North Creek Railway Depot Museum Newsletter Spring/Summer 2026

President's Message

Dear Friends and Supporters,

As we welcome the arrival of spring, I am pleased to share the many exciting developments underway at the North Creek Depot Museum. This year is especially meaningful, as we are commemorating the **125th Anniversary of Theodore Roosevelt's "Night Ride to the Presidency,"** a defining moment in both our region's and our nation's history.

Over the past months, we have made significant progress in advancing our mission to preserve and share this remarkable story. We have launched a dedicated anniversary website that serves as a central resource for historical information, event updates, and educational content. Beginning on **July 8**, our anniversary lecture series will commence, bringing distinguished historians, writers, and authors to our community and offering fresh perspectives on Roosevelt's legacy, conservation efforts, and leadership.

Our full calendar of commemorative events includes the newly redesigned and installed **Roosevelt Gallery**, a gala, and a Main Street parade on **Saturday, September 12**, as part of History Weekend. The celebration will also feature a special presentation by **Joe Wiegand**, the noted Theodore Roosevelt impersonator and historian, on the Depot platform. These events will bring together residents, visitors, and scholars to celebrate the enduring significance of Roosevelt's journey to the North Creek Railroad Depot.

At the same time, we continue to invest in the preservation and improvement of our historic campus. With the support of generous donors and grant funding, we have recently completed the installation of a new cedar shake roof on the Depot building. This important project marks the beginning of an 18-month **Matching Fund Capital Improvement Campaign**. Funds raised will support additional critical work, including exterior painting of the Depot and much-needed ADA accessibility upgrades and restroom facilities at the Owens House. These improvements will ensure that our facilities remain welcoming, safe, and historically authentic for years to come.

None of what has been accomplished—or what lies ahead—would be possible without the dedication of our volunteers, the generosity of our donors, and the enthusiasm of our community. Your continued support allows us to expand our educational programs, enhance our exhibits, and share the rich history of the Adirondacks with a growing audience.

As we move forward into this exciting year, I invite you to join us—whether by attending an event, volunteering your time, or supporting our Capital Campaign. Together, we can ensure that the story of Theodore Roosevelt's Night Ride, and the broader history it represents, continues to inspire future generations.

Thank you for your ongoing commitment to the North Creek Depot Museum.

With sincere appreciation,

Tony

Anthony Cucchiara
President

Depot Museum Creates New Theodore Roosevelt Exhibit

In 2026, to commemorate the 125th anniversary of Theodore Roosevelt's Night Ride to the Presidency, the North Creek Depot Museum is creating a new permanent exhibit.

Exhibit panels will describe Roosevelt's emergence as a national figure during a volatile time in American politics. It will examine how TR's love of the Adirondacks helped to inspire his work to protect wilderness and wildlife across America. Other panels will portray his heroic exploits in Cuba, his run for governor of New York, his reluctant but short time as vice president, and his becoming the youngest president through one of the worst acts of political violence in American history.

The exhibit will describe the assassination of President William McKinley at the Pan-American Exposition in Buffalo. It will also detail the events of TR's dangerous journey from Mount Marcy to North Creek after news arrived that the president was dying.

The new exhibit, located in the Museum's Theodore Roosevelt Gallery, will allow us to offer a more complete story of how TR became America's youngest president and one of its most admired ones—and of the climactic role North Creek and the Adirondacks played in these historic events.

New Roof Safeguards Special Place in American History

The Depot Museum has a new roof, thanks to generous donations and several grants. In March, a new cedar shake roof was installed on the building, which was constructed in 1872. This type of roof was installed to maintain the building's early 1900s architectural style, a stipulation of the Museum being placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The old roof, installed when the building was restored, had seriously deteriorated and was in imminent danger of leaking onto artifacts and the Museum's diorama.

The new roof will help safeguard a special place in American history, as the Depot platform is where, 125 years ago, Vice-President Theodore Roosevelt learned that President William McKinley had died, making Roosevelt the 26th president of the United States.

The work was done by Pinnacle Roofing from Schenectady. "The crew did a fantastic job," according to Greg Schaefer, vice president of the Museum's Board. "They worked hard in pretty challenging early spring weather and went out of their way to do a great job for the Museum to help us preserve our history."

