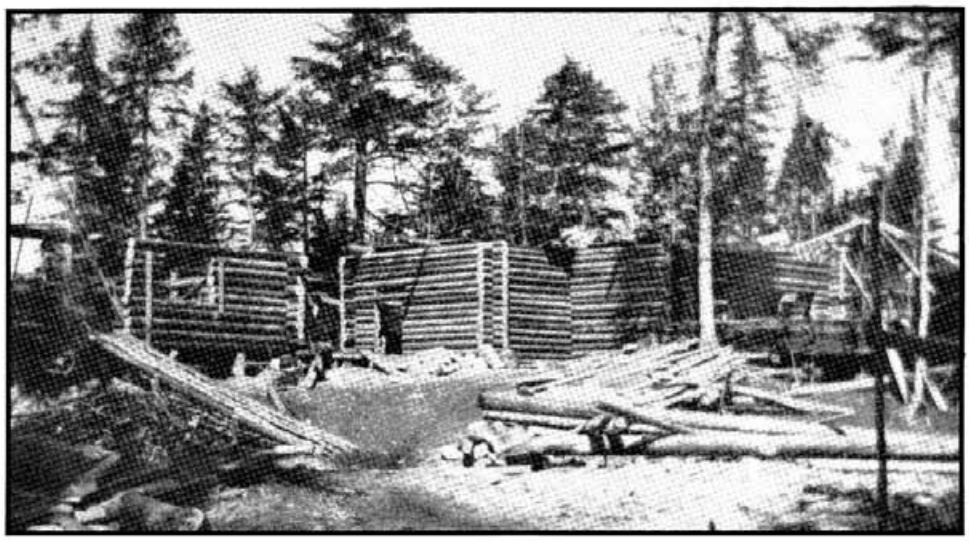
Volume 5, Number 1
June 1996

Newsletter

ADIRONDACK
ARCHITECTURAL
HERITAGE

Robert H. Robertson, Architect of Santanoni



Provided by George Canon

Camp Santanoni under construction, c. 1892

ROBERT H. ROBERTSON is one of three seminal builders of "Great Camps" in the central Adirondacks, along with William West Durant and William L. Coulter. Though Robertson was best known in his own time for early skyscrapers in New York City, he is important in our region as the architect of Camp Santanoni and Nehasane.

Robert Henderson Robertson was born in Philadelphia on April 29, 1849, a son of Archibald Robertson, a merchant, and Elizabeth Henderson. Named for his maternal grandfather, Robert was descended on his father's side from the owners of the McIntyre Iron Company in the Adirondack High Peaks. He attended Rutgers College, where he established a friendship with Robert C. Pruyn, later his client at Santanoni; they graduated in 1869. He began his architectural apprenticeship in Philadelphia under Henry A. Sims, but soon moved to New York, perhaps because "early in life" he married Charlotte Markoe, daughter of a New York physician. It is said that in New York Robertson worked in the office of George B. Post, "a leader in the design of early skyscrapers," but Sarah Landau wrote that this cannot be determined "either from New York City directories or from Post's office records."

At least by early 1873, he had entered the office of Edward T. Potter, specialist in High Victori-

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From the President

The pace of *everything* is picking up at Camp Santanoni.

Citizens Advisory Committee. The CAC has finished a year of regular meetings and has more or less achieved a consensus on a plan for the historic area of Santanoni. While the plan does not include public lodging or meals, which AARCH advocated as the best long-term approach for using the buildings and funding their preservation, it does allow a good interpretive program and appropriate level of restoration. Now the state must write its Unit Management Plan, incorporating the CAC's deliberations. Once the UMP is completed, it goes to public hearings, a re-writing, and finally to the Adirondack Park Agency for approval. AARCH hopes that DEC will give the writing of the UMP a high priority, so that the plan can be implemented before much more serious deterioration to the buildings occurs.

Summer Interns. With the support of the Town of Newcomb, AARCH will have *two* interpreters at Santanoni this summer. As in the previous five summers, one will be based at the Main Camp. A second intern will be based at the Gate Lodge, available to show this building to the public for the first time in Santanoni's history, as well as orient and educate visitors about Santanoni, and perhaps begin to raise funds and volunteers to help in the preservation.

Preservation Work. Again with the support of Newcomb and the state, the main lodge roofing project will continue, other stabilization work at the Main Camp will be undertaken, and hopefully, the barn roof will be completed and stabilization of the "Herdsman's Cottage" in the Farm Complex will begin. We are looking for a carpenter to work full time at Santanoni this summer, if you know someone who might be interested and qualified.

Historic Structures Report. Under the $12,000 grant AARCH received from the Preservation League of New York State/New York State Council on the Arts Grant Program, Wesley Haines is nearing completion of the abbreviated Historic Structures Report for the Farm Complex. Using many of the materials previously collected by Winthrop Aldrich, and conducting a detailed inspection of the buildings, Wes is developing a much fuller understanding of the history and significance of the Farm Complex, as well as recommendations for its preservation and interpretation.

Volunteers. We expect to have a higher level than ever of volunteer activity at Santanoni this summer, including two scheduled work weekends, on July 19-21 and August 16-18. Volunteers are needed for roofing, assisting the roofers, staining, glazing, and cooking for the dozen or so volunteers. Supervision will be provided. Beyond these organized weekends, volunteers are welcome to assist the carpenter at any time(s) during the summer. To volunteer or for further information, call Steven Engelhart at 518 834-9328.

