

THE SOUTHSIDE HILL

A GOOD PLACE TO LIVE, WORK, AND WORSHIP

Thomas P. Dimitroff

Fall, 1991

Each year, each season, is special to me because I live in the total environment that is Corning, New York. Although blessed with a natural environment that finds the community nestled in a charming valley on the beautiful Allegheny Plateau, Corning's man-made environment hasn't always been as pleasant as it is today. To a great extent, what we are today is no accident. Rather, our environment is the result of many factors including those natural ones we inherited as a river community whose growth pushed across the valley floor and up the one-time wooded slopes of the surrounding hills.

Our environment is also a result of our history. Long ago a succession of Native American cultures made their homes in this area and lived in great harmony with their natural environment. Then along came another man bringing with him new cultures and new technologies. These newcomers would effect many changes upon the environment as they built their homes, their businesses, and their industries. Bridges would span the valley's rivers and dikes would eventually attempt to contain them. Indian trails would be replaced by roads, canals, and ribbons of highways. Wires would loop from pole to pole bringing both light and communication to the valley. Much of the valley's floor would even be given new skins of cement and asphalt. Amidst all of these magical happenings there seemed to be one constant - change. For many years much of this change was not orchestrated nor planned. It just happened, and, as it did, change

took many forms and directions.

Change is only one of Corning's environmental traditions. Another such tradition from the valley's past is pride in the community. It is a pride that was spawned by individuals and families who have been singularly and collectively proud of their homes and apartments; their neighborhoods and community; their jobs, churches, and families. This pride has been nurtured and supported by a similiar pride radiating from Corning's businesses and industries. Like all else, pride in Corning has not been universal, but it has been widespread and pervasive. Pride has been an important supporting force of the social and economic health of the community.

Pride is still very much a part of Corning. Yet, Corning today is different. It shines with a new beauty, a new profile of confidence and hope and expectation. Much of this originates in what is happening along the river's banks, up and down Market Street, on the Parkway, in our museums, and around the Northside business district. An important element in all of this is that the great majority of recent changes here are planned changes, changes orchestrated to build upon our traditions in creative ways; to take us economically and socially into a bright and prosperous future, a future that will continue the history of community pride, growth, and excellence. As we enjoy architectural samples of the best of two centuries standing almost side-by-side, we are reminded of the bridge of committment reaching both to the past and the future that has been built by Corningites.

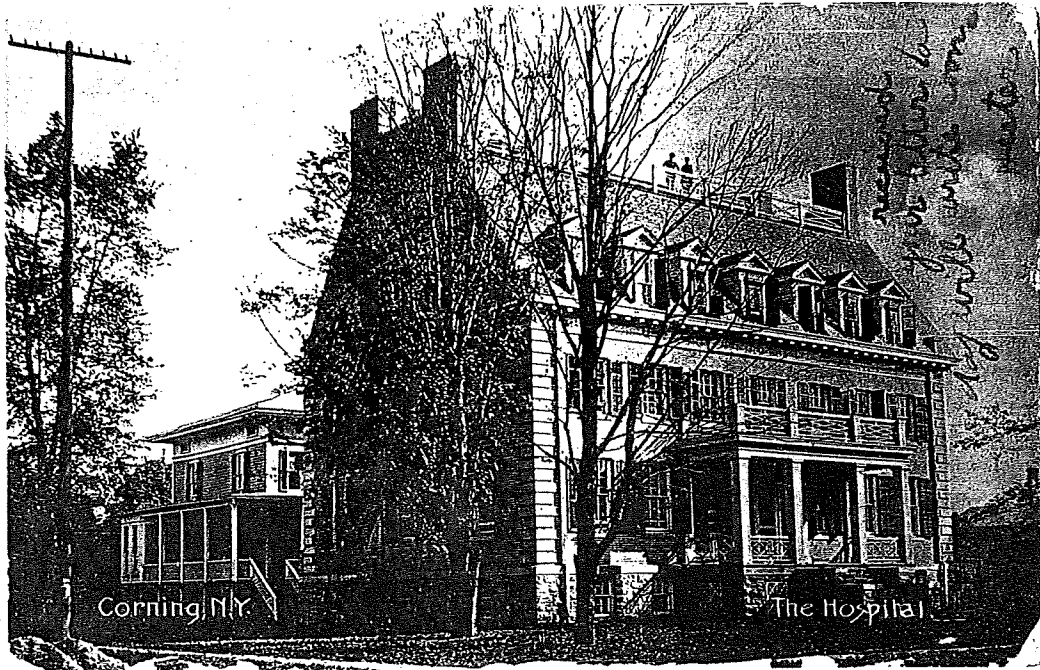
All of this brings to mind several thoughts. Just as change



HOSPITAL, CORNING, N. Y.



Corning Hospital, CORNING, N. Y.



CORNING CITY HOSPITAL CORNING N. Y.

has been a constant in Corning's past, so it will be in Corning's future. Positive change continuing the exciting directions present in Corning today is not, however, automatic nor guaranteed. It, like the present, must be planned and worked for diligently. We must also remember that Corning is more than a business district. It is a complex community made up of a variety of neighborhoods and environs. The health of the total community is a matter of gestalt. If Corning is to march into the future strong of heart and soul, strong with pride, and with a strong economy, its various neighborhoods must be healthy. They must be nurtured. This too, will take planning, resources, and care. This too will require changes orchestrated to build upon our traditions in creative ways. This too will take the combined efforts and energies of all elements of the community. This too will take vision.

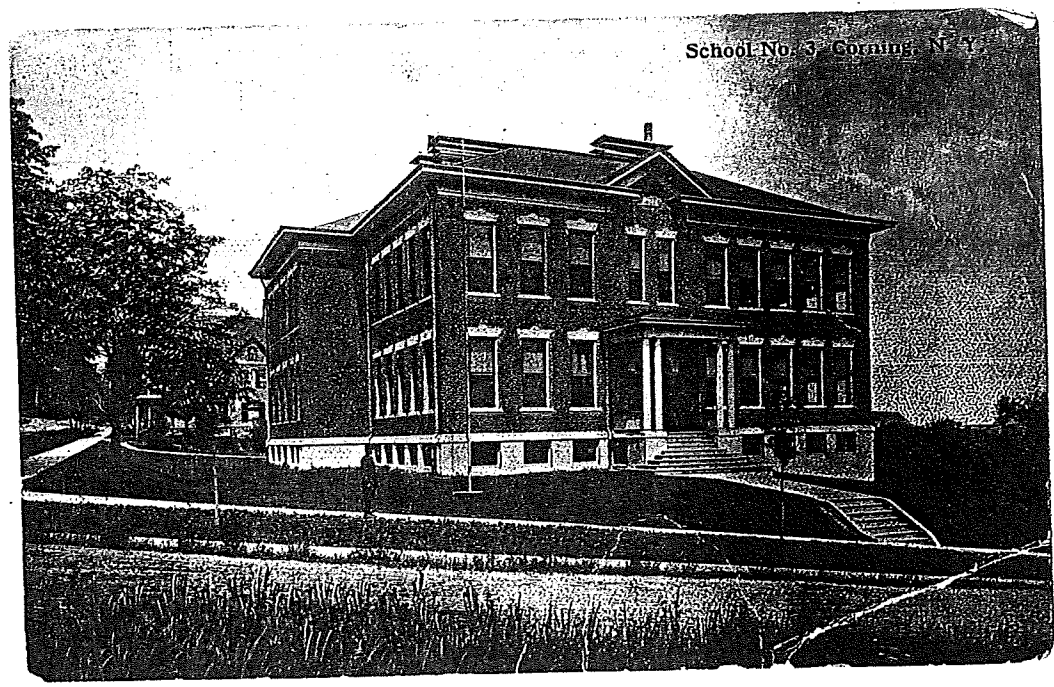
All of Corning's neighborhoods are special and important. Each has its history. Each has its strengths and unique characteristics. Each has its problems. The Southside Neighborhood is one part of Corning and is special to its residents and to the entire community. Today the Southside Neighborhood continues to be a fine place in which to live, work, and worship. This is a status which should be protected and enhanced.

