

September 2010

Foodservice

equipment & supplies.



By Donna Boss, Contributing Editor

Divine Kitchen & Bar

at Hotel Clarence in Seneca Falls, N.Y.



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The film "It's a Wonderful Life" plays in the lobby of Hotel Clarence, named after the guardian angel who helps restore the main character's conviction to live. The hardwood floors and simple décor are interior design elements found throughout the property.

Photos by Dave Revette, photodrave@me.com

The upscale boutique hotel uses a small but very efficient kitchen to support its restaurant, bar, catered events and room service operations.

Hotel Clarence, which opened in Seneca Falls' historic district in July 2009 following a \$6.5 million renovation, is named after the guardian angel Clarence Odbody, played by Henry Travers in Frank Capra's 1946 film classic "It's a Wonderful Life." Clarence intervenes when George Bailey, played by James Stewart, contemplates suicide on Christmas Eve while standing on a bridge overlooking a canal in his hometown of Bedford Falls.

Since the film's release, Bedford Falls has been believed to be modeled after Seneca Falls, where Capra stopped on his way to visit relatives in nearby Auburn. In the movie, the angel Clarence gives Bailey a chance to see what would have happened if he had never been born and George re-claims his lease on life.

"Today, the hotel and its restaurant, DiVINE Kitchen, and adjacent bar make a strong contribution to Seneca Falls by attracting customers to this historic site," says Jake McKenna, the hotel's owner along with

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The 30-seat mahogany bar (below) is equipped with a beer tower, wine shelving, refrigerators and blenders. In the back, guests can sit in the lounge (seen on the right) while enjoying beverages and bar menu selections.

Photos by Dave Revette, photodave@me.com



his partner in J&J Hospitality, Jay Bernhardt.

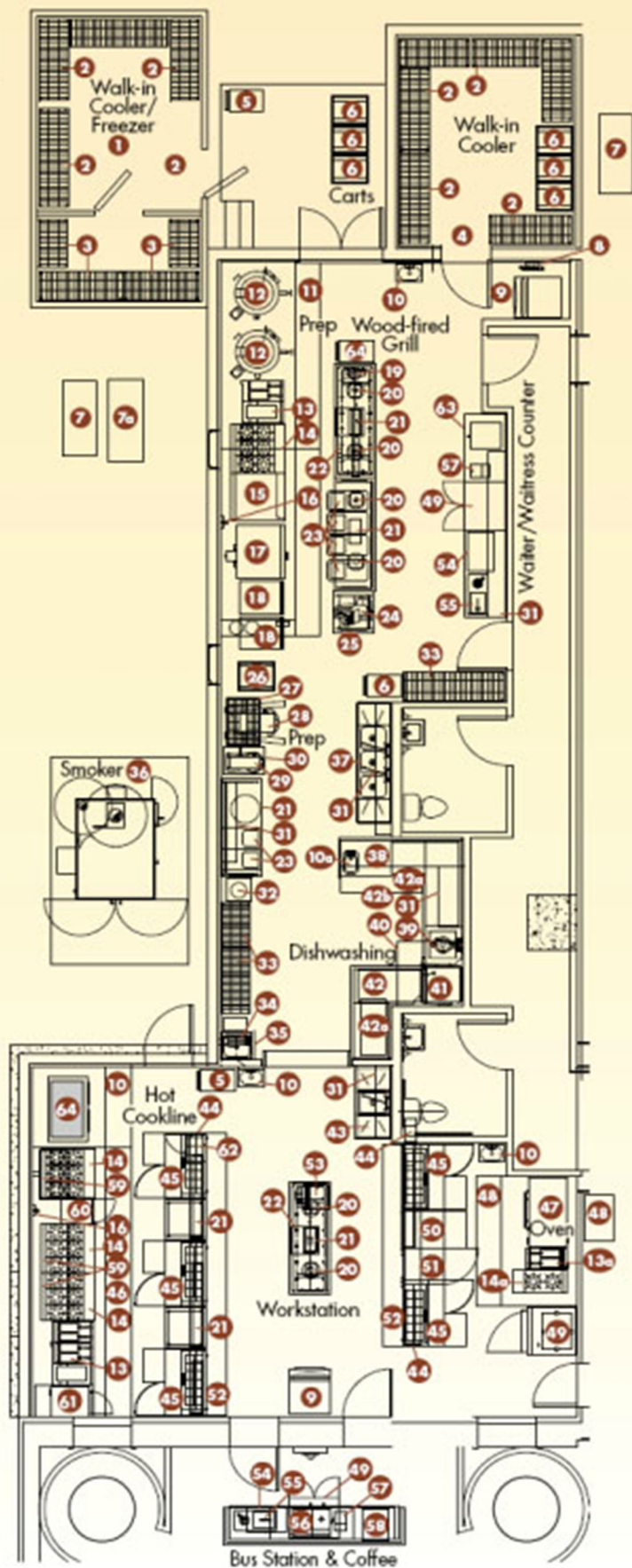
The renovation included land acquisition, construction fixtures, furniture and \$550,000 in kitchen equipment, smallware and glassware. The hotel contains 48 rooms including nine suites, an 88-seat restaurant, a 30-seat bar and a ballroom that can accommodate 130 people at seated events and 160 people at buffets. "We selected décor features with intricate scroll work amidst clean modern lines," says Erica Bernhardt, interior design consultant at JGB Properties. In the bar, an old mahogany bar originally used in Muldoon's, a downtown Seneca Falls bar, is a centerpiece in this comfortable environment.