The roofing work was made possible in part through a major gift by Glenn and Carol Pearsall, along with generous donations from the Rucker family, the Cloudsplitter Foundation, the Alfred Z. Solomon Foundation, and the W.G. Broughton Private Charitable Trust.

The Museum continues to seek more grants and raise funds to complete the exterior rehabilitation and other needed projects at both the Museum and Owens House.

The North Creek Railway Depot Preservation Association is a 501(c)3 not-for-profit, and a New York State Registered Charitable Organization. Your tax-deductible donations are gratefully accepted and help us to keep the Museum open and working to fulfill our Mission to "collect, preserve, and interpret objects related to the history and culture of the Gore Mountain Region." Increases in the cost of fuel oil and maintenance of our historic buildings puts a strain on our operating budget. Please consider a membership or additional donation if you are already a member. Your generosity is greatly appreciated. Thank you!

Capital Campaign Capital Campaign, Part II
After the New Roof—More to Come!

Have you seen the new roof at the North Creek Depot Museum? It's glorious!

This important work was made possible by the support of generous donors and grant funding, including Glenn and Carol Pearsall, the Rucker family, the Cloudsplitter Foundation, the Alfred Z. Solomon Foundation, and the W.G. Broughton Private Charitable Trust.

We are now planning to launch a broader effort to preserve the historic Depot and expand its popular education and historic programs. During the second phase of our Capital Campaign, we will be seeking to "match" the approximately $125,000 already raised so we can carry out other much-needed improvements, including exterior painting and repainting of the Depot platform. These upgrades will align with restoration work completed three decades ago and will help maintain the building's status on the National Register of Historic Places. Other priorities include accessibility enhancements to the Museum's 1857 Owens House education and resource center, including ADA-compliant ramps and the installation of an ADA accessible restroom on the main floor.

This work will enhance the heart of our mission—our popular education and historic programs. In recent years, we have more than doubled We are not yet officially in the campaign mode, pending some more detailed planning, but we plan to kick off a matching campaign this summer. In the meantime, enjoy the several improvements already completed or in the works, including our new Theodore Roosevelt Gallery, along with the many events celebrating the 125th anniversary of Roosevelt's dramatic "Night Ride to the Presidency" (www.teddyrooseveltnightridetothepresidency.org).

visitation to the North Creek Depot Museum and the ever-popular Caboose. Our education program, which initially focused on Johnsburg's 4th graders, has grown to include additional students and grades. As we did with the roof, we have restored the physical integrity of the 1857 Owens House, where our planned improvements will allow us to expand our programming and welcome more children and adults.

If you are able, please consider being among the first to give to this matching campaign as an addition to your other gifts this year. This will be an important boost as the campaign officially begins later and will count toward the match.

Many thanks for your support.

https://secure.qgiv.com/for/capitalcampaign-raisetheroof

Meet the Hartensteins

Meet Jane and Steve Hartenstein. Jane grew up right here in North River, NY, as Mary Jane Harrison. She and her husband Steve volunteer most Saturdays during the summer as very knowledgeable docents at the Depot Museum. While wintering in Florida, they continue to serve their community.

"In St. Augustine, Florida, it's sometimes hard to tell the change in seasons but for me, as a volunteer at the Castillo San Marcos, participating in the reenactment of Spain turning over the massive coquina fort to the United States in 1763 is a sure sign of spring.

For my husband, Steve, who volunteers with the neighborhood handyman group known as the Work Crew, opening the community pool signals the change of seasons.

While the rest of the country considers the first weekend in May and the Kentucky Derby the arrival of Spring, growing up in North River it was the White Water Derby on the Hudson River that was as sure a sign as mud week. By now the ice will have gone out of 13th Lake and it's time to start making summer plans.

We both look forward to volunteering at the Depot Museum again this summer and sharing the history of the area with people who visit from all over the world. We enjoy talking with the visitors as well as learning new facts and stories from the other docents. This summer will be particularly interesting as the entire country celebrates its 250th birthday and North Creek recalls the ride of Teddy Roosevelt to the presidency 125 years ago.