AARCH continues to play an instrumental leadership role in helping all these phases of the Camp Santanoni renaissance move forward. Among the many other projects and activities we are involved with, the work at Santanoni should be a real source of pride for all AARCH members.

HOWIE KIRSCHENBAUM

MEET OUR SANTANONI INTERPRETERS

Kirsten Merriman is a graduate student in Historic Preservation at Eastern Michigan University and has a B.S. Degree from Michigan State University in Parks and Recreation Resources. She has previously worked as a backcountry ranger at Sleeping Bear Dunes National Lakeshore, as a seasonal interpreter at Yellowstone National Park and as a guide at several museums. Kirsten will be based at the Gate Lodge.

Mark Brebach is a graduate student in the University of Vermont's Historic Preservation Program and also has a B.A. in American History from Northwestern University. He has done extensive hiking and camping in Utah, Colorado, California and Vermont and was "captivated by the exquisite craftsmanship" at Santanoni when he visited there last summer. Mark will be based at the Main Camp.

Volunteer for Santanoni Work Weekends,

JULY 19-21 AND AUGUST 16-18!

Call Steven Engelhart, 518 834-9328.

Robert H. Robertson Architect of Santanoni

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an Gothic churches and colleges, who was then working on the Mark Twain House in Hartford, Connecticut. In the office Robertson met William A. Potter (1842-1909), his future partner, and joined the American Institute of Architects. At that time, before any architectural schools were established in America, apprenticeship was the accepted process for entering the profession. Robertson, wrote a contemporary, "was most fortunate in

Shelburne Farms Archives

being able to pursue his studies under the direction of such men. They were of the first rank, and of wide experience."

In 1875, William A. Potter was appointed to the post of supervising architect of the U.S. Treasury Department. From that time through 1880, he was Robertson's senior partner in the firm of Potter & Robertson, with offices at 52-54 William Street in New York. In their six years together, the partners produced 34 known designs, of which 25 were built, and altered six New York City buildings. Three of these projects were for members of the Pruyn family in Albany, including a two-and-a-half story brick townhouse for Robertson's classmate, Robert C. Pruyn. In 1881, though the partnership had ended, Robertson and Potter each moved their separate offices to 121 East 23rd Street, occasionally collaborating until 1902 when Potter retired. In 1885 Robertson was elected a Fellow of the AIA. In 1891, just about the time that he was working on the two Adirondack camps, the offices again moved in tandem, to 160 Fifth Avenue.

From 1902 until 1907, William's nephew Robert Burnside Potter (1869-1934) was Robertson's junior partner in Robertson & Potter. In 1908 Thomas Markoe Robertson (Yale 1901, Ecole des Beaux Arts 1903) joined his father as R. H. Robertson & Son, collaborating with him on his last known work, the American Woolen Company Building, 1909.

Though in 1913 the *New York Times* had published a mistaken report of his death in California, Robert H. Robertson died on June 3, 1919, at Nehasane, while hunting with Dr. Webb's son Seward.

From 1881 through 1909, Robertson's busy office produced at least 56 substantial projects, but a complete list has yet to be compiled. Sarah Landau summed up the firm's work:

Robertson's huge production included large country and town houses, many churches, public and institutional buildings, several railroad stations including the Richardsonian Mott Haven Station, NYC (1885-86; demolished) — perhaps his best building — skyscrapers, and banks.

Though Robertson was prominent in New York, and his work was frequently published, some spark of creativity was evidently lacking:

Over the years his designs tended increasingly towards a clutter of small motifs and an avoidance of dominant features. As his buildings grew taller and larger his problems of proportioning and integrating the elements of a buildings became more apparent. This difficulty shows up in his New York skyscrapers — his Lincoln Building (c. 1885), Corn Exchange Bank (1893-94), and especially the American Tract Society Building (1894-95).

Montgomery Schuyler, a contemporary critic, opined that

none of these tall buildings contributes very distinctly to the solution of the specific problem of the tall building, and none can be be called successful in its entirety. The architect's power of design is shown in the parts, rather than in the whole, in the picturesque features in which his other work abounds.

None of the scholars who listed and analyzed Robertson's design projects included the three projects in our area. Ironically, as Santanoni and Shelburne Farms become well-publicized restoration projects, Robertson's most enduring legacy may be the buildings that were not noticed in his lifetime.

Dr. William Seward Webb (1851-1926), the developer of the Adirondack & St. Lawrence Railroad, abandoned the practice of medicine for finance about 1881, when he married Lila Vanderbilt. The Webbs' house at Shelburne Farms on Lake Champlain, just south of Burlington, Vermont, was built in 1899, but Robertson was consulting Frederick Law Olmsted about the mammoth gentleman's farm as early as 1886. Around 1890 or '91, Robertson also designed a Shingle style camp called Forest Lodge for Webb at Nehasane, reached by a private station on the railroad. Craig Gilborn wrote that Forest Lodge (demolished in 1984) was "architecturally impressive on the outside, . . . less so inside except for the living room, with its timbered cathedral ceiling and massive stone fireplace."

