30TH ANNUAL AARCH PRESERVATION AWARDS

Frontier Town Gateway, North Hudson | September 19, 2025 | 4:00 - 6:30 PM

ADIRONDACK ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

AARCH

30th Annual Preservation Awards

For 30 years, AARCH's Annual Preservation Awards Ceremony has recognized the individuals, businesses, communities, and organizations whose efforts exemplify the best of historic preservation work in the Adirondack region. This event shines a light on the passions and extraordinary work of the people who make historic preservation such an important part of the region's vitality.

Stewardship Committee

Special thanks to AARCH's Stewardship Committee for their planning and oversight of the annual awards program.

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Thank you to Katie Cole and John Eldridge for photographing the event.

Thank you to our event host, Frontier Town Gateway!

We are celebrating this year's preservation awards at **Frontier Town Gateway** in North Hudson, a 2024 awardee. Located just off the I-87 Northway, this iconic A-Frame building was once the entrance to the beloved theme park, Frontier Town. Staten Island entrepreneur, Arthur Bensen, brought Frontier Town to life in 1952 as a family-friendly destination with unique Wild West-themed attractions such as Prairie Junction, Pioneer Village, Indian Village, a rodeo arena, and a small railroad.

After Frontier Town closed in 1998, the A-Frame sat vacant and deteriorating for 20 years until Muhammad "Mo" Ahmad bought it in 2018. Mo and his team restored the building, transforming it into Frontier Town Gateway, a vibrant restaurant and travel center. Mo completed the majority of the work with the help of friends and local craftsmen. He used wood harvested from the site or sourced locally to create the ornate log railings and other wood features. Since opening in 2022, Frontier Town Gateway has become a hub not only for weary travelers, offering a variety of goods from local artisans' wares to camping gear, but also a destination for events and gatherings, like weddings, job fairs, and car shows.

Courtesy of Frontier Town Gateway

Johnsburg Historical Society

For the rehabilitation and restoration of the Robert & Electa Waddell House

Johnsburg, Warren County

Owner: Johnsburg Historical Society
Contractor: Brisbane B. Young Contracting
Engineer: Winchip Engineering, P.C.
Key Individuals: Osprey Services; Olden Electric; Patrick Strohmeyer; volunteers from Johnsburg Historical Society
Project Dates: 2021-2023

The Robert and Electa Waddell house was constructed in 1869 for the couple and their family. Electa (née Roblee) had bought the 122-acre lot from her mother in 1866 and upon the home's completion, Robert, Electa, and their children moved in along with some extended family and two laborers. The house is a classic example of the Italianate style, with a square cupola, deep bracketed eaves, and decorative window frames. The property stayed in the family for 155 years, passed down matrilineally; the last Waddell descendent to live there was Norma Rawson, who moved out in 2015.

The Johnsburg Historical Society (JHS) was incorporated as a nonprofit in 1973 with a mission, in part, to protect the town's historic buildings and sites. In 2021, the JHS purchased the Waddell House to use as their museum and office. In order to convert the former residence to suit their needs, they had to ensure that it complied with accessibility and safety requirements, which included updating the bathroom and installing an entrance ramp. They were able to preserve most of the original finishes inside and out while installing new plumbing and electrical systems as well as increasing the load-bearing weight of the floor. They also saved the original wood windows, which they plan to re-glaze soon. A new coat of paint on the exterior preserved the original wood features, highlighting the distinctive Italianate cornice and window frames. The Johnsburg Historical Society's rehabilitation and restoration of the Robert and Electa Waddell House has breathed new life into this architectural gem and important community resource.

Top: Robert & Electa Waddell House after rehabilitation and restoration
Middle: office space during rehabilitation and restoration
Bottom left and middle: local school kids in museum space after rehabilitation and restoration
Bottom right: exterior during restoration

All photos courtesy of Johnsburg Historical Society.

Robert Card & Helen Zyma

For the restoration and long-term stewardship of the Strand Theatre

Old Forge, Herkimer County

Owners: Robert Card & Helen Zyma
Masonry Restoration: Viau Construction
Sign Restoration: Signs & Designs of New York
Project Dates: 1991-present

The Strand Theatre of Old Forge opened in 1923 during the silent film era and remains a movie theater to this day. Robert Card and Helen Zyma purchased the Strand in 1991, when it had a single seasonal auditorium and two out of six habitable apartments. The majority of the restoration was completed by 1999, which included a sensitive addition that houses three additional auditoriums and the restoration of the lobby, concession, and restroom areas. Today, the Strand is open year-round and comprises four screens and eight apartments.

