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Newsletter

ADIRONDACK ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

North Creek Railroad Station on Track

There is good news for an historic building in the Adirondacks which has significance for the nation: the North Creek Railroad Station in the Town of Johnsburg, Warren County, where Theodore Roosevelt learned that he had become President of the United States.

Mary B. Hotaling

North Creek Railroad Station before roof work began

Governor Mario M. Cuomo announced on July 14 that $56,000 remaining from the 1986 Environmental Quality Bond Act would be awarded for acquisition and repair of the station. The grant to the North Creek Railroad Depot Preservation Association was the largest of only three in the state, which were limited to properties listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. Because the state money is a matching grant, a drive is on to raise an additional $14,000 by enrolling both business and general members. NCRDPA (also known as "Save Our Station") has already accomplished a great deal since it organized in September 1990. After waiting out the D & H bankruptcy, the group successfully acquired the building from the Canadian Pacific Railroad in June 1993 for $10. Phase I of the restoration is the cedar-shingle roof finished this year. Phase II, to begin in spring 1994, will see the exterior scraped and painted, and structural work done on the porch. The work, which aims to restore the station to Roosevelt's time, must meet the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. The association's

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From the President

As you read this issue of the Newsletter, I hope you will share my sense of excitement about the momentum AARCH seems to be generating.

The restoration of Santanoni has finally begun, and AARCH continues to play a leading role in that process.

Our input on the Citizens Advisory Committee on the Remsen-Lake Placid Railroad Corridor helped influence a strong historic preservation theme in the first draft plan.

This summer and fall's historic tour program was the most successful yet, in terms of quantity, variety, quality, and attendance.

And, perhaps most promising, our first workshop on historic preservation in the Adirondacks fulfilled all of our expectations. We have developed a model for towns and villages in the park to get involved in historic preservation in a practical, non-threatening, financially feasible way. We tried it out on October 27 and it received a very positive reception. This gets to the heart of AARCH's mission — working cooperatively with local people and local governments to preserve the historic and architectural heritage of our communities. As Lao Tse said, "A long journey begins with a foot put down." It certainly feels that what we began, in a modest way on October 27, will be the first step toward catalyzing meaningful historic preservation activity throughout the Adirondack Park.

HOWIE KIRSCHENBAUM

Adirondack Towns Learn to Survey Historic Architecture

AARCH's first workshop on historic preservation, held on October 27, was a great success. Representatives of twelve towns and villages around the Adirondacks attended the event and learned how to conduct a survey of their town's historic architecture. The workshop, which was held at the Hotel Saranac in Saranac Lake, was attended by residents and officials of Jay, Piseco, Clifton, Saranac Lake, Horicon, Johnsburg, Keene, Lake Placid, Ticonderoga, Chazy, Bolton and Newcomb.

The workshop began with participants sharing something that was special or valuable about the older buildings or structures in their town or village. Then AARCH Board member Barbara Parnass gave a slide presentation showing the wide variety of historic architecture that exists around the park - main streets, churches, camps, hotels, public buildings, bridges, industrial buildings and many other types of architecture. Many participants expressed surprise at how much more historic architecture existed in their towns than they had previously realized.

AARCH President Howard Kirschenbaum then described the overall process of historic preservation, which begins with a survey of the historic resources in any locality, and leads to public appreciation, improved stewardship and local planning. He emphasized that historic preservation begins at home. It must be motivated and controlled by local people. "The state or federal government can't force people to take care of their community. Good stewardship comes from local people and local governments appreciating their architectural heritage and wanting to pass it on to the next generation."

A panel of experts then described their experience with previous architectural surveys that have been conducted by towns and villages in the Park, particularly in Essex County. Steve Engelhart, Barbara Parnass and Jessica Roemischer described surveys they had worked on in Keeseville, Saranac Lake, AuSable Forks, Clintonville, Moriah and Essex. In the afternoon, workshops were held on the practical aspects of conducting historic surveys, including researching your town's history, selecting buildings and sites to include, and filling out the survey forms. These workshops were led by Steve Engelhart of Friends of the North Country in Keeseville and Newcomb Town Supervisor George Canon (both AARCH Board members), Clifton Town Historian Jeanne Reynolds, Elizabethtown's Adirondack Center Museum director Reid Larson, and historic preservation consultant Jessica Roemischer.

The workshop was funded, in part, with a grant from the New York State Council on the Arts. After the workshop, AARCH will continue to work with teams from those towns undertaking a local survey. Other towns and villages interested in conducting a survey of the historic architecture in their area should contact Mary Hotaling at AARCH's Saranac Lake address, or phone 518 891-2748.

