



KENT-DELDORD
HOUSE MUSEUM

2015 Annual Report

ABSTRACT

The Delord Family's story continues when visitors enter the gate and see this home through the eyes of the Delord descendants and hear family stories and challenges that span over 100 years. The Museum's activities and accomplishments for 2015 are summarized in this annual report.

Introduction

The Kent Delord House Museum was home to the Delord Family for more than a century, from 1810-1913. The house overlooks the scenic Lake Champlain and Cumberland Bay where in 1814, the Americans won the Battle of Plattsburgh, a strategic victory instrumental in ending the War of 1812 with the British.

One of the oldest homes in the City of Plattsburgh, it was built in 1797 by William Bailey. His sister, Elizabeth Bailey Kent, wife of James Kent, chief justice and chancellor of the New York Supreme Court later sold it to Henry Delord. The Delord story unfolds from the hundreds of letters, diaries, and artifacts written and kept by the family over a span of 100 years. The historic house contains Delord and Webb heirlooms from the last descendant, Frances Delord Webb.

Fannie Hall died on October 4, 1913. In her will, she left her “historic relics” to a museum. Fannie also left the house to the Physicians Hospital. For the next ten years, her faithful servant Catherine Dowling served as caretaker of the house, protecting and preserving not only the house but also historic family belongings.

Jeannette Brookings Tuttle, a civic activist and local historian, is one of the key people responsible for the Kent-Delord House Museum. As Regent of the Saranac Chapter of the Daughters of the American Revolution, Mrs. Tuttle launched a campaign in 1914 to raise a maintenance fund and asked William H. Miner, a local millionaire inventor, to buy the house to preserve it as a Museum. It took ten years of convincing, but Miner bought the home in 1924 and immediately started the restoration process.

William H. Miner established a Board of Trustees to administer a trust fund he provided to operate the house as a museum. The Kent-Delord House Corporation obtained a provisional charter in 1928 as an educational institution from the Regents of the University of New York, and was later granted the absolute charter on March 18, 1938. Today the Museum is filled with portraits, furniture, dinnerware, books, letters, and personal items owned by three generations of the Delord family.

Mission and Vision

Our *mission* is to provide unique educational experiences based on authentic objects and stories of the Delord family.

Our *vision* is to become a nationally recognized museum through illuminating the values of the past which serve as an inspiration to the present and the future.

Board of Trustees

President - Trevor Laughlin

Vice-President - Sharon Bell – VP (through September 2015), Secretary (October 2015)

Secretary - Donna Bell, (through September 2015)

Treasurer - Holly Morrow (June 2015)

Director - Don Wickman

Sally Booth (through September 2015)

James Clute

Tom Glasgow

Matt Hewson (February 2015)

Carol Lindberg (through September 2015)
Scarlett McBride
Paula Calkins Lacombe (Vice-President, October 2015)
Craig Russell (May 2015)
Jaimie Trautman (through September 2015)
Gary Fisher (October 2015)
Dianne Wyand (October 2015)

President's Report

The heart of any civic organization is its volunteers. We at the KDHM are extremely fortunate to have an exceptional cadre of docents, interns, educational volunteers and willing on-call helpers who are all instrumental in keeping the museum moving forward.

Additionally, the KDH Garden Club continues to be a bastion of support to the cause. Not only do its members contribute many, many hours keeping the historic gardens and grounds looking marvelous, they make significant financial contribution to the ongoing operation of the museum.

The other group of volunteers which I would like to recognize is our board of directors. It has been an honor and a privilege to serve as board president with this terrific group. Distinguished not only by its diligence and hard work, but also by its exceptionally robust and diverse makeup. We have serving this year:

- a lawyer
- a contractor/woodworker
- a public policy administrator
- 2 professional educators
- a business administrator
- 2 education administrators
- a scientist
- a CPA

I am very grateful to this group of dedicated individuals and the collective skills that they bring to the museum. Their stewardship and energy promise good things for the coming years for the museum.

