

# Opera House TIPAF and the Town of Clayton

In a recent news article dated 10/9/04, in the *Watertown Daily Times* by Mike Pell, the headlines read, “Opera House eyed as year-round draw” and “Clayton to put \$2.5 million into renovation.” The first two paragraphs read as follows:

“Clayton – Up and down the St. Lawrence River, business owners and residents fantasize about extending the tourist season so they don’t have to depend on three months of income to pay a year’s worth of bills. Now there’s a coalition that’s trying to lend substance to that dream.

Thousand Islands Performing Arts Fund members and Town of Clayton officials hope that a \$2.5 million renovation of the Clayton Opera House will provide people with an opportunity to transform the region from a one-season wonder into a year-round tourism magnet.”

## **What is TIPAF?**

The Thousand Islands Performing Arts Fund is a 501 © (3) not-for-profit corporation headquartered in Clayton, New York. It is currently leading an effort, in conjunction with the Town of Clayton, to revive and renovate the Clayton Opera House. TIPAF’s goal is to raise \$2.5 million to fund this important project. Because the project has the strong support of local, state and federal officials in the Thousand Islands region, the community has been asked to join in establishing the Clayton Opera House as a year-round performing arts and community center for the benefit and enrichment of the Thousand Islands region by considering support for the *Centennial Campaign to Renovate the Clayton Opera House*. The *Centennial Campaign* is still in its initial phase, but \$600,000 has been pledged to date.

## **What is the relationship between TIPAF and the Town of Clayton?**

In 2003, TIPAF and the Town of Clayton agreed upon their responsibilities in a joint endeavor to renovate the Opera House building and to provide for its management as a community and performing arts center. In the spring of that year, the Town passed a resolution dedicating the Clayton Opera House for use in perpetuity as a community and performing arts center. In addition, TIPAF and the Town signed an agreement setting forth their understanding of how the Opera House would be managed and renovated. TIPAF is responsible for managing the ongoing operations of the Opera House and raising funds for, and collaborating with, the Town in overseeing the renovation work of the building. The Town is generally responsible for maintenance, repair and utilities.

Thus a public/private partnership has been launched to accomplish the establishment of a cultural center in the Thousands Islands region.

## **Renovation – What will it cost?**

As an important foundation for proposed renovation work, it should be noted that the Opera House building is structurally sound and the performance hall possesses excellent acoustics. Both these attributes make it a very desirable candidate for revival. Architectural details for a renovated Clayton Opera House have been developed through identification of the best uses of the Opera House and the accompanying features that are needed. Schematic designs have been developed by Grater Architects and reviewed with engineers Bernier, Carr & Associates. A cost of \$2,370,000 has been estimated for the renovation. Plans and costs have received close analysis by the TIPAF Building Committee that includes representatives from the TIPAF Board of Directors and the Clayton Town Board, as well as experts in theater sound, stage lighting and theater management. The cost of renovation includes exterior and interior improvements, which include, heat & AC system, elevator, sprinkler system, major electrical and plumbing changes, new bathrooms, state and federal access and egress compliance, and third floor improvements. It also includes an addition to the back of the building needed to house mechanicals, bathrooms and dressing rooms. New seating, new stage curtain, lighting and rigging and a new sound system are included in the cost.

## **How is the community involved?**

It is widely recognized that TIPAF and the Town of Clayton are indeed fortunate to have a beautiful, historic building to restore to new beauty and functionality thereby enriching the lives of Thousand Islands residents and fueling the economy of the region. The local community has been supporting the Opera House through its Performance Patron program (\$100 to \$1000 seasonal sponsorship) and by buying tickets to support local talent like Sean Brabant, Kathryn Ingerson and Michael Slattery. Substantial support has been shown for the Sunday Series, which promotes local talent. In addition, the Opera House is happy to be a venue for the recently formed Community Concert Band. This group is conducted by Gloria Musser and carries a roster as follows:

Christine Sterling, Clayton  
Mary Eder, Wellesley Island  
Corri Dartnell, Clayton  
Jackie Badour, Clayton  
Hanna Grybowski, Clayton  
Dee Fuller, Clayton  
Vicky Cummings, LaFargeville  
John Brabant, Clayton  
Lorraine Gauthier, Cape Vincent  
Sally Pentoney, Watertown  
Julian Grybowski, Clayton  
Maresa Badour, Watertown

Susan Walroth, Watertown  
Cathy Harruff, Clayton  
Mary Brabant, Clayton  
Kathryn Ingerson, Clayton  
Jerry Lantier, Clayton  
Barbara Hoops, Brownville  
Megan Cross, Carthage  
Rena Kandler, Clayton  
Tom Harruff, Clayton  
Martha Jablonski, Dexter  
Rick Badour, Watertown  
Jerry Davis, Clayton

Jim Oxenford, Three Mile Bay  
Lori Fearnside, Chaumont  
John Keal, Clayton  
Don Kendall, Clayton  
Kevan Cross, Carthage  
David Raville, Chaumont  
Joe Raville, Chaumont  
Donna Wuestenberg, Clayton  
Kathy Youmell, Cape Vincent  
Bill Dixon, Clayton  
Harley Dingman, Dexter  
Erin Klock, LaFargeville  
Zachery Tate, Alexandria Bay

Ashley Oxenford, Three Mile Bay  
Iris Waterson, Fishers Landing  
Tom Eder, Wellesley Island  
Mark Getman, LaFargeville  
Steve Ahlgrim, Watertown  
Linda Raville, Chaumont  
Dawn Burdette, LaFargeville  
Michael Balonek, Potsdam  
Jill Flynt, Clayton  
Warren Wisner, Morristown  
Golda Mellon, Clayton  
William Walldroff, LaFargeville

**Who do you contact for additional information?**

Thousand Islands Performing Arts Fund and the Town of Clayton are very grateful for the community's continuing support for this important project. For additional information on the *Centennial Campaign*, please contact Mary Mascott, or for programming and/or activities at the Opera House contact Donna Cantwell. Both may be reached at 686-1037.