North Creek Railroad Station,

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long-term plan includes a railway museum, tourist center and a waterfront park along the nearby Hudson River.

The sixty-mile-long Adirondack Railroad from Saratoga Springs to North Creek was completed in 1871 by Dr. Thomas C. Durant, who, with his son William, operated it until his death in 1885. In 1889 it was acquired by the Delaware & Hudson Railway company. The North Creek Railroad Station is the center of a complex built between 1874 and the early 1900s which also includes the freight house, round house, tool house, turntable, old station and horse barn.

The episode for which the North Creek station is best known was well told in "TR Receives His Summons to the Presidency," by Richmond B. Williams in the *Bell Telephone Magazine*, Autumn 1951, provided by AARCH member Arnold Markowitz, which is the source for this synopsis.

On September 6, 1901, at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo, President William McKinley was shot by an assassin. Vice-President Roosevelt hurried to Buffalo, where he was assured that McKinley would recover. After three days Roosevelt left to join his family in the Adirondacks, at the Upper Works of the Tahawus Club in the Town of Newcomb, thirty-five miles beyond the end of the railroad.

Wrote Williams:

> *In the area in which the Roosevelts were then staying, the principal means of communication was by telegraph in to North Creek, the rail head. However, Louis (Lew) Pereau had connected North Creek with the Lower Works twenty-five miles away by a single-wire grounded telephone circuit, which also linked one telephone at the intermediate points of Minerva and Aiden Lair.*

Thanks to this single line, Roosevelt was visiting one of the few primitive areas of the country which had telephone service.

On Thursday, Roosevelt and his party walked five miles to the Flowed Lands where they took canoes to two cabins at the west end of Lake Colden. After breakfast Friday, September 12, they climbed Mount Marcy, reaching the summit shortly after noon. They had descended to Lake Tear-of-the-Clouds and sat down to eat when woodsman Harrison Hall reached them, carrying the message of McKinley's decline. Hurriedly finishing their meal, they all returned to Camp Colden; Roosevelt and one guide continued on, reaching his family at the Upper Works at about 5:30.

Mary B. Hotaling

Railroad turntable at North Creek

The Vice-President declined to travel farther without more information, but he sent a messenger ten miles to the Lower Works to arrange for relays of horses. Meanwhile Roosevelt's private secretary, William Loeb, Jr., was on the way from Albany to North Creek with a special train. The messenger returned between 10 and 11 that evening with the urgent summons from Buffalo.

The first leg of the ride was ten miles in a buckboard on a rough, winding road in the dark, arriving at the Lower Works at 1 AM. From there Roosevelt phoned Loeb in North Creek to tell him he was coming. Fresh horses drew Roosevelt nine miles farther on a somewhat better road, but it was still dark and now raining. The rig arrived at Aiden Lair at 3:15 AM with sixteen miles to go. Mike Cronin, who kept Aiden Lair and knew the road well, drove his black horses and surrey on the last lap at breakneck speed, arriving in North Creek a few minutes after 5 AM on September 14, 1901.

There on the station platform, Cronin delivered a note to William Loeb, who passed it to Roosevelt. McKinley had died at 2:15 AM. All the way from Aiden Lair Cronin kept silent about what he had learned by telephone hours earlier: he did not tell his passenger that he had become president of the United States. "The paper fluttered to the platform but (Roosevelt) bent down and picked it up, thrusting it into his pocket as he boarded the train for Buffalo — and the Presidency," wrote Williams.

In addition to this historic event, the North Creek Railroad Station has economic and industrial significance to its local community. In 1934 the first of many snow trains arrived, which would more than double the town's population by bringing hundreds of skiers to the North Creek Ski Bowl and Gore Mountain. In 1944, to assist the war effort, the railroad was extended thirty-three miles to carry titanium from the National Lead Corporation at Tahawus, a route maintained until 1989.

While the station's future is looking up, Aiden Lair, on a parcel of 70+ acres with a lovely view, is vacant and for sale. "Save Our Station" can be reached at PO Box 156, North Creek, NY 12853, or phone 518 251-3330.

Our appreciation to the New York State Council on the Arts for the funding which made this newsletter possible.

Santanoni Restoration Begins

After twenty-one years of abandonment and deterioration, Camp Santanoni in the Town of Newcomb, Essex County, is being restored. On October 19, 20, 28, and November 4, volunteers from AARCH and the Town of Newcomb, along with employees of New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, worked on putting a new, cedar shingle roof on the Artist Studio adjacent to the Santanoni main lodge on Newcomb Lake.