Sharing of time and skills comes naturally to anyone who has lived in the North Country and knows the important contribution of volunteer organizations like the local Fire Companies, the North Country Outreach, and the Historical Society and Depot Museum. It was that tradition that brought me as a volunteer to the Castillo, operated by the National Park System. I enjoy learning about the history, architecture, and daily life in St Augustine's 450-year existence and now I give talks on colonial medicine using the fort's collection of antique medical tools. I decided to share some of St. Augustine's unique tales in **Ancient City Stories**, published in 2024 and since no history is complete without the story of the indigenous people that impacted our history, I published **An Epidemic of Glory** in 2025.

Come visit us at the Depot this summer and say hello, we would love to catch up with everyone. **Better yet, become a volunteer and share the fun.**

If you have a few hours to spare, we would love to talk with you. Contact Andie Waldron, Volunteer Coordinator, at 518-251-5842 or mailto: director@northcreekdepotmuseum.org?subject=Interested in Volunteering

Anthony Bright: Capturing History in Watercolor

The North Creek Depot Museum is proud to recognize the artistic talent and generosity of Anthony Bright, whose beautiful watercolor paintings of the Depot Museum and the historic Owens House have become treasured additions to our collection.

Anthony Bright is a gifted artist known for his ability to capture the character and spirit of historic structures through the delicate and expressive medium of watercolor. His paintings of the Depot and Owens House reflect not only architectural detail, but also a deep appreciation for the history and significance of these landmarks within our community.

Through his generous donation of these works, Anthony has helped preserve the visual story of the North Creek Depot Museum for future generations. His artwork offers visitors a unique perspective—blending artistry with history—and serves as a lasting tribute to the buildings that anchor our mission.

We are sincerely grateful to Anthony Bright for sharing his talent and supporting the Museum in such a meaningful way.

Depot Museum Welcomes J. Scott Willoughby as New Board Member

Originally from New Jersey, Scott visited North Creek as a child and fell in love with the area. Eventually, he purchased property in Baker's Mills, living there part time before becoming a full-time resident 13 years ago. Active in the community, he sat on the Board of the Farmers' Market for many years, ran the Cruise Nights in North Creek for five years, and helped the Whitewater Derby Committee with their popular paddling event.

Scott has been inspired by the nature and the rustic art typical of the Adirondack region, which led to his involvement in the rustic furniture business—just one of the many ventures he has pursued over the years, including manufacturing, data and software, investing, mapping, classic cars, antiques, caretaking, rental management, and contracting. He has also traveled widely, visiting Canada, Nepal, Burma, Thailand, Cambodia, Laos, Bali, India, Kashmir, Suriname, Belize, Mexico, and Europe, as well as places throughout the U.S., in search of fine art and inspiration.

Always drawn to the history of a place, Scott has a great appreciation for the preservation of local historic sites and stories. As a collector and skilled craftsman, he understands the need to take care of our own history.

The Owens House: Yesterday and Tomorrow

By Robert Engel

In North Creek and its vicinity, 1871 was a big year. Thomas Durant's Adirondack Railroad arrived from Saratoga, bringing a trainload of optimism to the region.