In some regards, 2015 was a year to catch our collective breath and to address some administrative areas of focus that have long needed attention. Five important items in particular that were accomplished during the year:

Performance evaluations for employees. A template was developed for a meaningful, performance-based evaluation of paid staff. The Museum Director completed his portion of the form, the personnel committee did the same with its portion and the parties met to discuss results. Strengths, areas needing improvement were identified and plans put in place for ongoing evaluation.

Revision and update to Docent Guide. This bible for our docents was reviewed and changes and updates performed.

Increased success in fundraising from the local business community. Historically, the Museum has relied on membership, fundraising events, grants and appeals to individuals for its income. Recently, we

have had significant success raising money by soliciting the business community for funds. This will clearly be an ongoing focus. Particular thanks to (former) board member Sally Booth and Museum Director Don Wickman for enlivening this effort.

Review of insurance. Although the question was raised too late to be meaningfully addressed before our policy was renewed last year, getting this item on the table is important. The issue is: what are we, as a museum, insuring against? If, for example, we were to suffer a catastrophic loss of structure and/or collection, what would we spend the settlement money on? A replica of the house would be just that, a replica. The collection is made up of one-of-a-kind items that are by definition irreplaceable. No one is suggesting that we carry no insurance. But, as our premiums account for more than 10% of our annual budget, this topic has been identified as a priority. Homework is currently being done.

Decision to undertake long-range planning/StEPS protocol. The Museum has not undergone a strategic planning overhaul in the memory of any of the current board members. Remedying this shortcoming was identified by the board as a priority. We went through a great deal of discussion and back-and-forth deciding how, exactly to proceed. Eventually, we reached a strong consensus on how to proceed. What we decided to pursue is a program developed by the American Association for State and Local History (AASLH) called the **StEPS** (Standards for Excellence Program) for History Organizations. This is a self-administered, multi-faceted program which addresses all areas of administration and planning for organizations such as the KDHM. We have purchased the materials needed to undertake this process and empaneled a committee which is currently fully engaged. Special thanks go out to Sharon Bell for championing this all-important process.

I look forward to busy and rewarding 2016 and am grateful for the opportunity to serve an institution as worthy as the KDHM.

Director's Report

It was again an active year at the Kent-Delord House Museum.

Exhibits – Periodic change is good. Visitors realize that there is something new occurring at the Kent-Delord House Museum giving them a reason to return. Like 2014, 2015 featured new exhibits in the house.

The *Plattsburgh Academy and the Adirondacks Journeys* made by Frank Hall were highlighted.

"Treasures from the Attic" displayed a selection of items usually not available to the public.

The Webb Connection transformed the Blue Parlor into an exhibit on the Webb Family with special artifacts on display that belonged to family members starting in the 18th Century along with portraits of eight Webb family members with Mehitable Webb Deane remaining in the dining room. Other priceless items displayed were Abigail Chester Webb's wedding fan from 1774 and the last book Henry Livingston Webb purchased for his daughter, Frances Delord Webb, the day before he died in 1846. To make room for the Webbs, the portraits of Frank Hall's ancestors were moved into the dining Room.

Events - People love events and they bring people to the site. Five activities highlighted the 2015 season.

Museum Days in June – This weekend offers free admission to local museums and cultural attractions throughout Clinton County. In 2015, the Kent-Delord House Museum had the largest attendance of all sites with 300 visitors over the two days. Besides the house being staffed with volunteers there were also British and American re-enactors on the grounds plus a display illustrating the lengths of all the principal vessels that participated in the Battle of Plattsburgh.

Battle of Plattsburgh in September– This is always a signature event for the museum. Here are figures from the weekend:

- Re-enactors – 130+ camped on the grounds
- Junior Encampment – over 200 people participated
- House visitors – 477
- Re-enactors dinner – volunteers served approximately 100
- Bateau Race – 9 boats took part
- Don Graves presentation – the talk by this Canadian historian attracted over 50 people in the carriage barn

History Happy Hour – This first-time event held in late October allowed attendees to enjoy food and beverages plus mingle throughout the house. A historical program conducted by Matt Hewson on Plattsburgh and World War I was incorporated into the activity. Twenty-four people attended and three new memberships resulted. Having exceeded expectations, this activity will be repeated in 2016

Veterans Day – Another first time activity was in commemoration of Veterans Day and in celebration of New York History Month, the museum was open for tours with free admission on November 11. As an added attraction, there were two World War II Jeeps parked on the lawn with related exhibits managed by Matt Hewson and John Dodge. Craig Russell had a display of Civil War equipment. Inside the house displays featured artifacts from other conflicts. Over 50 people checked out the outside presentations and 45 toured the house.