Probably almost immediately following the design of Nehasane around 1890, Robertson began work on Camp Santanoni, built in 1892-93. Robertson's family history was deeply rooted in the terrain near Santanoni, descended as he was from the McIntyres who first developed iron mines in the High Peaks in the early 1800s. He took a turn as President of his family's McIntyre Iron Company, and he was an early member of the Adirondack Club (1877-c.1897), and an original member of its successor, the Tahawus Club, which leased the then-inactive iron company lands at the Upper Works, not far from Santanoni in Newcomb. Arthur H. Masten used Robertson's 1908 watercolor of the "New Blast Furnace, 1854," as the frontispiece in his book, *The Story of Adirondac.*

In the 1890s, Robertson was described as "tall, well-built, and with a

Robert H. Robertson... *continued*

well-developed physique, having given no small attention to athletics, and being a most enthusiastic hunter and fisherman." He was also a musician, and president of the Mendelssohn Glee Club, for whom he designed a clubhouse in Manhattan in 1891.

Robert Clarence Pruyn (1847-1934), though two years older than Robertson, was in the same class at Rutgers College. Robert's father, Robert Hewson Pruyn, was appointed by President Abraham Lincoln around 1861 as minister to Japan, only the second ambassador to that country since Commodore Perry opened it to trade with the West. The younger Pruyn was said to have served as his father's secretary there, but since he was only 14 at the time of the appointment, that post may have been more honorary than actual. Robert C. Pruyn was president of the National Commercial Bank & Trust Company of Albany, a predecessor of Key Bank, from 1885 to 1931. About 1897, Pruyn joined the Tahawus Club along with Robertson, though he had already enjoyed Santanoni for five years by then.

The primary contemporary source attributing Santanoni to Robertson is the Forest Commission report of 1893. The only extant building there known to be Robertson's work is the Main Camp. When it was built, the camp's logs were varnished "like a ship's deck," not stained dark, and it is not clear when the trim was painted its vivid Chinese red. In 1893, the camp was described as the "largest and finest in the entire forest. . . . Although built of logs, the group of cottages are well designed, and offer a remarkably fine example of what can be done with rustic work in architecture. . . . Pains were taken to avoid city effects and to make the place picturesque rather than elegant." Though the writer mentioned a "lodge and stables . . . half a mile from the residence," all traces of those buildings, located before the last bridge to the Main Camp, are gone.

"More original and important [than Nehasane] was Camp Santanoni," wrote Craig Gilborn. "There was never a structure like it anywhere in the Adirondacks."

Howard Kirschenbaum remarked that "a number of architectural features of Santanoni's main lodge have been described as Japanese in their influence." As early as 1929, this quality was noted in a magazine article. The author, Guy H. Lee, at first credits the client:

The galleries take the place of hallways in the usual type of house, all the rooms giving on them. It is interesting to recall that the Japanese always employ this method of getting to and from the various rooms in the rambling structures which are typical of their architecture; and as Mr. Pruyn spent many years of his youth in Japan, it is possible that his experiences there influenced him in the design of Camp Santanoni. In the method of arriving at the final grouping of the different units this influence is also felt. The Japanese first locate the important rooms of their houses and then connect them up and roof them in; at Camp Santanoni all the units were placed to command pleasant outlooks or to be thrust back out of the way as their use suggested, and then brought under one roof and connected with galleries.

On the other hand, Lee says: "Mr. Pruyn had originally planned to have a group of separate log cabins, but was persuaded to modify this idea by his architect, the late Robert H. Robertson."

Regardless of the sources of the design, Santanoni is a unique, and extraordinarily successful, synthesis. One of its most enchanting characteristics is the spatial mystery of those shadowed galleries. Santanoni's true architectural qualities cannot be apprehended from photographs alone; rather, its genius is in the subtle, three-dimensional manipulation of space.

Santanoni is unique in Robertson's body of work, for its complex but powerful form, its low silhouette, its rustic materials, and the boldness and unity of its vision. In its location in Newcomb near the McIntyre ironworks, it may have been closest to Robertson's heart, as well. The unique combination of the client Pruyn, with his experience in Japan, and the architect Robertson, with his family history in the landscape of Newcomb, resulted in a remarkable architectural synthesis, the camp called Santanoni.

MARY B. HOTALING

Principal sources:

Craig Gilborn, *Adirondack Furniture and the Rustic Tradition*, (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1987), 68-69.

Howard Kirschenbaum, "A Brief History of Camp Santanoni," (Raquette Lake, NY: Adirondack Architectural Heritage, n.d.)

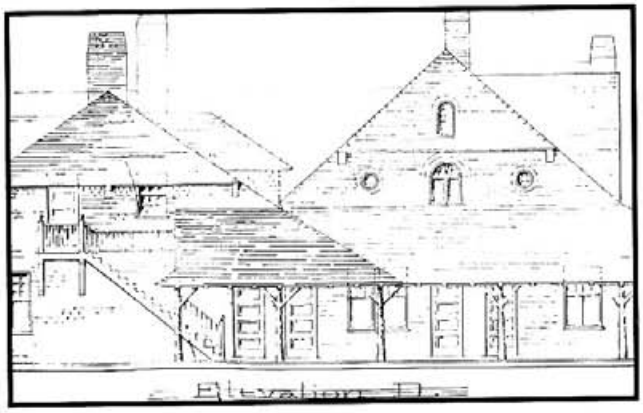
Sarah Bradford Landau, *Edward T. and William A. Potter: American Victorian Architects* (New York: Garland Publishing, 1979), 70-79.