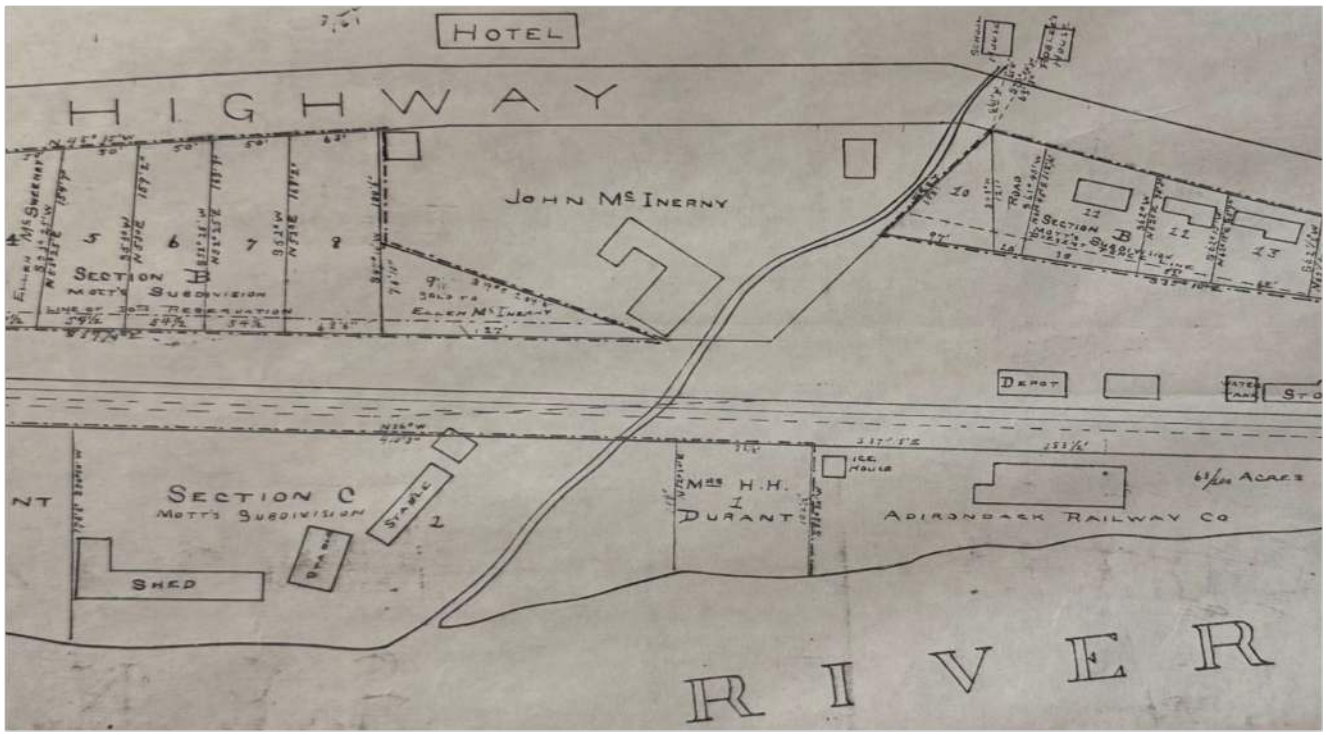
A building boom quickly began and included the famed American Hotel. There were two existing houses on the hotel's property, one of which was moved across Main Street long before the original hotel burned in 1903. That is the Depot Museum's Owens House. Built in 1857, it is possibly the oldest house in North Creek.

The boom times came to a screeching halt only two years later when a financial panic swept the nation and the world. A major cause of the Panic of 1873 was the Crédit Mobilier Scandal of 1872. Crédit Mobilier was a fraudulent construction company, co-founded by Thomas Durant to overcharge the federal government for building the Transcontinental Railroad. Suddenly, Durant's development plans for the Adirondacks, using North Creek as his transportation hub, were curtailed by a crippling financial disaster that he helped to cause.

Back to the Owens House. Main Street and the rest of the world recovered from the panic. The North Creek Depot and the Durant family made their mark on the Adirondacks. And the Owens family, who moved into the relocated house, raised their children. Their descendants still live in the area.

Since purchasing the Owens House in 1995, primarily to provide office and project space, the Depot Museum has worked to maximize its utility. Today, the second floor is being converted into space for archives, collections storage, and research.

Recent renovations, supported in part by the Alfred Z Solomon Charitable Trust and the Rucker and Quintavalle families, have added a secure basement, modern climate controls, a security system, and a classroom space. The downstairs now contains meeting and reception spaces and open storage displays. The Museum recently hosted a reception at the Owens House for its major benefactors.



Detail of an 1889 map of North Creek made for Heloise Durant, widow of Thomas, showing the original American Hotel (indicated by ☆), the earliest known schoolhouse in town (✶, the current location of Ski Bowl Road) the Depot (✪) and the here unnamed Owens House (✯). This indicates that the Owens House was moved across Main Street (here called "Highway") earlier than was previously thought.

LARAC Grants Support Museum's Flourishing Education Program

This year, the Depot has been awarded two separate grants from the Lower Adirondack Regional Arts Council (LARAC), which will allow us to further our education programs. One grant, a renewal, is supporting "People and Trains That Could," our partnership with the Johnsburg Central School District.

