this week on the roof, so Friends President Dan Motill said the funding was "wonderful" and a "total surprise."

Plans call for turning the building into a visitor's center and bring it back to what it looked like at the beginning of the 20th century when it was the Ovid Free Library.

Reveille / Between the Lakes

April 21, 2005

Wal-Mart files new plans

Preliminary plans have been filed for a new Wal-Mart Supercenter in Seneca Falls. The plans are expected to be presented to the Seneca Falls town planning board next Thursday (April 28) at 6:30 p.m. The plans are expected to be forwarded to the county planning board next month.

The plans change the scope of the project announced by Wal-Mart last year. Instead of expanding the current facility on Routes 5 & 20, the company is looking at building a new building on 21 vacant acres behind Kentucky Fried Chicken/Taco Bell and Monro Muffler off Route 414.

The new store is expected to be two-and-a-half times larger than the existing building and offer general merchandise, full-size grocery department, seasonal garden center, gas station/convenience store and Tire Lube Express. The store will face Route 414 with a left turn lane placed

on the northbound lane just south of Monro Muffler. Three driveways will be placed off North Road.

Wal-Mart officials said the current staff will be relocated to the new store, with an additional 100 jobs created. The company will also be responsible for finding tenants for its current store and gas station.

Special use permits will be needed for the gas station and Tire and Lube Express. Wal-Mart also has to work with the Seneca County Highway Department and state departments of transportation, environmental conservation and health on curb cuts, highway designs, retention ponds and other requirements.

The project is expected to take nine to 12 months. Depending on the approval process, it could open by fall, 2006.

THE WAL-MART announcement

is not the only good news for the town and county. The county planning board conditionally approved plans for Kinney Drug and Aldi Market construction. Both are expected to bring the plans to the town planning board next Thursday.

Kinney Drug, which has a mini-store on Fall Street, is looking to open a 12,075 square foot, stand-alone pharmacy on Routes 5 & 20 and Balsey Road where Aldi Markets had purchased land a couple of years ago. Aldi Market, meanwhile, is looking to build a 16,358 square foot building on the adjacent lot which formerly housed Finger Lakes Bowl which burned down in 2003.

Kinney Drug is also looking to include a gas station in its plans.

The lot layout still needs subdivision approval and other permits, although construction could be completed by the end of the year.

Three Up For Trustee Slots With Bears' 'Friends'

BY NEIL CHAFFIE

A senior software engineer, an assistant tourism director and a chemical dependency counselor are the newest nominees for openings with the Board of Trustees of the Friends of the Three Bears.

Selected by a Friends nominating committee and being sent on to the executive committee for its consideration are the names of Robert Myers of Rochester, a senior software engineer and developer of the Friends of the Three Bears Web site, Phyllis Motill of Ovid, who is with the Seneca County Tourism office as assistant tourism director, and Thomas J. Bouchard

of Willard, chemical dependency counselor at the Willard Drug Treatment Campus.

Barry Roach, nominating committee chairman, will present the names to the executive committee during a meeting this month for consideration. If approved by that committee, Roach goes then to the board of trustees during a quarterly meeting in June to recommend the election of the trio.

Myers, a former Ovid resident and graduate of local schools, has been with Eastman Kodak for 28 years. He is experienced in software design, system analysis, project management, program coding, testing and delivery, and maintenance. Myers has had extensive experience with

software applications and is knowledgeable in the area of database design and management, spreadsheet integration, word processing, graphics and communications. Go to www.friendsofthethreebears for a look at the Web site he designed.

Motill, a registered nurse and wife of Dan Motill, president of the Friends, has years of experience in the management and administration of health education programs. For the past seven years, she has been with the county tourism office.

Her strengths come in the area of organization, planning, development and budgeting. As assistant tourism director for the county, she is charged with helping to implement a successful tourism program. Bouchard, a member of the town of Romulus Planning Board, holds a Wayne-Finger Lakes BOCES certificate for the completion of a program aimed at grant writing. He is a certified video producer, a credentialed alcohol and substance abuse

continued on page 1

counselor and holds a St. John Fisher College bachelor of arts degree in psychology. He has been at the Willard Drug Treatment Campus since 1997 and has had 11 years in the field of human services in the care of inpatient, residential and developmentally disabled clients.

The Friends have numerous committees with plenty of room to spare. Myers, for example, would be added to the outreach team of Ada Kool, Megan Mullin and Joanne O'Connell. Phyllis Motill would work alongside Roach, Mullins and Scott B. Adams, a park reuse committee. There is a park development committee yet to be filled out. Another is fund raising.

The rehab team consists of Dan Motill, Charles Mullins Jr., Robert Covert, Dale Theetge and Kit Kalfs. Charged with the administration are Dan Motill, Ada Kool, Cheryl Westervelt, Karen Corning, and Ovid Atty. Mark Sinkiewicz. Those groups all report to the president and an executive committee monthly with any decisions going each quarter to the entire board of trustees for further discussion and voting.

Dan Motill told the executive committee and others during a Tuesday, April 26, meeting that roofing work on the Mama Bear was in high gear. He said later that the job will be finished up this first week in May. Workmen were awaiting the arrival of more materials. Motill said attention is now being focused on the Baby Bear and the replacement of its roof this summer. Theetge, of the rehab team, said the roofing job was decided upon for fear the roof on that building might not hold up through another winter. The only cost will be for materials. Volunteer workmen are going to do that job. As for the recent \$60,000 state grant, Motill said a formal presentation is ahead with the state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation involved. The Friends intend to match that grant and invest those dollars in the \$120,000 structural repair of the Mama Bear, a building due to become a visitor's center. No date has been set for the presentation.

In another development, the Community Bank and the Geneva National Bank in Ovid are allowing the use of space for a slide presentation on the Three Bears project.

