Every Community Needs a Beating Heart: How Preservation Drives Revitalization

There is overwhelming evidence that the most successful communities—with thriving economies, healthy schools and social and cultural institutions—are those that embrace their own history and preserve their historic buildings. Good jobs, protection of natural resources, and good leadership are perhaps even more important. Historic preservation is a critical element in the revitalization of struggling communities and it is a visible expression of a community investing in itself and improving its own quality of life.

AARCH has always been a strong advocate for the connection between historic preservation and community vitality. We work to preserve individual buildings, yes, but we also advocate for preservation because historic places can become affordable housing, attractive spaces for businesses, innovative cultural centers, new farms, restaurants and other attractions. Preservation is about finding new uses for historic structures, not just saving buildings.

Historic places create identity

Historic places are often the “beating heart” of a community. They are the physical expression of our common heritage and many develop iconic status over time. They bring people together by “defining” a community. Think of any Adirondack town or village and you’ll quickly think of an historic building there. The Adirondack Hotel in Long Lake; Old Forge Hardware in Old Forge; the chapel on Big Moose Lake. Jay, Keeseville, Wanakena, and Hadley have historic bridges that identify them. Newcomb’s identity is tied closely to Santanoni. Others include the Woods Inn in Inlet, Raquette Lake Supply Company, the Indian Lake Theater, or the Willard Brothers building in Northville. All of these places help define their towns.

The transformative impact of preserving and restoring specific structures in a community are well-documented in the Adirondacks. (Many AARCH Preservation Award winners are in this category.) These often vacant buildings were once highly visible residences, barns, churches or schools. Examples in the region of places that have been restored and given new and quite different lives include: Paradox House Retreat (farmhouse), Champlain Valley Senior Community (Willsboro School), Valcour Brewing Company (Old Stone Barracks) and The Revival (Wells Baptist Church).

Other iconic buildings are restored and opened to the public as community centers or museums, enhancing both the physical and cultural environments of their towns. Nearly every community in the region has places like this. Recent examples include the Whallonsburg Grange Hall in Essex, the Goodsell Museum in Old Forge, and the Strand Center Theatre in Plattsburgh (see pages 8-11 for more inspiring stories).

Bridges, railroad stations, and industrial sites that are abandoned have a big impact on a community’s landscape. Preserving them takes creativity, hard work, and often significant investment. But like the structures themselves, the effect of preservation can be outsized. Saving the unique Bow Bridge in Hadley preserved a rare work of civil engineering, but also preserved the historic pedestrian “link” and a destination for visitors.

“Cluster” preservation

In some communities, clusters of historic buildings can draw together the past and
We don’t know what we’ve got until it’s gone

If the preservation of historic buildings, neighborhoods and commercial centers make our communities better places to live, work, and visit, then the loss of historic structures can diminish and sometimes devastate a community.

While not every historic structure can be saved, we should remind ourselves of what is lost when places that represent our common heritage disappear. These losses underscore the importance of organizations like AARCH who advocate for preserving endangered historic sites.

Dexter Lake Camp was a huge four-story mansion near Santa Clara built in 1890 as a faithful copy of Albrect Durer’s Nuremburg home. The camp was architecturally unlike anything else in the region and had just been restored when it was put up for sale in 1994. It was purchased and quickly demolished by singer Shania Twain who built a huge, modern house there. A few years later, they left the area and sold it.

The Wawbeek on Upper Saranac Lake met a similar fate. Designed, in part, by William L. Coulter, it featured one of the most imaginative fireplaces in the Adirondacks. For generations, the buildings were a much-loved restaurant and lodge, open to the public. Despite a campaign to save it led by AARCH, the new owners of the Wawbeek demolished the buildings and built a huge new camp complex, only to put it on the market and leave the area seven years later. Both of these losses represent short term choices by individuals without consideration of the longer term consequences for a community and its heritage.