The kitchen consists of two rectangular areas: a 660-square-foot pantry/restaurant kitchen area and a 725-square-foot banquet kitchen/warewashing area. "The space allocated for the kitchen was defined by the original kitchen's footprint, which was irregular," says Tom Mahaney, project manager/designer, Buffalo Hotel Supply, Farmington, N.Y. "The owners didn't want to do a major demolition for a new kitchen and they wanted a from-scratch menu, so we had to position as much equipment as possible in a relatively small, 1,285-square-foot space to allow staff to be very efficient. For example, we installed a triple-stacked deck oven, which is the first time I've ever had to do this. Most of the equipment is standard buyouts from manufacturers, though we had to order custom-fabricated dishtables and worktables, and sinks."

DiVINE Kitchen

Key Equipment List

- | | |
|---------------------------------|-----------------------------|
| 1. Walk-in cooler/freezer | 33. Storage shelving |
| 2. Cooler shelving | 34. Hose reel |
| 3. Freezer shelving | 35. Mop sink |
| 4. Walk-in cooler | 36. Smoker |
| 5. Bus carts | 37. 3-compartment sink |
| 6. Roll-in racks | 38. Custom soiled dishtable |
| 7. Cooler condenser | 39. Disposer |
| 7A. Freezer condenser | 40. Condensate hood |
| 8. Filter system | 41. Dishwasher |
| 9. Ice maker | 42. Custom clean dishtable |
| 10. Hand sink | 42A. Glass rack shelf |
| 10A. Sink | 42B. Landing Shelf |
| 11. Banquet exhaust hood | 43. Prep sink |
| 12. Steam kettle | 44. Overshelves |
| 13. Fryer w/dump station | 45. Refrigerator sand top |
| 13A. Fryer | 46. Kitchen exhaust hood |
| 14. Range | 47. Triple deck oven |
| 14A. Half-size range | 48. Steam generator |
| 15. Fry-top range | 49. Refrigerator |
| 16. Pot filler faucet | 50. U/c freezer |
| 17. Double-deck convection oven | 51. U/c refrigerator |
| 18. Proofing cabinet | 52. Plate storage |
| 19. Food processor | 53. Conveyor toaster |
| 20. Heat lamps | 54. Warming drawer |
| 21. Worktable | 55. Ice water station |
| 22. Pot rack, ceiling | 56. Espresso machine |
| 23. Ingredient bins | 57. Coffee grinder |
| 24. Slicer | 58. Coffee brewer |
| 25. Slicer stand | 59. Salamander broiler |
| 26. Bin pack rack | 60. Cook hold oven |
| 27. Mixer rack | 61. Convection steamer |
| 28. 60-qt. mixer | 62. Microwave |
| 29. 20-qt. mixer | 63. Custom waitress counter |
| 30. Mixer stand | 64. Wood-fired Grill |
| 31. Wall shelves | |
| 32. Ice cream maker | |