Guy H. Lee, "Estates of American Sportsmen: Santanoni, the Adirondack Camp of Robert C. Pruyn, Esq., of Albany, New York," *The Sportsman*, October 1929, 71ff.

Montgomery Schuyler, "The Works of R. H. Robertson," *Architectural Record*, December 1897, 184-219.

Shelburne Farms, vertical file, courtesy Julie Bressor, Archivist.

State of New York, Forest Commission report, 1893, Vol. I, 178-79.



Elevation, Webb's Forest Lodge at Nehasane.

1996 TOUR PROGRAM SCHEDULE

AARCH's tours, led by knowledgeable volunteer guides, are enjoyable learning experiences and raise funds to support our activities. Participants should wear comfortable walking shoes and dress for the variable weather conditions of the Adirondacks. Bring your own lunch and beverages, unless otherwise noted. Attendance is limited on most tours. All tours require preregistration and prepayment. To register, send full fee to AARCH, 1759 Main Street, Keeseville, NY 12944 or call 518-834-9328 for more information. Refunds will be given to those not able to attend a tour if we are notified in advance of the cancellation.

Provided by Irma & Bob Fisher

Tip Top, site of our Annual Meeting June 29

Saturday, June 29
AARCH ANNUAL MEETING AT "TIP TOP" NEAR SCHROON LAKE

AARCH's 1996 Annual Meeting will be held at "Tip Top," a classic, rustic Adirondack estate overlooking the Green Mountains near Schroon Lake. The meeting will begin at 1 PM and will feature the presentation of our **1996 Adirondack Architectural Heritage Awards** to ten individuals, organizations and businesses for their exemplary work in historic preservation in the region. The meeting will be followed by a tour of Tip Top, ending around 4 PM. The meeting is a benefit of AARCH membership, guest fee is $5. Advance registration is required.

Saturday, July 13
HISTORIC MORIAH

This is a fascinating tour of an Adirondack town with a long and rich iron mining history and a remarkable architectural legacy that embodies that history. The tour will start with a brief slide presentation by Jack Brennan, who worked in the iron mines of Moriah for 35 years. We will then take a close look at the iron company buildings, worker's housing, church, memorial hall, jail and cintering plant in the mining communities of Witherbee and Mineville. In Port Henry we'll take a walking tour which will include the grand French Second Empire style Town Hall, the railroad depot, Sherman Free Library, bank, churches, Lee House and other interesting architecture. Tour begins at 10 AM and ends at 4 PM. The tour is cosponsored by the Moriah Historical Society and the Port Henry/Moriah Economic Development Zone. Fee is $20 ($15 for AARCH members). Advance registration required.

Saturday, July 20
CAMP SANTANONI

Explore one of the most magnificent Great Camps in the Adirondacks with Rob Engel, a former AARCH interpreter at Camp Santanoni. Surrounded by thousands of acres in the Santanoni Preserve, this tour will include stops at the Gate Lodge Complex, Farm Complex and Main Camp on Newcomb Lake. Participants will see restoration work in progress and be able to view some of the camp's interiors. The round-trip walk is about 9.8 miles on a gently sloping dirt road. Meet at 10 AM at the parking lot of the Santa-noni Preserve, off Route 28N in the hamlet of Newcomb. We'll Return about 4 PM. Suggested optional donation is $10 ($5 for AARCH members). Advance registration required. A limited number of seats are available on a horse-drawn wagon, for an additional $10 fee, by advance reservation.

AARCH Events

Sunday, July 21
HISTORIC ESSEX
Led by AARCH Board member David Hislop, the tour will begin at 1 PM at Graystone, a magnificent circa 1853 Greek Revival style home which overlooks Lake Champlain. At Graystone, tour participants will see a brief slide lecture on historic Essex. The walking tour will feature dozens of houses and other buildings from the 19th century, including the Stone Church, Essex Inn and Noble-Clemmons House. Some interiors will be seen as well. This is an unusual opportunity to experience the only hamlet in the Adirondacks listed in its entirety on the National Register of Historic Places. The tour will end around 5 PM. Fee: $20 ($15 AARCH members). Advance registration is required.

Essex Inn

Friday, July 26
FOUR RUSTIC CAMPS OF WILLIAM COULTER
AARCH's Mary Hotaling will again lead one of our most popular tours of four turn-of-the-century "Great Camps" on Upper Saranac Lake, all designed by the prominent Saranac Lake architect William Coulter. These include Eagle Island (Vice-Pres. Levi Morton), Moss Ledge (Isabel Ballantine), the Wawbeek (Moritz Walter) and Prospect Point (Adolph Lewisohn). A rare opportunity. Fee is $35 ($25 for AARCH members) and includes a boat ride to Eagle Island. 10 AM to 4 PM. Advance registration required.

Saturday, July 27
NORTHVILLE: WHAT STYLE IS IT?
This unique workshop/tour will use the village of Northville as an open classroom for learning about architectural styles and the language of architecture. Beginning at 10 AM, the morning will be spent in the classroom setting of the Northville Public Library, where the group will learn about identifying architectural styles from Steven Engelhart, AARCH's Executive Director. Following lunch, the group will walk around this historic village and look at several dozen historic buildings which exemplify a whole range of architectural styles from the Federal to the Craftsman styles. Walking tour will end around 4 PM. Cosponsored by the Northville Public Library. Fee is $20 ($15 for AARCH members). Advance registration is required.

