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Public sees change at lake-themed Skaneateles history museum

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By



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Skaneateles Historical Society Board President Karlene Miller (left) and Creamery Museum President Laurie Winship pose in the connective corridor at the Creamery at the Museum on Hannum Street in Skaneateles. The museum has doubled in sized with the expansion.

By Mary Beth Romano

Contributing writer

Preserving the past while building for the future has always been the goal of the Skaneateles Historical Society. And part of that future is a newly opened and expanded Museum at the Creamery.

"The community support has been wonderful. It is so important to us," museum director Laurie Winship said.

With its gleaming floors and cathedral ceilings the 3,000-square-foot expansion consists of three additions: A 390-square-foot archival storage

room, built onto the existing museum; an 830-square-foot boat museum, in the former boiler plant; and a 1,780-square-foot connector wing that joins the boat museum to the original museum.

"This new space doubles the former space," Winship said.

Winship has worked at the helm of the historical society for seven years.

The former librarian said she never envisioned taking on such a job.

"I never thought I would be doing this," she said. But the 17-year Skaneateles resident not only enjoys her job, but the flexibility and diversity of the work.

"My day changes, according to what is needed," she said. "I can pay invoices one day and return emails regarding research questions the next."

Winship is quick to credit board members and community members for their continual help with projects.

“ Everything is donated, we don’t purchase items,” she said.

Located at 28 Hannum St., the expansion project began in May 2007. The society was able to buy the building next to the existing museum. The museum used to be a creamery where local farmers brought their milk; the building next door was the boiler plant that supplied power to the creamery.

A ceremony earlier this summer showcased the new connector wing and boat museum, which includes displays of wooden boats that were manufactured in Skaneateles, as well as a new and expanded gift shop. The boat display includes Lightning No. 1 — perhaps the most-famous sailboat built in Skaneateles — on a two-year loan from Mystic Seaport Museum of America and the Sea in Mystic, Conn.

Plans for a new, interactive lake model are in the works. The current lake model is one of the museum’s most popular displays, because summer visitors like to see where they are staying, and local residents enjoy learning new facts, including where some of the old steamboats were sunk.

There also is a new gift shop in the connector wing and new signs are being constructed. Artifacts that have been in storage, including agricultural implements, will be put on display.

Although the original budget was \$700,000, it was increased over the years to \$750,000. Money was raised through community donations, grants and special fundraisers, such as the one held recently

at interior designer (and Skaneateles resident) Thom Filicia’s lakeside home. A total of \$18,000 was raised to help make up the \$75,000 still needed to finish parking and landscaping projects, as well as add an annex to the boat building.

“Fundraising is ongoing, for the buildings and for new exhibits. We will continue to work hard at planning other fundraisers as we move forward,” Winship said.

On Sept. 22, the society will receive the Onondaga Historical Society’s most prestigious award, the OHA Medal.

“We are very excited,” Winship said.

The decision was made in “recognition of the Skaneateles Historical Society’s work in restoring the Creamery Museum and expanding public programs.” The presentation will take place at the Genesee Grand Hotel’s Tiffany Ballroom.

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Laurie Winship (left) and Karlene Miller pose in the boat museum section at the newly expanded Creamery at the Museum in Skaneateles. Miller is president of the Skaneateles Historical Society Board, while Winship is president of the museum.