Ovid
Gazette

May 5, 2005

Ovid Gazette
6-22-05

Schedule for Building Restoration Released

BY NEIL CHAFFIE

Tentative dates for the letting of bids and the beginning of exterior work on the former Seneca County clerk's office (Mama Bear) are beginning to fall into place.

Bids for the \$120,000 project could be awarded this fall and work begun as early as November. If those dates are met, the two-year project could carry a completion date of Dec. 31, 2007, including a 90-day period to close out all documentation.

Final plans and specifications could be in place this summer and bids awarded as early as November. Dates and plans for the project were hammered out during a June 17 meeting between Dan Motill, president of the Friends of the Three Bears, Seneca County planner Harriet Haynes and two state officials, Chris Capella Peters, historic sites restoration coordinator with the Central New York State Parks regional headquarters in Jamesville, and Kathleen Damiana, regional grants officer with the Finger Lakes Region, state Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation in Trumansburg.

Listed as an awards meeting, the 90-minute session dealt primarily with what the state expects for the \$60,000 it has approved for the project. The other \$60,000 is being raised locally by the Friends with the financial help of Seneca County, the town of Ovid and the village of Ovid. The work being talked about at this time involves only the exterior of the building. Another \$140,000 is going to be needed for interior work and the conversion of Mama Bear into a visitor's center. Peters said during the meeting in the county office building in Waterloo that the \$60,000 grant included funds for a new roof. With the roof project already in place and paid for with funds raised by the Friends, it means there is \$10,000 in state monies that can be invested elsewhere in the exterior rehab of the building.

Both Peters and Damian said again during the meeting that the progress

made by the Friends in the drive to preserve and find new uses for the Seneca County courthouse complex of three buildings is one the community can be proud of.

The women discussed in detail the role of the Friends in the stabilization of the Mama Bear. The next order of business, insofar as stabilization work goes, is expected to be the removal of a fuel tank at the northeast corner of the building.

Officials are figuring that also would be a good time to take care of foundation work. And where soil is disturbed, Peters noted, there are archaeology requirements that will need to be met.

In dealing with the Trumansburg regional office of the state Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the Ovid project now is known as 540422. In matters dealing with archaeology, its O4PRO4162.

There is even a start date — April 17,

continued on page 4

2005. That was the day that state Parks Commissioner Bernadette Castro let go with the news that the Ovid project would be funded to the tune of \$60,000.

Motill said the community and supporters of the Friends of the Three Bears should be proud of the fact that the Ovid project had to compete against 410 other applicants seeking a grand total of \$75.7 million.

In the historic preservation category, Ovid was one of 156 applicants seeking \$33.4 million. The \$60,000 comes from the state's environmental protection fund, one administered by the office of state parks.

"I am delighted," Castro said in a letter to local officials, "that yours was one of the grants that we were able to award from more than \$12 million available to us. We are eager to initiate our partnership with you for this very important project."

"I'm delighted too!" Motill exclaimed.

To comment on this story, e-mail flcn1@lightlink.com.

Ovid Holds Mama Bear Fundraiser Concert

BY NEIL CHAFFIE

Organizers of Ovid's Concerts in the Park have decided their Aug. 16 concert will begin at 6 p. m., an hour later than the first concert in July.

The later start is designed to give people time to get home from work, take care of their family responsibilities and still make it to the Main Street park in Ovid without missing much of the entertainment.

If dinner is missed at home, it's not to worry. There will be hotdogs, burgers and sausage on the grill and plenty of cold drinks to wash the chow down with.

There is no charge to be a part of the "Concert in the Park," but you should have a couple extra dollars in your pocket. Frances Ratcliffe has donated a painting to be used as a fund raiser so you'll want to invest in several tickets. Also on sale will be various items offered by the Friends of the Three Bears, sponsor of the concerts. Wines for tasting will be supplied by the Cayuga Lake Wine Trail.

The featured performers for the August concert include soloist Casey McDonald and a quintet known as Four Old Goats and a Kid" playing favorites from the 1920s. Concert proceeds are being set aside to help with the restoration and preservation of the buildings, the smaller building known as the Baby Bear, the middle and somewhat larger building known as the Mama Bear and the largest of the three, the courthouse, is the Papa Bear. Baby Bears concert took place in July and this month's event is the Mama Bear concert. The Sept. 4 event, of course, is the Papa Bear Concert. Several people opted during and after the July concert to become members of the Friends of the Three Bears, the non-profit organization striving to restore the court house complex and find new uses for it. Membership manager Ada Cool said membership now stands at 256, including 203 individuals and 53 institutions.

Dan Motill, president of the Friends, urged officers and executive committee members during a meeting Tuesday,

July 26, to join him in pursuit of new members.

"Our biggest money-maker is with memberships. We need your help to sustain the current level of membership," Motill said. The president said he may ask the officers, executive committee members and trustees to approve some type of program that would reward those people bringing in new members. Dues are \$25 a year.

Turning to restoration of the courthouse complex, Motill noted that Mama Bear has a new roof and plans are in motion for a Baby Bear roof project in late August. The only expense will be for the required materials. Volunteers are going to tackle that job and also intend this summer to dress up the park flag pole with a couple coats of paint.

Robert Myers, builder of the Friends Website, turned in a written report showing 208 new friendsofthethreebears Web site visitors during the first 25 days of July. For the first time, Myers added, Microsoft's MSN site had more Friends visitors than Google did.

Concert

Continued from front

"We're getting the word out," Myers added. The website is documenting activities of the Friends of the Three Bears and also is now offering an "operation center" having to do with business conducted by officers, trustees and certain volunteers and is a secure area of the Web site. Access can be gained by non-operation center members upon their request to see certain documents. The website is carrying photos of the Strawberry Festival in June and will be adding photos of the July concert shortly.

