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# HISTORIC SARANAC LAKE

## Interpretive Plan

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## Part 1: Introduction

In July of 2019, Historic Saranac Lake (HSL) began an interpretive planning process to consider ways to integrate their purchase of the historic home and medical office of Dr. E.L. Trudeau with their existing building, the Saranac Laboratory Museum. Together, the two buildings offer an opportunity for HSL to create a museum campus that interprets the story of Dr. Trudeau’s groundbreaking efforts in treating and researching tuberculosis as well as the broader history of the greater Saranac Lake area. In the late 19<sup>th</sup> century, Dr. Trudeau’s work put Saranac Lake on the map. Nearly 150 years later, HSL will use those same buildings to interpret Trudeau’s legacy and the history of the larger Adirondack region.



*Saranac Laboratory Museum*



*Trudeau Building*

With an expanded museum campus, HSL will contribute to ongoing efforts to revitalize the downtown core, a role recently recognized by the State of New York. As of late July 2019, just under \$10 million in state grants were awarded to projects that will revitalize downtown Saranac Lake, including \$325,000 to help preserve the Trudeau Building. Other grants will support the beautification of downtown streets and parks; a new home for the Pendragon Theater; the creation of Play ADK, a new children’s museum; a whitewater park on the Saranac River; an entrepreneurial space; and a new brewery downtown. Receiving this grant is powerful validation and recognition of the impact HSL has had and will continue to have in the Saranac Lake region.

Fundraising efforts began in April of 2018 with a \$3.5 million capital campaign to support building acquisition, rehabilitation, museum exhibits, personnel, and endowment building. To date, the project has raised \$1,329,000 in donations and pledges of support, including a \$500,000 Environmental Protection Fund Grant from the State Office of Historic Preservation and the Downtown Revitalization Initiative grant mentioned above.

HSL’s Board has also taken steps to prepare for the expansion, including the creation of an updated Strategic Plan. The first strategic priority in that plan states that “HSL will provide excellent exhibits and experiences, both at its two museum buildings and in its community programming.” This plan reflects the organization’s Mission and Vision Statements, integrates both build-

ings, and considers interpretive options as one of the first steps toward creating the museum campus and its new exhibits.

**Mission Statement:** “Historic Saranac Lake’s mission is to preserve and present area history and architecture to build a stronger community.”

**Vision Statement:** “Historic Saranac Lake’s vision is of a thriving community that embraces history and acknowledges its cultural and economic impact. We strive to provide exceptional exhibits and programs and to be recognized as expert partners in preserving our history and built environment and in connecting Saranac Lake’s story to the rest of the world.”

### **Site Description and Program History**

Historic Saranac Lake currently operates its programs from the Saranac Laboratory Museum at the edge of the downtown area and directly behind the community’s flagship historic Hotel Saranac. Constructed in 1894, Trudeau’s Saranac Laboratory was the first laboratory in the U.S. built specifically for tuberculosis research. The Saranac Laboratory was named as a Milestone in Microbiology site by the American Society of Microbiology in October 2019. Interpretive spaces in the laboratory building include the laboratory itself, a small room for interpretive videos, another small exhibit space interpreting the “fresh air cure” treatment, and the John Black Room used for meetings and temporary exhibits. Remaining spaces in the building include a gift shop, staff offices, rented office space, and attic storage for collections.

Historic Saranac Lake was originally founded in 1980 as an architectural preservation organization. HSL’s first project was to nominate and list over 200 properties to the National Register of Historic Places after taking an inventory of the hundreds of Cure Cottages in the area. HSL also was instrumental in efforts to preserve the Bartók Cabin and Saranac Lake’s Union Depot, and subsequently acquired and restored the Saranac Laboratory. As an architectural preservation organization, HSL continues to assist residents with National Register nominations and the historic tax credit. HSL also offers several walking and historic house tours interpreting the built environment in Saranac Lake. These tours include:

- Historic Downtown Walking Tour
- Cure Cottage Museum Tour
- Trudeau Sanatorium Walking Tour
- Little Red and Trudeau Statue Tour
- Bartok Cabin Tour

While architectural preservation remains at the heart of HSL’s mandate, the organization took on a museum interpretive role in recent years. In 1999 it acquired the Saranac Laboratory, rehabilitated the building, and opened it as a museum in 2009. In addition to the semi-permanent and temporary gallery spaces at the Saranac Laboratory Museum, HSL also runs a robust oral history

program that collects and shares first-hand accounts related to the tuberculosis industry and local history in the Saranac Lake region. HSL's Cure Porch on Wheels is a particularly visible representation of the oral history project and museum outreach programs. It is currently used throughout the area to collect and share oral histories and to host a variety of arts and cultural activities. Today the organization's mission has expanded to include many of the responsibilities of a local historical society.



*The Cure Porch on Wheels was launched in 2019.*

HSL also operates an online archive of local history through the Historic Saranac Lake Wiki page. More than 6,000 pages of local history information can be found at <https://localwiki.org/hsl/>. Additional local history resources can also be found at HSL's website <http://www.historicsaranaclake.org/resources.html>. HSL's expanded campus will offer a wealth of new interpretive opportunities to leverage these local history collections and related resources.

Through museum visits, architectural tours, public programs, and school programs, HSL serves approximately 5,000 visitors per year. By identifying the Saranac Lake School District as its service area, HSL has defined a clear geographic area to prioritize the stories that it tells. The school district has the largest area in the State of New York, covering a total of 603 square miles.