The loss of buildings from fires has been terrible, too. In 2004, the barn at the Santanoni Farm was lost to fire under mysterious circumstances. In 2011 Hubbard Hall, an elaborately decorated Queen Anne-style building on Court Street in Elizabethtown burned to the ground. This August an arson fire destroyed the rare, post and beam house and barn at the 1812 Homestead in Willsboro, which attracts thousands of visitors every year to learn about life in the early 19th century. Plans are underway to rebuild both the Santanoni barn and the farmhouse at the 1812 Homestead.

Sometimes historic structures are lost to natural disasters like floods, reminding us of how fragile these special places can be. The Walton Bridge, built in 1885 over the Ausable River in Keene, was one of only about 40 lenticular or parabolic truss bridges remaining in the country. Listed on the National Register, it was destroyed in 2011 by Tropical Storm Irene. A new pedestrian bridge was built in 2015 to replace it.

That flooding also washed away the remaining buildings of the Land of Make Believe in Upper Jay. This fantasy park, which opened in 1954, was the finest work of the prolific designer Arto Monaco. An ice jam on the Oswegatchie River destroyed the 1902 footbridge in Wanakena. So important is this iconic crossing that the community has raised funds to build a replica of the 117-foot bridge, now under construction.

Other places deteriorate so badly that they are unable to be saved. Aiden Lair in Minerva was a famous inn associated with Teddy Roosevelt’s midnight ride out of the Adirondacks. It has been vacant and unmaintained for decades and now, sadly, is at the end of its life.

Harriman Cottage was one of three remaining cottages from the Paul Smiths Hotel era at the College. After decades of deterioration, the cottage was demolished in 2008. Other buildings in this category include Garondah Lodge in Elizabethtown and many of the larger buildings — chapel, auditorium, and clubhouse — at the Lake Placid Club.

The good news is that the climate in the region has changed over the last 25 years in regards to historic buildings, and the number of losses are fewer and fewer each year. Adirondackers come to realize that these places have great historic, architectural, social, and economic importance. We see them, by and large, not as problems or relics, but as opportunities to shape and improve community life, character, and identity.

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present and provide the physical assets needed for revitalization. Preservation planning for groups of buildings or entire neighborhoods, even in small villages, can help bring the built environment together with a community’s cultural heritage, and establish a strong identity.

**Westport on Lake Champlain** was a summer resort town through the early 20th century. But the large hotels that defined it are long gone and Westport is reinventing itself as an arts destination. A walkable center full of well-preserved 19th-century architecture, its restored Main Street, the Depot Theatre in the 1876 train station, and the 1885 County Fairgrounds complex have created an attractive and historic environment for residents and visitors alike.

**Warrensburg** has the largest number of National Register listed historic buildings in the region with everything from water-powered mills to churches and residences. The work of the master stonemasons from there is legendary and visible in many Adirondack Great Camps. Their work is also seen around town in structures of all types that give Warrensburg its unique character and renown for this stone craftsmanship.

**Saranac Lake** has embraced its history as a “pioneer health resort” through its restored cure cottages and the transformation of Trudeau’s 1894 Saranac Laboratory into a museum that tells this story. But preservationists like Historic Saranac Lake have gone beyond this focus and helped create and preserve historic districts throughout the town, most recently in the Helen Hill neighborhood, providing homeowners access to generous tax credits to help with the cost of renovations.

The preservation effort in Saranac Lake is also helping to drive downtown revitalization, with the multi-million-dollar restoration of the 1927 Hotel Saranac at its center. Historic buildings on main streets are ideal places for businesses, restaurants and arts groups to renovate—they are physical and visual clusters that draw communities together.

**Heritage tourism and preservation**

AARCH’s ongoing work with NYSDEC and the Town of Newcomb to preserve Great Camp Santanoni is focused on saving and restoring a National Historic Landmark. But the Santanoni partners also know this unique heritage attraction is a central part of the town’s economy. About 12,000 people per year visit Santanoni, which is located in a town with fewer than 500 residents. The direct connection between preservation and the town’s future has encouraged Newcomb to invest several hundred thousand dollars in restoration and interpretation at Santanoni and at the McIntyre Furnace and McNaughton Cottage at nearby Upper Works.

