

# Media Release

## FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Historic Saranac Lake to Receive \$20,000 grant from the National Endowment for the Arts**

**Saranac Lake, NY** -- The National Endowment for the Arts has awarded an Art Works grant of \$20,000 to Historic Saranac Lake for design of the Traveling Cure Porch, a mobile exhibition space that will host community-based history and arts programs. National Endowment for the Arts Chairman Jane Chu has approved more than \$30 million in grants as part of the NEA's first major funding announcement for fiscal year 2017. The Art Works category focuses on the creation of art that meets the highest standards of excellence, public engagement with diverse and excellent art, lifelong learning in the arts, and the strengthening of communities through the arts.

"The arts are for all of us, and by supporting organizations such as Historic Saranac Lake, the National Endowment for the Arts is providing more opportunities for the public to engage with the arts," said NEA Chairman Jane Chu. "Whether in a theater, a town square, a museum, or a hospital, the arts are everywhere and make our lives richer."

"We are deeply honored to have the support of the NEA" said Amy Catania, Executive Director of Historic Saranac Lake (HSL). "We have been thinking about this project for a long time, and we are thrilled to get it started in 2017."

Cure porches are ubiquitous in Saranac Lake, where tens of thousands of people came from around the world for the "fresh air cure" for tuberculosis. Hundreds of local homes that catered to patients feature these glass-enclosed porches with movable windows. Drawing upon the American cultural tradition of the porch as a public and private community space, the Traveling Cure Porch will create an intimate venue where residents and tourists meet to share their knowledge and to experience arts and heritage.

In November, HSL hired a new Oral History Coordinator, Aurora Wheeler, who will manage the Traveling Cure Porch project. Ms. Wheeler is currently conducting oral history interviews and planning pop-up museum exhibitions to take place throughout the area in 2017. “The Traveling Cure Porch will be a fabulous extension of our oral history project,” said Ms. Wheeler. “It will be a great way to get outside of the walls of the museum and connect with the community.” The NEA grant includes support for consultation with Traditional Arts of Upstate New York on the oral history project.

The focus of the first phase of the Traveling Cure Porch Project is to design a sturdy, low cost, mobile space and plan for its construction and use in 2018. HSL will work with local designer, Jesse Schwartzberg of Black Mountain Design Build, to create a design. HSL will host several community meetings, inviting individuals and organizations to share their ideas about design and use of the space as a mobile museum exhibition space, an artist studio and gallery, an oral history booth, a venue for living history reenactments, a prop for outdoor theater, an information booth, a parade float, and more.

The Traveling Cure Porch is informed by innovative projects created collaboratively outside of the walls of traditional museums, such as “Porch Pieces” by artist Bryony Graham (Salem ArtWorks, NY); the Philadelphia Public History Truck (Temple University); and History Moves (University of Illinois at Chicago). While many small museums are eager to embrace innovative models of community engagement, budget and staffing limitations present barriers. HSL will disseminate the design and project plan to other museums and arts organizations in order to adapt this design as a model of community engagement.

Founded in 1980, Historic Saranac Lake is a not-for-profit architectural preservation organization that captures and presents local history from their center at the Saranac Laboratory Museum. Anyone interested in contributing to the Oral History Project and Traveling Cure Porch Project should contact Aurora Wheeler at [aurora@historicsaranaclake.org](mailto:aurora@historicsaranaclake.org).

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Aurora Wheeler. Photo courtesy of Historic Saranac Lake