Friday, August 2
CLINTON PRISON AT DANNEMORA
In 1995 the Clinton Correctional Facility in Dannemora, the third oldest prison in New York State and the largest, celebrated its sesquicentennial. This unique opportunity will take us into this maximum security prison where we will visit a cell block, modeled on the "Auburn System," the Church of the Good Thief, the North Yard and the former Dannemora State Hospital. The history of the prison is fascinating and its architecture is most dramatic. The tour will begin at 9:30 AM and end at 3 PM. Suggested optional donation is $20 ($15 for AARCH members). Advance registration is required.

Saturday, August 3
IRONVILLE AND THE PENFIELD HOMESTEAD MUSEUM
Ron Ofner, AARCH Board member and President of the Penfield Homestead Museum, co-sponsor of the tour, will lead this 10 AM to 2 PM tour which explores one of the most important historic industrial sites in the Adirondacks. This was the site of the first industrial use of electricity and other innovations in the iron industry. This tour of the museum and hamlet of Ironville includes the Alan Penfield homestead, other historic buildings associated with the iron industry and a walk to the original dam and mine site. An unusual behind-the-scenes tour of an important period and place in Adirondack history. Fee is $15 ($10 for AARCH members). Advance registration required.

Friday, August 9
RUSTIC BIG MOOSE ARCHITECTURE
This tour will look at a variety of distinctive rustic architecture in Big Moose, including the work of Henry Covey, Earl Covey and the Martin family. The tour will be led by John Barrows, a Cazenovia contractor who has written about the Coveys in Fine Homebuilding magazine. The tour will include visits to the Big Moose Chapel, Covewood Lodge, several camps on Crag Point and to The Waldheim. The tour begins at 10 AM and will end about 4 PM. Fee is $30 ($20 for AARCH members). Advance registration required.

Saturday, August 10
BEHIND THE SCENES AT SAGAMORE
John Friauf, Jr., AARCH Board member and licensed NYS guide, will host a unique look at one of the Adirondacks' best known "Great Camps." Sagamore was built in 1897 by William West Durant and was sold in 1901 to Alfred Vanderbilt as a wilderness retreat. This tour takes a close look at how the camp worked to maintain the illusion of ease for its owners and guests and will include stops at the caretaker's complex, farm, sugarbush and powerhouse. Tour begins at 10 AM and ends around 3 PM. Fee is $15 ($10 AARCH members). Advance registration required.

AARCH Events

Saturday, August 17
HISTORIC TAHAWUS AND ADIRONDAC
Town of Newcomb Supervisor, George Canon, will lead this tour which looks at over a century of iron mining in the Town of Newcomb. We will see the McIntyre Furnace, village of Adirondac, other remains of the Adirondack Iron and Steel Company operations and the 20th century mining operation at Tahawus. The McIntyre Furnace, in particular, is a very important early American industrial site, one that has been documented by the Historic American Engineering Record. Meet at the Newcomb Town Hall at 10 AM and we'll go by bus to Tahawus. The tour will end about 1 PM. Fee is $15 ($10 for AARCH members).

Thursday, August 22
HISTORIC RAQUETTE LAKE
AARCH Board President Howie Kirschenbaum will lead this all-day tour to some of Raquette Lake's most interesting places. Meet in front of the Raquette Lake Supply Company at 10 AM for a walking tour of "downtown" Raquette Lake, then take a short drive to The Antlers to see several buildings associated with one of Raquette Lake's major, early hotel complexes. From the Raquette Lake Girls Camp we will board a boat and spend the afternoon viewing "Great Camps" and other historic buildings from the lake and debarking to visit a number of fine old camps and churches. Return around 4 PM. Fee is $35 ($25 for AARCH members). Advance registration is required.

Wednesday, August 28
THREE GREAT CAMPS ON OSGOOD POND
AARCH founder and Board President Howard Kirschenbaum will lead this tour of three impressive turn-of-the-century camps near Paul Smiths: White Pine Camp, former summer White House of Calvin Coolidge and now a museum; Northbrook Lodge, former private estate and now an inn; and a third, beautiful camp. 10:30 AM to 3:30 PM. Fee is $30 ($20 for AARCH members). Advance registration required.

Monday, September 16
HISTORIC LAKE PLACID
For the first time, AARCH is offering a very special tour of Lake Placid. Led by David Ackerman, author of "Placid Lake: Centennial History, 1883-1983," the tour contemplates visiting several lakeshore camps and a boat tour of the lake aboard the "Lady of the Lake", beginning at 1 PM and ending around 5 PM. Fee is $30 ($25 for AARCH members). Advance registration is required, and space will be limited to 30 people.

Saturday, September 21
CAMP SANTANONI
Led by AARCH Executive Director, Steven Engelhart. See July 20th for details. Due to the anticipated replacement of the bridge to the Santanoni Preserve, the horse drawn wagon rides may not be available for this tour. Call ahead for details.

AARCH SLIDE PRESENTATIONS
If you've not had a chance to see our Executive Director Steven Engelhart give AARCH's excellent slide presentation "There's More to Adirondack Architecture Than Great Camps," there will be several opportunities to do so this summer. The slides are drawn from our ever-growing slide collection of interesting and striking Adirondack buildings and places. Call AARCH at (518) 834-9328 for more information.