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**AARCH’s Stone Mill and the Keeseville Riverfront Park: Progress!**

AARCH is proud to call the historic village of Keeseville “home.” Here, revitalization is taking many forms including renovation of the village’s commercial center, the opening of new farms and the Ausable Brewing Company nearby, community festivals, and more. In April we participated in a Local Food, Local Places workshop that reimagined Keeseville as a food-centric destination based around the products of local farms. The workshop pointed to AARCH’s Stone Mill and proposed Riverfront Park as high-priority projects in Keeseville’s transformation. This year saw important progress on both of them.

We developed a new financial model and plan for the Stone Mill—rehabilitating the shell of the building, basic infrastructure work and some interior finish—so that it could be used as a flexible “incubator” space. AARCH and the Town of Ausable also received several planning and start-up grants for the adjacent Riverfront Park and are waiting to hear about another that will fund the balance of that community project.

We also had the pleasure of showing off the Stone Mill at two big events. On August 22, the building was filled with the audience at a community concert for the hundreds of people that stayed overnight in Keeseville from the 2016 Cycle Adirondacks bicycle tour (photo at right). A month later, we welcomed the Adirondack North Country Association for its annual meeting called “Unpacking the Secrets of Successful Communities.”
A similar opportunity exists with the National Register-listed Debar Pond Lodge (Town of Duane), a 1940s Great Camp designed by William Distin. It is also in the Forest Preserve and owned by New York State. For over ten years, AARCH has been trying to work with the DEC to preserve its buildings and create a destination for visitors, so far without success. For Duane, with its small population and limited resources, the public reuse of Debar Pond Lodge is the best hope for its economic future.

Heritage tourism is based on historic preservation because visitors want to see, touch and experience history. The number of visitors to the Adirondacks and their interest in its history as well as its natural beauty are growing. Just like locals, visitors appreciate the special places that define our region and they will spend money to stay in historic lodges, eat in converted mills, bicycle past restored barns and tour Great Camps. Community revitalization in this case includes preserving, developing and marketing historic assets because they bring people to visit and stay.

Historic preservation and community revitalization are closely linked in our region just like anywhere else. Successful historic rehabilitation and reuse projects, large and small, help make communities of all sizes successful.

Throughout the Adirondacks, AARCH provides technical resources and advice to individuals, groups, businesses and local towns to help these projects move forward. Almost as important is that we encourage the creativity and imagination needed for these projects, and point to the numerous, real-life examples in our backyard where historic preservation is working and communities are thriving.

**ADVOCACY AND ACTION**

Among AARCH’s great strengths is our ability to respond quickly to preservation crises, to offer experienced help and leadership, and to stay with an issue for the long haul.

**Eagle Island, Upper Saranac Lake**

We have continued to support the work of the Friends of Eagle Island to bring this William Coulter designed Great Camp on Upper Saranac Lake back to life as a youth camp. Eagle Island was given to a Girl Scouts council in 1938 for use as an outdoor camp. For seventy years until it closed in 2009, thousands of girls spent summers here. The Friends purchased the property in late 2015 and have been working hard to have it open by the summer of 2018.

We are helping to advise the Friends on a variety of issues including a survey of historic buildings and information on grant programs to help with restoration costs. We took a group there in August, with longtime AARCH board members Mary Hotaling and Howie Kirschenbaum as tour leaders. Both have been deeply involved in helping to save Eagle Island. Tour-goers spent the day exploring the incredible architecture and island setting, enjoying stories from three generations of campers, and meeting a descendant of the previous owners.

**Preservation issues in the Forest Preserve**

We’ve continued to advocate this year for several historic structures within the Forest Preserve. Our focus is to work with state agencies, local officials and preservationists to develop plans for rehabilitation and reuse of these special places, all owned by New York State. These efforts include support for the continued and historic use of the Remsen to Lake Placid rail corridor for rail transport; presenting alternatives for the Gooley Club buildings in Minerva, currently slated for demolition; and advocating for public use of Debar Pond Lodge (see article above.)