Today the Southside Neighborhood includes a pleasing mix of residences, educational facilities, churches, businesses, medical facilities, professional offices and an arts center. Its residential structures include both single and multi-family units - some rentals others owned by the occupants. Another interesting aspect of the neighborhood is the designation of its northern area (First Street)

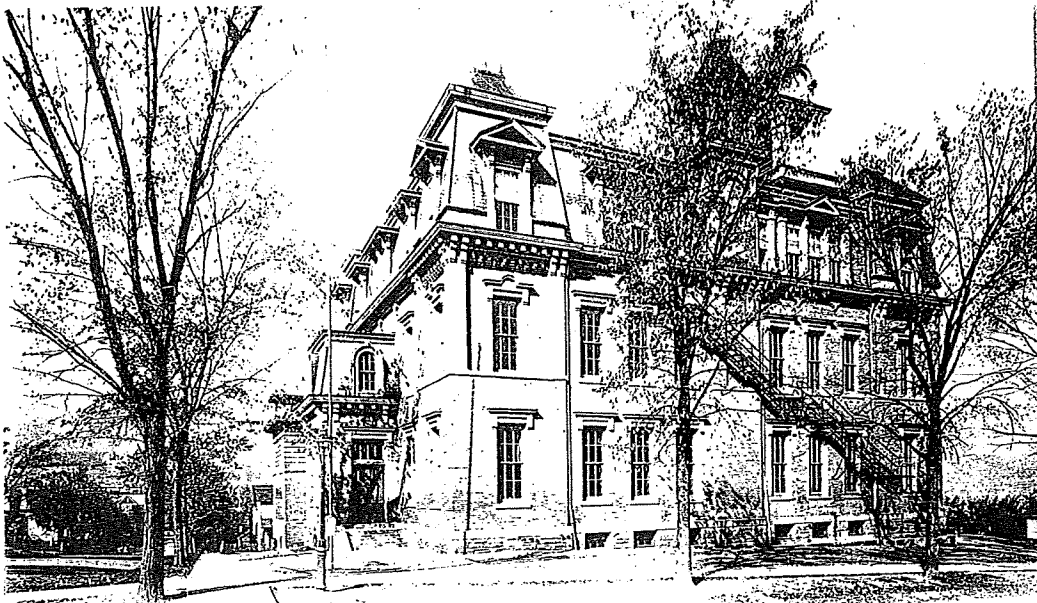


School No. 2,  
Corning, N. Y.

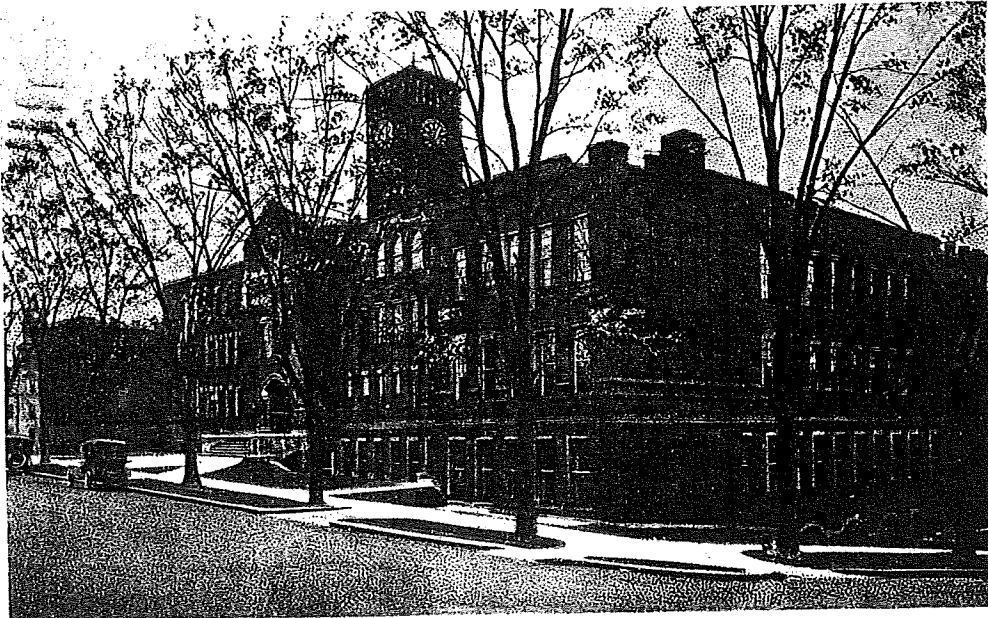
Pub. by The J. M. Greig Co., Corning, N. Y.



School No. 3, Corning, N. Y.



A 25629 Free Academy, Corning N Y



CORNING FREE ACADEMY, CORNING. N. Y.



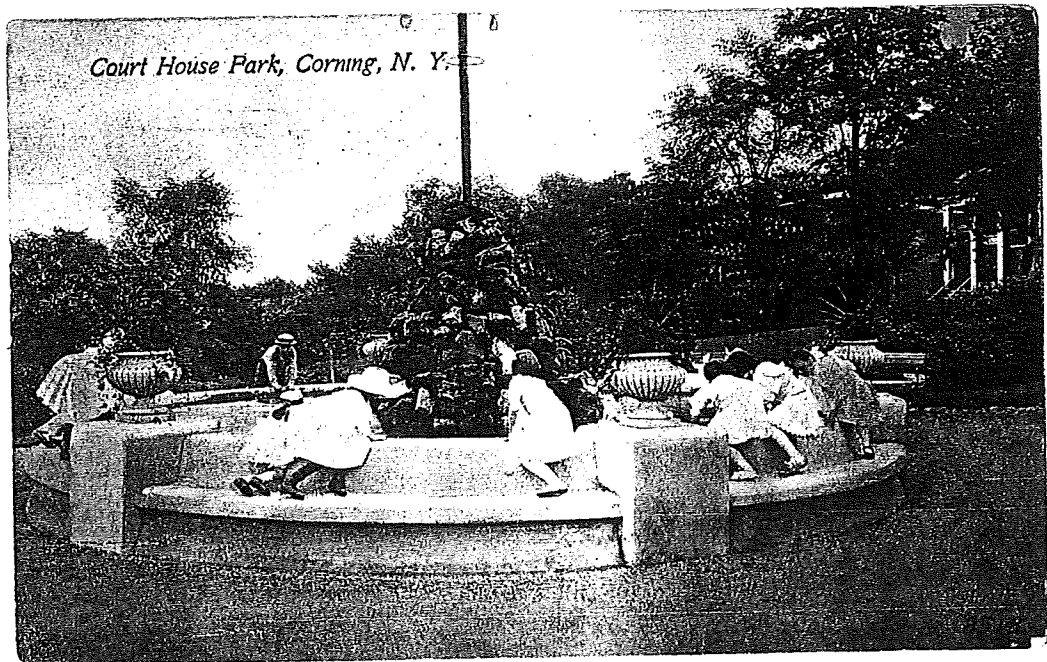
as a transition zone by planners and code writers.