Spreading the News

Three Bears restoration is discussed in preservation circles across the state

BY NEIL CHAFFIE

Meeting Wednesday night, June 29th, trustees representing the Friends of the Three Bears learned that their drive to preserve and find new uses for the historic Seneca county courthouse complex in Ovid has caught the attention of several different publications and organizations.

Dan Motill, president of the Friends of the Three Bears, said the effort behind the Ovid project is seen "as a happening," by the Albany Legislative Gazette, the Preservation League of New York in its annual report and the Landmark Society of Western New York during a recent regional preservation conference.

Area newspapers also have published both news and feature stories.

The awareness of those groups, Motill told the quarterly meeting of the Friends, "opens doors to more funding sources."

Praise for the progress made by the Friends also has come from political figures and representatives of state agencies working with the Friends.

In just 21 operational months, the president noted, the former county clerk's office, the middle of the three buildings known as Mama Bear, has a new roof. The smaller of the three buildings, Baby Bear, will receive the same treatment next month.

The Friends have a \$60,000 grant via the state's environmental protection fund and is busily arranging the required matching funds. Those dollars will be used for the rehabilitation of the middle building, Mama Bear.

Motill said \$15,000 is being committed by the Friends via their dues and various fundraisers. The village of Ovid and the town of Ovid have each added

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Bears

Continued

\$1,500. Another \$500 has been contributed by the New York State Department of the Sons of Union Veterans.

Additional monies in the amount of \$25,000 represents a state grant made possible through the efforts of state Senator Michael F. Nozzolio. State Assemblyman Brian Kolb arranged for a \$5,000 state grant.

Motill said he will ask the Seneca County board of supervisors to contribute \$11,500 during a forthcoming meeting.

In a letter to board chairman Robert Shipley, the Friends president said the assistance of state, county and local governments represents a collective support that is "another example of the benefits resulting from preservation sensitive partnerships formed by the Friends of the Three Bears and receptive organizations."

Those willing to contribute, Motill added in the letter, "see the merit in preserving these historic landmarks and are willing to join this partnership."

Discussing other developments of the past 21 months, Motill reported "We have made good progress by any measure."

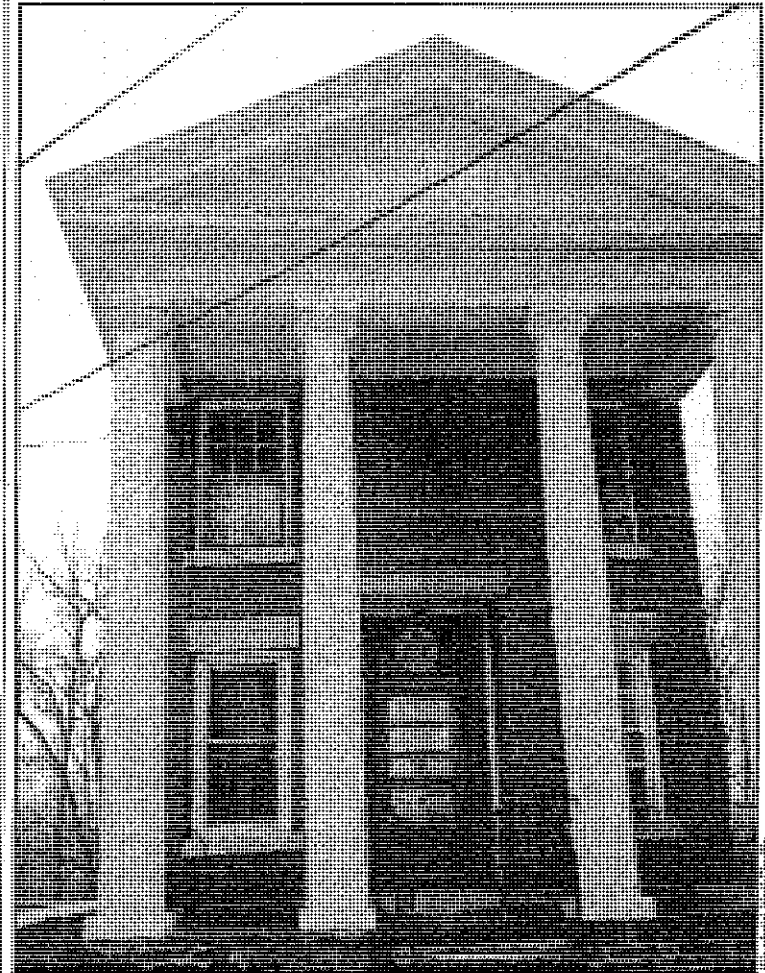
What the Friends intend is the conversion of Mama Bear into a visitor's center at a cost of about \$260,000. About half would be invested in exterior work and the rest used for interior changes.

Motill said it would be appropriate this year to begin Mama Bear's rehabilitation in some form because that building became the Ovid Free Library just 100 years ago and continued in that role for 60 years.

He referred to 2005 "as a significant milestone" in the lifetime of the Mama Bear.

The third building in the complex is the courthouse (Papa Bear). All three are largely unused with county offices now in Waterloo. The courthouse, however, will be the site of an August meeting of the county board of supervisors.

Mama Bear



The middle building known as Mama Bear was the former county clerk's office. The building has a new roof due to the preservation efforts of Friends of the Three Bears.

On Top of Things

Commander of the Sons of Veterans, Department of New

re roof area was stripped with one-half inch plywood. Theetge said severe water damage at the southwest corner of the building required some extra work. Plywood could be applied. The roof has an ice and water barrier and a new drip edge. Fifty-year-old shingles make up the north side of the roof and the south side to be completed Wednesday. Work was done and is continuing to be done by these generous volunteers, Theetge said.