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The DIVINE Kitchen dining room's hardwood floors and wooden tables and chairs provide stark contrast to the light walls in the sleek room brightened with natural, sconce and pinpoint lighting.

Photos by Dave Revette, phototravel@me.com

Design Capsule

Located in the historic district of Seneca Falls, N.Y., Hotel Clarence opened in July 2009. The four-story, upscale hotel underwent a \$6.5 million renovation and now contains 48 rooms with nine suites. The 49,000-square-foot hotel also features the 1,800-square-foot DIVINE Kitchen and Bar, room service and a 3,000-square-foot ballroom for catered events. A 1,385-square foot kitchen provides food for all the foodservices. The 88-seat restaurant with an additional 12 outdoor seats features contemporary and local American cuisine and is open for "It's A Wonderful Morning!" breakfast from 7 a.m. until 10 a.m.; lunch from 11:30 a.m. until 2:30 p.m.; and dinner from 5 p.m. until 9 p.m. Sunday through Thursday and 5 p.m. until 10 p.m. Friday and Saturday. The average dinner check is \$25. The 30-seat bar serves guests from 11:30 a.m. until closing. A ballroom serves 130 guests for seated events and 160 guests for buffets. The hotel staff includes 37 people, including up to six in the kitchen at peak periods. A \$6.5 million renovation included land acquisition, construction fixtures, furniture and \$550,000 in kitchen equipment, smallware and glassware.

- **Owner:** J&J Hospitality; Jake McKenna, founder and CEO of Parsons-McKenna Construction Company in Liverpool, N.Y., and Jay Bernhardt, founder and CEO of JGB Enterprises in Liverpool and JGB Properties in Syracuse, N.Y.
- **Acting General Manager:** Jan Dewind
- **Executive Chef:** Sean Agate
- **Executive Sous Chef:** Allyson Clampi
- **Architect:** Ramsgard Architectural Group, Skaneateles, N.Y.; Andy Ramsgard, architect
- **Interior Designer:** JGB Properties; Erica Bernhardt, consultant, Syracuse, N.Y.
- **Equipment Design & Dealer:** Buffalo Hotel Supply, Farmington, N.Y.; Tom Mahoney, project manager
- **Equipment Installer:** AIS & Express Commercial Services, Victor, N.Y.; Wayne Stoutner, president
- **Construction:** Parsons-McKenna Construction Co., Inc., Liverpool, N.Y.
- **Website:** hotelclarence.com

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"The kitchen works well because we have the right equipment in the right amount of space to produce the menu we want," notes Sean Agate, the restaurant's executive chef. "We have room for storage and a place for everything, which helps us to be organized and function efficiently. Nothing gets lost."

"All the equipment is mobile for sanitation purposes," adds Mahaney.

The hotel's foodservice operations offer an ethnic and demographic mix of ingredients. Using his European training to design a menu that is "comforting yet pushes beyond people's normal boundaries of comfort," Agate explains that "our selections are a result of our location in an increasingly popular wine-producing area in the Finger Lakes region with farms that grow many fresh local vegetables and fruit. We also have access to local meat producers in the area. Our guests include local citizens and travelers who are either passing between Buffalo and New York City or who come to participate in 'It's a Wonderful Life' celebrations."