The program provides school-based lessons for students in Pre-Kindergarten through Grade 8, focusing on local and historical topics relevant to the Museum's mission. Literature, art, music, actors, movement, and writing are incorporated into lessons designed to complement individual learning styles and engage students on multiple levels.

One of our favorite culminating activities is the 5th Grade Ski Gear Design Contest, which follows a lesson that examines the Gore Mountain region's rich ski history. This year's top prizes went to Harper Smith, Tommy Fuller, and Emma McNally. Kiley Knickerbocker's entire class participated. and the entries were so well done that the entire class was rewarded with a pizza party!

The second LARAC grant received this year is supporting activities related to the 125th Anniversary of Theodore Roosevelt's Night Ride to the Presidency. Theodore Roosevelt reprisor Joe Wiegand will reenact a portion of that ride and provide a free performance on the Depot Museum Platform on Saturday, September 12, 2026.

SAVE THE DATE!

We hope you'll join us at our 125th Anniversary Gala on Thursday, September 10, at 5:30 PM at Timber & Thyme at the Station in North Creek. The event commemorates Theodore Roosevelt's dramatic "Night Ride to the Presidency," which ended at the North Creek Train Depot 125 years ago. In addition to delicious food, there will be a silent auction, fun door prizes, dancing to fabulous music provided by Frank Conti's Jazz Trip, and keynote speech by McKibben, a renowned environmentalist, author, and journalist. McKibben's talk will focus on Roosevelt's environmental legacy. We hope to see you there! Tickets, which cost $125 per person, are available by scanning the QR Code:

Our Hornbeck Raffle is Back!

Don't miss out on your chance to win a 10'6" Classic Hornbeck canoe! As last year's raffle winner, Dick Carlson of North River said, "It's such a great raffle, for a great cause. Any man or woman can win!"

Raffle tickets are available at the Depot Museum, Community Bank in North Creek, Music by the River, and the North Creek Farmers' Market.

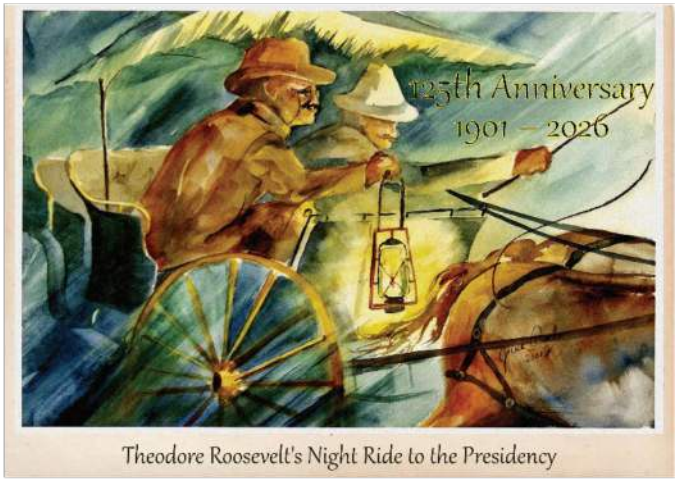
125th Anniversary of Theodore Roosevelt's "Night Ride to the Presidency"

To commemorate the 125th Anniversary of Theodore Roosevelt's historic "Night Ride to the Presidency," the North Creek Depot Museum has undertaken a comprehensive initiative to honor this pivotal moment in both regional and national history.

Central to this effort is the creation of a dedicated anniversary website serving as a hub for historical content, event information, and educational resources (www.teddyrooseveltnightridetothepresidency.org). The site provides visitors with a detailed timeline of Roosevelt's journey, background on the events of September 1901, and updates on commemorative activities.

Complementing the digital presence is an engaging lecture series featuring noted historians, authors, and scholars. These presentations explore Roosevelt's life, leadership, conservation legacy, and the significance of the Night Ride, offering audiences a deeper understanding of its impact.

Together, the website and lecture series form the foundation of a broader commemorative program, designed to educate, engage, and inspire the public while preserving the legacy of this extraordinary chapter in American history. Check out all the planned activities by clicking on the Events tab of the anniversary website (see above).



Theodore Roosevelt's Night Ride to the Presidency

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