With the support of the Seneca County courthouse as the background, volunteers met to work on Ovid on Saturday, Aug. 27. They are repairing the roof on the former surrogate clerk's office, one of the three buildings making up the courthouse complex in the village. Two of the three buildings were found to need a new roof. The courthouse roof is to be replaced at a later date.

Volunteers Tackle Roofing Job In Ovid

BY NEIL CHAFFIE

Volunteer members of the Sons of Union Veterans came from as far away as Ithaca on Saturday, Aug. 27, to help with the removal of the old roof and addition of a new roof on the former surrogate clerk's office, one of the three buildings making up the Seneca County courthouse complex in Ovid.

That work was to be completed on Wednesday, Aug. 31, weather permitting. Additional help on Saturday consisted of local businessmen and members of a Boy Scout troop.

Dan Motill, president of the Friends of the Three Bears, said the volunteers saved the Friends about \$3,000. The lone cost was for materials and came to a little more than \$2,000. Had the workers been paid, the cost would have more than doubled.

"We owe these people lunch," Motill said. A crew worked all day Saturday, did some additional touching up and planned to have the project completed on Wednesday, Aug. 31 if the weather cooperates.

The roof is the second to be replaced at the courthouse complex. The middle building (the former county clerk's office) was replaced earlier this year. The courthouse roof is to get its turn at some time in the future.

Motill said the decision was made to

replace the roof on the surrogate clerk's office, now housing the Caywood Camp, Sons of Union Veterans, after contractors took a look and figured it would not hold up another winter.

Dale Theetge of Ovid, a trustee with the Friends of the Three Bears, said he would track down a volunteer team from among Boy Scout Troop 78 and

"We owe these people lunch."

Dan Motill, president of the Friends of the Three Bears

the Sydney Camp 41, Sons of Union Veterans and set an Aug. 27 date to do the work.

From the community came Warc Crafts, Charles Mullins Jr. and David Tillinghast. The Ovid Federated Church sponsored Boy Scout Troop 78 contributed scoutmaster Ed Theetge assistant scoutmaster Bob Jennings and Scouts Brian and Peter Jennings Robert, Nicholas and Dale Theetge.

From Sydney Camp 41 came commander Lyman Baker, secretary Robert Baker and senior vice commander Douglas Duel. The elder Dale Theetge

continued on page 1

Plans Set for Baby Bear

BY BILL CHAISSON

The Friends of the Three Bears, a non-profit organization that formed in September 2003 in order to stabilize, preserve and restore the trio of landmark buildings in the Village of Ovid, has a couple of projects in the works.

Kit Kalfs, a trustee of the organization and a member of the executive committee, is in charge of the effort to restore the fascia on the "Baby Bear." Fascia is the vertically oriented molding that covers rafter tails at the edge of the roof. "I recently wrote up a report," said Kalfs, "that essentially says 'This is what it'll take to fix this.'"

There are four or five components for this particular fascia, representing different types of molding. "It was milled in 1845 and we are going to try to restore or mimic the original," Kalfs said. "We have talked to Lorren Hammond about doing it."

Hammond is a master craftsman with a shop on Rt. 96 in Ulysses. He recently designed and built the chairs used the public who visit the Laboratory of Ornithology at Cornell.

The other project, which Kalfs refers to as the "hot button issue" is the gas tank buried next to the "Mama Bear". In order to stabilize the building's foundation, the tank needs to be removed. It once held fuel for the sheriff department's vehicles. The tank no longer has any use as the sheriffs' operations have been largely re-located to an office at the new correctional facility. The project manager for this undertaking is Barry Roach, another trustee and executive committee member of the Friends of the Three Bears.

The Friends organization was founded in order to work in conjunction with the owners of the buildings, the government of Seneca County. The "Papa Bear" and the Baby Bear were built in 1845 as a courthouse and a clerk's office, respectively, for the county government. The county was then governed by a tradition called the

Baby Bear

Continued

"half shire" system, which meant that it had two county seats that were occupied alternately in three-year shifts. The practice was adopted because transportation was quite difficult even up into the 19th century and moving the county seat periodically meant that no constituents were unfairly distant from their government offices on a permanent basis. Another regional example can be found in Bradford County, Penna., where Troy and Towanda shared the title of county seat after 1870.

Although the county government no longer moves lock, stock and barrel to Ovid every three years, the county Board of Supervisors holds its July meeting in the Papa Bear each year to preserve the half-shire status of the county government. The Mama Bear was constructed in 1862 when a larger clerk's office was needed. The Baby Bear then became the surrogate's office, a court that administers will, trusts and deeds, until the mid 1880s when its current tenant, The Sons of the Union Veterans of the Civil War, took up residence.

The older Papa and Baby Bear buildings are in the Greek Revival style and their proportions conform to the 'golden mean' that famously defines the measurements of the Parthenon and other structures of Classical antiquity. The Mama Bear, in contrast, was built during the Victorian Era and shares with many contemporary buildings a vertically attenuated appearance that departs from the Classic ideal. "The Mama Bear had a mezzanine in it," said Kalfs, referring to a partial floor built above the main floor, "and the building was open in the middle. It was torn out in 1962 so they could build the 'box within a box'. If you go up into the attic you can see the original bookcases [of the Ovid Free Library] and the window moldings." The building housed the library between 1905 and 1962.

Because the buildings are county owned, they qualify for Federal money for capital improvement projects. "The Federal government paid for the Mama Bear's roof," Kalfs said.



Photo/Paulette Likoudis

During the year end meeting of the Friends of the Three Bears non-profit corporation, trustee Dale Theetge presented a \$500 grant check from the National Organization of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War. The award is to be used for the restoration and preservation of the "Little Bear" building on Ovid's Main Street. From left to right in front are Phyllis Motill, Naomi Brewer, Theetge and Dan Motill. At center are Barry Roach, Ada Cool, Karen Corning, Mary Willers, Tom Bouchard and Bob Myers. In back are Kit Kalfs and Charlie Mullins. All are trustees of the organization.