The Southside Neighborhood is an important historic and architectural element in the history of Corning and the area. Today it stands a living history - a feast for the eyes and a magnificent resource for residents, students, tourists or just plain admirers of nineteenth century American architecture. Its value transcends local fascination.

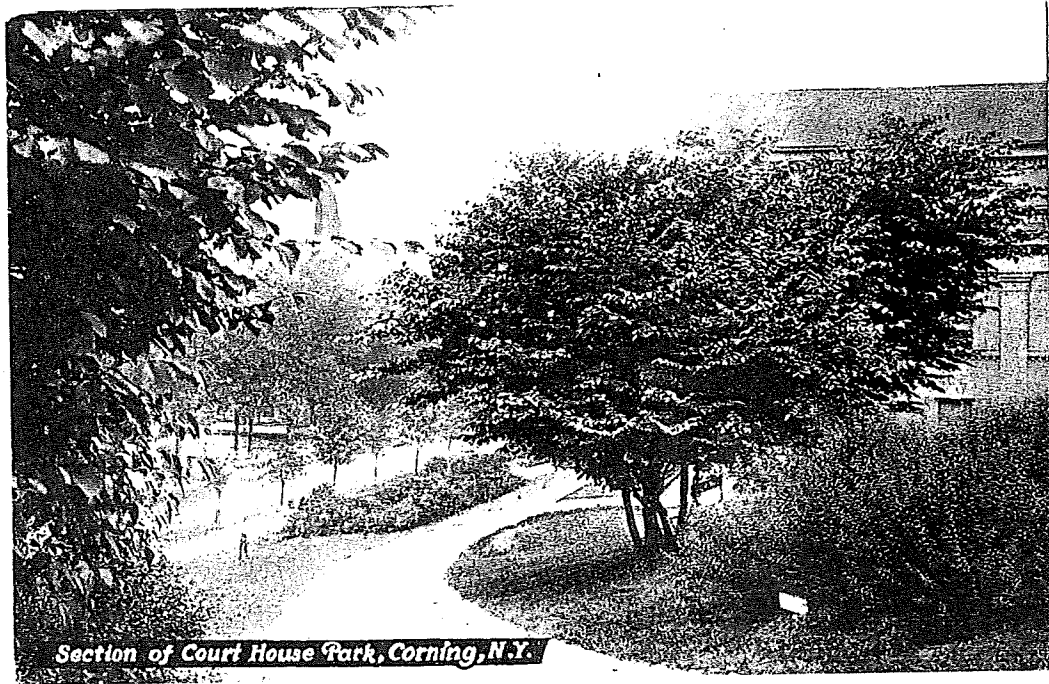
The story of the Southside Neighborhood's historic and architectural importance is part of the larger story of the history of Corning. Corning's early economic growth was tied to its location where railroad and canal met. Since earliest times, the geography of the region had made it an important crossroads. This fact combined with the geographical reality of a narrowing valley resulted in Corning developing as a typical river town. The economic configurations of the community that had their genesis in the opening of the Chemung Canal in 1833 changed gradually as the importance of the canal declined and the impact of the railroads and the industries they spawned and nurtured blossomed. The premier industry, the Corning Flint Glass Works took its position along the river, a position of obvious advantage in 1868 with access to a water supply and the transportation offered by the canal and parallel railroads. The linear pattern thus established was continued as a business district developed between the "Glass Works" to the north and the Erie Railroad paralleling it one block to the south.



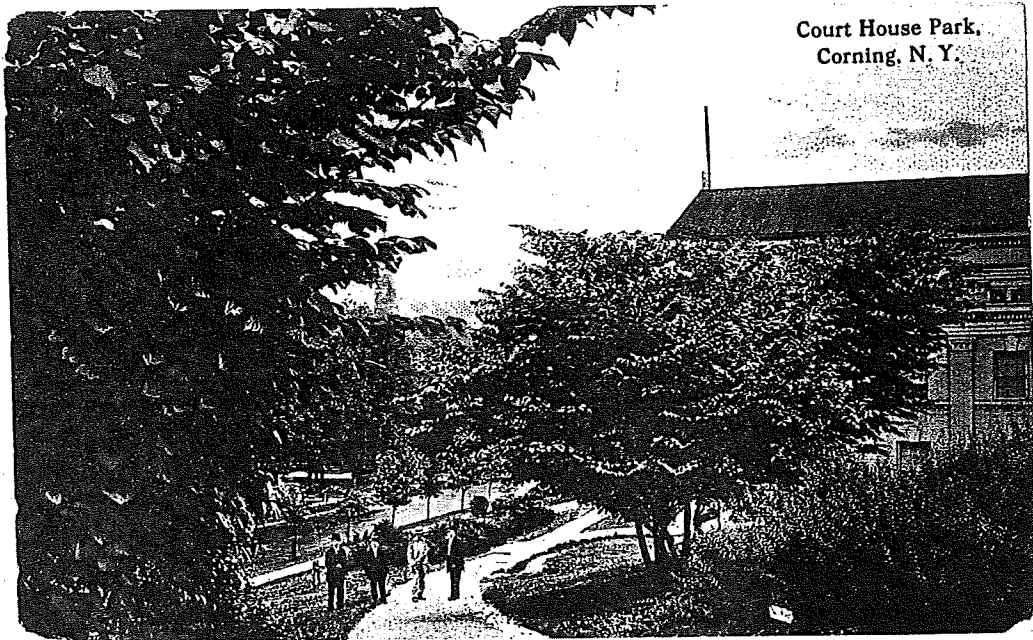
*Court House Park, Corning, N. Y.*



*Court House Park, Corning, N. Y.*



*Section of Court House Park, Corning, N.Y.*



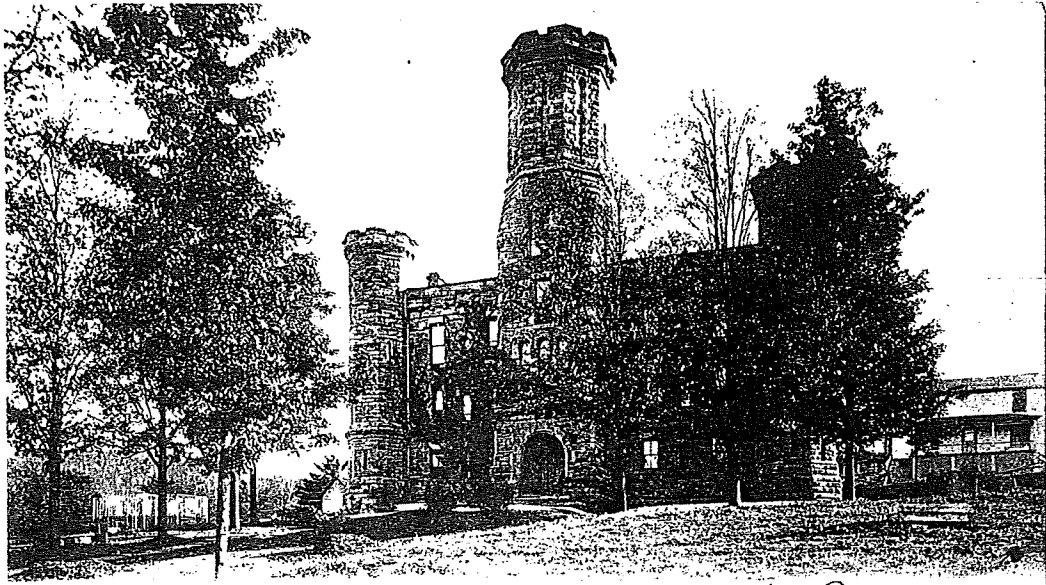
**Court House Park,  
Corning, N. Y.**

Throughout nineteenth century America local transportation systems, especially in smaller communities, failed to keep up with the convenience, speed, and dependability of railroads, like the Erie, which sped people and products from city to city. It was important, therefore, to live near your place of work or business. A short walk was truly a better way to start the day than having to harness up the horse. (Unless, of course, you could afford to have it done for you.)