**Remsen to Lake Placid Railroad**

AARCH, the Adirondack Scenic Railroad, Trails with Rails Action Committee, Rail Explorers, and Historic Saranac Lake, along with many committed individuals worked hard in 2015 and early 2016 to stop the destruction of the northern section of this historic railroad. In March, nominated by AARCH and HSL, the railroad was designated a statewide Seven to Save site by the Preservation League of New York State.

In May, Governor Cuomo announced his final approval of the controversial DEC plan to remove 34 miles of rail track between Tupper Lake and Lake Placid in order to create a recreational trail there. Following that, the Adirondack Railway Preservation Society filed a legal challenge to this decision in State Supreme Court. The hearing in the case has been postponed several times at the state’s request. AARCH has expressed its support for the lawsuit and made a donation to the legal fund. The DEC is pressing ahead with plans to remove the tracks in the spring.

**Gooley Club**

Our efforts to save the Gooley Club, a historic hunting and fishing club on Third Lake, continued in 2016. In May, DEC released a draft Unit Management Plan for the Essex Chain Lakes that called for removing the National Register-eligible Inner Gooley Club buildings when the Club’s lease expires in 2018. (The UMP specifies that the farmhouse at the Outer Gooley Club will be retained.)

The UMP did not acknowledge that the buildings were National Register eligible and did not explore “prudent and feasible
Another great year at Camp Santanoni

This summer, four interpreters staffed the camp and gave tours to several thousand visitors. They also restored windows, conducted a visitor survey, and planned a natural history guide for the Santanoni Preserve. Michael Frenette, in his 19th summer at Santanoni, restored deteriorated logs at the Artist’s Studio and A-Dack LLC continued work on the collapsed floor system at the Farm Manager’s Cottage. Volunteer Chuck Higgerson also finished restoring the wood and stone steps there. Howie Kirschenbaum led several volunteer work days to clear brush and mow grass at the farm. A big thanks to the Town of Newcomb for funding these repairs and our summer staff.

The AARCH Santanoni Committee dusted off and made revisions to the Camp Santanoni Interpretive Plan. An informal group from AARCH, NYSDEC, SUNY ESF, the Town of Newcomb, and NYSOPRHP have been working together to finalize the draft plan so it can be approved and implemented.

Thanks to years of work and persistence by AARCH and its Santanoni partners, a new Unit Management Plan for the Santanoni Historic Area was approved by the state in March. Among other things, the UMP allows for the rebuilding of the barn that was lost to fire in 2004. We will soon commission a feasibility study that will provide logistical, planning, and cost information for this large and expensive project. The UMP also allows for greater historic landscape restoration, if guided by an approved historic landscape study. We hope to have this done in 2017, too.

Several years ago, saddened by the loss of the barn at the Santanoni farm, AARCH member Tim Sauter decided to build an accurate model of the barn to document it and build public interest in its reconstruction. This summer, visitors were able to view this fantastic model at the Gardener’s Cottage (photo at left). It has been moved to the Newcomb Adirondack Interpretive Center for the winter and can now be seen there. Don’t miss it!
AARCH has always worked with schools and teachers to find ways to build interest and excitement about architecture and preservation. This year we increased our focus on creating new programs and finding opportunities to engage and educate a younger audience. Here are a few reports on our 2016 education and outreach work.

**Questing** is popular vehicle in New England for getting young people to develop a type of scavenger hunt in their communities to explore history, architecture, people, and the natural environment. In the second week of March, AARCH Program Director Karyn Norwood and Adirondack Museum Educator Christine Campeau teamed up with 5th grade students and teachers from Keeseville Elementary School to create the first-ever Adirondack region “Quest.” Over the course of a week, students learned about Keeseville’s history and architecture and designed their own Quest to find and identify historic buildings in town. The clues are spelled out in rhymes written by the students that give historical and architectural facts about the places on the scavenger hunt. The students also created a map with original drawings of the buildings. An event to kick-off questing in Keeseville was held in June for everyone involved, plus parents. Copies of the Quest are available at the AARCH office, so stop by and join the treasure hunt. Everyone who completes it gets a prize!