Delord Christmas – Using the excellent job that the Garden Club does in decorating the house as the backdrop, the second annual Delord Christmas was held in December. The walkways lined in luminaries and a burning Yule log completed the scene. Over 110 people attended where they could enjoy live music, storytelling, snacks, and beverage. Weather totally cooperated.

Training opportunity – In April, I attended a workshop sponsored by the American Association for State & Local History titled, “Re-inventing the Historic House Museum” at the Strawberry Banke Museum. It was at this training I learned of the History Happy Hour concept plus other ideas.

Fundraising/Development – Outside funding is essential to maintaining the museum and its programs. The two major sponsors this year were Price Chopper (Golub Foundation) and Stewart’s Shops. Their dollars assisted in supporting programs. Also, a number of local businesses became members.

Outreach – It is vital to have a presence in the community. For the second year the museum has been a participant on local radio and did two programs on the University of Vermont’s Across the Fence program. One discussed the Webb connection to the museum, the other on the Battle of Plattsburgh commemoration. There was also a presence on Fox44 and WPTZ. Upon a request from Sunrise Rotary, I delivered a talk on the museum to approximately 35 members. New this year was the introduction of a Museum Corner in the *Lake Champlain Weekly*. For the July 8 edition, the Kent-Delord House Museum produced the first column. With a print run of 12,000, this is an excellent form of marketing. One of the best and subtle outreach methods was the purchase of a movable letter sign to be placed near the road.

Visible from traffic traveling in either direction, this 'silent salesman' assisted in promoting museum events.

Garden Club Report

The Kent Delord House Museum Garden Club members are credited with the beautiful landscaping that surrounds the museum. They work from May to December keeping the grounds, including a grape arbor, maintained and historically correct for the time the Delord family resided at the house. This year the barn was also cleaned and organized by museum personnel and garden club members. A memorial stone honoring Mimi McDowell's many years of dedication was placed at the entrance of the grape arbor. This was made possible by the family through donations in her memory.

Fund raising remains a necessary role for the Garden Club. In May, they held a Blooming Raffle sale. Proceeds of over \$600 were raised and prizes, both purchased from and donated by Cook and Gardener, were won by participants. The garden club also sponsored its annual plant exchange in early May which provided a small sum of money for the treasury but more importantly brought together interested gardeners and advertised both the museum and the garden club.

The Secret Garden Tour held in July raised \$2800 to support the work of the garden club. About 12 gardeners in and around Plattsburgh graciously opened their gardens for viewing by over 150 interested people. The garden club provided refreshments.

In August, a program with Charlie Naardozzi, a Garden Expert, was held at Clinton Community College. There was an excellent community response and around \$4000 was raised.

In December, the garden club members decorated the museum for the holidays and hosted an open house. Volunteers welcomed visitors and serve refreshments. The theme this year of *Feathered Friends* was very well received with about 175 people attending. In the community, many shared their experience and promoted it to friends who asked for tours after the open house.

The Garden Club elected officers for the 2016-2018 term. They are: Carol Lindberg, president; Sue Doin, vice president; Linda Sabella, treasurer; Ruth Mary Ortloff, secretary.

Committee Reports

Personnel

This committee comprised of Tom Glasgow as chairperson, Sharon Bell, Paula Calkins Lacombe, and Trevor Laughlin, ex-officio, implemented an evaluation process for the Director including developing an evaluation form. The committee also developed an orientation manual that was distributed to board members and is now used for all new board members, interns, and other key volunteers involved with the museum as part of an orientation process. Additions are expected and will be added accordingly.

Buildings and Grounds

Work on the roof to replace the cedar shingles was a priority in 2015 and work was done by Mark Kiroy. The following areas were completed in 2015: the Western slope over the kitchen in April, northern exposure of main house in June, and southern exposure of modern bathroom/Cumberland Bay Works

(CBW) room/bay window of the winter bedroom. Starting in the spring, he will complete the section over the two bedrooms and back hall, the portion of the room that contains the safe, and finish with the northern part of the CBW. This will complete the roof.

