

New & Exciting: Where We Are Today in the Saratoga County Area

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SECTION TEXT BY ANN HAUPRICH



Not for Summer Only

How Saratoga became a place for all seasons . . .
and all reasons.

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One of the restored horses in Saratoga's well-known Congress Park carousel.

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SARATOGA WAS MANY THINGS to me when my folks first settled nearby more than a quarter of a century ago. It was a place with a picturesque park off Broadway for sun-bathing, people-watching and playing frisbee, a place to experience performances by world-class entertainers while sprawled on a blanket under the stars at the Saratoga Performing Arts Center, a place to befriend a thoroughbred stable hand and sneak an up-close look at equine legends like Secretariat. It was, in short, "The Summer Place To Be."

Make that "The August Place To Be."

As the days grew shorter and the scenery became brilliant with autumn colors, and then aglow with winter's snow, followed by the bountiful buds promising the arrival of spring, Saratoga may as well have hung out a sign reading: "Welcome to Sleepy Hollow."

Save for some landmark appearances on the tiny stage of The Caffe Lena, including Don McLean's debut of "Bye, Bye, Miss American Pie" and the odd splash of relief heard coming from the direction of the hot mineral bathhouses in the Spa State Park, Saratoga seemed to be saving herself for summer.

Not seeing much future in a city that hibernated 10 months out of the year, I quickly skipped town after my high-school graduation and spent the next two decades living and working in Scandinavia and Canada. It was not until one of my annual trips back home around the dawn of the 1990s that I began to notice what a magnificent metamorphosis Saratoga had undergone since the Vietnam War years. →

Downtown Saratoga Springs has changed dramatically over the past half century. These photographs show a busy Broadway intersection near the Congress Park end of the community as it is now (bottom) and as it appeared before revitalization.

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SURE, SHE STILL SPARKLED AND sizzled in the summer, but like a beautiful butterfly, Saratoga had transformed from a dull, drab off-season pit stop into a vibrant “Place For All Seasons”—and, seemingly, all reasons.

Tired Victorian homes were undergoing facelifts and becoming beautiful “Painted Ladies” once again. Even the natives were lining up to participate in house tours sponsored by the Saratoga Springs Preservation Foundation. Breathtakingly manicured flower beds and charming sidewalk cafes now beckoned visitors to take advantage of a dazzling assortment of academic, artistic, cultural, health, recreational and social events.

“The Summer Place To Be” was hopping year-round, hosting well over 100 annual conventions from small state events to gatherings of international significance such as the Humor & Creativity Conference hosted by Dr. Joel’s Goodman’s HUMOR Project.

The county was now home to not one, but three national museums. In addition to The National Museum of Racing & Hall of Fame on Union Avenue, the National Museum of Dance was keeping visitors on their toes on South Broadway while history was being uncorked at The National Bottle Museum in Ballston Spa.

Trips through yesteryear could also be experienced at the Saratoga Springs Historical Society Museum inside the Canfield Casino in Congress Park; the Saratoga Harness Hall of Fame Museum; the Saratoga County Historical Society Museum at Brookside in Ballston Spa; at the Grant Cottage, where famed Civil War General-



Clockwise from top left: A restored Victorian mansion; painted ladies in a carriage parade passing the grand old Adelphi Hotel on Broadway; the Saratoga Automobile Museum in the Spa State Park; a patriotic window box in Ballston Spa; the Saratoga Children’s Museum; harness racing action; The Batchelor Mansion & Inn; and Milton Avenue, Ballston Spa.



PHOTO: KATE FOX



PHOTO: ANTONIO BUCCA



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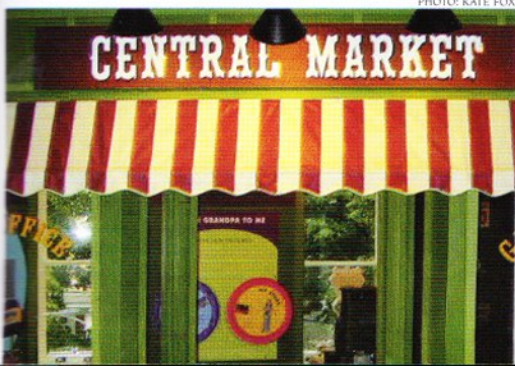
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PHOTO: SARATOGA AUTOMOBILE MUSEUM

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turned-President U. S. Grant spent his final months writing his memoirs in Wilton; and at Saratoga National Historical Park, which commemorates “The Turning Point of the American Revolution.”

Saratoga has since added an innovative Children’s Museum, an Antique Automobile Museum and a Military Museum while the National Bottle Museum has expanded to include a Museum Glassworks facility. The Ndashinna Interpretative Center, just off Route 9N in Greenfield Center, offers exhibits and programs celebrating Native American contributions to the area.

THE ARRIVAL OF THE SARATOGA Springs Urban Cultural Park Visitors Center on South Broadway made it easier to explore the region’s rich and diverse heritage. Regent Street Antique Center’s Museum of Antiques and Art offered yet another incentive for visitors to frequent the area on a year-round basis.