**New Skills for Young Tradespeople**

In May, Steven Engelhart and Karyn Norwood spent a day working with two construction trades classes at the Champlain Valley Educational Services facility in Mineville. We started with a classroom overview of the general principles of working with historic buildings and ended the day in their workshop teaching students to reglaze historic wooden windows—a valuable and sought-after skill for those working in the trades.

**Summer Safari**

In August, Karyn Norwood presented “Architecture 101,” a popular week-long class at Summer Safari. This was AARCH’s first time teaching in this youth enrichment program, sponsored by SUNY Plattsburgh. It offers 5-to-16-year olds different classes and experiences in the arts, science, math, and outdoor adventure. Karyn had twenty students dive into the basics of architectural design. They then went on to design their own buildings and made models of them. Their brainstorming about what architecture is was captured in this wordle diagram the class created:

**Studying Historic Bridges**

In early November, Steven spent the day in the field with 39 students from technology classes at Westport Central School. Students and teachers looked at ten historic bridges over the Ausable River from Ausable Chasm to Keene Valley. The outing explored the three different engineering principles used in historic bridge construction—arch (compression), cable (tension) and truss (tension and compression). Students will use this knowledge to design their own bridges using classroom computers.

Westport students study bridge engineering on the swinging bridge over the Ausable River in Keeseville.
Mid-Century Architecture: What was new is now historic

The 2016 tour season wrapped up in the rural cemeteries of Albany and Troy in October. Over 1,100 people joined 40 tours from Plattsburgh to Clayton to Albany. We took trains and rail bikes; tour boats, kayaks and canoes; bicycles; horse-drawn wagons; and cars to see the region’s special places. We did lots of walking, too! This year, along with typical Adirondack rustic architecture, we focused on the more recent mid-20th century era in house styles and roadside architecture, learning a lot along the way.

Mid-Century Modern is characterized by open designs with flat planes, large windows, and sliding glass doors that turned homes outward and encouraged exploration of the world. Especially after World War II, modern architecture experimented with new materials — steel, plywood, stucco and glass. Pre-fabricated homes became popular through kits sold by Sears, Lustron, and other manufacturers. Driven by the growing and more mobile middle class, affordable and easily constructed homes were in demand around the country.

Our “Pre-Fab Plattsburgh” tour in July visited several Lustron homes built there in the 1950s, and heard a presentation by Daniel Reiff, an expert in catalogue homes.

Follow that road!

Another reflection of the changing times was the rise of architecture associated with vacationing by automobile. As interstate highway construction and car ownership expanded, distant places were more within reach. Americans took to the roads and many made their way to the Adirondacks. Gas stations, motels, restaurants and theme parks were built along county and state roads to provide amenities and entertain travelers.

In 1935 the Whiteface Veterans Memorial Highway opened, allowing cars to drive to the top of a High Peak. New state roads and later the “Northway” (1957–1967) were built, spurring the construction of theme parks such as Santa’s Workshop (Wilmington, 1949), Frontier Town (North Hudson, 1952), The Enchanted Forest (Old Forge, 1956), and The Land of Make Believe (Upper Jay, 1954). This “boom” continued through the opening of Time Town in 1970, where kids could take simulated space journeys from Bolton Landing.

Several AARCH tours this summer explored this unique and often whimsical roadside architecture. From the motels and mini-golf courses in Lake George to the winter scenes at Santa’s Workshop, we saw what brought in the tourists then and continues to today.

The car vacation also fueled the dream of second home ownership. Ausable Acres, another AARCH destination this year, was a planned recreational community begun in the 1960s, where average Americans could own a “leisure home.” Now over 400 homes on small lots are nestled in the woods or perched on hillsides above the river. From Swiss chalets, to rustic log cabins, to petite A-frames, its architecture continues to tell the story of the era when cars led the way and buildings followed close behind.

Just in time for Holiday gift-giving! Sale on AARCH books about Adirondack architecture.

