

Thursday

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Partly
sunny;
high in
mid 30s.
Page A2

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ENVISIONING THE FUTURE



Rebecca Kelly, artistic director for the Tahawus Lodge Center, shares her vision for a dance studio and cultural center at the former Masons building in AuSable Forks. During an open house Wednesday, the community was invited to share the vision of restoring the building into a hub of activity for the hamlet, combining commerce, culture and community while keeping the bigger picture of restoring Main Street in mind.

Staff Photo/Kelli Catana

PRESS-REPUBLICAN

Gordie Little's
Small Talk
See Page C10

Spectrum

SECTION C

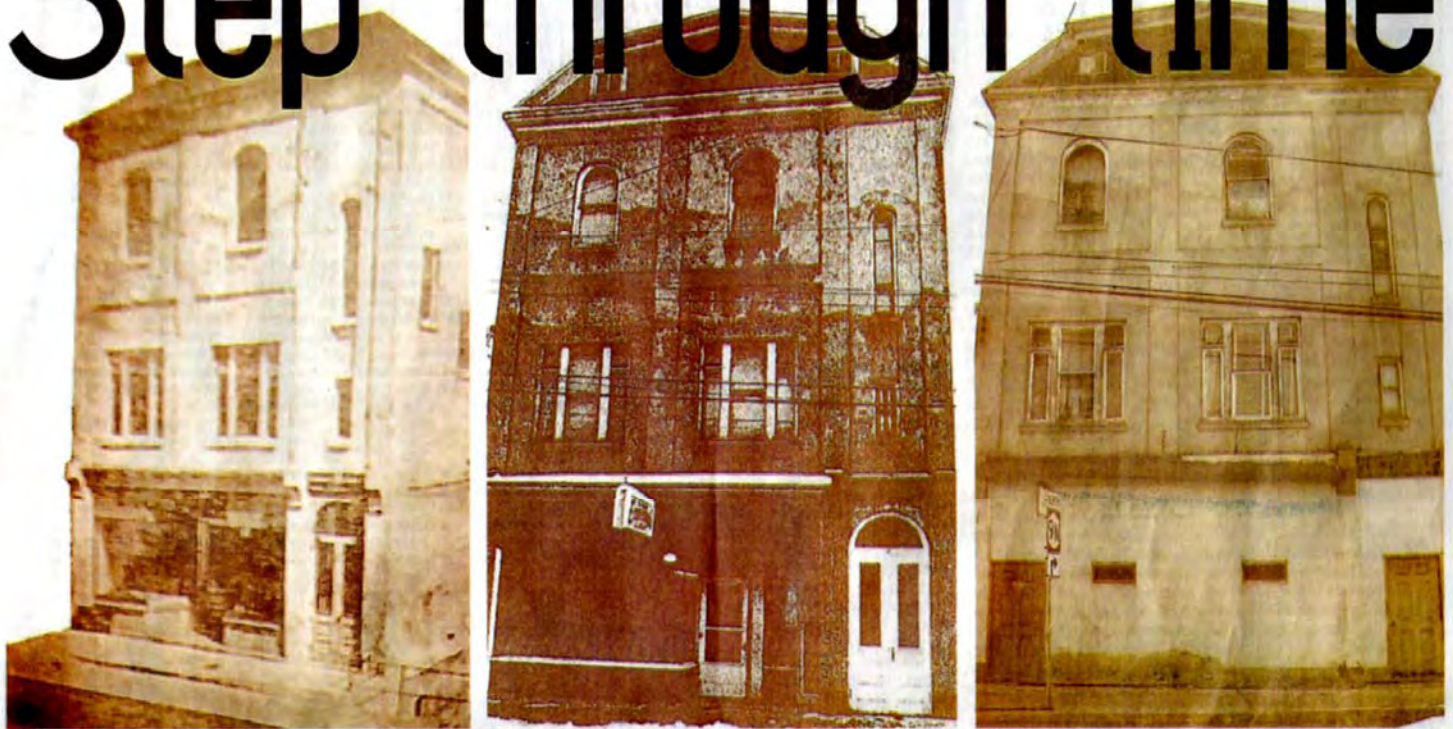
▶ Celebrations C6
▶ Entertainment C7

Press-Republican

Features Editor **Suzanne Moore**, 565-4138, smoore@pressrepublican.com

Sunday, January 2, 2011 C1

Step through time



Photos Provided

The state of the Tahawus Lodge — 1911 (left), 1943 (middle) and 2008 — over its hundred-year existence.

Tahawus Lodge marks centennial with renovation

By **KIM SMITH DEDAM**
Staff Writer

It stands like a rectangular mountain in the village center.



The Tahawus Lodge, built at four stories into the banks of the Ausable River, is a monolith crafted with gambrel roof lines and arched windows gazing from its interior stairwell.

The structure was raised here in 1911, and this year marks its centennial, having survived a ravaging fire in that destroyed much of the village in the early 20th century and more than a few bouts of episodic flooding.

