

# ADIRONDACK ARCHITECTURAL HERITAGE

The Year In Review

2009



*Left to right: former Congregational Church (1851), AARCH's Stone Office Building and Stone Mill (1849), and the Stone Arch Bridge (1843).*

As 2009 comes to a close, we are celebrating what has been our most ambitious and successful year ever. We offered another highly regarded and popular series of public educational programs; continued our advocacy efforts to save threatened historic places; helped others to preserve and restore buildings and to make their communities better places to live through our technical assistance outreach; and through our partnership with NYSDEC at Camp Santanoni, we took several new steps to bring this National Historic Landmark back to life. In addition, we made big improvements to our website, launched an e-newsletter called *AARCH Matters*, brought two groups of people from all over the country to explore the region through our rustic study tours, recognized exemplary historic preservation work through our annual awards program, and made great progress on our work to create a new home for AARCH in Keeseville.

**All in all, it was a terrific year.**

## A New Home for AARCH

A year ago, we acquired an historic mill complex on the Ausable River in Keeseville as a new home for AARCH. When the property is fully developed, we will have exhibits, workshops, a meeting and classroom space, a resource center, and offices. Besides developing the site for our own uses, we will adaptively reuse part of the Stone Mill for other purposes. The revitalization of this site has been a high priority for the village for decades and it presents a wonderful opportunity for AARCH to establish a greater physical presence in the region and to contribute to the vitality of this historic village.

During the last half of the 19th century this was the Ausable Horse Nail Company, which manufactured horse nails and the machines to produce them. In the 20th century, it was part of the operations of R. Prescott & Sons, which manufactured radio and television cabinets until the 1960s.

The acquisition of this property and the first stages of its restoration and rehabilitation have been made possible by grants from New York State, the *1772 Foundation*, donations of materials and labor, AARCH's own cash resources, and the early proceeds from our capital campaign.

The capital campaign was launched in early August with a goal of raising \$100,000 from our members and friends. So far, we have received \$23,000 in pledges and about \$57,000 in contributions, so we are at about 80% of our goal. This quick and enthusiastic response says a lot about the passion our members have for our work and for this project and, for this we are most thankful.

**Phase One.** We started the work by removing sheetrock, paneling, linoleum and carpeting to reveal the original interior fabric of the Stone Office Building. Based on what we found, plans were drawn for the restoration work of the ground floor, where we'll have our offices and a small gallery space. Our crew (Charles Willer, Mike Kuba, and Bob Hamilton) then set to work to restore plaster, trim, windows and doors; make minor modifications to the floor plan to create a bathroom and reception area; refinish floors; and to install new electrical, plumbing, and heating systems. We expect this phase to be completed this coming winter and to move into the building soon after.

**Next Steps.** We will continue the work on the Stone Office Building in 2010 by creating a resource center in the building's lower level and rehabilitating the upper floor for a meeting room space and small rental apartment. In preparation for doing the resource center, architect Nils Luderowski has prepared plans and specifications and we'll pour the concrete floor for this level this fall.

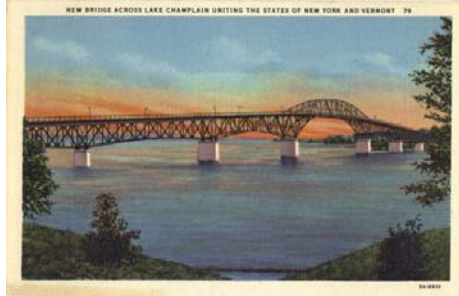
**The Stone Mill.** The 11,000 square foot Stone Mill will be used for AARCH workshop and classroom spaces and portions of the building will be developed for working studio and living spaces, used and owned by others. We have been most fortunate to attract some major public funding for this project in 2009. A \$630,000 grant from the Restore New York program was awarded to AARCH, through the Village of Keeseville, for the adaptive reuse of the building and for additional work on the Stone Office Building. The program is an excellent fit for this project as it primarily funds the revitalization of vacant and abandoned buildings in community centers, which will bring new economic and social life to the community. Planning for this project will take place in 2010 with construction to begin in 2011.