The city inspected the museum on 5/7/15 for fire/safety. The entrance floor was oiled. Other routine maintenance occurred due to leak problems with old roof as the new was completed in affected sections where needed.

Collections

The Museum recruited a student intern who assisted inventorying collections and entering them into the collections computer data base. Collections members coordinated with the Museum Director to display appropriate collection items to enhance the museum's annual displays. The chairperson attended a workshop sponsored by the Essex County Historical Society on conservation of paper artifacts in May of 2015.

Education

This year the Education Committee organized and held several successful educational events at the Museum. This included British uniform and equipment display during Battle of Plattsburgh weekend, the first "History Happy Hour" with speaker Matt Hewson on Plattsburgh in WWI, Veteran's Day military history display, and a period style yule log burning during the museum's Christmas festivities.

Projects for the future include organizing further events that broaden the number and types of activities which take place at the museum and which support learning about Plattsburgh's and the museum's rich past. Recruitment of committee members will also be an ongoing objective for the committee in 2016.

Nominating

Filled 5 Board vacancies including the Treasurer's position.

Volunteers

Recruited and trained 3 new docents including two teenagers. The docent guide was condensed and updated based on the current displays. Volunteers participated in the annual Museum Days, Battle of Plattsburgh weekend events including the reenactors' dinner, the museum's first History Happy Hour in October, Veteran's Day activities, and in December the Garden Club's Holiday Open House, and the second annual Delord Christmas. Volunteers remain an essential part of the Museum's ability to provide the public with access to the museum and to present innovative and entertaining events.

Membership/Development

Several letter campaigns were completed in an effort to retain and recruit museum members. The business sponsor campaign, started in 2012, offering business name recognition resulted in an increase in business sponsors from 5 in 2011 to over 30 in 2015. The annual appeal also took place in December. Efforts were successful in that new members were recruited and some renewed members increased their membership level.

Communications

The web page was updated and improvements made. Due to the previous web page master's leaving, two contractors agreed to assist in this area as needed. An in-house person to perform ongoing updates

is vacant. Three newsletters were published, missing one the last quarter. Our rack card was updated, published, and distributed to the Chamber. Several pamphlets were literally given a facelift by putting new colored pictured covers on them which greatly enhanced the overall look. These efforts will continue in 2016. Facebook remains an essential social media tool for the museum and provides marketing for events and generates interest for the museum.

Statistics

2015 Monthly Museum Activity* and Revenue					
Month	Visitors Adult/Student		Admissions/Donations		Museum Store
January			\$	\$	
February					
March					
April					
May	29	9	\$ 98.11		\$78.00
June	360	63	\$349.00		\$40.00
July	96	18	\$457.00		\$56.50
August	81	6	\$297.00		
September	513	1	\$215.00		
October	22		\$140.00		\$40.00
November	119		\$55.50		\$7.75
December	286	64	\$192.00	\$414.00	\$254.50
TOTAL			\$1804.11	\$414.00	\$476.75

*Based on sign-in at museum door, "clicker- count" during special house events, and docent reports

Additional Information

June - Museum Days - Sat. 185, Sun. 115, School Group – 12 adults and 55 students

Sept. – BOP – Sat. 306, Sun. 177, Jr. Encampment – 300

Aug. – 24 admissions was History Happy Hour and charged for event

Dec. – Garden Club open house 171, Delord Christmas 110, Admissions was School Group of 64 @\$3.00 each

Annual Numbers 2013-2015						
	2013		2014		2015	
	Adults	Students	Adults	Students	Adults	Students
Visitors	1045	211	1627	118	1506	161
Admissions	\$1138.00		\$706.00		\$1804.00	
Donations	\$198.00		\$51		\$414.00	
Museum Store	\$200.00		\$270.00		\$476.75	

Annual Membership Numbers 2014-2015		
Business	26	35
Personal	254	258
Total	280	293

Financials

A summary financial report is available at the museum upon request.