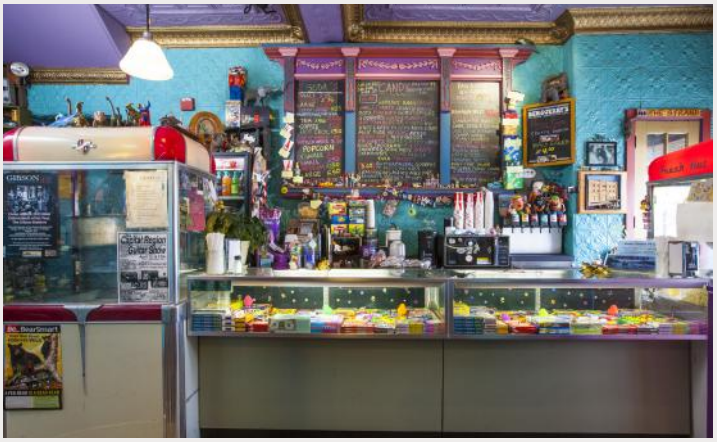
During the 1999 restoration, two layers of suspended ceiling in the lobby were removed to reveal the original pressed metal, which was repaired with salvaged panels where needed. This also allowed for the reinstallation of two original chandeliers that were in storage. Updates to the restrooms preserved the original fabric wall coverings and incorporated period-appropriate salvaged fixtures while improving accessibility. The 1999 addition that houses three more theaters used the same wire-cut bricks as the original façade.

The original auditorium has been remarkably preserved. In 2008, a New York State Main Street Grant supplemented personal funding to enable full restoration of the 1934 Art Deco seats, repairing and repainting the ceiling, and retiling the floor. During the same project, the façade was disassembled and rebuilt to support the reinstallation of the neon "Strand" blade sign.

Over the past 30 years, Robert and Helen have remained dedicated to stewarding this local icon, not only restoring it to its former glory but ensuring that it remains a vibrant, relevant community hub. Their persistence is evident inside the building and out, particularly when it comes to restoring the marquee several times over the years when it has been hit by trucks!

Top: façade of the Strand Theatre of Old Forge with the restored blade sign
Middle: original auditorium during restoration
Bottom left: concession area after restoration, courtesy of Nancie Battaglia
Bottom right: owners Helen Zyma and Robert Card in the original auditorium after restoration; courtesy of Nancie Battaglia

All photos courtesy of the Strand Theatre unless otherwise noted.



Gregg Firster

For the rehabilitation of the Bateman Hotel

Lowville, Lewis County

Owner: Gregg Firster
General Contractor: DiMarco Constructors
Architect: SWBR Architects
Preservation Consultant: Preservation Studios
Project Date: 2025

Constructed in 1869 to replace a previous hotel that burned down, the Bateman Hotel is one of the most prominent buildings in the Lowville Historic District. Located on the east side of State Street, just south of Shady Avenue, this four-story, mixed-use brick building anchors the commercial downtown district. The Bateman Hotel played a pivotal role in Lowville's economy throughout the late 19th and early 20th centuries, welcoming visitors to the Tug Hill Plateau and the heart of Lewis County.

During the early 1990s, the building's upper floors were converted to apartments using the historic tax credit program, while the majority of the first floor remained commercial space. The most recent rehabilitation of the Bateman, coordinated by Preservation Studios, preserved the building's remarkably intact original features and layout and reintroduced period-appropriate features where they had been lost. The $2.7 million project utilized state and federal historic tax credits to replace the roof, make interior repairs, and replace non-historic windows from the 1960s with replicas of the original windows based on historic documentation. Thanks to this sensitive rehabilitation, the Bateman once again stands proudly in downtown Lowville as a community resource that includes affordable housing units and street-level storefronts.

Top: the Bateman Hotel circa 1920
Middle: the Bateman after its 2025 rehabilitation
Bottom left & right: interior of the Bateman after rehabilitation

All photos courtesy of Preservation Studios.

Deborah Coffin

For the restoration of Stowersville House

Lewis, Essex County

Owner: Deborah Coffin

Key Individuals: Pat Santamaria (contractor); Tom, Walter, and Buzz Maliniak (masons); Gerry Spooner; Scott Spooner; Dale Clark (preservation consultant); Richard Barrow (plaster); David Pinello (earthworks); Drew Goerlitz (housewright & earthworks); Dan Faber; Mark Ferry

Project Dates: 2005-2025

Stowersville House is the last remaining structure from a thriving 19th-century village centering around the Stower forge in Lewis. In addition to the busy forge erected on Spruce Mill Brook in 1837, the bustling community included a grist mill, general store, barber shop, school, and several houses and barns. The village became a ghost town by the 1970s, leading to the deterioration and/or demolition of its remaining structures. Stowersville House stood in a state of disrepair until Deborah Coffin bought it in 2005 and began the process of carefully restoring it.

