

syracuse.com

'Pocket park' off Clinton Square should be fixed, reopened by next summer

Published: Thursday, December 22, 2011, 5:46 AM



Dick Case / Post-Standard columnist
By



David Lassman / The Post-Standard

This is the Robert P. Haggart Park at the corner of South Clinton and West Genesee streets. It's named in honor of the late Post-Standard columnist Bob Haggart.

Not to worry; it's on the way.

That's the cheery word I had this week from Andrew Maxwell, the city's director of planning and sustainability, who is my contact for information about Robert R. Haggart Park.

The "pocket park," so-called, is across the street from my workplace in The Post-Standard building. The park's at North Clinton and West Genesee Street, in the "heart of downtown Syracuse," as we used to say.

The park's named for Bob Haggart, who used to be a columnist for the paper. Bob left us in untimely fashion in 1997; cancer took him. We miss him a

lot.

When the park came along, it pleased Bob's ex-colleagues. Not only was it a neat memorial but it was handy by Bob's old office. We could watch over it.

I called Andy Maxwell the other day to comment on the gray, tall, board fence the city has put up around the pocket. Haggart Park has seen better days, I have to admit. It turns out it was put up on top of a building that was torn down. Some of the debris was shoveled into the hole; the landscape's sinking.

Sinking.

I talked to Andy Maxwell about the situation back in September and he told me the park's in for a fix. It's to be included in the county's "save the rain" sewer project, which is going on all over town. Andy figures work on the park could start in the summer of 2012.

It's to include porous pavement, planters and other environmentally friendly measures. Just the sort of thing to knock the socks off the Common Council, which Bob Haggart used to call "Syracuse's greatest deliberative body," tongue firmly planted in cheek.

According to Andy, the city raised the fence to protect us from falling into one of the park's holes and hurting ourselves. "It's a safety issue," he explained.

Just now, the fence looks a bit intimidating, honestly. The sort of place we're tempted to get a boost up and peek inside. The fence doesn't even have any happy paintings by school kids on it.

One more thing: Bob Haggart isn't buried in the park. That's a totally false rumor made up by Syracuse's greatest deliberative body.

That skinny building

Pam Priest, the helpful archivist at Onondaga Historical Association, did some digging for me in her records about the curious building at 537-39 N. Salina Street. The landmark is very narrow: only 13.9 feet side to side. It stands vacant.

Pam says it looks to her, from Syracuse street directories of the era, that No.537 was built sometime between 1890 and 1892. Before that, the space was a driveway to North State Street.

That matches the story I heard from George Angeloro, who owns the restaurant next door. Along with the opinion I heard last week from a fan who said the building is similar to those in many Italian cities. George said he'd heard 537 was built "by an old Italian."

Pam Priest found the first tenant in 1892 was a Chinese laundry, Ching's. Later, a clairvoyant is listed at 537, when it was called the John Hall Block.

Ida Mae Winter

I had some nice feedback from the column I wrote about Ida Mae Winter and Big Moose Community Chapel Sunday.

Enid Pechin Reiley writes about Ida's family's Ainsworth Lodge at Big Moose, where her family had a camp. "I still remember going to their Lodge to get our drinking water from a pipe that had the clearest, coldest water I can remember," Enid says. Adding, of Ida Winter, "I'm glad she's still going strong."

A fellow Big Moose camper, present tense, also called to tell me he's the "only one who square-danced with Ida Mae Winter" a while back. That's Charlie Adams of Auburn, who took my wife and I out in his antique Chris-Craft, The Grace, back in 2006, when Big Moose noted the 100th anniversary of Grace Brown's murder by Chester Gillette at the Adirondack lake.

Charlie and Ida grew up together.

The books

Credit Barbara Davis with another book of Syracuse history. It's the "Jewish Community of Syracuse," published in Arcadia's Images of America Series. Barbara, a retired professor at Onondaga Community College, describes the new book as "mostly pictures." It was so-authored by Susan Rabin, a colleague at Barbara's former job as principal at the Hebrew Day School.

Barbara's previous work includes a book on "Syracuse African Americans," which came out in 2006, also from Arcadia. The new book sells for \$21.99.

Also, Log Cabin Books of Hamilton has published "Practical Dreamer," \$25.95, by Norman K. Dann, the first complete biography of abolitionist Gerrit Smith in more than 70 years. The author is a retired faculty member at Morrisville State College.

Dick Case writes Tuesday, Thursday and Sunday. Reach him at 470-2254, or by e-mail at dcase@syracuse.com.

© 2011 syracuse.com. All rights reserved.