The Southside Hill became a choice location for development as a residential neighborhood because of its location. Erastus Corning and his colleagues had predicted this when earlier they made their first plans including setting aside what is now Courthouse Park (Canfield Park) as a green space and as home for needed public buildings. As prosperity and growth would transform the little community first into a village in 1848 and later into a city in 1890, The Southside Hill continued to be a choice place to live. It was not only on the same side of the river as much of the community's business and industry, it was also adjacent to it. Once again, the linear pattern established first by the river was continued and parallel streets bearing not so romantic names such as First, Second, and Third Streets stretched east and west across the hill. The grid was completed by north - south running connecting streets with more interesting, if not romantic names, like Pine, Cedar, and Walnut.



St. Mary's Convent. Corning, N. Y.



A 25643 St Mary's Convent, Corning, N. Y. Dear Friends - Glad you got  
 can get a few pictures - they mean & stayed all day  
 with me in the f. of D. at as I was alone. Mamie!

New Convent, CORNING, N. Y.



The industrialism of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries brought greater prosperity to some than others and a more distinct social and economic class system in America. Corning, like so many other hill towns, began to reflect this in a settlement pattern. Basically, as the hustle and bustle and the smoke and soot of the downtown area increased, so did the desire of the affluent, who could better afford it, to remove themselves a bit from these elements. As this was accomplished the fields of the upper reaches of the Southside Hill became the building lots for substantial and gracious homes that often reflected not only the affluence of their owners, but also their personal tastes and their pride. Older residential areas on the hill also were blessed with wonderful homes in a variety of styles. The result is a wonderful mix of residential structures from large to small; from ostentatious to reserved. This mix ranging from high style residential architecture to modest styles presents us with a balanced neighborhood. The styles represented reflect what was popular from the late eighteenth to the early twentieth centuries.

Over the years successive owners of most of these homes have shown great pride in them. These structures and the neighborhood as a whole have been beautifully nourished and preserved. Luckily, for us today, this neighborhood reflects an important part of Corning and America's nineteenth and twentieth centuries. It is an invaluable collage of important examples of architectural styles including among others Greek Revival, Italianate, Queen Anne, Classical Revival, English Tudor, and Bungalow. Beyond this, however, it long has been a vital part of this city's social and economic health.





N. Y.  
Corning Club



No. 1870



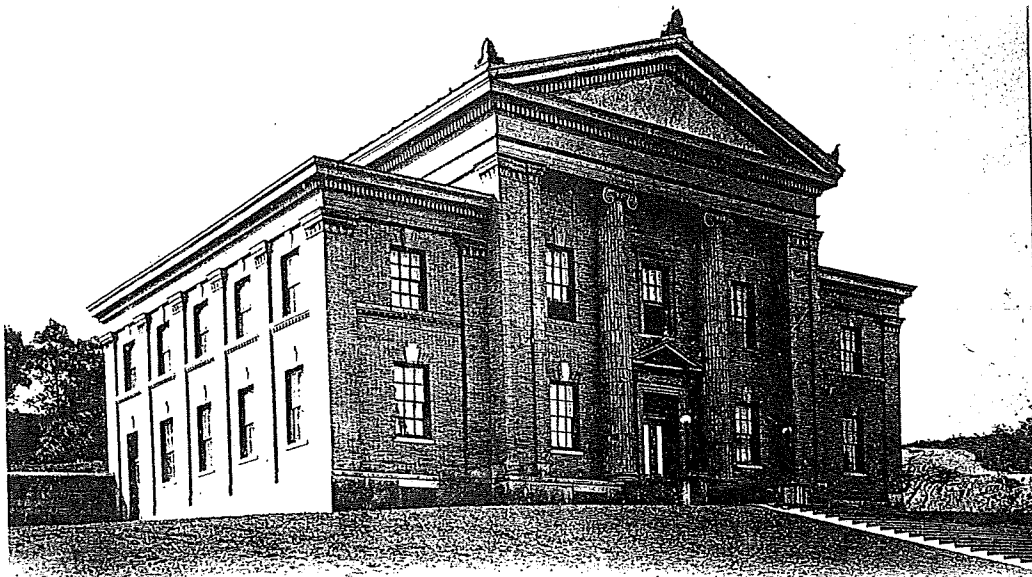
Corning City Club -- Corning, N. Y.



Dotted throughout the Southside Neighborhood are historic structures and areas. Courthouse Park (Canfield Park) is one such example. This beautiful green area was originally set aside as a public square by the Corning Company and became home to schools, churches, and courthouses. City Engineer R. H. Canfield submitted plans to turn Block 66, then called Court House Square into a park. The Court House sits rather majestically lording it over the northeast corner of the park. Its stately lines, accentuated with terra cotta decorations, along with its historic importance make it a community landmark. Built in 1903 it replaced the original 1854 courthouse that had occupied a site a bit further up the hill in the park. Presently, the Courthouse is not being used for court sessions. The building, owned by the county, sits on city land.

Adjacent to the park on the corner of Pine and First Streets is the old Corning City Club building constructed in 1898. After a fire gutted the building in 1926, the City Club decided not to continue to use it. Instead, it was given to the city to become Corning's War Memorial Library, a function it served until the mid-1970's. Today the building houses Steuben County offices and has an unclear, if not uncertain future. It is also owned by the city.

The Southside Hill has been host to many educational structures. Today, Corning Free Academy is another public building that has become a local landmark while still serving the community as a school. Old School 3 on Chemung Street is presently partially converted into condominiums, while School 2 on First Street stands deserted and decaying. These vacant buildings also face an uncertain future.

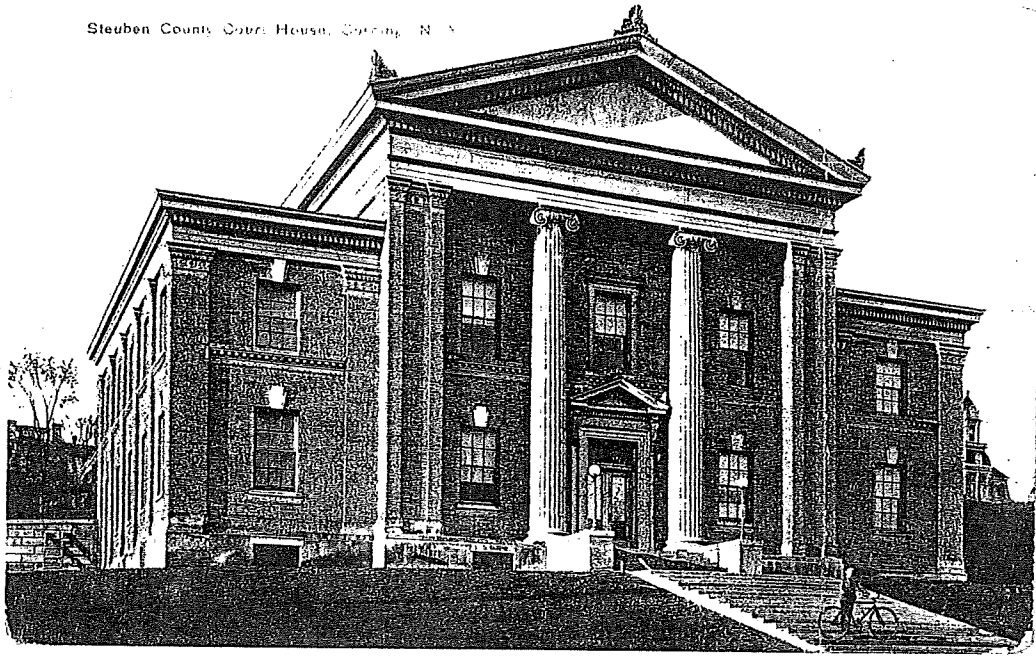


A 25625 Court House, Corning, N. Y.