Some of the hotel's most popular menu items are prepared in the smoker located outside. "We prepare items such as short ribs by first smoking them outside on my favorite piece of equipment here, a hickory wood smoker, which holds 560 pounds of products," Agate says. "We found that simplicity won the day for smoking. By putting on a good rub, cooking slowly and paying attention to the amount of time needed for cooking, we have a great product."

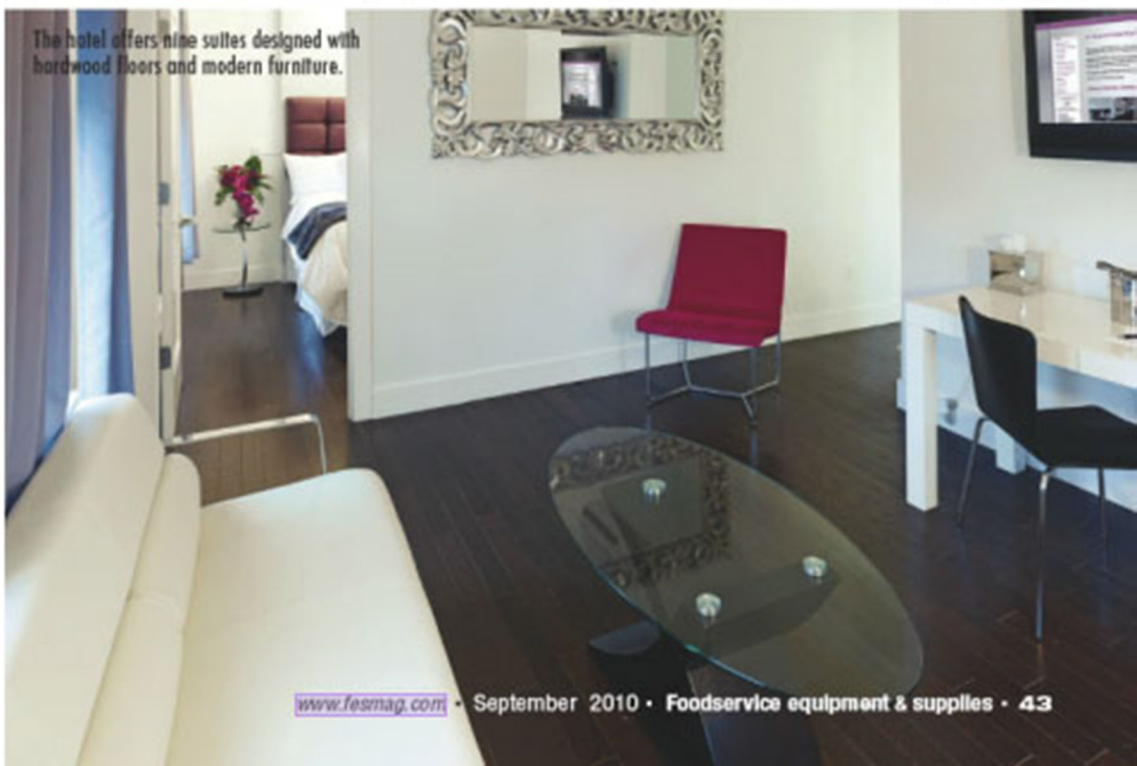
Several smoked menu items, such as wild boar pork bellies and veal cheeks that are braised in duck fat and beer, are also vacuum sealed sous-vide style, or "under vacuum" style. "The smoking and sous-vide processes give distinct flavor and texture," Agate says. The sous-vide process, which is more often used in Europe than the U.S., helps maintain the integrity of ingredients by heating them for an extended period at relatively low temperatures.

"The sealing process is expedient because it allows us to pre-prepare days in advance," says Agate. "This helps us manage food and labor costs and offer value to the customer. If we didn't use this pre-prepare process, we would have to



The hotel's rooms contain simple décor with a silver and gray color scheme accented with maroon backboard.

Photos by Dave Revette,
photodave@me.com



The hotel offers nine suites designed with hardwood floors and modern furniture.

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charge higher prices to the customers.”