June 9 ..... Old Forge Arts Center, 1 PM
June 22 ..... Adirondak Loj (near Lake Placid), 8 PM
July 27 ..... Long Lake Library, 8 PM

Origin of Raquette Lake School

A friend from Saratoga Springs tells this family story:

Dr. Augustus Siess Downing, her great-uncle, who spent his summers in Raquette Lake, served as Third Assistant Commissioner of Education in charge of elementary education in New York State from around the turn of the century until 1908. The story goes that one day Dr. Downing went in to see an official of the Forest, Fish and Game Commission in Albany and said to him: "We have a problem. You have a mandate to keep the Adirondack Park forever wild. I have a mandate to educate all the children in New York State. There is no school in Raquette Lake."

"You have your mandate. See that it is carried out," replied the official. As a result of this conversation, so they say, the school in Raquette Lake was built.

Downing went on to become the state's Deputy Commissioner of Education in 1926, and was profiled in the NYS *Red Book* that year. His contribution is said to be commemorated by a plaque in the school, or perhaps the library, in Raquette Lake.

Any information on the truth of this story, or the whereabouts of the plaque, would be welcome. MBH

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

PITCHED ROOFS IN THE ADIRONDACKS

The importance of maintaining a sound and weather-tight roof is obvious to one and all. Never has the list of optional materials been longer than it is now for roof coverings, sheathing or decking, and framing. Asphalt shingles are available in single and three-tab configuration, and their aggregate surfaces are often colored to give them the appearance of a slate or a cedar shingle roof. The heavier weight, textured, "architectural" grade shingles are increasingly popular for rehabilitation as well as new construction. Some existing asphalt shingle roofs, however, are old enough to deserve consideration of restoration in kind.

Traditional slate survives on many older buildings and appears on a few new ones, with origins in Vermont or Pennsylvania if not eastern New York State. These stone shingles are apt to last a hundred years if their anchoring nails and metal flashings do not corrode excessively or suffer the impact of sliding snow and ice which can break the slates as well.

The wooden shingle also perseveres in many roofs old and new, and is available with fire-resistive treatment. If installed in a properly vented roof deck (the spaced-apart roof boards are commonly called "strapping" in the Adirondacks), these wooden components can last fifty years or more. Debris falling from trees and mosses must be cleaned from the surfaces so as to prevent decay.

A third type of roof covering, which has its own substantial history in the Adirondacks, is metal. Usually painted, but sometimes with metallic surfaces of zinc, tin, lead, terne (tin and lead), "galvalume," copper or aluminum, these roofs also last for decades if vented to prevent build-up of moisture from beneath, and securely fastened to the roof deck in the face of howling winds. Snow and ice accumulations tend to slide off metal roofs, making them work well, despite concern about what happens below when snow does fall off the eaves. The steeper pitched modern roofs are usually "standing seam," that is, adjacent panels are joined in upturned ridges which are crimped over and locked together. Otherwise, they may have an inverted "vee" or double "vee" joint, which is unsealed and yet which works well under most conditions. Metal roofs with minimal pitch are usually "flat-seam," consisting of small flat panels of sheet metal, edge lapped and soldered together to achieve a sealed covering.

Many factors come into play in the maintenance, repair or replacement of roof coverings. Matters of visual and physical compatibility are important. It seems that nothing can restore and enhance, or obfuscate and detract from, the character of a building more effectively than roof intervention, if the roof form is dominant.

In addition to color, texture and reflectivity, roof surfaces play a critical role in giving a sense of scale to a house or building. The size and shape of shingles and/or panels is critical to the overall appearance. Roofs in the Adirondacks also have physical challenges to address — extremes in temperature and precipitation, and increased threat of fire due to dominance of wood construction, often remote locations and/or combustibility of conifer woods, if present.

Buildings which are unheated tend to avoid ice accumulation and related leakage. Ones which are heated perform best when three distinct but related conditions are addressed: insulation, vapor retarding at heated side of same, and venting of unheated side. Of course, the insulation keeps excessive heat from escaping and melting snow on the roof which in turn freezes at roof edges and creates ice dams. The venting helps dissipate any heat which does escape, and the vapor barrier (sheet polyethylene if possible and latex paint if not) helps to prevent the formation of moisture in the roof assembly by preventing the escape of moisture-carrying heated air.

Threat of fire can come from outside or inside. For protection outside, the noncombustible coverings are most desirable, with fire-retardant impregnated combustible materials coming in second. Protection inside is ordinarily afforded by plaster and drywall finishes, but many Adirondack buildings do not have this option. Wooden interiors in large buildings can be protected by fire detection and sprinkler systems; in small ones a combination of intumescing varnishes or paints (which blister and protect wood when heated), and fire retardant treatments for wooden attics can help.

In order for roofs to perform well in the Adirondacks, the whole roof assembly must be considered. This critical portion of the building envelope is a gravity-resisting thermal boundary, which is subject to interior conditions as well as exterior ones. The heavy snowfalls and the presence of the forest with its shower of leaves and needles adds to the list of potential problems which we expect a roof in the Adirondacks to survive.

