

## Dream team behind the Center's renovation

By NANCY SUNDSTROM

There's a now-famous expression about it taking a village to raise a child, but in the case of the Grand Traverse Heritage Center (GTHC), it's taken a small army to renovate a building.

And if you ask anyone working on the 7,500-square foot building originally built in 1904 as the Carnegie Library on Sixth Street in Traverse City, and the adjacent structure of the same size, they'll tell you that being a part of converting this historic building into a newly formed center that will be filled with a wealth of educational and cultural resources feels like history in the making itself.

For Construction Coordinator Mike McMaster, whose job is to oversee the 50-plus team of painters, mechanical and flooring experts, carpenters, architects, electricians, roofers and dry-wallers, there's a unique family connection. His father, Cyril (a.k.a. Nick), worked on the Carnegie Building in the early 1960s when the Traverse Area

District Library added another 7,500-square feet of concrete onto it.

"In the tradition of many people who are in the building trade, my dad wrote his name on an interior wall and I'm not sure where that might have been, but it's something that about 40 years later, I'm working in the same space where he had been," said McMaster, who was hired by Friends of the Con Foster Museum.

"I'm here now working on a very different and new chapter in the life of this remarkable building, and it's interesting that much of what we're doing is about getting this building back to where it was supposed to be," he said. "In a way, that's the personal stamp we're all putting on this project, taking two very separate buildings and redoing them so they have a uniform identity that reflects what will be going on inside."

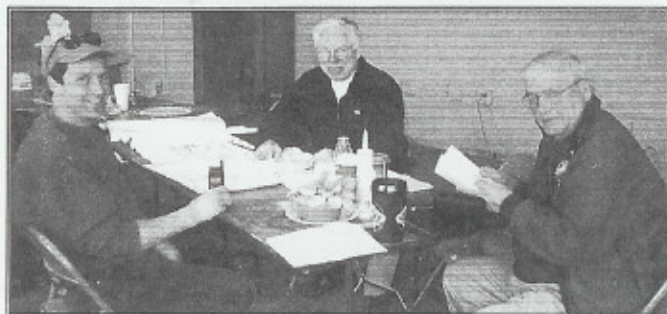
When it is finished and ready for its grand opening on June 22, GTHC will be a 15,000-square-foot, multidimensional facility that will house the collections of

the Friends of the Con Foster Museum, Grand Traverse Pioneer and Historical Society, Maritime Heritage Alliance, and Railroad Historical Society of Northwest Michigan, as well as the Grand Traverse Rock and Mineral Club and the Women's History Project.

Tim Cress of Windemuller Electric echoes McMaster when he says that the primary challenges on the project have been joining the two buildings, dealing with their different levels and responding to the problems posed by working in a turn-of-the-century building when most of the laborers are used to structures that are much newer, to name a few.

"When we're all finished with this job, we want to look back and be able to say that we did excellent work, that we did it together, and that what we've done will be a standard to hold for generations to come," reflected Cress.

Sheren Plumbing & Heating provided two workers to the project in the form of HVAC Foreman Brian Scram and Project Manager Jerry Magee. The men have worked closely



From left: Mike McMaster, Ted Foley and Joe Whall.

alongside industry peers and community volunteers, which include the likes of retired business executives Dick Marr, Ted Foley and Joe Whall, all of whom are Traverse City residents who have already devoted thousands of hours to seeing GTHC evolve from dream to reality.

Magee agrees with Cress that the synergy brought about by years of individual experience and a shared commitment to the project has seen them through a task that many might have found daunting.

"We all come from different backgrounds, but something we share is a belief that a community is stronger and better off by pre-

serving things that are special, unique, and part of the fabric of who we are," he said. "When buildings are gone, you really can't replace them, which is why you see people getting involved with efforts like this one, saving parts of the State Hospital, and the Historic District efforts."

Added Scram: "It's also been a pleasure to work on this project because it's not something that was commercially driven. Every day when we come here, we're surrounded by dedicated volunteers who are here because they want to be and have something to offer and give back to their community. This is about much more than restoring an old building."

# GRAND TRAVERSE HERITAGE CENTER

75 CENTS



Herald photo by Garret Leiva

Soaring chandeliers and shining hardwood floors are included in the top to bottom \$1.25 million renovation of the Heritage Center on Sixth Street in Traverse City.

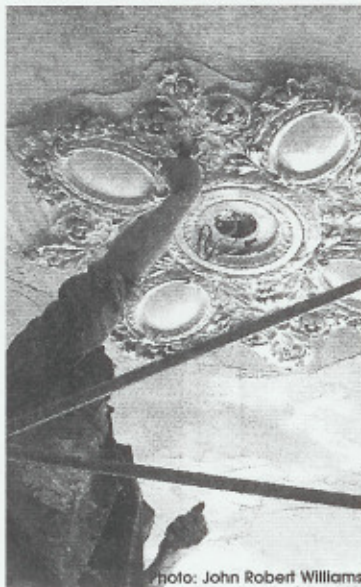


photo: John Robert Williams

