



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

Patty Ritchie

## Ritchie Announces Two Local Eateries Added to NY's "Historic Business Preservation Registry"

PATTY RITCHIE March 30, 2022

| ISSUE: **HISTORIC BUSINESS PRESERVATION REGISTRY**



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State Senator Patty Ritchie is announcing that two local businesses have been added to the new New York State “Historic Business Preservation Registry.” Recently, Senator Ritchie nominated Watertown’s “Crystal Restaurant” and Ogdensburg’s “Phillips Diner” for inclusion

in the registry, which seeks to recognize and honor New York's historic businesses.

"The Crystal Restaurant and Phillips Diner are two North Country staples that not only are known for their good food, but also for their rich histories," said Senator Ritchie.

"I would like to congratulate both of these establishments on this special designation and thank them for being part of their local communities for so many years. I am hopeful that by being part of this new program, more people will be encouraged to visit them, enjoy a meal and learn about their histories."

Opened in 1925, the Crystal Restaurant is Watertown's oldest restaurant, replacing the early saloons that occupied the City's Public Square at the turn of the nineteenth century. The restaurant, which was established by brothers Dennis and Jerry Valanos in 1925, occupies a prominent spot on Watertown's Public Square, retaining its original black-tiled storefront, hanging sign and wood paneled interior with bar and booths. In 1928, Otto Dephteros was hired as chef and along with his brother Nicholas, they quickly rose to run the business, purchasing it in 1943. Heirs to the two brothers have continued to operate the restaurant for more than ninety years. In 2018, the family finally acquired the building itself, which was subsequently rehabilitated. Current owners Peter, Libby and Joe Dephteros maintain well-remembered local traditions—including their famous "Tom and Jerry" cocktail—within the original historic bar and restaurant for the local community.

Phillip's Diner in Ogdensburg was opened in 1948 by Russell and Ollie Phillips and their son, Bud. In 1949, Joe Rish, Russell and Ollie Phillips's son-in-law, joined the staff as a cook, learned the business from the Phillips family and watched as it grew from a small dining car with a handful of seats to a small diner style restaurant. After a neighboring fire seriously damaged the restaurant in 1972, Joe purchased the business and rebuilt it. In 1994, his daughter, Judi, granddaughter of founders Russell and Ollie, started working alongside her

father and soon became his right hand. Today, the diner is owned and operated by Judith Rish Ashley. She and her husband, Don Ashley, continue to use many of the same recipes used over seventy years ago, when the diner first opened.

New York State's Historic Business Preservation Registry was established by Chapter 241 of the Laws of 2020. The program is administered by the Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation, and highlights businesses that have been in operation for at least 50 years and have contributed to their communities' history. The program also provides educational and promotional assistance to businesses to help ensure they remain viable.

For more information on the New York State Historic Business Preservation Registry, including an interactive map of historic businesses across the state, [click here](#)