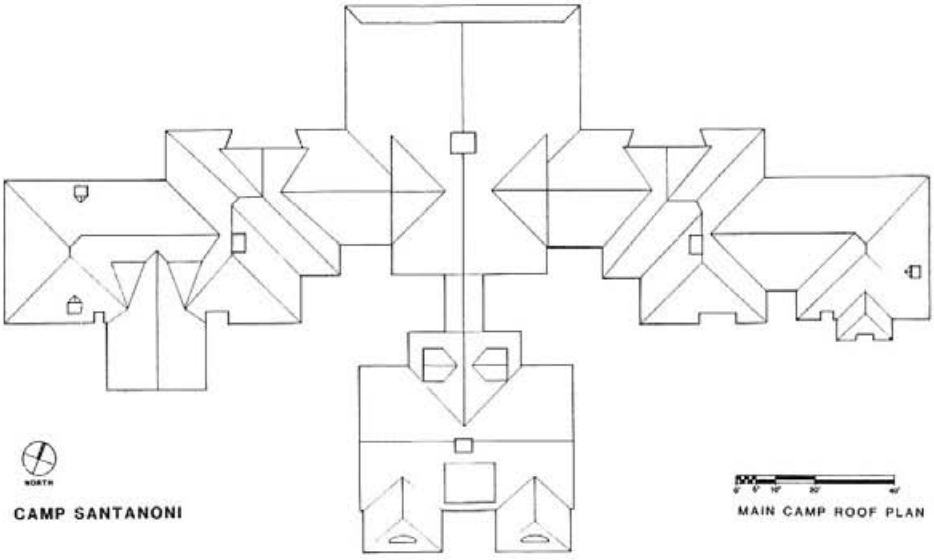
The restoration begins one hundred years after the main camp at Santanoni was completed in 1893 for Robert C. Pruyn, a prominent Albany businessman. With the addition of a major farm complex and other buildings around 1905, Camp Santanoni, on its 13,000 acre estate, became one of the grandest of the Adirondack "Great Camps." The Pruyn's successors, the Melvin family of Syracuse, sold the Santanoni property to the state in 1972, after eight-year-old family member Douglas Legg disappeared in the woods near the camp and was never found. Ironically, on October 28, while the volunteer crew was working on the roof, they could look across Newcomb Lake and see about thirty U.S. Air Force and state personnel raking the main island in search of the boy's remains, unsuccessfully following up the latest lead in the long-standing mystery.

In the fall of 1991, after a vigorous campaign initiated by AARCH and the Town of Newcomb, Governor Mario Cuomo announced that the state would preserve Camp Santanoni, which is listed on the State and National Registers of Historic Places. DEC Deputy Commissioner Robert Bendick worked out a compromise between environmental and historic preservation groups, local officials, and state legislators that would allow Camp Santanoni to remain and be preserved as an educational exhibit in the Forest Preserve. Since then, the DEC has been working on a Unit Management Plan that will include all the details of how both the natural environment and the historic resources of the Santanoni Preserve will be managed.

Frustrated with the slow progress and responding to the steady deterioration of the buildings at Camp Santanoni, including the partial collapse of the boat house last winter, AARCH began lobbying again this year for action at Santanoni. This fall DEC authorized emergency restoration work to begin. Since it was too late in the season to tackle the main lodge roof, it was agreed that AARCH and Newcomb would replace the roof on the Artist Studio this season, and DEC would take responsibility for rebuilding the boat house in the spring, which is excellent news.

Led by Supervisor George Canon, the Town of Newcomb purchased all the materials to replace the roof on the 20x30 foot Artist Studio. AARCH President Howard Kirschenbaum and Tupper Lake contractor Randy Burgoyne coordinated the volunteer effort and supervised the actual work. A total of 32 person/days of labor have gone into the project so far, including the time of AARCH members and volunteers Irv Francis, Joe and Nancy Pfeiffer, Carl Stearns, Don and Beverly Williams, Melissa Brewer, Howard Kirschenbaum, Dan Edelstein, George Petkov, Danny Otts and Warren Lipa; Newcomb's George Canon and Virginia Hall; and DEC's Andy Blanchette, Richard Ciperley, and Phil Johnstone. The recently completed historic structures report provided by the Preservation League of New York State, with AARCH Board member Carl Stearns as one of its principal authors, guided the work. (See page 8.)

Hopefully, DEC will complete its Unit Management Plan this winter, and a coherent plan for Santanoni's restoration and use will be agreed upon. AARCH will continue to work toward that end. Meanwhile, with the new roof on the Artist Studio, it appears that a significant milestone has been passed. There is no going back now. Santanoni will be restored.