Bears Seeks New Ways to Motivate Members

BY PAULETTE LIKOUDIS

As rain fell on the evening of June 28, trustees of the Friends of the Three Bears were high and dry in the historic Papa Bear courthouse building. Their spirits were also high, as they reviewed the past year and made plans for the future. The group was formed three years ago to advance the restoration and preservation of the prominent complex of three matching brick buildings on Ovid's Main Street.

Although donations are up by 45 percent, membership dues payments are down. There are 249 current, active members. "Basically, we're in good shape financially, but individual members are going

down as a result of getting farther from the kick-off," said Motill.

Motill said, "Over time many factors compete for members' attention and resources.... Continuous progress on rehabilitation projects will keep the public aware and interested in the restoration effort." The president said that after three years of dealing with memberships and encouraging members to be loyal to paying renewal dues, the organization has begun to look at ways to motivate members.

"We've learned that our members are gamblers. People who don't pay dues buy wine raffle tickets," said Motill. A single case of raffled Americana wine brought in

\$1100 for the group. It was won by Verona Village resident Betty Potter, who doesn't even drink wine. She gave the prize to her grandchildren.

The Friends now hope to encourage prompt payment of dues by giving each member paying in his anniversary month a free raffle ticket for the chance to win \$40 worth of gasoline. The cost of each individual membership is \$25 per year, and business memberships are \$50 per year.

If the raffle approach is successful, said Motill, "It will mean less reminders, stamps, phone calls and e-mails."

Trustee Dale Theetge, New York State Department Commander and a representative for the David G. Caywood Camp chapter of the Sons of Union Veterans of the Civil War, announced that he had applied for and received a \$500 contribution to be used in restoration of the "Little Bear" building. The national organization has increased its funding of such causes

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Bears

Continued

from \$6000 to \$12,000 per year, supported by its 6000 dues paying members.

An exhibit at the Ovid Strawberry Festival brought in \$60 for the Friends of the Three Bears, reported secretary Karen Corning, who added that the public exposure was good. Mrs. Corning was a winner in the event's strawberry bake-off contest with her torte entry, and trustee Phyllis Motill won recognition for a pie she submitted for judging.

Outgoing trustee Kit Kalfs gave a report of his efforts to restore the facia and architectural moldings of the "Baby Bear" building, the 1845 Seneca County clerk's office. "We're going to have to get a good restoration carpenter to meet historical preservation guidelines." Kalfs has made contact with area builders, and said he would like to see some pieces of original construction kept, if possible.

Speaking for Project Manager Robert Corning, absent from the June meeting, Motill said plans are set for the removal and replacement of unsafe steps and railings leading to the Papa Bear. The Seneca County manager and the New York State Historic Preservation Office have approved the project definition.

A county building permit for the step project has been applied for at no charge to the Friends. "We'll be meeting the balance between code and historic guidelines," noted Charlie Mullins.

Work on the steps is expected to begin by mid-July, and volunteers will be needed for tearing out, nailing and painting, said Motill. The cost is expected to be \$800 at the most, possibly as low as \$600. Peterman Lumber Company of Seneca Falls has agreed to offer a 20 percent discount on materials.

Trustee Barry Roach gave a detailed report of plans to remove an underground gasoline storage tank at the Mama Bear building, currently used as a substation by the Seneca County Sheriff's Department. The building was also home to the Ovid Library at one time.

Roach reported, "Bero and associates have said they won't touch that building until the tank is gone." The Rochester architectural firm has been selected to carry out tasks designed to stabilize the exterior walls of the Mama Bear building.

Although no complications are expected, guidelines for bids on the tank removal will need the approval of the New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, the New York State Office of Historic Preservation and other Seneca County officials before being released for bid. The Three Bears buildings are owned by Seneca County.

Roach also reported that trustee and attorney Mark Sinkiewicz has drafted a lease proposal for continued use of the property by the Friends. Some exclusions, related to utilities used by the Sheriff's department, will have to be worked out. County planner Harriet Haynes will work with both sides to finesse the lease arrangement, said Roach.

Motill said he expected the formatting of the lease to take at least three or four months. He also noted that county officials have been very helpful, but that the situation is somewhat unique because the Three Bears are the only buildings in Seneca County listed on the national historical register. "We're plowing new ground all the time," said Motill.

There have been 2,110 visitors to the Friends of the Three Bears website during the first two quarters of 2006, reported trustee Bob Myers of Rochester. Visitations have doubled since last year to 400 per month.

In June, the top three keywords resulting in those visits were "strawberry, festival and Ovid," said Myers. The three leading search engines used to reach the website are Google, MSN and Yahoo. Myers said he is still looking for old photos of the three buildings for inclusion on the website.

The departure of trustee Kit Kalfs has resulted in one opening on the group's board. Trustee Tom Bouchard will head the nominating committee, and he asked for help in sifting through resumes provided by the half dozen members interested in the position.

About a dozen trustees serve rotating, elected three-year terms. Individuals representing six area organizations will remain trustees as long as they are interested.

The next public event offered by the Friends will be a free Baby Bear Concert, scheduled for Tuesday, July 18, at 5 p.m. Popular singer Alice Dietrick of Lodi will perform on the lawn that evening. For more information, visit www.friendsofthethreebears.com.

Courthouse Complex Gains A Following

BY NEIL CHAFFIE

The Seneca County courthouse complex in Ovid hasn't lacked for meetings, gatherings, concerts and various improvements over the past summer months, making it the busiest season for the complex in years. And there is more to come in November and December.

One of the most talked about improvement projects has to do with the new front steps at the courthouse, in place just in time for the September 26 meeting of the Seneca County board of supervisors.

