

The Hoag House

In 1866, Milton Hoag began the active life of real estate transactions that have so closely identified him with Seneca Falls. He would buy and remodel and improve business blocks. In doing so he invested thousands of dollars, all of which proved profitable until the big fire of July 30, 1890, swept away a large portion of the business section of Seneca Falls, and in which Mr. Hoag lost over \$55,000 over and above all insurance.¹ *The Reveille* reported the hotel losses (including contents) at \$30,000, with insurance coverage of \$7,600.²

The earliest settlers along the Seneca River at what is now Seneca Falls put up a tavern on the hill above the river on same spot now occupied by the Gould Hotel. It was known as the Clinton House. Early travelers following the road west to Buffalo, etc. frequently stopped here. At some point the Clinton House was destroyed or torn down³ and replaced by the Carr's hotel. It was in 1866 that Milton Hoag purchased Carr's hotel at the corner of Fall and State streets, and spent a large sum of money in greatly improving the building. It was practically the beginning of the Hoag House, the well-known hostelry which has since borne that name.⁴

In 1877, Mr. Hoag took personal charge of his hotel. He conducted it until it was burned in the fire of 1890. As this fire swept away pretty much all of his other businesses, and given his advancing age, the fire permanently checked his activity in real estate ventures.⁵

A new Hoag House was built in 1895. Given its location on the trolley lines connecting Geneva, Waterloo, and Seneca Falls, with cars operating every half-hour, the Hoag became a favorite of "the transient trade, catering as it does exclusively to that class, and is generally made the headquarters for traveling men having business in those three towns."⁶

This new Hoag House was said to possess "all modern improvements." It was an imposing three-story brick building with stone trimmings and entrances on two streets. The interior was finished throughout in oak wood. The main floor was laid with tile. The office, lobbies, vestibules, writing room and barber shop are lighted with plate glass windows. There are fifty rooms on the house and a seating capacity of a hundred in the dining room.⁷

A Mr. C. M. Bills of New York City took over as proprietor on August 1, 1903. Grip's publication described him as having "the faculty and good sense to keep a competent office staff and the best help throughout the house." Grip's publication goes on to say that "Seneca Falls which in the beginning



contributed so liberally to secure the erection of a first class hotel building has not been disappointed in getting the man who was needed to make the house what the traveling public wanted.”⁸

In late December 1905, a new bowling alley at the Hoag House opened for business. It was described as one of the finest professional alleys in Central New York. It was built by R.A. Shindel, clerk of the Hoag House.⁹

In late May 1912, the Hoag House, which for nine years had been under the management of C. M. Bills, was acquired by Louis Stauff of Geneva. Stauff purchased the building from Charles McKeivitt.¹⁰

Tragedy struck on Thanksgiving morning in 1918, when a fire began in the basement of The Hoag House. By noon the building was a total loss, with nearly all of the equipment destroyed. Four blackened walls stood where the hotel had stood just six hours before. Villagers declared that this was the end of the hotel business in Seneca Falls. This was not the case, however, because the Goulds Manufacturing Company stepped forward. Desirous of having a good hotel facility for its business use, the Goulds company furnished the \$250,000 capital needed to build a new hotel. This new hotel, appropriately named the Gould Hotel, opened in February 1920. The Hoag House was gone, but it was replaced by a magnificent new facility.¹¹



¹ “Grip’s” *Historical Souvenir of Seneca Falls*, 1991 reprint by the Seneca Falls Historical Society of the 1904 publication by Grip Publishing in Syracuse, NY, p 90

² “Grip’s” *Historical Souvenir of Seneca Falls*, p 123

³ “Seneca Falls Opens \$250,000 Hotel, *The Syracuse Journal*, 1920.

⁴ “Grip’s” *Historical Souvenir of Seneca Falls*, p 91

⁵ “Grip’s” *Historical Souvenir of Seneca Falls*, p 90

⁶ “Grip’s” *Historical Souvenir of Seneca Falls*, p 135

⁷ “Grip’s” *Historical Souvenir of Seneca Falls*, p 136

⁸ “Grip’s” *Historical Souvenir of Seneca Falls*, p 136

⁹ *The Syracuse Journal*, December 23, 1905.

¹⁰ “Hoag House Changes Hands,” *The Auburn Citizen*, May 31, 1912.

¹¹ “Seneca Falls Opens \$250,000 Hotel, *The Syracuse Journal*, 1920.