Court House, Corning, N. Y.

Steuben County Court House, Corning, N. Y.



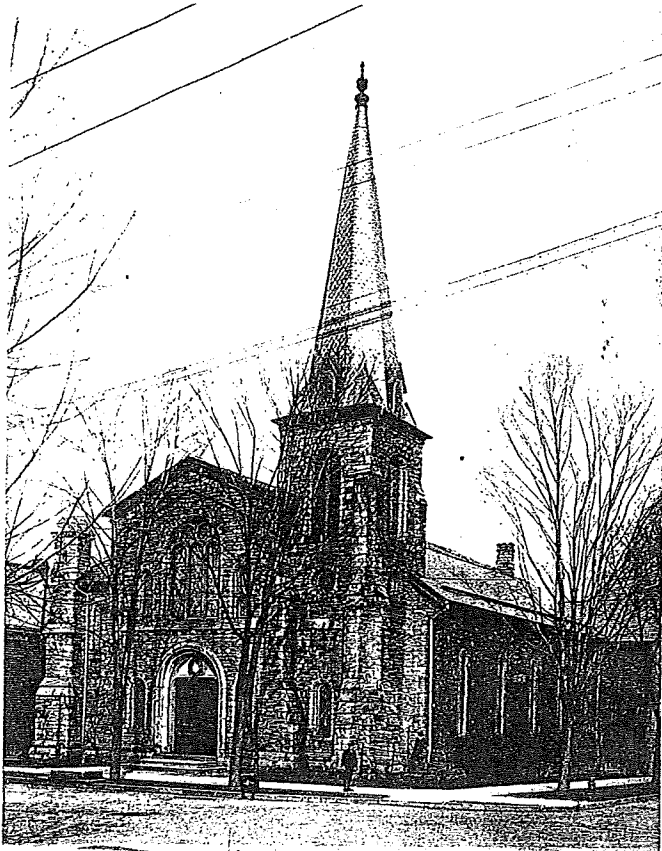
Court House, Corning, N. Y.



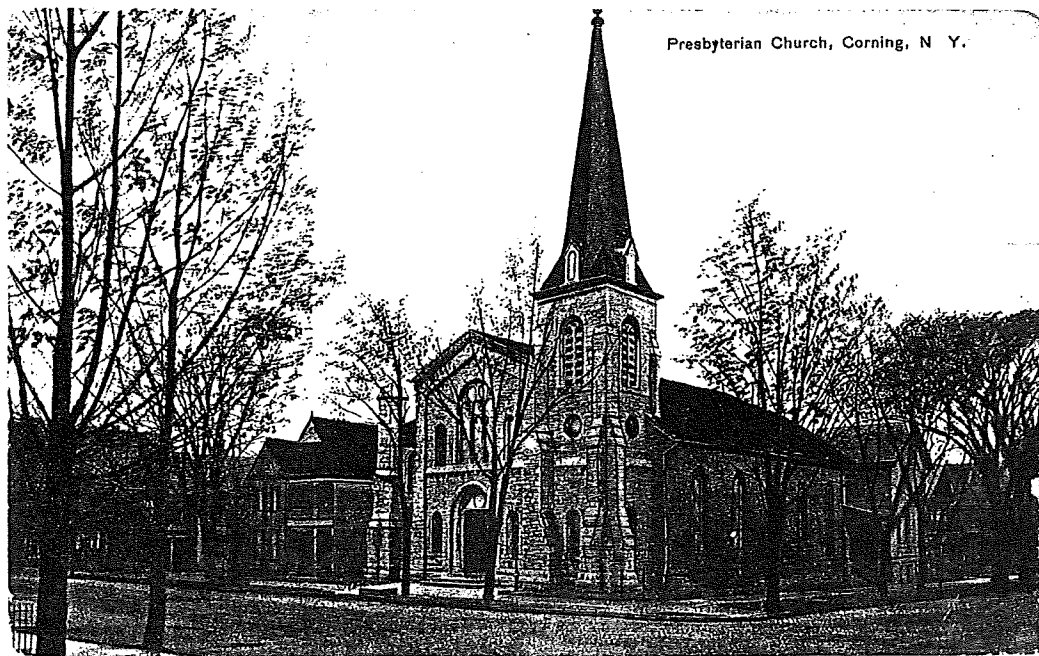


German Church, Corning, N. Y.

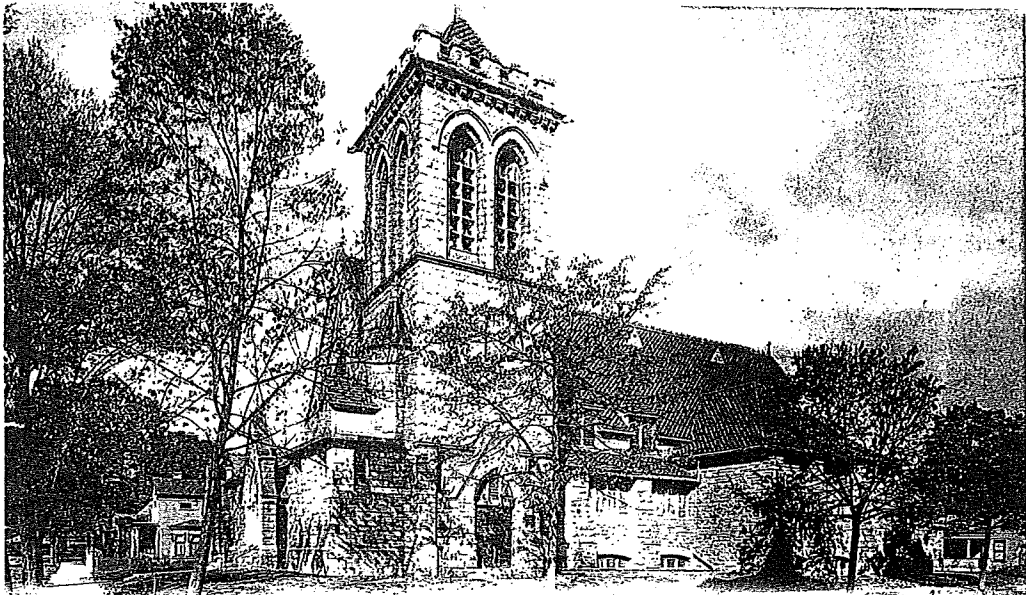
Pub. by The J. M. Greig Co., Corning, N. Y.