News & Notes

ALBANY: Orin Lehman, highly regarded Commissioner of the State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, retired in mid-July. Joan K. Davidson has been nominated by Governor Cuomo to succeed Lehman. Since 1977 she has served as President of the J. M. Kaplan Fund, which supports urban design, historic preservation, environmental protection, land use planning, neighborhood improvement, civil liberties, human rights and the arts. A grant from the Kaplan Fund was instrumental in establishing AARCH as a membership organization. Ms. Davidson's appointment awaits confirmation.

AARCH's Program Coordinator Mary Hotaling was nominated by the Governor to become a member of the State Board for Historic Preservation, and was confirmed by the Senate in July. Mary attended her first two-day, quarterly Board meeting in September at Peebles Island, where she was pleased to be able to move the nomination of the Adirondack Railroad to the State and National Registers of Historic Places.

ALTAMONT: When the state purchased the 12,500-acre Santanoni Preserve, it took over 20 years to resolve the dilemma of what to do with the historically and architecturally significant buildings on the property. AARCH has been working to prevent the same problem from recurring when the state purchases the 14,000-acre Follensby Park. In July, AARCH wrote to DEC Commissioner Thomas Jorling expressing the Board's interest in the future of the main lodge on Follenby Pond. The Adirondack-style lodge was built in 1917 and contains 17 rooms and over 6300 feet of living space. The state's Historic Preservation Act requires that determination be made of the property's historical and architectural significance. If the property is deemed to be eligible for the State Register of Historic Places, then Environmental Conservation Law Section 9-0109 all but prohibits state purchase (which, in the Adirondacks, would probably mean the building's destruction.) Copies of AARCH's letter were sent to the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation which, shortly thereafter, scheduled a visit to the property to view the buildings. We will continue to follow this matter closely in the coming months.

AUSABLE FORKS: The Graves Mansion has been purchased and is being renovated for use as a bed and breakfast. It was open for tours this year.

GABRIELS: The farmer who owns the large and striking Gabriels schoolhouse, on Route 86 between Saranac Lake and Paul Smiths, is willing to give the structure to anyone who is willing to move it. Time is of the essence! If interested, call Howie Kirschenbaum at AARCH.

JAY: Bridge and Beyond, the organization advocating for protection of the 1857 Jay Covered Bridge, is optimistic in light of recent NYS Department of Transportation assertions that the bridge can be renovated to meet a load rating of HS-25. This would avert construction of a new concrete and steel bridge 600 feet upstream near the community swimming hole, and abandonment of the old wooden one. Cost is estimated at $660,000, less than a third of the price of one alternative new bridge. Symbolic of the Town of Jay, the bridge has been used as the cover illustration on the Essex County highway map. The Jay structure is said to be the only covered bridge in the Adirondack Park, and one of 29 in the state. Joan Turbek has written a coloring book based on the group's effort to save the covered bridge. Told through the eyes of a little girl, the story not only does a good job of conveying the dilemma in Jay, it is an allegory for historic preservation in rural areas around the Adirondacks. *The Little River and the Big, Big Bridge* is published by North County Books. To order the book and help the group working to save the bridge, send $11.25 (which includes postage) to Bridge and Beyond, Box 164, Jay, NY 12941.

PAUL SMITHS: Five new members were elected to AARCH's Board of Directors at July's annual meeting at White Pine Camp. Jacqueline Day is Director of the Adirondack Museum, and formerly headed the Regional Council of Historical Agencies. James E. Glavin, a landscape architect by profession, has been a full time resident of Cranberry Lake since his retirement from his Syracuse firm. Ronald Ofner heads the Essex County Tourism department with an office in the new visitors' center at the Crown Point Bridge House. Jean A. Olson serves as Supervisor of the Town of Horicon in Essex County. Margaret Prime, our new Secretary, is a third-generation seasonal resident of Lake Placid, and former owner and operator of the KOA Campground in Wilmington. In addition, retiring Board members Paul Malo, Sue Rathbun and Barry Silverstein were named as charter members of the new AARCH Advisory Council.

Mary B. Hotaling

Members visit White Pine Camp boathouse at AARCH Annual Meeting

PAUL SMITHS: The tennis house at White Pine Camp was hit by a falling tree and suffered serious structural damages during a severe storm on August 24. Architect Addison Mizner, who did extensive work in Florida, designed the tennis house along with other improvements made to the camp in 1911. AARCH's Annual Meeting in July included a tour of the camp. The tennis house will be restored in the spring.