The oldest part of the house is an encased one and a half story post and beam structure, whose gable end faced the road. It was then extended on the east side, using an early balloon framing technique, with mortised floor joists and large beams. Over the course of 20 years, Deborah and her team restored virtually every part of the structure, from repairing the foundation, reconstructing the slate roof, and rebuilding the ell to restoring the original windows, uncovering and repairing the original wood siding, and restoring the interior plasterwork. The house had no electricity or plumbing, so for many years, Deborah worked with an generator and mostly hand tools until she had the building wired and plumbed. Her team also did extensive landscaping with stone walls and garden beds, in part to accommodate the new septic system and well. Deborah's dedication is evident in every inch of this lovingly restored home, which is a testament to how far patience, persistence, and partnership can take you.

Top: Stowersville House after restoration
Upper and lower middle: reconstructed ell of Stowersville House before and after restoration
Bottom row: interior of Stowersville House before and after restoration

All photos courtesy of Deborah Coffin.

Trude Fitelson
Lifetime Achievement
Thousand Island Park, Jefferson County

For the past 50 years, Trude Fitelson has served as a champion for Thousand Island Park (TI Park). She first experienced the historical charm of TI Park as a child. Her grandfather was a Methodist bishop involved with the religious campground in its early days. During the 1950s and 60s, Fitelson witnessed several cottages demolished after years of disuse. In addition to the decay, she noticed the "modernization" of cottages with asbestos siding, decorative trim removal, and the loss of other historic features. The realization that the Park's architecture was vulnerable galvanized Fitelson, who began to organize like-minded allies concerned about the Park's loss of historic character. TI Park's centennial in 1975 helped the group gain momentum and form the Thousand Island Park Landmark Society (TIPLS).

After consulting with noted architectural historian and preservationist Paul Malo, the Landmark Society of Western New York, the National Trust for Historic Preservation, and the newly formed Preservation League of New York State, the TIPLS undertook a National Register of Historic Places district nomination for the Park's 300+ structures under Fitelson's leadership. The Park was surveyed in 1979-80 and listed on the National Register in 1983.

Over the course of the next two decades, Fitelson continued to lead the Park's preservation movement. Working through the unique governance structure of TI Park alongside community stakeholders, the TIPLS was instrumental in the establishment of a Preservation Code in 1985 along with an Architectural Review Board. Fitelson also spearheaded the *Thousand Island Park Handbook*, an architectural style guide for contractors, cottage owners, and architects. In 1999, Fitelson was instrumental in establishing TI Park's Land Use Plan to guide development within the park.

Thanks to Trude Fitelson, preservation is now baked into the soul of the TI Park community. Her inspiration and leadership have influenced not only her neighbors within the Park, but those beyond who are motivated to preserve their own communities' unique heritage. Most recently, Fitelson has served on a working group to produce a book highlighting the last 50 years of TI Park's history and consulted with the nearby towns of Orleans, Alexandria, and Clayton to undertake architectural surveys of their island properties. We are indebted to preservationists like Trude Fitelson who lead the charge with vision, collaboration, and perseverance.

Top: Trude Fitelson (left) presenting the first TI Park Landmark Society Preservation Award in 1981
Upper middle: TI Park's Main Dock before restoration
Lower middle: Main Dock after restoration, courtesy of Andy Kane
Bottom: Wellesley Hotel after restoration

All photos courtesy of Thousand Island Park Landmark Society unless otherwise noted.

Open Space Institute

For the restoration of MacNaughton Cottage

Newcomb, Essex County

Owner: Open Space Institute
Contractor: Cutting Edge Group, LLC
Architect: AJA Architecture and Planning
Project Dates: 2006-2025

MacNaughton Cottage is the oldest and only intact residential structure from the early mining era in the historic Village of Adirondac. This two-story saltbox house with an attached one-story wing was originally constructed in 1834 to house the owners and managers of the Adirondack Iron and Steel Company. The cottage stands as an example of early vernacular architecture and industrial history in the region. Notably, the attached wing functioned as the earliest bank in the Adirondacks.

Decades after the closure of the mining operation, the property and its structures were repurposed as the headquarters for the Tahawus Club, one of the earliest sportsmen's club in the Adirondacks. Vice President Theodore Roosevelt was staying at the Tahawus Club with his family in 1901 when he received news that President William McKinley, who had been shot days earlier, was near death. Roosevelt began his legendary "midnight ride to the presidency" from MacNaughton Cottage. Recognized for its historical significance, the cottage was listed as a contributing feature in the Upper Works Adirondack Iron and Steel Company Historic District on the National Register of Historic Places in 1977 and the New York State Register in 1980.