Equine action was no longer limited to “The Sport of Kings” at the Saratoga Race Course on hot August days as crowds assembled year round to catch the excitement of nightly harness racing as well as occasional concerts and festivals at the Saratoga Raceway, regarded as one of the fastest and most beautiful harness tracks in America. Adding yet another touch of beauty and grace to Saratoga’s equine scene was the debut of the elegant Memorial Day weekend Dressage Festival & Competition. Celebrities and ordinary folk alike also flocked to the city to enjoy European-style polo matches.

Prestigious Skidmore College, once considered the private turf of the elite



Clockwise from top left: an overview of the historic park that includes the Canfield Casino; Spit 'n' Spit fountains in Congress Park; the legendary Caffe Lena on Phila Street; the Lincoln Bathhouse; and the National Museum of Dance in Saratoga Springs.



PHOTO: MICHAEL L. NOONAN



PHOTO



PHOTO: MICHAEL L. NOONAN



PHOTO: ANTONIO BUCCA



PHOTO: KATE FOX



NEW & EXCITING

academic set, was opening its doors to Joe Public—the school began offering a free lecture series featuring prominent artists, authors, politicians and professors—while Filene Hall reverberated with the sounds of some of the world's finest classical and jazz musicians. Exhibits at Skidmore's Schick Art Gallery and Saiselin Art Center became another year-round draw.

Thanks, in part, to Skidmore's close affiliation with SPAC, locals and out-of-towners alike now had opportunities to participate in Master dance classes and Writer's Institute workshops led by literary greats including Pulitzer Prize winning Albany author William Kennedy. The Center for Gifted and Talented Youths also began its tradition of bringing hun-

dreds of kids to the campus each summer.

Arts and entertainment options had mushroomed to include Home Made Theater productions at the Spa Little Theater and events sponsored by the Saratoga County Arts Council. From folk art shows to antiques and architectural artifacts festivals to "Artists In The Park" exhibits of paintings and sculptures, the picture had become increasingly colorful.

THERE'S NO DOUBT THAT THE choice of SPAC as the official summer home of the New York City Ballet, the Philadelphia Orchestra and the New York City Opera was a first step in Saratoga's evolution from a small town filled with Damon Run-

World-class musicians bring a touch of class to SPAC when the Philadelphia Orchestra is in residence there each August.



COURTESY OF THE SARATOGA PERFORMING ARTS CENTER

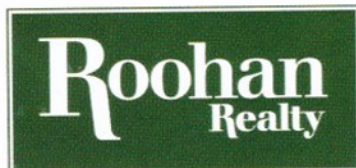
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For additional information, please contact Joan Fitzhenry or Carole Tarantino at Roohan Realty - 518-587-4500.



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yon characters to a respectable cultural oasis. The era of Lillian Russell and Diamond Jim Brady had been gently replaced by the elegance of the Vanderbilts and the Whitneys.

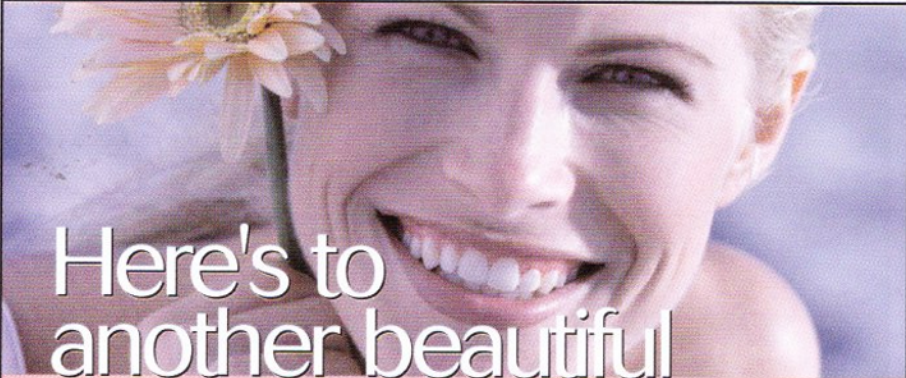
Most visible and involved in community affairs was—and remains—Marylou Whitney, a vivacious socialite of remarkable effervescence and ingenuity.

It was Marylou who began the traditions of the annual theme parties at The Canfield Casino and who brought new meaning to the summer carriage parade and popular tailgate parties. It was also she who first lured the legendary broadcast journalist Walter Cronkite and stars like Ginger Rogers, Barbara Eden, Mary Ann Mobley, Gary Collins, John Forsyth and Joan Rivers to The Spa City.

Key to the success of the region's spectacular transformation have been the dedicated Saratoga boosters at the Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce, the Southern Saratoga County Chamber of Commerce, the Saratoga Convention and Tourism Bureau, the Saratoga County Promotions Department, the Saratoga Springs City Center and the Department of Public Works.

THANKS TO THEIR TIRELESS, AND often unglamorous behind-the-scenes work, word spread that Saratoga still offered the best of what visitors longed to experience ("Health, History, Horses & Hospitality") as well as a multitude of reasons to return during other seasons. Without these people of vision and the countless business leaders and community volunteers who have supported their mission, Saratoga might still be dubbed: "The Summer Place to Be."

Because of them, it has blossomed into a place of which we can all be proud: "A Place for All Seasons," and "A Place for All Reasons." My former stamping grounds in Copenhagen and Toronto are worth the trip, too, but now when I find myself saying "There's no place like home," my heart is where it belongs—not just during August—but all year long... deep in the heart of Saratoga County! ■



Here's to
another beautiful
Saratoga Season.

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