Food deliveries go to one of three places: the basement’s dry storage area or the main floor’s coolers separated for produce and protein/dairy or the walk-in freezer.

In the bulk prep/banquet prep area, staff prepare mise en place on worktables. They place the ingredients for soups, stocks and sauces into the 40-gallon steam kettles. “Once we make the sauces, we label and date them, then place them into the walk-in cooler where they can stay in good form for up to a week,” Agate says.

Also on the bulk prep/banquet prep hot line are fryers to make house-made potato chips, ranges for producing soups and sauces, and a flattop griddle for French toast, pancakes and searing meats such as prime rib rubbed with olive oil and fresh herbs before they are smoked. The double-deck convection oven heats pastries, pies and cookies, as well as house-prepared European-style dough prepared in the mixers for bread.

A server station across from the banquet kitchen contains coolers, plates and heat lamps.

On one side of the pantry, staff use a food processor and refrigerated prep tables to prepare salads, sandwiches and appetizers. Staff prepare desserts such as ice cream and sorbets in the other half of the pantry. A nearby triple deck oven bakes pizza and flatbreads.

On the main production line, staff prepare most of the food for the restaurant and room service on double-stacked steamers, ranges, overhead broilers, fryers, and a wood-fired char grill (at right).

In the pantry, double-stacked overshelving provides space for passing menu items to servers. A perforated section in the plate storage area below was installed to allow compressor units to breathe. On the opposite side, sandwich prep tables and undercounter refrigerators and a freezer support cold prep. Limited space necessitated a triple-stacked deck oven for pizza, appetizers and bakery goods. A steam generator that heats the ovens sits in a closet in an adjacent room. Also in this pantry area are fryers and ranges and an overhead utensil rack.

All kitchen photos by Tom Mahoney, Buffalo Hotel Supply, Farmington, N.Y.

An Historical Perspective

The Hotel Clarence and its foodservices are expected to give the revitalized downtown area of Seneca Falls a new lease on life following the recent recession. Built originally in 1918 as the Gould Hotel, which was named after the hotel's backers, Goulds Manufacturing Company, which produced pumps, Hotel Clarence's ownership changed hands several times after 1950. In 2007, it was purchased by Jake McKenna and Jay Bernhardt, who are partners in J&J Hospitality.

"Our business finds unique buildings and renovates them," says McKenna. "We came across the Gould Hotel, which had once been a luxurious property for its time, with a grand ballroom and huge corridors. It was the first hotel in the state to have indoor plumbing and it was very well constructed of concrete and brick so the structure would never burn. As a structural engineer by training, I found this to be incredible for its time. But, the building had been vacant for three years and was in rough shape—the roof leaked and there was extensive water damage. Though it is located in the historic district, it is not in the historic

register. So, we gutted everything and continued on an aggressive construction schedule that took just eight months."

McKenna and Bernhardt received support and economic development money from Seneca Falls. "We would never have been able to support our schedule had we not received a lot of assistance from local municipalities," McKenna says.

Since the hotel's opening, operators answering phones proclaim, "It's a wonderful day at the Hotel Clarence!" When visitors walk into the hotel lobby, they see the classic movie "It's a Wonderful Life" playing continuously without sound. The guests' breakfast service is titled "It's a Wonderful Morning!" and the appetizer menu features "Fallen Angel" sweet and spicy chicken wings. As the hotel enters its second full year in operation, the owners and staff are confident that "a wonderful day" is not only about the quality of the hotel and the foodservice experience the guests receive, but also the financial return on investment.

On the opposite side of the kitchen is a hot line containing three stations. One station contains ranges for sautéing vegetables and proteins for pasta dishes and fish items such as honey-glazed salmon seared in cognac. The second station contains fryers and a cook-hold oven for preparing appetizers such as pork belly and roasted marrow spread. The third station has a gas activated wood-fired grill and overhead broilers for burgers, pork loin chops, rib-eye steak and the restaurant's featured barbecue pork ribs and chicken. "The wood-fired grill required weeks of training until staff learned to regulate it properly," Agate says. "It is a unique piece of equipment and allows food to be flavorful without taking on a gas flavor."