Santanoni: From Japanese Temple to Life at an Adirondack Great Camp
Robert Engel, Howard Kirschenbaum and Paul Malo
The comprehensive history and guide to the iconic and much-loved Great Camp Santanoni historic site. Filled with details about the Japanese-influenced design, its architecture and construction; the Pruyn family and Santanoni’s many guests; the farm complex and agriculture; the early years of restoration and much more. Includes dozens of photographs and illustrations, maps, bibliography and index. 244 pages, paperback, 8½ x 11. Reg. $29.95.
Sale price $15.95

Adirondack Churches: A History of Design and Building
Sally E. Svenson
The 19th century saw the rapid expansion of religious influence and of church building in the Adirondacks. This book documents over 100 churches, their architectural styles and influences, patterns of building, and social and economic factors affecting construction. Generously illustrated with more than 200 images. Annotated, bibliography and index. 240 pages, paperback, 10 x 9. Reg. $29.95.
Sale price $15.95

Order online at www.aarch.org, click on Storefront or call 518-834-9328.
The Boquet Schoolhouse (Essex)
Essex Community Heritage Organization

In the early 19th century, the hamlet of Boquet was centered around water-powered industries owned by William Ross on the banks of the Boquet River. When the community had grown to fifty houses and 400 residents by 1826, Ross had employees from his woolen mill build this unusual octagonal building from local stone. Children attended the one-room school until 1952 when it was closed by the state due to low enrollment. It was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1972.

Although substantially renovated in the 1990s, it was in need of attention and repairs to its roof, striking cupola and other areas. ECHO undertook a successful two-year capital campaign for the schoolhouse, and high-quality work by local craftsmen has beautifully restored this much-loved landmark.

The Beers Bridge (Keene Valley)
Beers Bridge Way Neighbors

Tens of thousands of Adirondack visitors drive by the pony-truss iron bridge that spans the Ausable River a few miles east of Keene Valley with barely a glance. But the Beers Bridge, built around 1900 and listed on the National Register in 1999, is one of only a handful of historic bridges remaining in Essex County. Originally erected in another location, this Thomas and Caleb Pratt designed bridge was reconstructed in its present location in 1922.

Many years of wear and damage from Tropical Storm Irene made significant structural work necessary. The Neighbors Association took on the project of restoring the bridge, installing new steel beams, wood decking, and rustproofing and painting the original trusses to ensure it will stand for many years to come. This exemplary effort should help inspire preservation efforts for other historic bridges in the region.

The Barn at Nettle Meadow Farm (Thurman)
Sheila Flanagan and Lorraine Lambiasi

At Nettle Meadow Farm in Warren County, goats and sheep have replaced the horse-breeding stock of the Johnson family who first established a farm here in 1792. The huge, three-story gambrel-roofed barn was built in 1903 for Meadowbrook Stock Farm, a well-established farm of 400 acres. Over time, parcels were sold off and large-scale farming ceased here in the 1930s.

Nettle Meadow was established in 1990 as a goat farm with a small cheese-making operation. In 2005, Sheila Flanagan and Lorraine Lambiasi bought the remaining 50-acre property and buildings and began expanding the herd. Today, some 300 goats and 80 milking sheep help produce 100,000 pounds of delicious and award-winning cheeses in the creamery, including Crane Mountain Chevre, Nettle Peaks, and Three Sisters. The owners also created an animal sanctuary at Nettle Meadow to care for farm animals too old or disabled to be productive.
Beginning in 2011, Sheila and Lorraine turned their attention to saving the sagging and deteriorating barn. Several contractors told them the barn was too far gone or would cost an astronomical amount to restore. They kept looking for the right craftsman and eventually found Andy LeBlanc, a barn restorer from Indian Lake. His painstaking, year-long effort to repair and replace timbers, flooring, windows and more has completely transformed the old barn. Replacing the roof timbers and installing a new metal roof was another large and difficult task done by Joel and Aaron Mosher.

The restored barn does double-duty with the lower floor home to the farm’s animal sanctuary, and the upper floor reborn as a jaw-dropping, cathedral-like event space.

