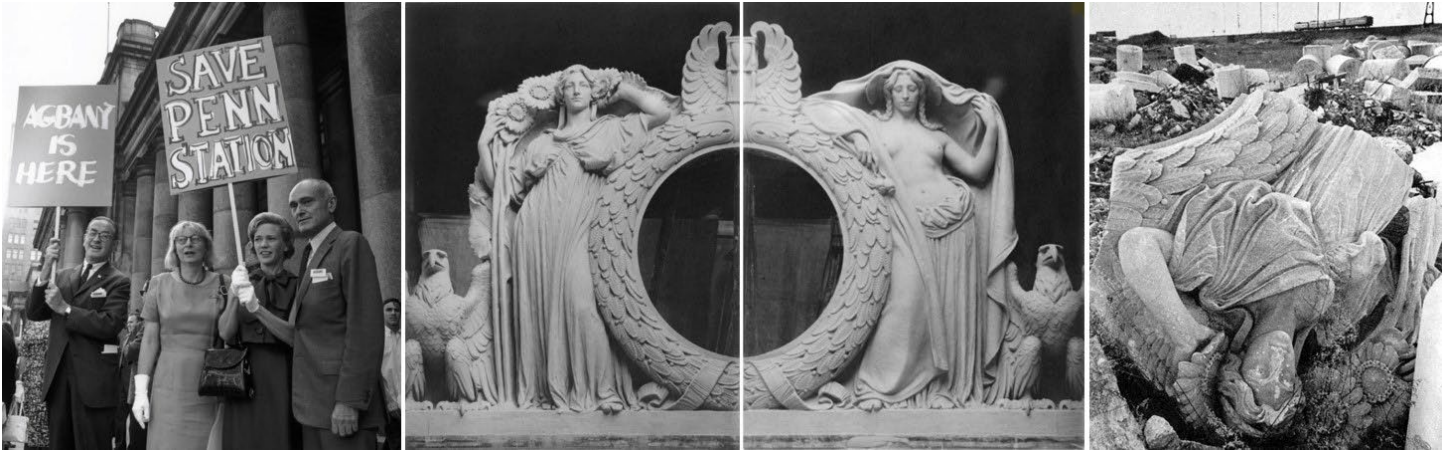




1962 - 2022

HUDSON HERITAGE ASSOCIATION

Celebrating 60 Years of Preservation



Left, Members of AGBANY protest the demolition of Pennsylvania Station, 1962. Center, Adolph Weinman's maiden at the left, holding the garland of sunflowers, represents "Day;" her comely sister at right, "Night." Right, a fragment of Weinman's stone maiden statue "Day," dumped into a trackside landfill in Secaucus, NJ.

A Call to Action: Saving Hudson's Brewster Store & the Beginnings of HHA

By Christopher Bach & Patricia S. Eldredge

In August 1962, a group of architects in New York City formed a new organization called the "Action Group for Better Architecture in New York." Its first and primary cause was the preservation of historic Penn Station. The group organized a protest, launched a letter-writing campaign, ran newspaper ads, spoke up at hearings and held a grand rally in front of the station that drew hundreds of supporters. They carried signs that read "DON'T AMPUTATE, RENOVATE," "DON'T DEMOLISH IT! POLISH IT!" and "SAVE OUR HERITAGE." One sign simply read "SHAME!"

On October 28, 1963, the demolition crew appeared with jackhammers, and the "monumental act of vandalism" began. Although all 22 stone-carved eagles (created by sculptor Adolph Alexander Weinman) that adorned the station were saved, most of the travertine and granite – including several of Weinman's paired stone maiden's "Day" and "Night" that once graced the four entrances – were dumped into a trackside landfill in Secaucus, NJ. By 1966, all traces of the monumental gateway were gone. The demonstrations to preserve Penn Station could not save it, but they did spark what became the architectural preservation movement in the United States.

Here in Hudson, in early 1962, the First National Bank of Akron was making plans to tear down its Hudson branch building and construct a new modern drive-in facility. Known as the Brewster Store at 5 Aurora Street and located directly across from the Clock Tower, the building was built in 1839 and had been designated as "the oldest commercial brick edifice in constant use in the Western Reserve." Residents of the village were outraged by the announcement and were "ready to do battle" to keep the building from being destroyed.

By late March, petitions and petitioners took to the streets, asking First National Bank to change its mind about tearing down one of Hudson's historic structures. One bank official reacted to the protests by saying, "They're a little premature. They should wait and see our plans for the new building." When the

plans were completed, bank officials planned to meet with village residents to try to convince them that the construction of the new building, and the demolition of the historic Brewster Store, would do no harm to the Western Reserve tradition.

HHa luminary Patricia Eldredge recalls that “the bank officials proposed to raze the historic building, use the street frontage for parking, and construct a typical Georgian-style building at the rear. The bank was, and still is, a linchpin for the downtown area. To lose it to a modern building with an anti-historic setback would destroy the ‘cornerness’ of that pivotal property and would have irrevocably scarred the face of the village.”



