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Story of Ithaca told in State Street brick



SIMON WHEELER / STAFF PHOTO

A crowd gathers on the State Street portion of the Commons in early August prior to a concert by the Gunpoets at the new Bernie Milton Pavilion in Bank Alley.



THE HISTORY CENTER

The corner of Tioga and State streets looking west on State Street.



THE HISTORY CENTER

A circa late 1940s view looking west on State Street from the Aurora Street intersection.



THE HISTORY CENTER

The Commons looking west near the corner of Bank Alley, right, in this photo probably from the late 1970s.

40 years ago, the Commons saved a city from the brink



Nick Reynolds
Commentary

Some people may still remember the days when cars zipped down State Street, unobstructed, from east to west. A pedestrian walkway for 40 years now, the three-block section known and adored as “the Commons” has served as focal point of Tompkins County, Ithaca, the meeting point of three hills acting as a magnet for human activity. The city wasn’t always a hotbed of economic activity, but State Street, always the city’s main drag, blossomed as both the Erie Canal’s construction and the extension of the Lehigh Valley

See **COMMONS**, Page 7A

By the 1950s, the city was decaying into a mess of unorganized commerce, congested, with signs pointing every direction but one — the city’s center.



DIGITAL

See several photo galleries of the Commons with these stories at ithacajournal.com.

7 features to check out on the new Commons

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Ithaca’s Commons is a unique place, with numerous touches added or enhanced during its renovation to make it a place people will have difficulty forgetting. Here are seven items to notice on the Commons:

Pavilion

It takes actually attending a concert downtown to appreciate the design of the new Bernie Milton pavilion. Bisecting Bank Alley, the regal terminus of Tioga Street, the pavilion caps a sloping canyon that not only creates a natural-looking stage but does so with subtle-

See **FEATURES**, Page 6A

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INSIDE

Business	9A	Nation & World	1B
Comics	6D	Obituaries	2B
Puzzles	6D	Sports	8B
Local & State	3A	TV/Movies	7D
Lotteries	3A	Viewpoints	4B



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