

Ossipee Mt. Grange awarded preservation grant

Brainstorming BBQ scheduled for Oct. 5

OSSIPEE — The New Hampshire Preservation Alliance recently announced the selection of Bridging Sustainability: The Ossipee Mt. Grange Revitalization Project to receive a \$500 Preservation Services Grant. The Ossipee Mt. Grange, formerly known as McDuffee's Antiques, is located at 3 Pork Hill Road in Water Village, Ossipee. The Alliance's grant program assists in saving community landmarks and landscapes by helping local organizations obtain specialized assistance from a preservation professional during in the early stages of a project.

Global Awareness Local Action (G.A.L.A.), the Lakes Region based nonprofit spearheading the Ossipee Mt. Grange Revitalization Project, will use the awarded grant funds to have a consultant, Jim Merkle of TMS Architects, conduct a preliminary condition assessment and develop a preservation plan that addresses the prioritization of repairs and other building needs while maintaining the historical integrity of the structure.

Merkle's report will outline the next steps for G.A.L.A. in its goal to revitalize the Ossipee Mt. Grange. The proposed project, coined Bridging Sustainability, weaves together, or bridges, traditional Grange advocacy on behalf of rural living with G.A.L.A.'s current sustainability programs. More specifically, the plan combines a local farmers' and artisans' market with a community arts, education and advocacy venue. Upon completion of this bold initiative, G.A.L.A. aims to create a hub for social, economic, and civic activity while effectively preserving a historical landmark, creating jobs, strengthening community, and providing opportunity for area residents to lead a more sustainable and enjoyable lifestyle. More specific plans and a detailed history of the building can be found on G.A.L.A.'s Web site at www.galacommunity.org/grange.html.

Criteria for receiving this award included the significance of the historic building, the imminence of a threat to the building's survival, and the likelihood of successful preservation efforts. The Ossipee Mt. Grange met all criteria and was consequently a good candidate for the award.

George O' Bean built the three-story building in 1904 while living in the neighboring house at the corner



COURTESY PHOTO ▼

G.A.L.A. EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR JOSH ARNOLD poses in front of the Ossipee Mt. Grange in Water Village. His non-profit recently received a \$500 preservation grant to go toward the revitalization of the Grange. Plans for the building include a cooperative farmers' and artisans' market.

of Pork Hill and Water Village Roads. Bean used balloon frame construction, an architecture characteristic of the early 20th century designed to accommodate free movement of large social gatherings. This design also gifted the second-floor venue with stunning acoustics. The first floor began as general store where locals could buy eggs, a newspaper, milk and other staples. Elloise Bean, George's daughter, managed the store during the early 1900s while living in a small nook on the side of the building. Meanwhile, the second two floors were owned and operated separately by the Ossipee Mt. Grange Association No. 131, a local chapter of the National Grange of the Patrons of Husbandry. The Grange hosted lectures on rural living and agriculture, community suppers and social gatherings like dances and concerts.

The Granite State News described the Grange in an Aug. 19, 1932 article titled "Water Village in Days of Yore: Self-Sufficient, Self-Reliant, Self-Dependent Manufacturing Community." The article reported, "dances were held there; the old Wolfeboro Band gave concerts there; Indian medicine shows were held there" and illustrated what mid-19th century Water Village looked like with three working mills, including a

fulling mill, grist mill and saw mill, as well as the Grange Hall, a Free-Baptist Church, a schoolhouse, a blacksmith, a tannery and a couple general stores.

When asked today, many Water Village residents reminisce about their Grange experiences including wedding showers, holiday pageants, oyster suppers, and even Christmas mornings when children flocked to the Hall to collect presents at one of Santa's most predictable stops. The most common memory, however, may very well be sifting through piles of antiques when the store was warmly known as the McDuffee's.

Gerald and Martha McDuffee remain rural legends in the Water Village area. On May 20, 1986, the front-page story of Northern Light read, "The McDuffees of Water Village." The cover picture showed Gerald and

Martha in front of their general store with gleaming, gentle smiles. The reporter described Gerald as a "square shouldered, rawboned man . . . wearing several sweatshirts, oil stained green workpants, wire rimmed glasses and a fishing cap which doesn't quite cover a thatch of white that appears to have been homebarbered about the ears. His face beams and a nearly perfect set of white teeth slash a tanned, grizzled face." Although the Grange was inactive at this time, Gerald and Martha continued to open up their home/shop as a community space for Sunday donuts after church service across the street.

Currently, G.A.L.A. is in the early stages of the revitalization project, focusing primarily on engaging community stakeholders in the planning process, publishing a business plan, and con-

ducting a capital campaign to raise money for restoration and initial capital investment necessary to bring the business to operational capacity. In the face of the huge project at hand, G.A.L.A. Executive Director Josh Arnold remains focused and determined. "I have to take one step at a time, otherwise I get lost in the immensity of the project," he said. "Right now I am focused on generating community feedback and input so that the final product will best reflect community needs and aspirations."

An opportunity to hear about more specific revitalization and offer your feedback and input will take place at the Ossipee Mt. Grange Brainstorming BBQ on Sunday, Oct. 5. Lakes Region area farms are donating fresh produce and meat to create a local foods BBQ. Guest speakers include Car-

ol Puffer (President, Ossipee Historical Society), Beth Merrill (Master, N.H. State Grange) and Maggie Stier (Field Representative, N.H. Preservation Alliance). Following guest speaker presentations and a brainstorming session, Wolfeboro-based professional musicians Beverly Woods and Seth Austen will perform a concert with their eclectic variety of international folk music styles including Celtic, Appalachian and Klezmer.

The BBQ is free and open to the public and will include family activities for everyone, including a beanbag toss, donuts-on-a-string competition and scarecrow making. People are encouraged to bring salads or desserts. Most importantly, G.A.L.A. is requesting people bring old Grange photos, news clippings, artifacts and stories that it may use in developing a Ossipee Mt. Grange portfolio. Contact Josh Arnold at 569-4760 if you are able to contribute any Grange artifacts, share a story about your Grange experience, or would like more details about the BBQ.

As for the Preservation Service Grant, G.A.L.A. is required to provide matching funds. It is anticipated that Merkle's inspection and report will be received within six months. Upon receipt of the report, G.A.L.A. will post major findings on its Web site and start working on the most pressing needs.

The Preservation Alliance is a statewide nonprofit organization dedicated to preserving the state's historic buildings and landscapes through education and advocacy. Funding for the Preservation Alliance's grant program comes from the National Trust for Historic Preservation, the NH Division of Historical Resources (with funds from the National Park Service), and other generous donors.

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