1839 Brewster Store – First National Bank, 1962.

Hudson residents spoke out, with many writing protest letters to the local paper. “This is all we have left of Ohio’s beautiful past and I love it. Save it!” wrote one resident. “This brick building has stood on the square in Hudson since 1839 and is regarded by most of us as a personal friend, treasured as one of the few remaining old buildings which make our square so beautiful,” wrote another. “They put pressure on the bank officials. The Akron Beacon Journal featured long and outraged letters from Fred Waring, Western Reserve Academy’s famed historian and teacher, Brad Burnham, and Gloria Guldán. A children’s petition was gotten up by the Kibbe boys, aged 12 and 10, followed by one signed by voting-age citizens,” recalls Eldredge.

On Monday, April 23, the paper reported that petitions were in the mail and that “the postman here had quite a bundle to dispatch.” Petitions carrying more than 800 signatures of persons wanting the old bank building to be preserved, went into the mail to the First National Bank. “The destruction of this splendid old building would detract seriously from the quality that makes Hudson something more than a commonplace village” read the protesting documents. The voice of David Hudson’s great-great granddaughter, Anna Lee, “joined firmly in the community chorus to preserve the heritage of the town he founded,” the paper reported. Noting the importance the building had played in community life, Ms. Lee wrote to bank officials in part, “Hudson is no recent development. It has taken almost 200 years to acquire its beauty and stature. Businessmen have exploited Hudson’s reputation at no expense to themselves. Surely it is only just that you shoulder some small part of this burden now.”

In neighboring Peninsula there were similar immediate threats to the Bronson Episcopal Church, also built in 1839 and the GAR Hall, built in 1851. By April, a group of women from Peninsula (Lily Fleder and Eunice Conger Halls) and Hudson (Gloria Guldán) had organized and headed to Washington, D.C., to meet with their Congressman William Hanes Ayres, the director of the National Trust for Historic

Preservation (NTHP) and Chief Historian for the National Park Service (NPS). Eldredge remarks “We must remember that this was a time when preservation was in its infancy. The Historic Preservation Act of 1966 had not yet been written and the National Trust was the only organization which seemed to have any interest in the subject.”

The Akron Beacon Journal was persuaded to send a reporter along to Washington, so that the trip was guaranteed good coverage. They wrote that the “three fast-talking women won some support for their campaign to preserve historic sites in Hudson and Peninsula.” In that meeting, it was agreed that both the NTHP and NPS would send representatives to assess the historical value of the disputed sites. Congressman Ayers gave them moral support and had his picture taken with them for the paper. Gloria Guldan later recalled “We pointed out to the Congressman that Ohio has very few acres of federally funded park lands, and that Hudson with its Green, its architecture and its country town feeling, served the same purpose as a park for the nearby communities.” Incidentally, this may well have been the first seed sown in the eventual formation of the present Cuyahoga Valley National Park.



**Formation of Hudson Heritage Association Announced,
The Akron Beacon Journal, June 18, 1962.**

The women returned to Hudson and Peninsula and suggested the next step would be to organize a committee. At the National Trust, the Hudson representatives were promised a consultant. Helen Duprey Bullock, the legendary editor of *Preservation News*, arrived in Hudson for the annual Ice Cream Social on the Green and for a large meeting held at Western Reserve Academy's Ellsworth Hall where she was to speak. It was at this meeting that the Hudson Heritage Association was officially founded as Hudson's preservation organization. Its first order of business was the salvation of the Brewster Store.

On June 17, 1962, after a two-day study of the communities and a presentation by NTHP and NPS officials, the Hudson Heritage Association was formally organized and named. And in August, the group interested in preserving the scenic and historic beauty of the Cuyahoga Valley was formed and named the Peninsula Valley Heritage Assosiation, now the Peninsula Foundation. Both the Bronson Episcopal Church and GAR Hall buildings were eventually saved and preserved, as well as the prominent Brewster Store building that proudly stands, among many other historic structures, safeguarding the perimeter edge of our beautiful historic Village Green.

Whether because of pressure or persuasion, the bank decided to retain the historic Brewster Store building and work soon began on the structural reinforcement of the interior.

On October 15 formal Articles of Incorporation of the Hudson Heritage Association were filed with the Secretary of State. Those listed as initial trustees were Dorothy Jackson, J. Fred Waring, Katherine Hyde, Gloria Guldan, Carleton Davis, John Harris, Charles Willits, Grace Goulder Izant, Ruth Sprague, Gerald D.

Gibson, Edward D. Fitch, Helen McConnell, Martha Phipps, Juanita Reynolds, and Robert Richardson. Ned Fitch was HHA's first president and Ruth Sprague was the first treasurer. The statement of purpose listed five goals:

1. Urge the preservation of buildings that are fine or interesting examples of architecture.
2. Help enforce zoning laws and building codes in order to encourage, in new buildings, the same good taste that Hudson's founders brought with them from Connecticut.
3. Promote the maintenance of David Hudson's Village Green and the Hudson Public Square as the central feature of the Village and Township.
4. Encourage the preservation and planting of trees throughout the community.
5. Cooperate with other committees and organizations devoted to the same end: the continuing development of a well-integrated community that is in keeping with its traditions as an early settlement of the Western Reserve of Connecticut.

This was the beginning of Hudson Heritage and its first challenge. There would be many more to follow in the next sixty years. We will tell you about some of them in the months to come.