Gone are a set of steps that were deemed "an accident waiting to happen." Officials recall the old steps came close to tripping up former Seneca County manager Keith Ashby. The quick action of those around him prevented a bad fall.

Through the volunteer hours of Ovid carpenter, Robert Corning, the old steps were removed and new ones built. Railings were cleaned and painted by another volunteer, Dale Theetge.

Others will get their first look at the new stairs Thursday night, Oct. 5, when the trustees of the Friends of the Three Bears hold their quarterly meeting at the courthouse. That meeting begins at

7 p.m.

By that time, the Friends, a non-profit organization created to preserve and find new uses for the complex, should have had an underground fuel storage tank removed from the premises.

A contracting firm was to take on the job Monday, Oct. 2. The tank lies at the northeast corner of the middle building, a structure due to become a tourist information and visitor center in the days ahead. Once the tank is out of the way, the Friends expect to have the authorization shortly to begin revamping the interior of the building. Barry Roach is chairing the tank removal effort.

Another project has to do with the purchase of a heater for the smaller of the three buildings, the "baby bear." The building houses numerous relics that officials feel should be in a heated building. At the same time, those groups or

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Courthouse

Continued

organizations meeting there would not have to do so during the winter months without heat. The heater purchase proposal awaits an agreement with county officials. Also expected Thursday night is additional discussion having to do with a lease agreement that the Friends and county officials are going over. That agreement calls for the county to lease the courthouse complex (buildings) to the Friends.

Further discussion is expected Thursday night on the coming Oct. 21 performance of the "Volunteers," a group of five musicians with the U.S. Army Field Band. Sponsored by the Friends and the South Seneca Central School District, the "Volunteers" will perform in the middle-senior high school gymnasium. The Friends have a concert committee putting together plans for ticket distribution, parking, concessions and so on. Proceeds will be used by the Friends for the courthouse complex project.

Tickets are free and available throughout the area. Officials are asking that if you find you have a ticket or tickets and can not use them, to return them for the use of others.

Getting back to the courthouse, it will host the community's annual Christmas Bazaar in November. Sally Tillinghast chairs that event. Officials said their series of summer concerts this summer met with such success that additional ones will be held next year.

Much Work On Three Bears Is Out of Sight

Ovid courthouse complex work inside job now

BY NEIL CHAFFIE

The Seneca County courthouse complex in Ovid, often referred to as "the Three Bears" doesn't look much different than it did when the Friends of the Three Bears organized five years ago with plans to preserve the buildings and find new uses for them.

But as for looks, hold on. The courthouse itself sports a new set of front steps.

And you'll need a ladder to see another improvement: a roof on the middle building.

While the public isn't seeing much outside activity, it is because inside work is now taking place. Under Tom Bouchard of Willard, a group of college students was the first to tackle the needed clean-up of the second floor of the middle building. An adult clean-up crew followed up.

The second floor walls, along with the ceiling, are due now for a paint job and that is to take place shortly. The floor itself is to be removed in favor of a mezzanine.

What's taking place is the ultimate conversion of the middle building (Mama Bear) into a visitors' center with a vital role as a segment of the Cayuga and Seneca Lake Wine Trails currently catering to thousands of tourists.

The Friends and work crews were unable to get into the Mama Bear any sooner because of its use by the Seneca County Sheriff's Department. With the coming of the county's Law Enforcement Center on Rt. 96 in Romulus, the department shifted its business there and cleared the way for work to begin on the Mama Bear.

While beginning the conversion of the building into a new use and concerning themselves with needs of the two adjacent buildings, a courthouse and a clerk's office building, the Friends are function-

ing with some 20 trustees meeting quarterly to deal with the business of the organization. A board of directors meets monthly and more often if there is a need.

The trustees receive monthly reports on the status of the overall project, fundraising, membership, public relations, concerts, the web site and other developments, from trustees specializing in those different areas. Enlisting vendors for the annual Ovid Strawberry Festival became a Friends project for the first time in June with proceeds of \$400 going to the courthouse complex project.

The first of three concerts in the park began last week on July 17 in front of the courthouse complex. A second show follows on Aug. 14 at 6 p.m. featuring the Swamp College Brass Quintet at 6 p.m. The quintet specializes in classical brass and jazz.

The third concert falls on Sunday, Sept. 2 at 5 p.m. and will feature Mudbone, a local favorite with concert lovers. This group specializes in American folk rock. The concerts also are considered fundraisers. The Friends, along with others in the community, turn after the concerts to plans for the annual Christmas Bazaar in November in the courthouse and the adjoining buildings.

"When we first started five years ago, we were very visible in what we were doing and getting a lot of support," said Friends president Dan Motill. But since that time, he added, the emphasis has switched to inside duties, such as clearing the courthouse cellar of debris and readying to plaster and paint in the middle building.

"The level of support is not falling off and we're grateful for that," Motill added.

In addition, he praised the Seneca County Board of Supervisors and various county officials for their support of the courthouse complex project. In addition to the support of local people, Motill said solid backing has also come from both the Ovid Board of Trustees and the Ovid Town Council.

Ovid Courthouse receives funding

State Senator Michael Nozzolio continued his strong support for the preservation of local historical buildings Saturday (June 14) by announcing he has secured a \$60,000 state investment to continue the restoration of the three historic courthouse buildings known as 'The Three Bears'. Senator Nozzolio previously secured \$25,000 for a Mama Bear Building stabilization project which precedes the current inside conversion project this \$60,000 supports. The announcement came during Flag Day ceremonies Saturday.

"Seneca County has been the site of many significant events in our nation's history," said Senator Nozzolio. "It is critical that we invest in and preserve the buildings that played such an important role in our region's history and I am extremely pleased to secure funding to invest in the restoration of courthouse complex. I would like to thank Dan Motill of the Friends of Three Bears and all those who work so hard to preserve these buildings for future generations."