54474 First Presbyterian Church. Corning, N. Y.



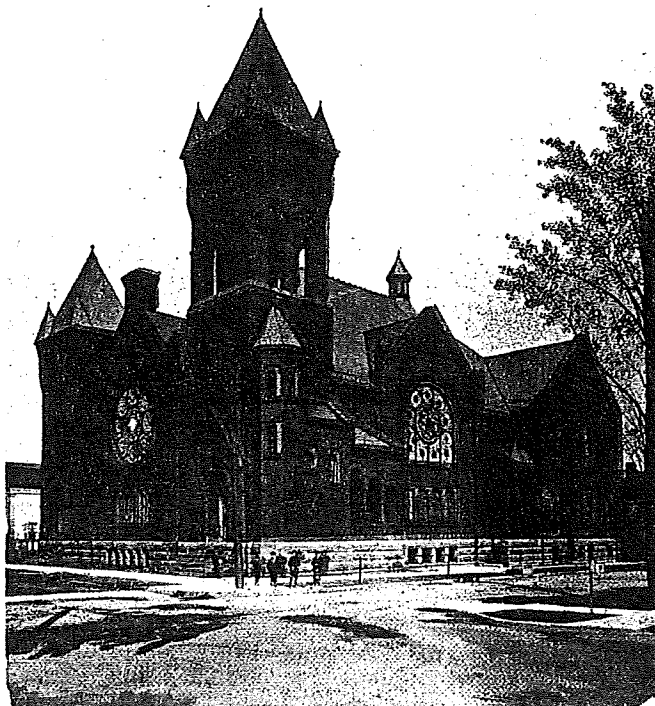
Presbyterian Church, Corning, N. Y.



A 25627 Christ Church, (Episcopal), Corning, N. Y.

*A. G. Smith*

Methodist Church, Corning, N. Y.



Many a visitor has quipped, "First Street should be called Church Street!" Their comments are well founded as at least seven religious institutions have homes there including Prebysterians, Lutherns, Methodists, Episcopaleans, Baptists, Catholics, and Christian Scientists. An additional two Roman Catholic churches are located in the vicinity. Among these religious institutions are wonderful examples of nineteenth century church architecture. These religious structures also have great local historical importance. They include the Preysbertian Church, the oldest church in continuous use in Corning, and the Episcopal Church with its Tiffany windows and Tiffany decorated interior.

The homes of many historic Corningites dot the Southside Neighborhood including the homes of several Houghton families, the Hawkes, the Sinclairs, the Sullivans, and the Carders to mention just a few.

Today Corning is the "Crystal City" not simply because of the glass that has been and is being made here, but also because this community is reflecting like a crystal prism qualities of brilliance and purity, of pride and love, as it builds upon its traditions and charts a course towards a daring and brilliant future. So what do we have on the Southside Hill? We have a special place, a place made of history and dreams and traditions.

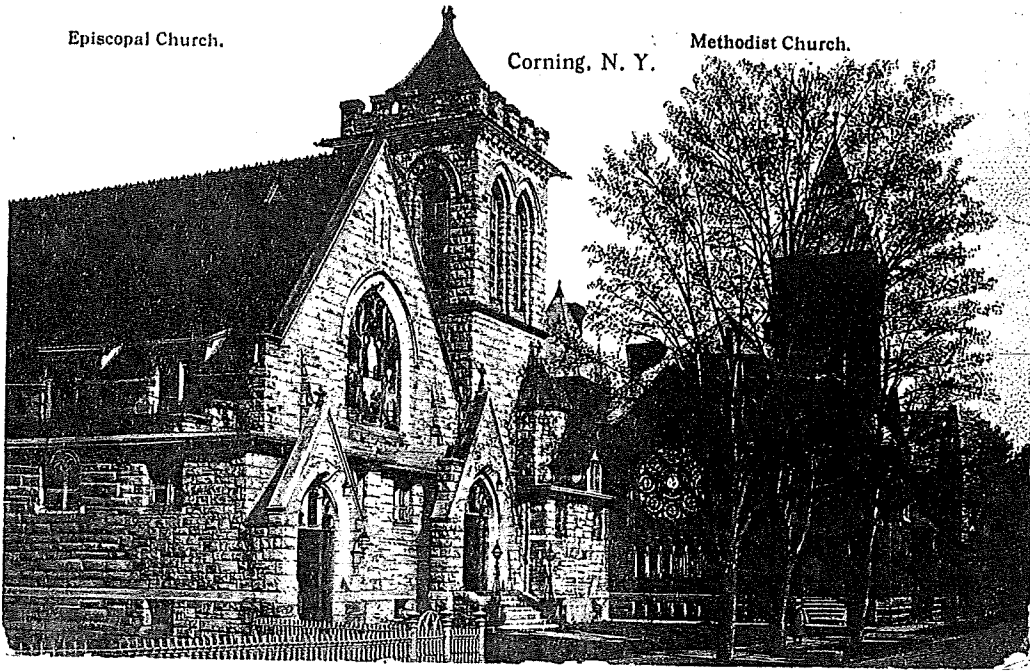
The Southside Hill is a living place of fundamental importance to the community as are all of the residential neighborhoods in Corning. Its richness as a neighborhood is its totality and its



Episcopal Church.

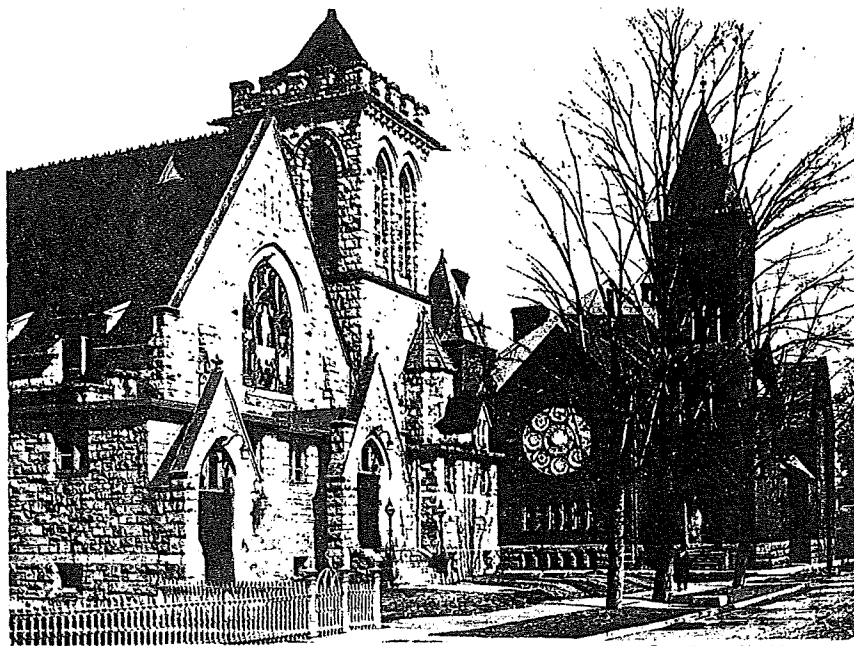
Corning, N. Y.

Methodist Church.