Top: MacNaughton Cottage in 1908
Middle: MacNaughton Cottage in 2003
Bottom: MacNaughton Cottage after restoration

All photos courtesy of the Open Space Institute.

The restoration of MacNaughton Cottage is a central component of the Open Space Institute's (OSI) long-term stewardship and preservation efforts at the 212-acre Adirondac Upper Works property in Newcomb. After sitting vacant and deteriorating for nearly 40 years, OSI prioritized the building's stabilization when they acquired the property in 2003. After years of planning, research, and local stakeholder engagement, OSI began full-scale exterior rehabilitation of MacNaughton Cottage in 2023 as the final piece of its decades-long vision to restore the Upper Works as a recreational and heritage destination while keeping in mind security, accessibility, and long-term maintenance. The project included asbestos abatement, structural stabilization, reconstructing the front porch, and replacing the roof.

MacNaughton Cottage encompasses the layered cultural, industrial, and recreational history of the site and broader region. OSI worked closely with the Town of Newcomb, New York State Department of Environmental Conservation, and local stakeholders to determine the structure's future use and now intends to donate the building and surrounding property to the Town of Newcomb, entrusting them with its long-term management. By integrating preservation with accessibility and interpretation, this project exemplifies OSI's holistic approach to conservation — ensuring that this architecturally and historically significant structure not only survives but thrives in its next era as a community asset and cultural landmark for future generations.

Patricia & John Cogswell

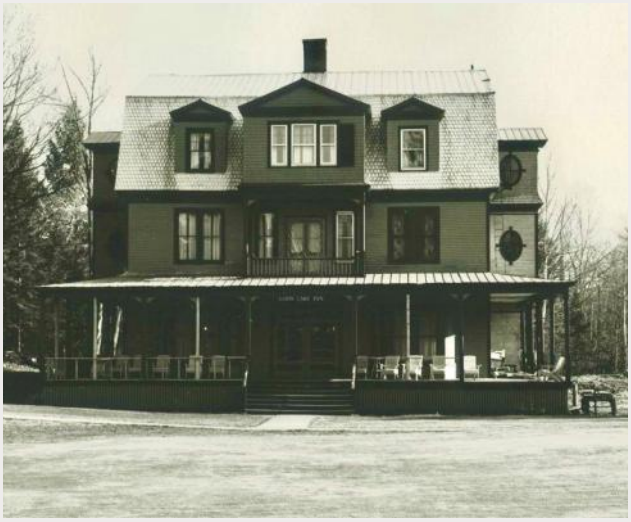
For the restoration of the Irish House

Loon Lake, Franklin County

Owner: Patricia & John Cogswell
Key Individuals: Brousseau Construction, Thomas Construction
Project Dates: 2018-2024

The Irish House was a core structure on the Loon Lake Hotel property, which opened in 1879 and flourished until 1929. Developed by Ferdinand and Mary Chase, the hotel complex was the size of a small village that could accommodate up to a thousand visitors, situated on 3,000 acres along the Port Kent – Hopkinton Turnpike and comprising large hotel buildings, 50 individual cottages, an 18-hole golf course, and numerous supporting structures. Outside of the Ausable Club, Loon Lake is the most intact example of a hotel-based 19th-century resort community in the Adirondacks.

The Irish House was constructed around 1905 as the second annex to the grand Loon Lake House and is the only surviving remnant of the hotel's core lodging. Other than a few years as a private residence, the Irish House remained a hotel for the past 120 years. Patricia and John Cogswell purchased the property in 2018 after watching it decline for several years. Since then, they have restored this Loon Lake gem, including repairing the exterior cladding, roof, entry stairs, porches, and original wood windows. Inside, they repaired the plaster, woodwork, and floors. They also kept original features, such as the tubs, room numbers, and fire hose as well as obtained furniture and mirrors that they believe were original to the hotel. Their dedicated restoration carries on the legacy of the Loon Lake Hotel, sharing the site's history with visitors new and old.



Top: the Irish House in the early 20th century
Middle: the Irish House after restoration
Bottom left: interior of the Irish House after restoration
Bottom right: the Irish House during restoration

All photos courtesy of Karl B. Smith, III.