*One office at the Stone Office Building was transformed from the carpeted and paneled space shown above to its 19th century appearance below.*



Donations to our capital campaign can be made by filling out the form available through our website, <http://www.aarch.org/siteappeal/home.html>



*Lake Champlain Bridge.*

### Advocacy for Endangered Properties

We continued to work this year to save the 1929 **Lake Champlain Bridge**, which crosses between Crown Point (New York) and Chimney Point (Vermont). The New York State Department of Transportation and the Vermont Agency of Transportation are currently studying several options for the bridge, including rehabilitation and replacement, and AARCH is serving on the Public Advisory Committee during the decision making process. Just as this process was getting underway, a major structural problem was discovered, causing the bridge to be closed to traffic. This has had huge economic consequences for people who use the bridge every day and is a great concern.

While a solution is being explored for re-establishing a crossing here, we are doing everything we can to raise public awareness about the historic and engineering importance of this bridge. We were successful in getting the bridge listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 2009, and it is now being considered for National Historic Landmark designation. In the year ahead we will also complete our *Lake Champlain Bridge Education Project*, which will include interpretive signs, a brochure, and web-based information about the structure.

There continues to be good news about the fate of the **McNaughton Cottage** (1834) and **McIntyre Furnace** (1854) in Newcomb. In addition to the stabilization work on both structures completed in 2008 by the Open Space Institute, this year Sasaki Associates and a team of interested people and organizations (including AARCH) helped to develop a Master Plan for the future of the 300 acre Tahawus Historic Area.

In an effort to save the 1878 **Upper Bridge** in Keeseville, we co-wrote federal and state grant applications to rehabilitate this extremely rare bridge, one of only about 75 cast and wrought iron bridges in the country. We have continued to advocate for the preservation of two threatened **fire observation towers** on Hurricane and St. Regis mountains. The future of other historic structures within the Forest Preserve, such as **Debar Pond Lodge** in Duane and ruins associated with **Great Camp Sagamore**, now hinge on how they are treated by unit management plans currently under development by NYSDEC.

### Continued Progress at Camp Santanoni

Thanks to continued support from NYSDEC, the Town of Newcomb, and a *Save America's Treasures* grant to AARCH, we have continued to plan and complete important conservation work here. In 2009, the largest conservation project was the stabilization and exterior restoration of the kitchen wing at the Main Lodge. The project was developed by Crawford & Stearns, Architects, and the work is being done by Jameson General Contracting, and should be completed in 2010. The \$325,000 project addresses some serious foundation problems and provides new structural underpinnings for this wing.

Michael Frenette (below) returned for his twelfth summer as our "builder in residence" and he continued work on two projects. The first was some fairly complex log conservation work in the vicinity of the Main Lodge's porte-cochere. The second was the reconstruction and restoration of the Bath House. He also supervised the summer staff (Katelin Olson, Natalie Franz, and Caroline Engel) in undertaking small conservation projects, including repairing the palisades around the porches, restoring interior finishes, and exterior staining and painting.



## Tours, Workshops, and Special Events



*AARCH tour participants explore one of the houses at Sekon on Upper Saranac Lake as part of our first “mystery tour.”*

This year AARCH sponsored thirty public educational tours throughout the region, including our first “mystery tour” and new outings to Newton Falls, the Paradox Lake area, Mt. McGregor, Lake Placid’s Main Street, and Huntington Forest. These explored a wide variety of places and were extremely popular with our members and the general public.

On Saturdays during May and June we conducted fifteen *Architecture of the Champlain Valley* tours in nine communities, as part of the Champlain Quadricentennial celebration. This series of free tours was funded by a grant from the Champlain Valley National Heritage Partnership. We also gave twenty public tours of White Pine Camp, the 1926 summer White House of Calvin Coolidge, did more than a dozen public lectures, and held five special events—our annual meeting at the Boathouse Theater in Schroon Lake, a benefit event at South Farm in Essex, a golf tournament in Westport, an awards luncheon at The Inn at Erlowest on Lake George, and a special outing for our larger donors on the *Saint Louis*, an electric Elco launch, at Mohican Point on Lake George.

We also held two *Adirondack Rustic Architecture Study* tours in September—one for the Friends of the Gamble House (Pasadena, California), and a second that was open to the general public.