PAUL SMITHS: Camp Topridge, the largest and most lavish of the Adirondack Great Camps, is still for sale. After a summer and early fall without any acceptable offers, Marine Midland Bank, the owner, lowered the asking price from $2.5 million to $2 million. For further information, contact Merrill Thomas Realty in Lake Placid or Howie Kirschenbaum in care of AARCH.

THENDARA: The Adirondack Centennial Railroad's second year of operation exceeded 1992's ridership with a total well over 70,000 from July through October. Other successes achieved this season include completion of the nomination of the railroad corridor to the National Register of Historic Places, and acquisition of two new locomotives. The railroad made grants from its September 19 proceeds among six non-profit organizations along the line, including Historic Saranac Lake and the Lake Placid-North Elba Historical Society, which occupy the depots in those villages. The ACR plans to add a mile to its run next season.

TICONDEROGA: PRIDE of Ticonderoga, the only Adirondack recipient, was granted $2,000 in the first round of the 1993 Rural New York Historic Preservation Grant Program. The award is for a feasibility study of reusing the downtown State Theatre, threatened with demolition, as a multi-purpose community center. The program was established and funded by The J. M. Kaplan Fund. The Preservation League of NY State is one of four groups administering the money.

UTICA: When the joint DEC/DOT Task Force released its preliminary draft plan, the Citizens Advisory Committee on the Remsen-to-Lake-Placid Railroad Corridor, including AARCH President Howard Kirschenbaum, had some strong criticisms of the plan's shortcomings. On the positive side, the report was very responsive to historic preservation concerns. However, the best way to preserve the historic railroad corridor is to have a railroad operating again. As currently drafted, the plan does not accomplish that; but with some revisions, it could. DEC/DOT staff will take the committee's feedback under advisement and come up with their next draft plan, which will then go to formal public hearings. We encourage AARCH members' participation at the public hearings when they are scheduled.

Join AARCH

On member Betty Scott's suggestion, we're including a membership coupon in the Newsletter, beginning with this issue. Your suggestions are welcome, too!

I want to help preserve the Adirondack Park's historical and architectural legacy. Enclosed is my tax-deductible membership contribution.

(Check one)

____ $15 Individual

____ $25 Family

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Please make checks payable to "Adirondack Architectural Heritage" & mail to: AARCH, c/o Hotaling, 22 Catherine Street, Saranac Lake NY 12983.

Resources

Surveys & Studies of Historic Resources in the Adirondacks

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* *available by mail from AARCH*

available by mail from publisher, 51 Milwaukee Street, Malone, NY 12953

Preservation Technology
with Carl Stearns, A.I.A.

The "Camp Santanoni Main Camp Complex: Documentation, Stabilization and Maintenance Plan" was issued in September by the Preservation League of New York State, after a full year of observations by the team of three consultants. Funded by a grant from the Open Space Institute, the report was prepared to assist the NYS Department of Environmental Conservation in preserving this irreplaceable architectural resource within the Santanoni Preserve in Newcomb.

Howard Kirschenbaum

AARCH members Nancy and Joe Pfeiffer of Boonville help reshingle the Artist Studio roof at Santanoni.

"Main camp" refers to the large pavilion and verandah log building which faces Newcomb Lake from a respectful distance in the form of a blunt arrowhead some 200 feet across. The "main camp complex" includes, in addition to the main lodge, two other substantial buildings: the new boathouse and the studio, both on the very shore of the lake, one on either side of the rise which the camp straddles. Seven secondary and smaller buildings and a series of bridges complete the complex in its current form.

The report finds the main camp to be in rather impressive structural condition for its age despite lack of maintenance in recent decades. The most substantial problems have to do with differential settlement of foundation components, the displacement and deformation of specific framing loads, and deterioration due to the removal of two verandah roof sections many years ago. The lack of lateral stability in the ground floor stockade of the kitchen wing is also pointed out. The most alarming observation is that one of the hip rafters of the new boathouse snapped under massive snowloads late in the winter of 1992-93. The photographs of the snowfall at Camp Santanoni taken by historic preservation consultant Wesley Haynes in March of this year are truly impressive.

To arrest the deterioration of the existing buildings, a gradation of stabilization measures is proposed by structural engineer J. Thomas Ryan of Ryan-Biggs Associates and preservation architect Carl A. Stearns of Crawford & Stearns, Architects. Included are outline specifications for the reroofing of virtually all extant buildings, with emphasis on the main camp, the new boathouse and the studio.

Adirondack Architectural Heritage

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