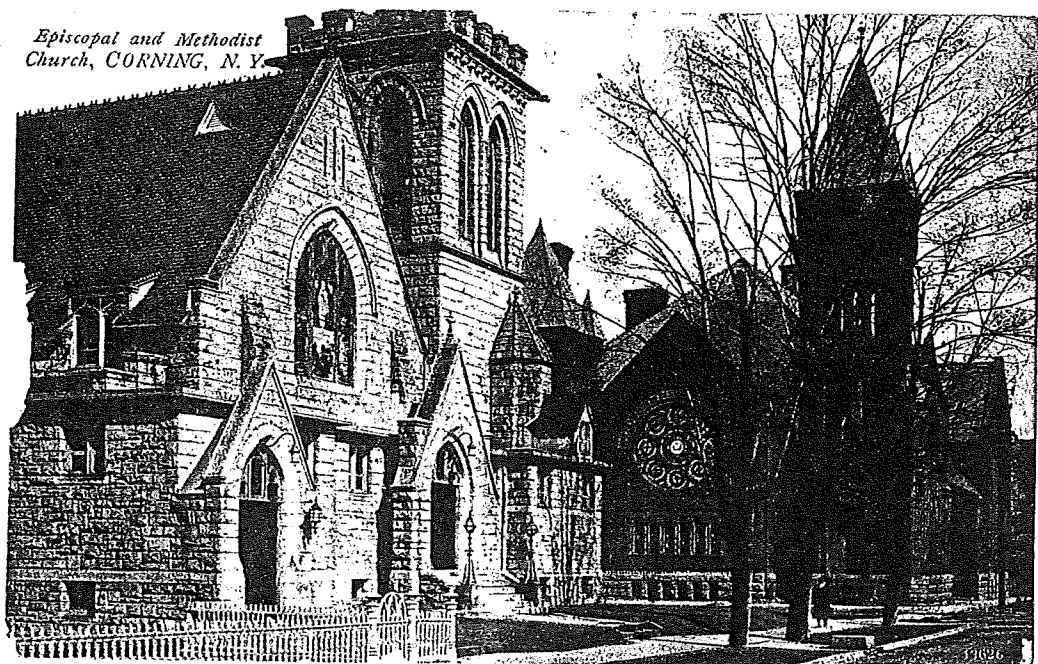
Interior Christ's Church, Corning, N. Y.



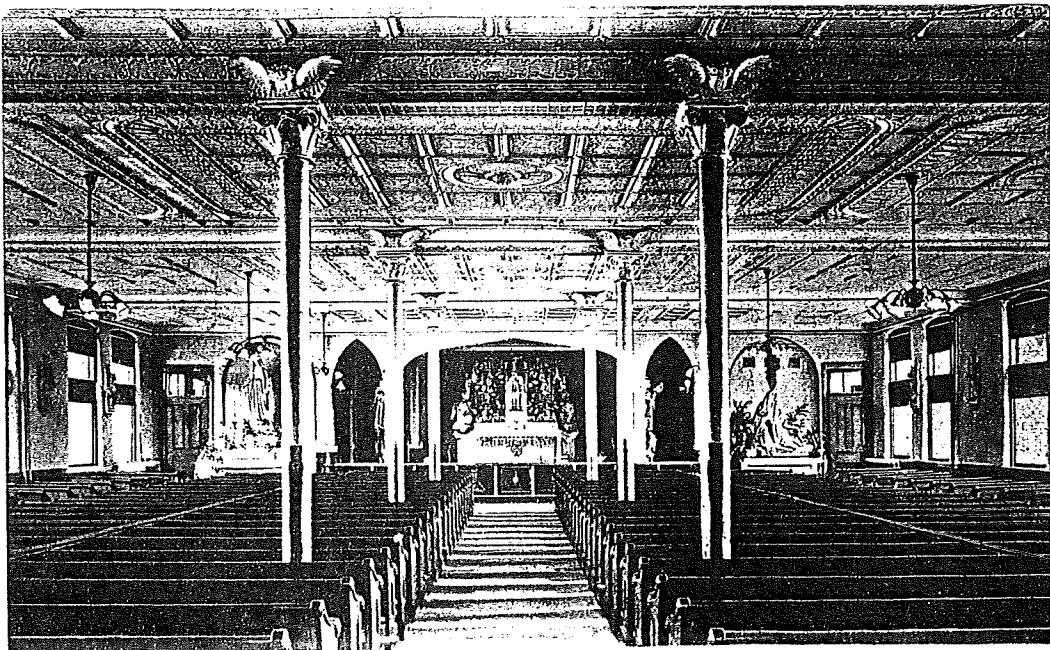
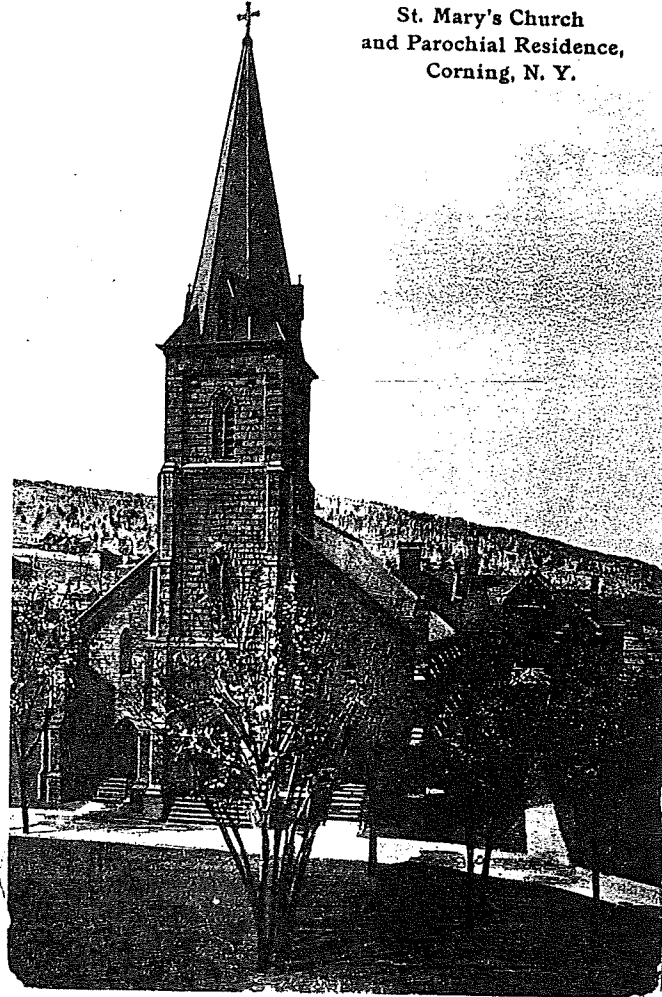


Episcopal and First Methodist Churches.

Corning, N. Y.



St. Mary's Church  
and Parochial Residence,  
Corning, N. Y.



Interior of St. Patrick's (Roman Catholic) Church, Corning, N. Y.

ambience. There are no guarantees that the Southside Hill will retain its special flavor, its historic architecture, and its total value to the community. Not only are there no guarantees that it will continue to be a healthy neighborhood, there are telltale signs of problems and threats to this including deteriorating structures, changing patterns of the usage of residential structures, increasing numbers of razings for parking lots, loss of architectural elements such as wrought iron fences, and a lack of coordinated planning for the future preservation and development of the area.

It is time for the entire community, including government, business, industry, the arts, property owners, and residents to make a concentrated effort to insure the future prosperity of all of Corning. Every element of our environment affects the quality of our life. We are a community. We are a wonderful community thanks to a large degree to those who came before us.

What will we leave?