Shortly before the holidays, boards and cement blocks were plucked away from the long-darkened front windows to reveal the early work of renovation that is reaching to remake a cornerstone of Main Street.

Sharron Hewston, Town of Jay historian, grew up when the streets of the "Forks" were full of life. She felt a deep sense of nostalgia when the boards came down from the windows of the lodge in December.

"I was just a kid again, flashing back in time, when I saw it," Hewston said.

"I pulled off the road, put it in park and got out. I just stood there and admired it. If you're a child that's born here, every instant of memory is just precious. To see it come back is" — she stopped to clear her throat — "spectacular. It is like going back to a childhood story."

RECONNECTING

Large panels of window glass and newly installed doors built by craftsman Lee Adams of Essex have replaced the closed cement block wall.

Behind the storefront, a showroom is emerging, reclaimed from dust and vacancy.

Rebecca Kelly and Craig Brashear purchased the Tahawus Lodge through their enterprise Appleby Foundation, a not-for-profit linked to cultural development and the Rebecca Kelly Ballet Company.

The married couple own a house not far from AuSable Forks village and have long envisioned what could become of the vast space of Tahawus Lodge.

"It just penetrated our awareness that the building was sort of like the town, gently in decline," Kelly said.

She sees it as choreography, in a way, a collaboration of business entities expressed through entrepreneurial movement.

"For a person who sees open space as a place for moving bod-

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historian



Staff Photo/Kelli Catana

Rebecca Kelly stands in the newly renovated Tahawus Lodge, which she purchased with her husband Craig Brashear, through their enterprise Appleby Foundations.

ies through the air, vacancy is something to sculpt," Kelly explained.

"They call Tahawus Lodge a 'center.'"

Hewston said Tahawus Lodge was that for a long, long time.

"When I was a kid, we had everything here in AuSable Forks: bowling alley; a pool hall where we could go into the front room (the back room was for the men); three theaters; clothing stores for men and women and children; a shoe shop; the golf course ..."

She remembers the red-fronted A&P store, the green-fronted Grand Union, a bank, a garage, two pharmacies and a liquor store.

"I wish I could open up a book and say, look, here is where we are. Here is where we are from."

Many of the old businesses are gone now, though the Forks is reconnecting to its earliest sense of enterprise.

MULTIUSE BUILDING

Standing like a sentinel by the eastern gate to the Adirondack Mountains, Tahawus Lodge was built for the Order of Free and Accepted Masons here chartered by the New York Grand Lodge on Oct. 6, 1884.

The building was erected on land granted by James and John Rogers, both Free Masons, ac-



Staff Photo/Kim Smith Dedam

An unfinished lodge sits unused in AuSable.

ording to oral history gathered by Sharron's husband, Geoff Hewston, whose father and grandfather were members of the Lodge.

There was a mortgage-burning celebration for the property in 1950, Mr. Hewston's history recalls.

Tahawus Lodge No. 790 met on its upper floors, brought crowds in for various suppers, dances, ice-cream socials and concerts on the second floor; and leased

the bottom two floors to the U.S. Post Office and the region's daily newspaper of the era, the Adirondack Record.

It was in every way a multiuse building for the most essential services of the time.

"Since before I was born, on the left was the workshop of Shirley Parsons, a man who worked on clocks and jewelry, and he was a Mason," Mrs. Hewston said.

"An etched Masonic sign hung there with the names of all the

original Free Masons, the ones that would have established the lodge."

The Post Office was in front, she recalled.

"Our family's Post Office box was number 67, and I can actually remember the combination."

Occupation at Tahawus Lodge grew and fell with the rise and decline of the J.&J. Rogers Company, the primary economic driver in AuSable Forks from 1829 to 1971. The company flushed the community with thousands of jobs in the iron industry and then in pulp and paper manufacturing.

The Tahawus Lodge was vacated not long after the company closed, Mrs. Hewston remembers.

Kelly and Brashear see a different multiuse for it now, one not tied to a single economic engine but to the industry of community itself.

They purchased the building as their daughter left home for college two years ago.

"We looked at that building and thought, well, dancers can use space. Then we became very excited about the building's exterior and interior."

It is much like the loft they reclaimed from a woodworking factory in Soho in New York City many years ago.

Lodge: 'Local people were stopping in with tears in their eyes'

► From Page C1

CREATIVITY CENTER

It isn't going to be just a performance hall.

"Our goal is to make it a creativity center, to stimulate local entrepreneurship with two retail spaces on the bottom floor, and dance and activity space on the upper floors with studios for artists and craftspeople. Having gatherings, having a hub to celebrate occasions is also very important to the building."

Kelly is aware of the risk in reclaiming something this large and immovable.

"But in our field, everything is a risk. We're dancers."

And the entrance is done.

The deep recess of the alcove entryway is laid out in new stone.

It, along with the landing of the ground-level stairway, have been finished with Lake Placid granite given as a gift this holiday season by Cold Spring Granite Company, which has mines in operation just down the road.

The Granite Company's general manager Rick Barber said they were thrilled to provide a new entrance for Tahawus Lodge.

