

## Your Support of The Seneca Falls *It's A Wonderful Life* Museum & Archives:



- Helps keep the Museum's doors open;
- Maintains a year-round permanent presence for one of the most beloved movies of all time;
- Helps ensure that, in the spirit of the film, admission to the Museum will always be free;
- Enables the Museum to work with cast members and fans to continually create new visual & audio exhibits;
- Is tax-deductible to the full extent allowable by law.

While standing at this intersection, it is appropriate to note the coincidence that in an early version of the film's script the place of George's crisis is not the Bridge Street Bridge, but the Water Street Bridge.

**8) Declaration Park, 132 Fall Street:** This grassy, contemplative area between the Wesleyan Chapel and Women's Rights National Historical Park's



visitor center, was the site of the old Fisher Theater, a classic 1920s movie house with projecting marquee

reminiscent of the movie theater in the film. At the time of Capra's visit, it would have been the Strand Theater.

**9) Fall Street Business District:** The commercial architecture, late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> century styles, is reminiscent of downtown Bedford Falls. Note that 111-124 Fall Street is known as the Partridge Building, and the building housing the Chemung Canal Trust Company at 54 Fall Street holds a plaque dedicated to Erastus Partridge, a major figure in banking in the Seneca Falls area. The school principal in *It's A Wonderful Life* was named Mr. Partridge.

**10) 32 and 54 Cayuga Street:** These houses, built in the Second Empire architectural style, are very suggestive of the Old Granville House at 320 Sycamore Street in Bedford Falls that became the home of George and Mary.

**11) Mynderse Academy, North Park Street:** This former high school building built in 1924 was constructed with a state-of-the-art gymnasium, though it lacked the swimming pool beneath its gym floor.

**12) 60 State Street, the former passenger station:** Though remodeled over the years, this train station once looked a lot more like the station in Bedford Falls.

**13) The Seneca Falls Post Office, 38 State Street:** Each year the Post Office, located in this 1932 Depression Era edifice, introduces a special pictorial postal cancellation, identifying Seneca Falls as Bedford Falls Station, during the *It's A Wonderful Life* Festival.

*Explore on your own -*

**St. Columbkille Cemetery and Restvale Cemetery, East Bayard Street:** Visit the grave of local hero, Antonio Varacalli, and look for family names from, or reminiscent of, people in the film, such as Bailey, Martino (Martini?), Potter, Partridge, etc.



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*Photographs courtesy of  
The Seneca Falls Historical Society*

## *It's A Wonderful...* Walking Tour Seneca Falls New York

*Walking distance: 1.3 miles  
Average walking time: 1 hour*

Like most movies of its time, *It's A Wonderful Life* was filmed on movie sets and sound stages in California. However, we believe the location, small town atmosphere, and key scenes from the film were inspired by Seneca Falls. Take the Walking Tour and experience the town for yourself. We invite you to draw your own conclusions!



**1) 32 Fall Street:** This building, now the home of *The Seneca Falls It's A Wonderful Life* Museum and the *IDEA Center for the Voices of Humanity*, was built in 1913 by Charles Fornesi as the village's first movie theater, The Seneca Theater.

**2) Lower Fall Street:** Like the main street (Genesee Street) in Bedford Falls this section of Fall Street (historically part of the Genesee Turnpike) was once divided by a center median, though without the large trees shown in the film.



**3) Ovid Street Bridge:** This 1981 four-lane bridge replaced a 1917 steel truss bridge, a twin of the still surviving Bridge Street Bridge. Frank Capra would have seen both bridges at the time of his visit.



**4) Ovid/Bayard Street Intersection:** This intersection has been greatly altered since the '40s, but just south of the corner on the east side of Ovid Street stood the barber shop of Tom Bellissima where Capra stopped for a haircut at a time when the film's screenplay was still being developed.