Brian & Renee Burns

For the long-term stewardship of Northwood Cabins

Tupper Lake, Franklin County

Owner: Brian & Renee Burns
Project Dates: 2016-present

Northwood Cabins is an iconic example of early- to mid-20th-century roadside architecture that grew popular with the advent of the automobile. As people began to travel by car, their vacation needs changed and sites like these were the perfect place to stay. The Northwood Cabins were originally placed on the Old Wawbeek Road in Tupper Lake around 1929 before Arthur and Eva LaPorte moved them to Route 30 in the mid-1930s. Situated on the way into town, they were a welcoming and accessible place to rest. The LaPortes also assembled a kit house on the site in 1940 to serve as the office. Shortly thereafter, the property closed due to World War II. It reopened in 1945 and has operated almost continuously as a motel since, welcoming visitors to the Tri-Lakes region. To celebrate the reopening, the LaPortes' son designed, constructed, and installed the iconic neon sign.

Brian and Renee Burns purchased the property in 2016 and have worked to preserve and update the buildings as needed. This has included replacing roofs and reconstructing floors, bathrooms, and kitchens, as well as updating the plumbing and electrical systems. Lastly, they commissioned a replica of the neon sign when the original was beyond saving. Today, Northwood Cabins provides a nostalgic experience with all the modern amenities. The Burns' thoughtful stewardship of the property has preserved this iconic mid-century lodging as a charming, affordable place to stay, with easy access to recreational sites in Tupper Lake and the broader area. Guests cherish the opportunity to step back in time with the cabins' vintage-inspired décor and tranquil setting.

Top: the original set of 1929 Northwood Cabins today
Upper middle: 1940 office building today
Lower middle: Northwood Cabins circa 1950s
Bottom left: replica of the original 1945 neon sign
Bottom right: interior of one of the cabins today, courtesy of Aurora Pfaff

All photos courtesy of Brian and Renee Burns unless otherwise noted.

Putnam Camp Board of Directors

For the long-term stewardship of Putnam Camp

St. Huberts, Essex County

Owner: Putnam Camp Board of Directors
Project Dates: 1930-present

Putnam Camp was established as a summer retreat in the mid-1870s and has operated as a non-profit since the 1930s, hosting up to 40 visitors a night each July and August in its picturesque assemblage of farm buildings and rustic cabins. Today, the camp is sustained by membership donations, bequests, and extra support from dedicated members for big projects. Volunteers perform most of the annual maintenance and repairs at the beginning of each season.

The core of the complex comprises the farmhouse and barn of the former Beede farmstead, which was established around 1850. Three prominent Boston families, the Putnams, James, and Bowditches purchased the property in the mid-1870s, forming Putnam camp and adding buildings through the end of the century. The camp features a decentralized plan of 16 rustic structures built with the materials on-hand. The buildings' simple vernacular design made use of local materials, such as cedar shingles, untrimmed logs, bark, and twiggy embellishments.

Top: Beede Farmhouse at Putnam Camp in 1946
Upper middle: Beede Farmhouse at Putnam Camp today
Lower middle: the 1877 "Stoop" (library/common area) today
Bottom left: Bowditch family working on the camp in 1905
Bottom middle: interior of one of the cabins today
Bottom right: guests making music in the Stoop today

All photos courtesy of Putnam Camp.

Putnam Camp is an exceptionally intact early example of an Adirondack woodland retreat, retaining almost all its original buildings, site plan, and landscape features. Although there have been modest updates over the years, alterations have been limited. The Putnam Camp Board of Directors has done an exceptional job of stewarding the property and in 2012, it was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. Nearly 150 years since the camp's formation, guests still cross the footbridge across Putnam Brook to bask in the quiet wilderness setting and gather for games, music, and other social traditions.

Adirondack Architectural Heritage

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Adirondack Architectural Heritage (AARCH) *is the nonprofit historic preservation organization for New York State's Adirondack region with a mission to promote better public understanding, appreciation, and stewardship of the Adirondacks' unique and diverse architectural heritage .*

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- Support to local advocacy efforts, such as: Camp Santanoni, the Poke-O-Moonshine and Hurricane Mountain fire towers, Debar Pond Lodge, Thomas Memorial AME Zion Church, the Steamboat *Tuscarora*, and many more irreplaceable Adirondack structures.

2026 PRESERVATION AWARDS

Do you know of a great preservation project?

Nominate it for an AARCH Preservation Award!

Nominations are now being accepted for the 2026 AARCH Preservation Awards, which recognize exemplary preservation projects throughout the Adirondacks. These awards honor businesses, organizations, and individuals who, through their preservation and stewardship work, have made the Adirondacks a better place to live, work, and visit.

Contact Preservation Services Director Christine Bush at christine@aarch.org or 518-834-9328 for more information!

A World of AARCH exists online, join us there.

AARCH's work is supported, in part, by the New York State Council on the Arts with the support of the Office of the Governor and the New York State Legislature.