

Proposed Local Landmark Designation of the Chacona Block – 411-415 College Avenue

The Ithaca Landmarks Preservation Commission (ILPC) introduced discussion at their July 11th meeting of the proposed local landmark designation of the Chacona Block at 411-415 College Avenue. This is the present location of businesses including Collegetown Bagels and Ruloff's restaurant. Public hearing on this designation will continue on Tuesday, August 8th at 5:30pm at Ithaca City Hall.

Why is the Chacona Block eligible for designation?

It meets the five criteria for designation in Ithaca's Municipal Code:

- *The Chacona Block possesses special historical and aesthetic interest as part of the development, heritage and cultural characteristics of the City of Ithaca and the growth of Cornell University.* Its construction is closely tied to the evolution of this section of College Avenue from boarding house buildings into an important commercial and apartment corridor during the early 1910s and the development of Collegetown. Built between 1911 and 1912, the Chacona Block was one of the first mixed use commercial blocks designed specifically for commercial and apartment rental purposes in close proximity to Cornell University's prominent stone bridge entrance.
- *The Chacona Block is identified with John N. "Little John" Chacona, a locally significant individual.* John N. Chacona was born in Greece and moved to Ithaca in the late 1800s with other relatives. He established confectionary and ice cream shops in various locations in Ithaca. After a fire at his 416 Stewart Avenue shop, he commissioned a new stucco commercial block at 411-415 College Avenue to house his shop, other businesses, and "modern" apartments for rent on the upper floors. Chacona's life and business enterprises in Ithaca were reported on by local newspapers. His Chacona Block store was well-known by Cornell students and references to it can be found in Cornell student publications and the university's alumni publications from this era.
- *The Chacona Block embodies the distinguishing characteristics of an architectural style.* This building is a good example of a stucco coated, Renaissance Revival style commercial building. It includes elements that refer to Chacona's Greek heritage, such as the lion's head and the Greek cross decorative elements on the College Avenue façade.
- *The Chacona Block is the work of architect John M. Wilgus, who was active throughout Ithaca during this era.* John M. Wilgus was a locally well-known architect who designed commercial, residential and religious buildings throughout Ithaca, including the First Church of Christ Scientist at 101 University Avenue, the McAllister Block at the corner of Eddy and Williams Streets, and the commercial building at 114-118 South Cayuga Street.
- *The Chacona Block represents an established and familiar visual feature of the community by virtue of its unique location.* The Chacona Block sits at the most prominent intersection of

Collegetown at the corner of College Avenue and Oak Avenue. Its location at this highly visible node is significant because the Chacona Block serves as an important eastern edge framing the heavily travelled route to and from the stone bridge of the Cornell University campus. It serves as a prominent landmark for people entering and leaving the campus and its size and scale remain compatible with Sheldon Court across the street.

What you can do to show your support of this designation:

- Attend the public hearing on Tuesday, August 8th at 5:30pm and make a short statement to the commission. Each speaker is allowed 3 minutes to make a statement.
- If you can't attend the hearing in person, you can submit comments by email to Bryan McCracken, the Historic Preservation Planner, at BMccracken@cityofithaca.org. Ideally, comments should be emailed to Bryan by Monday, August 7th at 4pm so that they can be distributed to ILPC members via email. If comments are emailed by 4:30pm on Tuesday, August 8th, Bryan will photocopy them and distribute them to ILPC members at the meeting. If you want to submit comments by regular mail, please send them to:

ILPC and Bryan McCracken
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