The announced funding will be used to restore the second largest building, which served as the County Clerk's office, in the courthouse complex. The building will be converted into a regional visitors center that will be dedicated to educating the public about the historical significance of the courthouse complex in Ovid. The staff at the visitors center will be trained to give tours of the courthouse buildings and will also work with local historical societies to provide information on the history of the region.

The new visitor center will become regional center for the historical societies in the Seneca County towns of Ovid, Lodi, Interlaken, Varick, Fayette and Romulus. In addition, the visitors center will serve both

to promote the local wine industry.

GENE PIERCE OF the Cayuga-Seneca Wine Trail said, "We are truly grateful for Senator Nozzolio's support of the wine and grape industry. This visitor's center will greatly assist our efforts in making more people aware of the presence of our local wineries and bring additional revenues into our area."

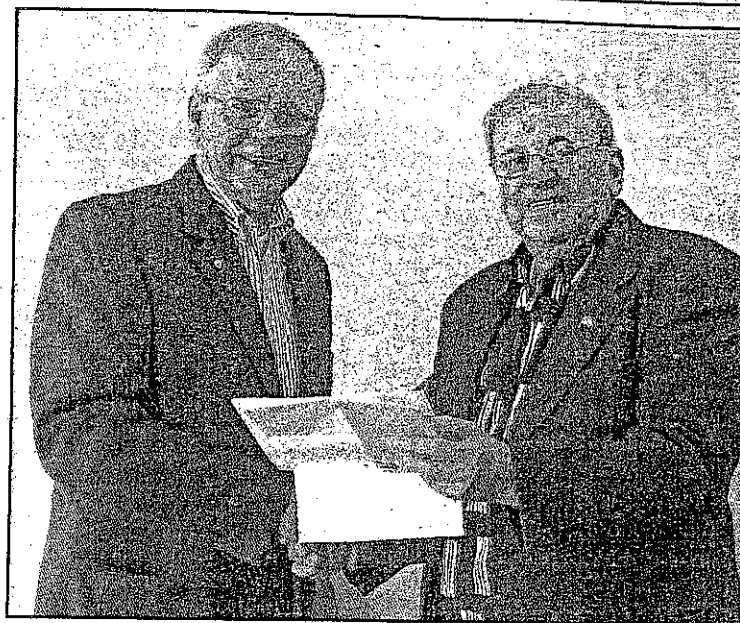
Motill, president of Friends of the Three Bears, said, "This year is the fifth anniversary of our work to stabilize, restore and convert the historic buildings that are key to our local history'. The conversion of the second building into a regional visitors center is critical to our efforts to reach out to local residents and tourists and encourage them to keep coming back. There are a number of exciting projects that we are undertaking and I would like to thank Senator Nozzolio for once again partnering with us and supporting our efforts to restore these historic buildings that are so important to Seneca County."

Motill added, the senator's continuing encouragement and verbal recognition of the work of the Friends of the Three Bears engenders others to step forward. "In the course of the last five years, we have been supported by 15 organizations to a varying degree - many of which are the result of the senators' verbal recognition," he said.

Nozzolio added, "This historic courthouse is the place where Seneca County's history was created and this state funding will allow Ovid to continue to preserve the great historical significance that this facility represents to Seneca County," concluded Nozzolio.

The Three Bears courthouse complex was named to the National Registry of Historical Places in 1976. For additional information,

Reveille



Landfill helps Mama Bear get ready for visitors

Dan Motill (left), president of the Friends of the Three Bears, accepts a check from Carl Casaccia, community relations director for Seneca Meadows Landfill, to help convert Mama Bear, (of the historical Three Bear buildings in Ovid), into a visitor's center. The Seneca Meadows Landfill contribution brought the total gift up to \$4,000 (2007-08) toward the project. Other organizations, such as ITT/Goulds, Seneca County and The Friends of the Three Bears have also donated, but many more funds are needed to reach the \$90,000 goal. If you wish to make a charitable contribution to this beautiful and historic building, send your check to Friends of the Three Bears, P.O. Box 75, Ovid, NY 14521-0075. Friends of the Three Bears is a nonprofit, tax exempt corporation.

FL Times
6-12-08
Thurs.

'Three Bears' restoration project gets \$60,000 boost

By PAULETTE LIKOUDIS
FINGER LAKES TIMES

OVID — The restoration of the historic "Three Bears" courthouse complex will continue thanks to a \$60,000 state grant that will go toward converting the middle building into a regional visitors center.

Sen. Michael Nozzolio, R-54 of Fayette, announced the state funding during a Saturday morning Flag Day ceremony on the steps of the "Papa Bear" building.