The Cabins in Hope (Hope)
David and Donna Terry

Built in the early 1930s on four acres along the Sacandaga River, “Polmateer’s De Luxe Vacation Cabins” accommodated visitors traveling Route 30, one of the main roads into the Adirondacks before the interstate was built, for 57 years. In 1989 the property was subdivided and the cabins were closed. David and Donna Terry bought the place in 2006 without any intention of reopening the cabins, but these small gems with their long history kept calling. Before long, the Terrys found themselves renovating, updating, and improving the cabins. In 2009 they opened The Cabins in Hope, offering clean and comfortable lodging, housekeeping and breakfast service, with a gorgeous riverfront and mountain views.

Roadside cabins like these were once common throughout the Adirondacks. Families took to the roads in their automobiles to experience natural wonders, historic sites, and other special places. Changing vacation patterns and preferences in the 1950s and ‘60s meant these types of places have all but disappeared from our landscape, especially in their historic form. The Terrys have kept the original attraction of this cabin complex—simplicity and ambiance—and brought it into the 21st century for a new generation of travelers to enjoy.

Kenjockety (Westport)
Ellen Phelan and Joel Shapiro

Wisconsin lumber and railroad magnate William T. Bradley built Kenjockety in 1912 on 40 acres of land on Lake Champlain. The house’s Prairie-style architecture, with horizontal lines, overhanging eaves, flat roofs and grouped windows, is rare in the Adirondacks. Inspired by the broad, flat landscape of the Midwest, it contrasts sharply with the rustic, Colonial-Revival and other styles that are predominant here.

After Bradley sold the property in 1926, it went through a succession of owners until artists Ellen Phelan and Joel Shapiro purchased it in 1984 and undertook major renovations. At the main house, they reconstructed the front porch, restored the roof, and reinstalled multi-paned historic windows throughout. The boathouse and carriage house were restored and remodeled, and converted into studios for Ellen and Joel.

In 1994, they began working with renowned modernist landscape architect Daniel Urban Kiley (1912–2004) to design a series of “garden rooms with pergolas and allees that blended seamlessly with the surrounding wild landscape and open fields.” These “beloved gardens” have become one of Ellen’s primary artistic inspirations. Some of Joel’s sculptures are integrated into the gardens as well. Photos can be seen at the Cultural Landscape Foundation website: [www.tcif.org](http://www.tcif.org).

The Kiley-designed landscape has added stunning new features that contribute to the character of Kenjockety. Ellen and Joel’s stewardship over more than 30 years has sensitively restored and adaptively reused the buildings, and preserved this extraordinary and unique place for the present and future.
Lake George Museum  
Lake George Historical Association and the Town of Lake George

The Warren County Courthouse, now the Lake George Historical Association (LGHA) and Museum, was built in several phases between 1843 and the 1890s. The two-story structure is made of brick with many limestone features including the foundation and window lintels and sills. The imposing hipped-roof building is dominated by a soaring clock tower with an arched recessed front entry.

The courthouse was abandoned in 1963 and threatened with demolition until LGHA convinced the Town of Lake George, its current owner, to reopen it for use as the association’s offices and museum. In 1969, the front addition, built in 1885, was taken down and the original façade of the building was restored. In 1977 the Lake George Arts Center opened an art gallery moved its headquarters into the rear of the building. For nearly 50 years LGHA and the Town have worked together to restore and improve the building. Recent projects include refinishing the floors of the courtroom chambers, restoring the building’s 19th-century wooden windows, and infrastructure improvements (heating and sprinkler systems). The original clock, a beloved icon, was removed and brought inside the museum in order to preserve it, and a replica now chimes the hours in the tower.

Much of the work throughout the building has been done by Department of Buildings and Grounds staff with help from LGHA volunteers. This partnership between LGHA and the Town is an inspiring example of a nonprofit organization and municipality working together to care for an historic building and give it new purpose and life in the community.

Lady Tree Lodge (Upper Saranac Lake)  
Chris Cohan and Rita Wong

Built in 1896 for Alfred Belo, a Texas newspaperman, Lady Tree Lodge was originally called “Lone Star.” It is one of a small collection of camps that were constructed around the Saranac Inn, a large, luxurious hotel on the north end of Upper Saranac Lake. During the summers of 1907 and 1908, New York Governor (and later Chief Justice of the Supreme Court) Charles Evans Hughes and his family occupied the house. The Saranac Inn, which burned in 1978, and the camps around it were the center of summer life and the social scene on the lake for many decades.