In all, we held over seventy tours and events, that were attended by over 1400 people.

## Technical Assistance and Support

We routinely provide helpful technical assistance to historic property owners on a range of preservation issues each year. This past year included providing support for National Register nominations, distributing information on preservation grants and tax credits, giving conservation advice, and helping to nurture fledgling preservation organizations.

We’re happy to report that some of our help has borne fruit in a variety of ways. The **Town of Brighton** received a grant from the Environmental Protection Fund program to fund the restoration of and an addition to its historic Town Hall. The **Pliny Moore Summer House** in Champlain, a rare early 19th century gazebo-like structure, is being restored and relocated to a nearby cemetery. A stone **grist mill in Schuyler Falls** was rescued from further deterioration and collapse when the owner undertook some major stabilization work there.

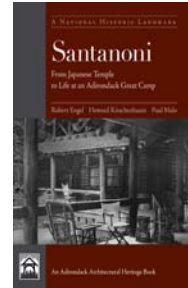
In addition, AARCH worked with PRIDE of Ticonderoga and the Town of Ticonderoga to undertake further restoration of the c.1890 **Frasier Bridge** over the LaChute River and to support the active downtown revitalization program there. We worked with the **Arto Monaco Historical Society** to ensure his artistic and creative legacy and to explore the feasibility of restoring the castle once at the center of the **Land of Makebelieve**.

Other technical assistance includes working with the owners of the Tahawus Lodge in AuSable Forks, the Champlain Visitor’s Center in Crown Point, the N House in Pottersville, and Breezy Bluff Cottage in Dresden; and with the Thurman Historical Society, to name a few.

## Other Activities

**Easements.** We agreed to hold our fifth historic preservation easement on Northbrook Lodge, near Paul Smiths.

**Web Site Improvements.** With the help of our web designer, we completed the new *Resources* section of our web site, and are working on another new section that will include an interactive map of the region.



**Reprinting *Santanoni*.** The second edition of *Camp Santanoni: From Japanese Temple to Life at an Adirondack Great Camp* was released in September, and is now available for purchase. For more information, visit our website at: [www.aarch.org](http://www.aarch.org).

## AARCH Awards

On October 9, preservation enthusiasts from around the Adirondack Park gathered at The Inn at Erlowest on Lake George to honor and celebrate those receiving an Adirondack Architectural Heritage Award. Six awardees shared their stories of challenge and success, passion and purpose with a lively and engaged group of advocates and supporters. Selected by the AARCH Stewardship Committee, chaired by Jane Mackintosh, the awardees were:

**William Gates and Family, *The Gates Homestead, Bolton Landing***



This circa 1830 farmhouse has been in the Gates/Reynolds family for 179 years. In 1917, Jonathan Streeter Gates,

great-grandfather of William Gates, sold 90 acres of land including the house to Dr. William G. Beckers. Two years later, Beckers offered Jonathan Gates’ wife Nettie, the following options: he would move the Gates’ house from the east to the west side of the road; build her a house anywhere in Bolton Landing she chose; or buy her the Tanner House in Bolton Landing. Nettie chose to have the house moved, and so it was turned around and moved across the road. During the time that William Gates has been steward of this family homestead, he has been working on numerous projects on the house and the outbuildings, and organizing the extensive collection the family has accumulated over the years. In 2008, the Gates Homestead was listed on the New York State Register of Historic Places.

**Paul and Susan Provost, Hemlock Hall, Blue Mountain Lake**



The main lodge, built c. 1890 for the Paul family and named Nawadaha, which means “sweet singer in the forest,” from

Longfellow’s *Hiawatha*, served as a peaceful summer retreat from the family’s wholesale shoe business in Pennsylvania.

Nawadaha was the first home in Blue Mountain Lake to have indoor toilet facilities. The main lodge’s massive two-sided fireplace serves as a focal point, opening onto part of the living room and a wing of the dining room; there is an additional fireplace in an upstairs hallway. Both the walls and the ceiling retain their original, intricate wainscoting.

In 1948 the property was purchased by Monty and Eleanor Webb, who renamed it Hemlock Hall. Restored in the 1950s, the Webbs added a dining room and additional cabins. Since 1949, Hemlock Hall has operated as a lodge, and continues to do so under the ownership of Paul and Susan Provost.