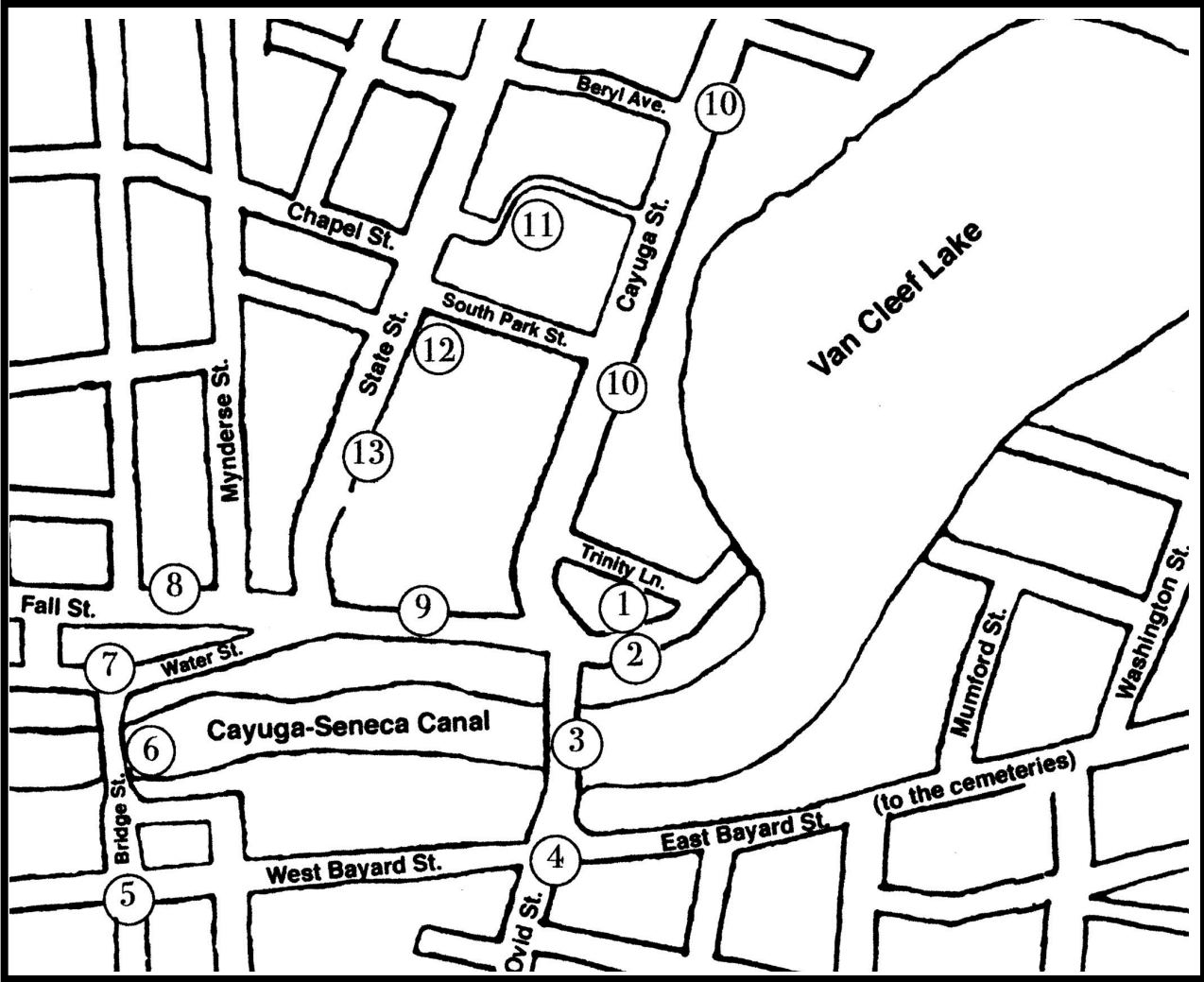
**5) W. Bayard/Bridge Street Intersection:** The village's first business district later became dominated by Irish immigrants. As Italian immigrants grew in numbers in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century this neighborhood became an Italian enclave. Just south of the intersection on the east side of Bridge Street was Vitetta's Bar & Restaurant, a possible inspiration for Martini's Bar in the film.

**6) The Bridge Street Bridge:** This truss bridge may have provided Capra with one of the most important elements in the film: George's leap into the river to "save" Clarence the angel. In the

original story, *The Greatest Gift*, George never jumps. Instead, he is stopped by a mysterious stranger who advises, "I wouldn't do that if I were you." At the time of his visit, Capra would likely have seen the plaque on the bridge dedicated to young Antonio Varacalli, who braved the cold April water in 1917 to save a young woman who jumped from the bridge. He managed to get the struggling woman close enough to shore for another man to take her from him. Overcome with cold and

exhaustion, Antonio was swept away by the current and drowned. Probably inspired by this story, Capra took the original concept of contemplated but averted suicide and crafted it into contemplated suicide turned into an unselfish act of heroism.

**7) Bridge/Water Street Intersection:** Once dominated by mills and factories, this neighborhood would have inspired Capra to make Bedford Falls a town suffering the loss of local industry during the Great Depression.



I would like to support the efforts of The Seneca Falls It's A Wonderful Life Museum & Archives to provide a permanent place to honor "The Most Inspiring Film of All Time" with a tax-deductible gift of:

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Or donate securely through our website: [www.wonderfullifemuseum.com](http://www.wonderfullifemuseum.com)

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\*American Film Institute

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