Lady Tree Lodge is typical of the rustic Adirondack architecture of the time. It has four fireplaces, original square and diamond mullion windows, beadboard throughout, and deep porches with ornate log screening, similar in style to camps designed around the same time by William Coulter (although it is not clear who the original architect was).

When Chris Cohan, Rita Wong, and Jennifer Swain purchased Lady Tree Lodge in 2013 it had satellite dishes attached to the house, added stairways, broken down porch railings, undersized roof supports, exposed plumbing and electrical conduit, and trees growing against it. In the last 3 years, they have made extensive repairs to the porches and railings and the screen across the house front. The boathouse was also rebuilt with new floors and roof.

Many of the 1,712 glass panes in the windows were reglazed. The beadboard paneling on floors and ceilings was painstakingly cleaned and today the walls glow with the richness of the original wood, and the house is flooded with shadows and light.

Lady Tree Lodge is one of the oldest remaining structures on Upper Saranac Lake and has one of its best views. As Chris Cohan explained, “It has been rebuilt to last another 125 years,” and, we can add, with the care and craftsmanship of the original.
The Strand Center Theatre (Plattsburgh)
The Strand Cultural Center for the Arts

Built in 1924, the architectural details and opulent style of the building was the hallmark of vaudeville theaters of an earlier age. The Strand’s original brick façade included a main theatre entrance and storefront on the street level, with three windows set into larger blind arches on the second story. Walnut doors with mirrored panels, marble floors, imported French damask-silk panels, and Corinthian columns adorned the interior.

After presenting live performances and movies for many decades, the Strand changed hands several times from the 1960s through the 1980s. During that time walls were erected to divide the auditorium and it eventually became a four-screen movie house. Other renovations added a suspended ceiling, covered the original glass panels of the entrance and filled in the arched façade with stucco. Hard economic times in the 1980s and 90s left the theater struggling and in debt.

In 2004, the North Country Cultural Center for the Arts purchased the building and began a 10-year, $4 million restoration effort. The Strand now has its original floor plan again, with two marble staircases leading from the lobby, a renovated 950-seat auditorium with a replica of the original chandelier, and its original iron and plaster work. The Strand was added to the National Register of Historic Places in 2008.

Today, the renamed Strand Center for the Arts manages the theater, which attracts nationally and internationally known performers. It is the crown jewel of downtown Plattsburgh and a major part of revitalization efforts there.

AARCH EVENTS AROUND THE REGION

Opening night at the AARCH Gallery exhibition in Keeseville.

Model of the Old Stone Barracks created by Joyce Bertoli.

From Wells to Plattsburgh to Keeseville, we hosted some great events this year. These included the AARCH Annual Meeting at The Revival in Wells, followed by a tour of a renovated sawmill along the Sacandaga River, now the studios and sculpture garden of artists John Van Alstine and Caroline Ramersdorfer; our popular summer Gallery exhibition of photos, sketches and drawings called “Patrimonio: Visions of Cuba”; and the Benefit Gala at the Old Stone Barracks in Plattsburgh that featured a tour of the Old Base. This amazing model of the Barracks was presented to the Valcour Brewing Company, its new owner. A great day celebrating this once-threatened and now-saved historic treasure.
Over 25 years ago, a small group of concerned individuals came together to save Camp Santanoni and begin AARCH’s broad and effective work across the region. 

Today, over 2,000 people are AARCH members, with the same focus and determination of the founders. Everything we do — advocacy, education, and preservation — is supported primarily by your donations to the Annual Appeal and through membership contributions. **Thank you for your continued support.**

- Join AARCH or renew your membership.
- Donate to the Annual Appeal.
- Order books and other merchandise.
- Find out about upcoming events and tours.

You can do this easily online at **[www.aarch.org](http://www.aarch.org)**. Or call the office, Monday-Friday from 8am-4pm at 518-834-9328. Email us at info@aarch.org. You can also mail a donation to **Adirondack Architectural Heritage**, 1745 Main Street, Keeseville, NY 12944