"We only had a 20-foot-wide space to put all the equipment in," Mahaney says. "That's why three broilers are above the ranges in order to make more space available for sautéing and the other stations."

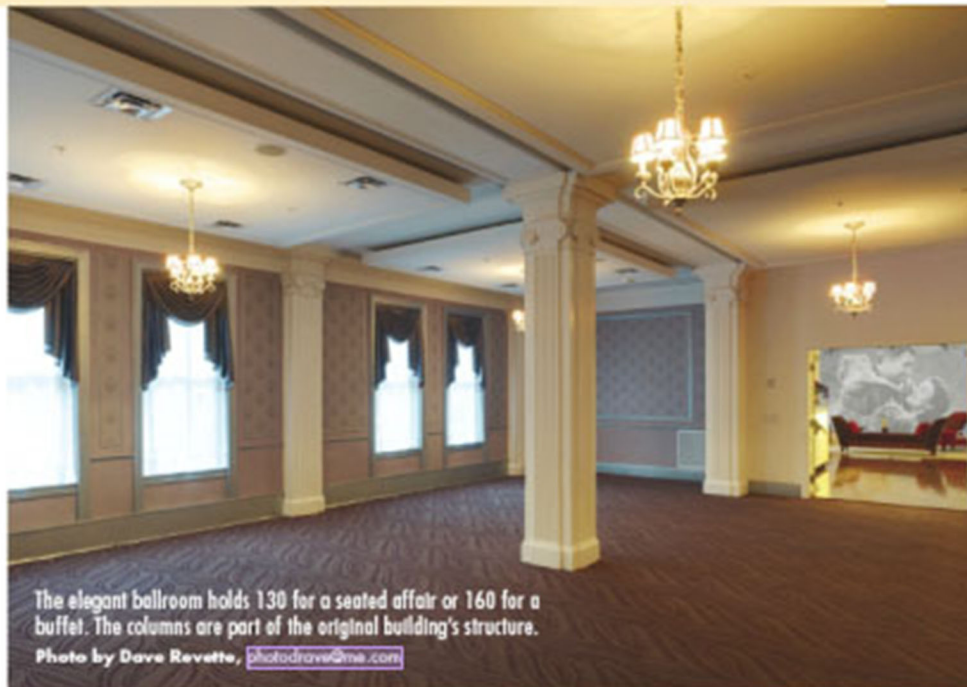
Another plate storage area sits on the other aisle of this cookline.

In the dishwashing area, staff use a disposer, a door-style dishmachine with custom fabricated soiled and clean dishtables, and a potwashing sink.

Agate's advice to equipment manufacturers is "make sure your products are reliable. Kitchens are a hostile environment for equipment — we're always slamming doors, putting out fires and moving pots and pans from place to place. The equipment must stand up to that."

In the bar area off the lobby, Mahaney selected "standard" bar equipment, including a beer tower, wine storage shelving, a beer walk-in cooler, food processor and blenders. Laminated wood covers the back bar coolers.

Though the hotel had a slow start, the restaurant attracted guests from the moment it opened. The catering business for local organizations such as the National Women's Hall of Fame continues to grow. Today, McKenna reports that the hotel is on target to meet its projected revenue. From a foodservice perspective, success requires the staff to maintain the kitchen equipment so it is functioning at peak performance in order to give credence to the hotel operators' declaration when they answer the phones, "It's a wonderful day at the Hotel Clarence." **FE&S**



The elegant ballroom holds 130 for a seated affair or 160 for a buffet. The columns are part of the original building's structure.

Photo by Dave Revette, photodave@me.com



In the kitchen's banquet area, staff work with a holding cabinet, double-stacked convection ovens, ranges, fryers and steam-jacketed kettles to prepare large quantities of food. Some is placed in the walk-in cooler to use as needed.