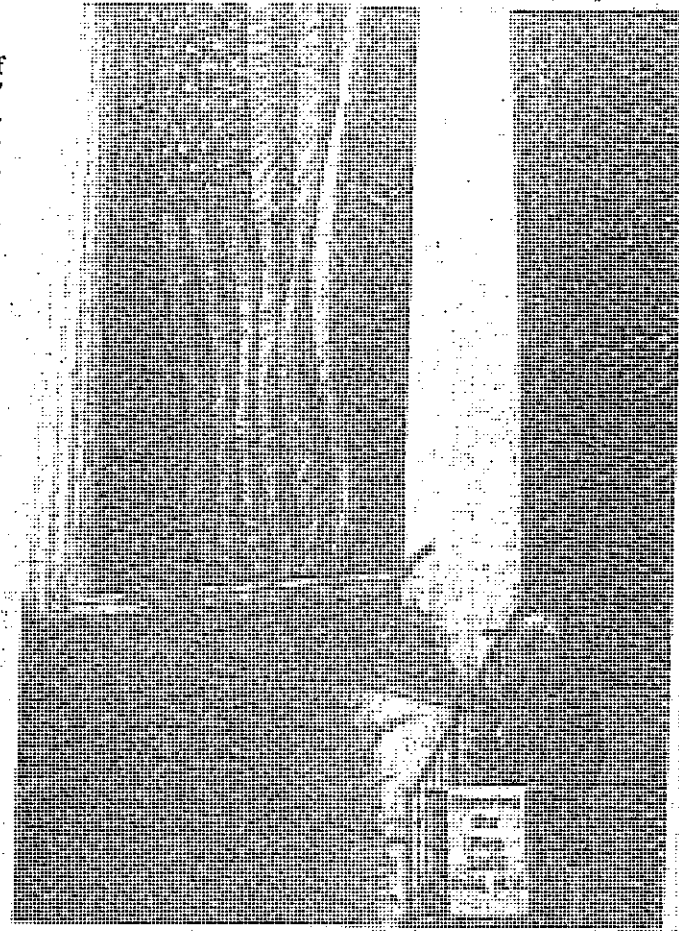
"Seneca County has been the site of many significant events in our nation's history," said Nozzolio, speaking to an audience of about 100 people. "It is critical that we invest in and preserve the buildings that played such an important role in our region's history..."

He thanked Dan Motill, president of the Friends of the Three Bears, and the group's members for their efforts to preserve the buildings.

Nozzolio previously secured \$25,000 in state funds for restoration work at the three Main Street buildings.

Following Nozzolio, Assemblyman Brian Kolb, R-129 of Canandaigua, read an essay on the American flag written by Midlakes sixth-grader Hannah Smith. In her essay, Smith said seeing the American flag made her think of her grandfather, who served in the Marine Corps. She likened the country's people to the flag, saying both weather physical changes over time.

Seneca County Manager Suzanne Sinclair said the American flag has endured in standing for personal freedoms that keep the entire country free, and Naval Reserve Commander Tom Watt



Paulette Likoudis / Finger Lakes Times

Sen. Michael Nozzolio, R-54 of Fayette, was among the speakers at Saturday's Flag Day Ceremony at the "Three Bears" courthouse complex in Ovid. Nozzolio announced \$60,000 in state funding for restoration of the middle building.

traced the history of the flag, noting that it has become the "most widely recognized symbol for the freest, most diverse people in the world."

"Why else would so many want to immigrate to this country?" Watt asked. He added that the sight of the American flag "fills my chest with pride and my heart with emotion every single time."

Those in attendance, including Kolb and Nozzolio,

signed letters of support to be sent to active military personnel. Students from South Seneca's eighth-grade class assisted by placing flags along the sidewalk and distributing "Our Flag" booklets and other information.

The ceremony also include patriotic songs and a color guard presentation.

Nozzolio also delivered some good news for the Clyde-Savannah School District yesterday, saying he has secured a \$20,000 state grant to continue its Reading First early literacy program.

That announcement was made at Clyde Elementary School.

Reading First, which establishes high-quality, comprehensive reading instruction in kindergarten through grade three, was in danger of being discontinued after significant cuts in federal funding. Without the state funds, the continuation of the program would have required additional local taxpayer funding.

"Even in these tough financial times, it is critically important that New York state continues to make wise investments in our children," said Nozzolio. "The benefits of early literacy are extremely important for success in today's competitive environment. When children become good readers in the early grades, they are more likely to become better learners throughout their school years and beyond."

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National TV Recognition For 'The Bears'

BY NEIL CHAFFIE

The Seneca County courthouse complex in Ovid is going to get some national recognition about the first of next month.

Joe D'Aluisio is one of the American Lifestyle Network's producers on a search for places to visit and things to do in New York State. He decided, with the help of the Seneca County Chamber of Commerce, that the historic courthouse complex in Ovid merited his attention.

While William Temberton operated the camera, D'Aluisio spent about 20 minutes interviewing Dan Motill, president of the Friends of the Three Bears, the local non-profit agency involved in the preservation and care of the complex.

D'Aluisio, leaving Ovid for a ride on Seneca Lake, said the team had shot some film and did some interviews in the north end of the county. The follow-

ing couple of days, he said, would be spent in the team's trailer producing material to be shown on the lifestyle's Web site at www.myamericanlifestyle.net about the first of August.

The network, the producer said, "is an entertainment and travel service owned by Multi-Media Productions LLC of Pearl, Mississippi." Producers, he added, spend their time seeking out events and places of interest that normally do not attract much attention.

He said he learned about efforts to preserve and find new uses for the courthouse complex in Ovid through Chamber of Commerce officials and decided the work of the Friends of the Three Bears was worthy of a visit. After getting Motill on film, D'Aluisio and cameraman Temberton spent a half hour or so shooting still photos of the interior of all three buildings making up the complex.

Depending upon scheduling, the two men said they would like to return next year to have a look at the stabilized middle building, which awaits the coming of contractors about the first of August. The interior of the building has been totally razed, Motill pointed out, and is to become a visitor's center sometime next year. The stabilization cost has been put at about \$100,000.

Looking in on the lifestyle network's Web site, one finds producer D'Aluisio and Temberton with several interviews of people in Montgomery County, including Dolores Jacksland, president of the Canajoharie-Palatine Chamber of Commerce.

Canajoharie resident Rob Meacham takes the visitors on a tour of the community and there are other stops at the Crystal Grove diamond mine, the Fort Plain museum, the Windfall Dutch Barn in Salt Springville and a look at the village of St. Johnsville.

"Seneca County, New York coming soon," reads the Web site.

Like other Ovid visitors, D'Aluisio wondered about the local name for the complex, the Three Bears. Motill said it may have come from a serviceman back in the 1940s when the Sampson Naval Training Center and the Seneca Army Depot were in operation.