Thomas P. Dimitroff

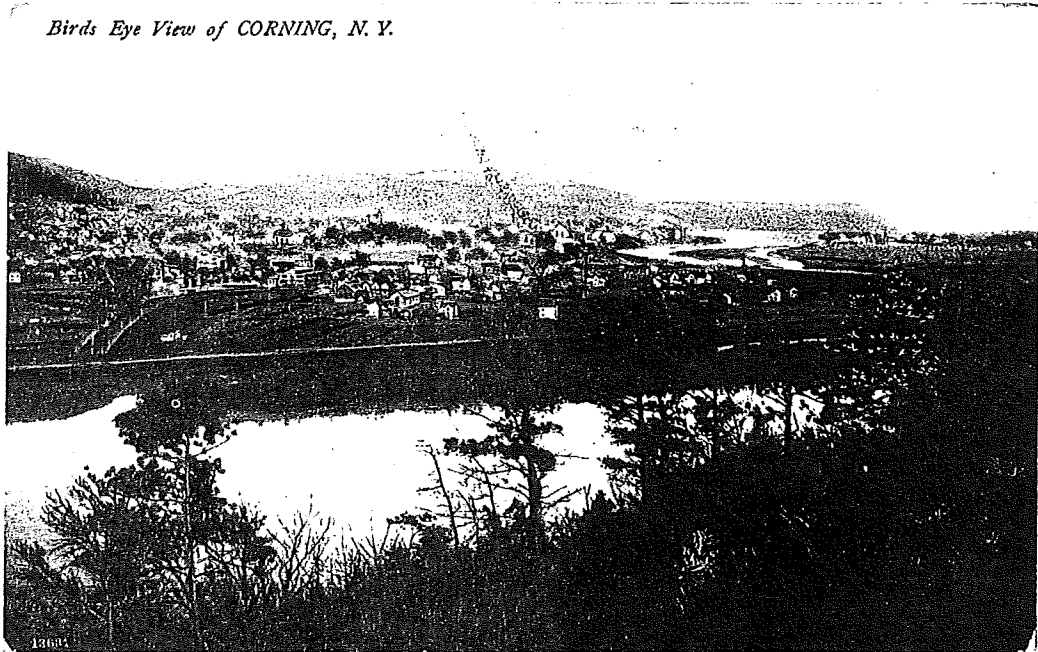
Fall, 1991



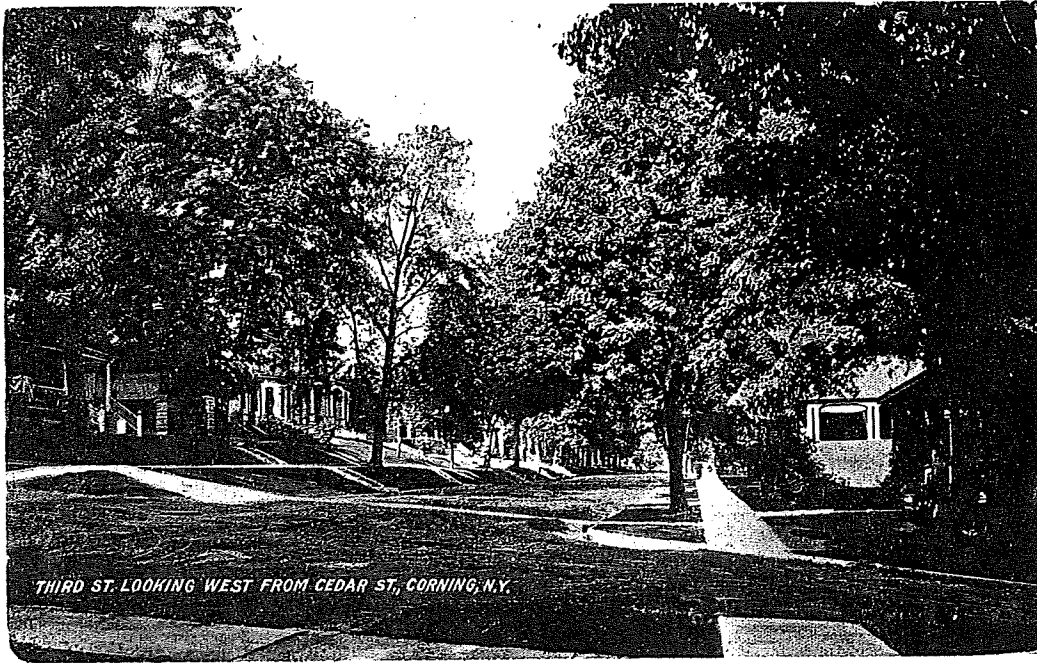
Pine Street and Erie Avenue looking South, Corning, N. Y.

*This is the office*

*Birds Eye View of CORNING, N. Y.*



13604



THIRD ST. LOOKING WEST FROM CEDAR ST, CORNING, N.Y.



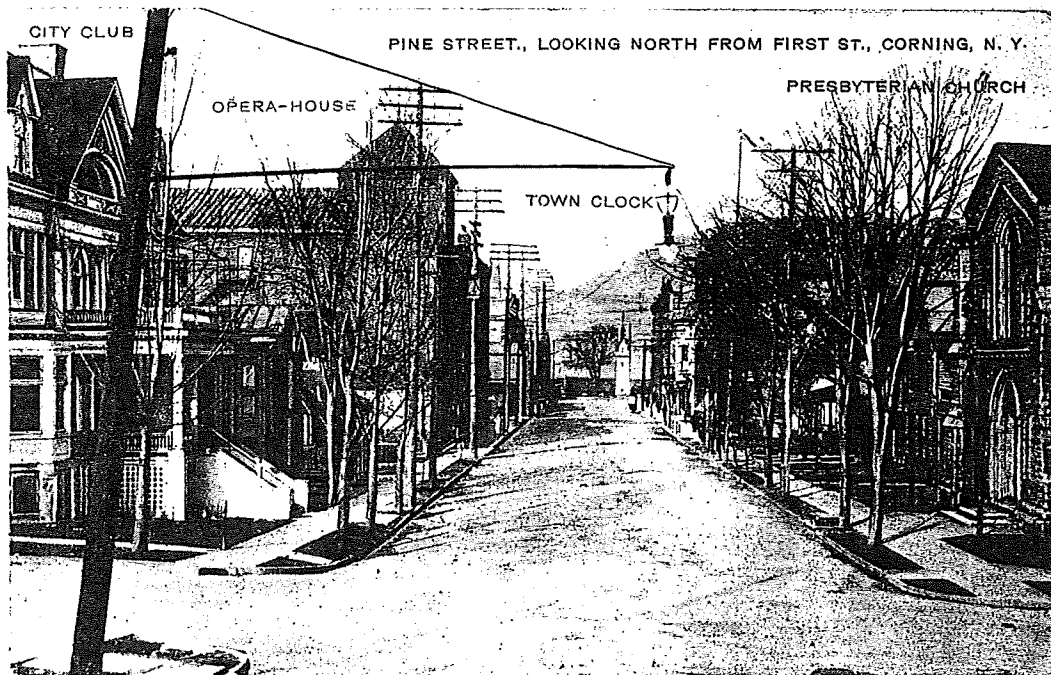
A 25640 Third St. looking East, Corning, N. Y.

*With Love to your Mother. Teabelle*



Pine Street Looking North, Corning, N. Y.

Pub. by L. T. Goodridge & Co., Corning, N. Y.



CITY CLUB

PINE STREET., LOOKING NORTH FROM FIRST ST., CORNING, N. Y.

OPERA-HOUSE

PRESBYTERIAN CHURCH

TOWN CLOCK



*EAST FIRST STR., CORNING, N.Y.*



First Street, East from Pine Street,  
Corning, N. Y.



First Street east from Pine Street, Corning, N. Y.