**Sekon Association, Upper Saranac Lake**



Isaac Newton Seligman, a New York investor and at the time one of the wealthiest men in the

country, developed his “Fish Rock Camp,” as the Sekon property was first called, in the late nineteenth century. The entire original camp, except for the Hill House, burned to the ground in 1904, and most of the Sekon buildings standing today date from the reconstruction of the camp which was completed in 1905.

The property which was to eventually become Sekon also included another Great Camp just to the north called Calumet. Calumet was the summer home of Isaac Seligman’s brother George and his sister, Mrs. Theodore (Frances) Hellman. Isaac Seligman was killed in a horseback riding accident in 1917, but his widow Guta, ran the camp until she became ill around 1931.

After the Great Camp era, Fish Rock Camp and Calumet were operated as an all-inclusive Adirondack resort under the name Sekon Lodge. On July 11, 1964, the Sekon buildings and surrounding land were sold at auction. At a crowded auction that day, 22 cottages and buildings, 9 lake-front lots, and 26 other parcels of land ranging up to ten acres, went under the gavel. Just days after the auction, on August 2, 1964, the first meeting of the Sekon Association was held in the former guide’s house.

Temporary officers were elected, and more than forty years later, the Sekon Association continues to operate as the homeowner association of the combined Sekon properties.

**Thomas Finnigan III, T.F. Finnigan Men’s Clothing Store, Saranac Lake**



Constructed in 1900, the Finnigan building is located within the Berkeley Square Historic District, more specifically, the Roberts Block. It is a three story, flat roofed, stone faced brick Romanesque

commercial block with two recessed balconies in the second and third floor façade. These balconies are characteristic of the adaptation of local architecture to incorporate elements of the tuberculosis cure industry, which had sparked the village’s commercial prosperity.

Although there is no record of an architect for this building, it is believed to have been the work of William Scopes. T.F. Finnigan Men’s Clothing Store opened in 1923; the ground floor front retains its 1923 cherrywood fixtures and furnishings. Finnigan’s remains in the family and is operated today by Thomas Finnigan III.

**The Atkinson Family, Keene Valley**



The Atkinson house was built by James Purviance Atkinson in 1906, on property that

was given to him and his wife Maria Normand Smith, by her father, Dr. Normand Smith, who arrived in Keene Valley in the 1860s and bought a

considerable amount of land. The original design called for a Swiss-chalet style, however, Maria, who designed the house, changed her mind. Perry Sleeper from Keene Valley was the primary builder, and he also made most of the furniture in the house.

The house, which was built at a cost of \$3,600 is made of native pine with cedar shingles; there are five brick fireplaces built by masons from Keene Valley, and woodstoves in both bathrooms. It has never been wired for electricity, and the original wood stove for cooking remains in the kitchen and is fired up on chilly mornings. Ice for refrigeration was once cut from the brook, but at some point in the 1930s a gas stove and refrigerator were installed, as well as gas lights and a water heater; the telephone was installed in 1957.


**Bruce and Beki Pushee, Old Mill Bed and Breakfast, Elizabethtown**



In 1874 this property was occupied by W.L. & B. Excelsior Factory; by 1884, C.N.

Williams built a steam sawmill on the property which was still in operation in 1890 with Almon Clark as his sawyer. In 1912, Clark had his own sawmill here with Harry MacDougal as engineer and David Stringham as sawyer. By 1927, the mill was operated by O.C. Clark and Son. After the mill closed, there was a short-lived attempt to run a dine and dance resort there.

Wayman Adams, an internationally renowned portrait painter purchased the mill in 1932 and turned the old mill into his summer home and art studio. The Old Mill Art Colony was founded, and operated for forty seasons, attracting instructors and students from all over the world. Stanley Turnbull and Robert Kraeuter purchased the Old Mill Art School in 1952; from 1960 through 1966 Ralph and Beki Maurello were the proprietors of the Art Center, and in 1990 Bruce and Beki Pushee established the Old Mill Bed and Breakfast, which they continue to own and operate.



State of the Arts  
NYSCA

*This publication and much of AARCH’s good work is made possible with funds from the New York State Council on the Arts, a State Agency*