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Graffiti from 1879 draws attention in Cuba

UBA — Graffiti dating back 127 years was recently uncovered by volunteers working at the Palmer House building in downtown Cuba. The writing on the wall was revealed while debris was being removed from the building.

The graffiti, written on an old plaster wall, refers to a performance of the play, “Uncle Tom’s Cabin,” held at the Palmer House. The words read “Rial and Draper’s Uncle Tom’s Cabin, Sept. 24, 1879.”

Traveling troupes specializing in the play, called “Tom Shows,” were popular in the post-Civil War North of the time.

Built around 1872, the Palmer House was acquired by the Cuba Friends of Architecture, a group trying to raise funds to restore the building.

The two-story building housed businesses on the bottom floor, with the Palmer Opera House on the second floor. It hosted plays, concerts and minstrel shows, including high school graduations in the 1930s and high school basketball games into the 1940s.

In 2001, the building’s roof collapsed and wasn’t repaired until a few months ago when the Cuba Friends of Architecture secured funding.

The group is continuing renovations inside the building and is still seeking funding.

On May 27, a walking tour will begin at the Cuba Grange Hall on East Main Street and will run in 15- to 20-minute intervals from 11 a.m. to 3 p.m. Local actors will be positioned throughout the cemetery, portraying past characters, such as those from the Civil War and other local historical figures.

The cost of the cemetery tour is \$3 for adults, and \$2 for children. Hot dogs and soda will be available for purchase.

Donations to the Friends of Architecture may be made to: Cuba Friends of Architecture, P.O. Box 274, Cuba, NY 14727. For more information, call Carol Donavan at (585) 968-2812.