First Preservation Easement

AARCH has received its first conservation and historic preservation easement, on a "grand camp" complex in the Tri-Lakes area. The property contains some outstanding examples of turn-of-the-century Adirondack camp architecture. In the spring of 1995, the owner of the 25 acre, 600-foot shoreline parcel approached Howard Kirschen-baum for help in insuring that the historic character of his property would be preserved for future generations.

AARCH worked with the owner, whose family has owned the property for 30 years, to create an easement or agreement in which the owner stipulated that his property will not be subdivided, that the camp buildings will be kept in good condition, and that any limited changes to the buildings will be consistent with the historic architectural style. AARCH will visit the property periodically to be sure that the provisions of the agreement are being followed.

The owner of the property prefers to remain anonymous. "He's a middle-aged man who plans to continue enjoying his property for many years," said Steven Engelhart. "But now he has the additional satisfaction of knowing that, whoever its future owners are, the land and buildings will always remain as he knew and loved them." Kirschenbaum said he believed this was the first time in Adirondack history that a private owner has freely donated an historic preservation easement not connected with a sale, subdivision or permit process.

In addition to personal satisfaction, another advantage for the owner is a substantial income tax deduction. Because the donation of the easement reduced the property's market value, the owner is entitled to a tax deduction equal to the difference in value before and after the donation. "This can result in a substantial savings on federal and state income taxes," explained Kirschenbaum.

We look forward to helping other owners preserve the historic and architectural qualities of their property in this manner. Contact Steven at the office for more information on preserving one's property through an historic preservation easement.

Technical Assistance

Helping to answer questions and solve problems

Are you wondering how to match the historic mortar on your fireplace, how to research the original paint colors on your house, which is the most appropriate historic roofing material for your camp or where to find a good restoration architect or contractor? Perhaps you're interested in listing your building on the National Register or are a municipality or small organization that's looking for preservation funding or wants to do a historic sites survey. ***On all of these questions and in all of these areas, AARCH may be able to help.*** As the regional, non-profit, historic preservation organization for the Adirondack Park, AARCH has always tried to provide help, on a limited basis, to individuals, businesses, local governments and other non-profits who are dealing with historic buildings. Now, thanks to a grant from the Rural New York Grant Program, AARCH can provide even more in the way of help and services. Our **Technical Assistance Program** makes use of the talents and resource fulness of our Board members and staff to try to help anyone with questions or problems related to old or historic buildings. So if there is any way we might be able to help you, from the simplest question to the most complex problem, please don't hesitate to call AARCH at (518) 834-9328.

The Rural New York Grant Program is administered by the Preservation League of New York State with support from the Botwinick-Wolfensohn Foundation, The J.M. Kaplan Fund, The Joyce-Mertz-Gilmore Foundation, The Margaret L. Wendt Foundation and the Andy Warhol Foundation for the Visual Arts.

News & Notes

Albany: Robert B. MacKay, Ph.D., was appointed by Governor George E. Pataki and confirmed by the Senate in December as chairman of the State Board for Historic Preservation, replacing Dr. Stuart W. Stein, who resigned last fall. Dr. MacKay has been the director of the Society for the Preservation of Long Island Antiquities since 1974.A second new member is Charles D. Urstadt, a Manhattan realtor with a strong interest in architectural history, local history and urban design.

Brighton: The third annual Brighton History Day will be held on Sunday, June 21, from 1 to 5 PM at the Asplin Tree Farms on Route 86 in Gabriels. The event is sponsored by the Brighton Architectural History Committee, which encourages residents and visitors alike to bring their own memorabilia to share.

The committee would like to see the bridge retained for pedestrian and bicycle use and for fishing. Response so far has been overwhelmingly in favor of keeping the bridge. Contributions may be made to the Save Our Bridge Committee, P.O. Box 486, Cranberry Lake, NY 12927.

Hadley: The Hadley Mountain Fire Tower Restoration Committee has been formed to restore the tower and its observer's cabin. So far, $4600 has been raised for materials, including an anonymous memorial donation of $2500, enough for initial restoration with volunteer labor, but not enough for a summit guide to staff the tower this summer. Contributions may be sent to the Hadley Mountain Fire Tower Fund. Contact Jack Freeman at ADK headquarters (518) 668-4447, or Tom Dandridge (518) 696-5559.

Save Our Bridge Committee

Oswegatchie Bridge, Cranberry Lake

Cranberry Lake: A citizen's committee has been formed to raise $500-700 for a structural engineer's evaluation of the Oswegatchie Bridge. The "Warren through truss" bridge, just downstream from the dam, has been closed to vehicular traffic by St. Lawrence County, and is scheduled for removal.

Ironville: The Penfield Foundation has been granted $500 in the first round of the Lake Champlain Basin Program's Technical Assistance Program for Cultural Heritage projects. The foundation will undertake a building conditions assessment of the Penfield Museum and church. For information on these grants, call Ann Cousins (518) 597-4212.

Jay: A January survey by Bridge and Beyond showed wide spread public support for maintaining and preserving the covered bridge. Essex County has applied for ISTEA funds to rehabilitate the covered bridge. The County is also exploring the possibility of building a second new bridge near the existing covered bridge.

Lake Placid: On January 9, the Town of North Elba Planning Board denied the application for a permit to build a new Wal-Mart store in Lake Placid. The vote was 3-1. A lawsuit filed in NY State Supreme Court by the applicant and the owner of the site against the North Elba Town Board and the Adirondack Park Agency was dismissed in mid-May.