"This 100-year-old landmark building will be just the kick-start the town needs for its renewal," he said, announcing the gift.

Jay Ward, president of Ward Lumber, has been helping connect project partners and is on the Tahawus Lodge Center steering committee.

"I have fond memories of going to the Adirondack Record newspaper offices with my grandmother in the basement of the Tahawus," he said when the first-floor windows were reopened.

"It's great to see the space brought back to life."

WINDOWS OF CHANGE

Coordination of effort is indicative of the version of entrepreneurial spirit Kelly and Brashear have put in motion here.

"We as artists are similar to the local Adirondacker who works at Whiteface (Mountain) in winter, cleans cabins in summer and takes care of peoples' camps. We do more than one thing to put together a life," Kelly said.

"And we feel that whatever businesses we hope to attract will reflect that multi-image of industry."

Tahawus Lodge Center, as they see it, could be home to an Internet café and a fabric store on the ground floor, with a year-round farmer's market on the lower level.

Or it could house a sporting-goods store with equipment rentals and box lunches a rustic furniture maker who ties flies or

maybe a potter who sells cut flowers.

Counting beats to reclaim vacant space, Kelly said the creative drive to both survive and flourish — to make something to be proud of — is part of who we are as human beings.

"Sometimes people need to have reflected back to them what they are capable of," Kelly said. "We felt there was a role for us to play in a positive way, and I think the town is ready. Local people were stopping in with tears in their eyes when we took the boards down from the windows. One gentleman told us he couldn't believe we found a way to bring the building back."

The timing for the restoration, priced at more than \$1.2 million, will proceed at the rate of funding, Kelly said.

To date, the project has cost \$150,000, and the next steps are coming.

Rebecca Kelly Ballet hopes to begin running pilot programs in Tahawus Lodge Center maybe as early as this summer.

And the gallery Windows of Change will put the first of its surprise exhibits in place with the New Year.

"For the next two years, there's going to be a lot of change in AuSable Forks," Kelly predicted. "The new window gallery is going to be an emblem of change, and that is ready to go. We don't have to let our wonderful tiny, little towns fade away. They are vibrant places where we can provoke our own local economy and make it work. "People have to be told they are impervious or they might believe they could catch the depression."

Open house scheduled for Tahawus Lodge center renovation

AU SABLE FORKS — Step by step, an ambitious vision is becoming a reality in this quaint mountain hamlet: a new center of commerce and cultural activity is taking shape — benefiting directly from an outpouring of community support in an old mill town busy being reborn as a gateway to the Greater Lake Placid Olympic region in New York State's grand Adirondack Park.

The creation of the new cultural center, which involves renovating the hamlet's historic Masonic Lodge — renamed the Tahawus Lodge Center, or "TLC" for short — is the project of the Manhattan-based dance troupe, Rebecca Kelly Ballet, and its umbrella organization, the Appleby Foundation, Inc., a 501(c)(3) nonprofit founded in 1979.

Much of the actual construction work, however, is being supplied by local businesses and contractors, some of whom are

donating materials, services or labor. In the span of less than 15 months since the building was purchased, a steady stream of "home improvement" activity has taken place at 14234 Main St.

Before renovations took place, architectural design and planning was supplied by Premises, the architectural team of Bryan Burke and Beverly Eichenlaub, based in Essex. Overall construction is led by Shawn Casey of the local outfit, High Peaks Builders. Lee Adams, from Essex, fabricated the doors.

In early November, TLC learned it would become the recipient of a significant gift when Cold Spring Granite Company agreed to donate stone for the two entry ways. Headquartered in Minnesota, the company has operated locally in Au Sable Forks.

"We at Cold Spring Granite are proud to be able to help with the renovation of the

Tahawus Lodge Center," said the granite company's general manager Rick Barber. "This 100-year-old landmark building will be just the kick-start the town needs for its renewal."

One of those local businesses is Ward Lumber, one of the largest manufacturers of Eastern white pine lumber in New York State and located just down the road from TLC in the hamlet of Jay. It was lumber company president Sidney "Jay" Ward III who first approached Cold Spring Granite.

"I have fond memories of going to the Adirondack Record newspaper offices with my grandmother in the basement of the Tahawus building," recalled Ward. "It's great to see the space brought back to life and adding to our community's arts and cultural opportunities."

"This much-appreciated gesture by the Cold Spring Granite Company supports not

only the project, but the town, for this will be an elegant and most visible addition," said Rebecca Kelly. "Jay Ward has been wonderful in his follow-through and encouragement in helping to make this happen. What an accomplishment.

Now that actual work has begun, one of the biggest selling points for donations and additional grant monies may prove to be tours of the building itself. Toward that end, the TLC team has announced an Open House celebration for Wednesday, Dec. 29, from 3 to 7 p.m. Visitors will be able to view the potential in all four levels of the building, see firsthand the progress that has been made and review plans for the next phase of renovations.

For more information on the TLC project, including the upcoming Open House, contact Craig Brashear at 646-734-7151 or visit www.TahawusLodgeCenter.org.