Lake Placid: Placid Gold, a corporation formed by members of the Serge Lussi family, local residents and hotel owners, signed a contract around May 16 to purchase the 1, 100 acre Lake Placid Club property. Mrs. Lussi said that by going slowly and letting "the next generation take part, we think we can preserve the property, not break it up or sell it off."

Moriah: The Moriah Historical Society was awarded a $500 Technical Assistance grant from the Lake Champaign Basin Program for an initial archeological assessment of the flooded Lee Mine. The Town of Moriah was also funded for a conditions assessment of the Town Office Building

North Creek: In the most recent round of state grant awards from the Environmental Protection Fund, the North Creek Railway Preservation Association received $31,000 (of a $156,900 project cost) toward "development of the North Creek Railroad Station as a historical museum to provide programs and rotating exhibits relating to the history of the Central Adirondacks Region.

News & Notes ... *continued*

Old Forge: The Arts Center/Old Forge will highlight Adirondack interiors in their biennial photography exhibit "Inside/Out," showing May 24 to July 7. Invited photographers Nancie Battaglia, Peter Paige & Jeri Wright are featured, along with the work of three Adirondack furniture makers. A complementary exhibit on the work of five contemporary Adirondack architects opens June 2. Admission $3 general, $2 members/students & seniors. Open daily 10-4, Sunday 12-4. Phone 315 369-6411.

Poke-O-Moonshine: Over the winter and spring a large enthusiastic group of people have banded together and formed the Poke-O-Moonshine Fire Tower Restoration Committee, including members from several Adirondack Mountain Club chapters. The group envisions restoring the fire tower, making improvements to the trails on the mountain, developing an interpretive trail & interpretive materials, & someday having a tower steward there during the summer. This effort has been endorsed by the Town of Chesterfield and is being made under AARCH's auspices, in cooperation with NYS Department of Environmental Conservation. Call Steve at (518) 834-9328 for more information.

Saranac Lake: The Arts Council of the Northern Adirondacks is working to improve the acoustics of the National Register-listed Harrietstown Town Hall auditorium, in cooperation with the Town and the Saranac Lake Chamber of Commerce. The well-maintained space, which can accommodate 650, is the largest performance facility in the central Adirondacks, yet it is seldom used because the sound quality is so poor. The project received the maximum $500 grant in the first round of the Lake Champlain Basin Program's Technical Assistance Program. For information on these grants, call Ann Cousins (518) 597-4212.

Saranac Lake: On May 6, Essex County supervisors approved the sale of the former Will Rogers Hospital to a developer who will create 75 units of middle-income senior citizen housing, with an optional service component. The price of the rapidly deteriorating property was set at $92,500. Until 2006, the development will benefit from a "payment in lieu of taxes" (PILOT) arrangement totaling $400,000. Construction will begin this summer, and the facility will open in 1997.

Schroon Lake: Tip Top, a "classic Adirondack estate" near Schroon Lake, is for sale. This rustic property includes a nine- room main house and six other buildings. Located on 14 acres with splendid mountain views, it is also surrounded by 30,000 acres of Forest Preserve and comes completely furnished. For more information, including a color brochure and videotape, contact Dr. Robert and Irma Worrell Fisher at (212) 685-2739. Note that Tip Top is the site of AARCH's 1996 annual meeting.

Ticonderoga: In March, the Town Planning Board approved an application for a permit to build a Wal-Mart of 80,000 square feet in an area north of the former incorporated village. It will be the first "big box" retailer within the Blue Line. Protesting that decision, Responsible Intelligent Growth for Historic Ticonderoga filed an Article 78 proceeding against the Town and its Planning Board in April.

Valcour Island, Lake Champlain: The Clinton County Historical Society has been awarded $5,000 (of a total project cost of $20,000) from NY State's 1995-96 Environmental Protection Fund for "continued preservation and maintenance of [the Valcour Island Lighthouse] the last remaining light on Lake Champlain in the public domain, including rehabilitation of interior areas where structural failure has occurred." In all, 27 projects were funded for $1.5 million.

About Adirondack Architectural Heritage

Adirondack Architectural Heritage is the regional, non-profit, historic preservation organization for the Adirondack Park. Our educational mission is to promote better public understanding, appreciation and stewardship of the built environment of the Adirondack Park. We fulfill this mission in a variety of ways, including by sponsoring tours and workshops, by giving public slide presentations, by offering technical assistance and by supporting local governments, organizations and individuals in their historic preservation activities. AARCH is a membership organization with over 675 members. AARCH members receive a biannual *Newsletter*, get discounts on AARCH-sponsored events and publications and may attend our annual meeting.

Join AARCH

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

(Check one)

__ $20 Individual __ $100 Sponsor
__ $30 Family __ $250 Benefactor
__ $50 Supporting
____ $ _____ Other

NAME _____

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Contributions are tax-deductible. Please make checks payable to "Adirondack Architectural Heritage" and mail to: AARCH, 1759 Main Street, Keeseville, NY 12944.

Resources

PRESERVATION BRIEFS

"Preservation Briefs" is the name of a technical information series published by the National Park Service, on various aspects of preservation technology. Single copies are available free from the NY State Office of Parks, Recreation & Historic Preservation. Call Valerie Smith, 518 237-8643, x. 287.

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