School programs touch all district students at one time or another, particularly elementary school students. In a typical year, 5th graders from Tupper Lake (outside the school district) also visit. To meet the needs of adult learners and family visitors, HSL offers public programs, including lectures, films, themed activities, and special tours.

### **Audience**

Historic Saranac Lake has identified two very different audiences: the local audience living within the school district and the tourist visitor. Many of the tourists are visiting to take advantage of

the outdoor recreation opportunities available in the Adirondacks, but some are in town because of their interest in the history of tuberculosis, family history, and other topics.

Saranac Lake itself has approximately 5,000 residents, but the Saranac Lake Central School District has approximately 14,630. At first glance, there's something very positive in knowing that HSL has about 200 active members (or roughly 4% of the town's population). That percentage is less favorable when compared to the full population number for the school district. Fortunately, there are approximately 500 more residents who have a looser connection to HSL than membership, but are more or less active depending on the program and their interests. This larger group of 700 members and loosely connected "friends" is still about 5% of the district population, a percentage to be proud of, yet an opportunity for growth. Clearly, meeting the interests of out-of-town visitors and the school district's residents requires a broader narrative than just the tuberculosis story.

At this time there is no detailed demographic information available for HSL visitors, but HSL plans to implement more intensive visitor surveying in the near future. HSL staff have reported that attendance stands at approximately 5,000 visitors per year. It's unclear what percentages are local residents versus tourists, but it seems reasonable to conclude there are opportunities for growth by continuing to increase the number of heritage tourism visitors, whether local or from afar. The 2018 Leisure Travel Study for Franklin County indicates that approximately 18% of visitors took time to visit heritage sites. The largest group of visitors, 79%, were in the region to take advantage of outdoor activities, particularly hiking and canoeing/kayaking. Because wilderness tourism has always been an important draw for residents and visitors, HSL is in a position to touch both the heritage traveler and the outdoor recreation traveler by incorporating this historical perspective and explaining how it relates to the tuberculosis cure story.

School groups are another audience that will be addressed more effectively in the expanded campus. HSL has a long history of programs in the schools. The frequency and number of those programs has tended to vary from year to year. When the organization can afford to dedicate a staff member to developing and promoting education programming, including public and family programs, as well as school programs, HSL's visibility and presence in the community will be further enhanced.

Getting the word out to draw increased visitation to the Saranac Laboratory Museum and to HSL's regularly scheduled programs is limited by available funding and staff time. HSL's website or websites like [saranaclake.com](http://saranaclake.com) or [visitadirondacks.com](http://visitadirondacks.com) are points of access for Laboratory Museum visits and walking tours. Notices in the local papers, regular email blasts to over 1,700 contacts, and regular posts to Facebook, Instagram, and Twitter are used to keep followers updated and engaged. Printed rack cards promoting the site can also be found in visitor centers and area attractions.

## **Interpretive Resources**

While the Saranac Laboratory building, Trudeau Building, and local historic structures are clearly important resources for interpretation, HSL also has a growing collection of its own artifacts and archival materials. HSL's wiki site and the oral history collection offer additional opportunities for information for creating exhibits, particularly those using local memories and voices. The Saranac Lake Free Library, just across the street from the Trudeau Building, has a significant collection of historic photographs and relevant archival materials. Further afield, there are also artifacts housed at the Adirondack Experience at Blue Mountain Lake and the New York State Museum in Albany. And finally, there are interpretive opportunities and program possibilities that exist if HSL can partner with the Adirondack Experience, the Six Nations Museum, Stevenson Cottage, and others.

While outside the parameters of an interpretive plan, it's worth noting that collections care and storage are a significant feature of the expanded campus. HSL is fortunate to have a professional archivist on staff who has made great progress with collections care in recent years with the support of IMLS grants. Collections are currently stored in the attic of the Laboratory Museum and accessed by a steep and hazardous set of stairs. The storage area is not climate controlled, but artifacts and archival materials are housed in archival boxes and acid-free folders. Staff are very aware of the disadvantages of the current artifact housing and eager to acquire more appropriate spaces in the Trudeau Building. Plans are underway to provide more effective climate control in the new collections' storage areas and to acquire additional shelving and supplies as needed. It's a truism in the museum field that expanded exhibits typically lead to an influx of new artifacts. With the Oral History Project strengthening connections between the organization and community members, HSL should expect to put their collections policy and new storage areas to good use once the new exhibits open.

## **Methodology for Preparing Interpretive Plan**

Planning and discussion of HSL's needs for an interpretive plan began in the fall of 2018. Background research using HSL's website, past exhibit plans, and published histories has been ongoing. The most valuable information was gained through a four-day visit to Saranac Lake in mid-July 2019 which included the following:

- Individual and group discussions with staff members
- Conversation at a Board Meeting about exhibit goals and content
- Meeting with local history experts to hear their exhibit priorities
- Community meeting for input on exhibit topics and museum marketing
- Educators' Meeting to discuss program and exhibit topics as well as the specific needs of school groups
- Time in the current exhibits, watching multimedia programs, and visiting walking tour locations

- Shadowing a summer camp visit to the Saranac Laboratory Museum
- Visits to the Adirondack Experience and Six Nations Indian Museum

### **Goals for the Interpretive Plan:**

- Suggest solutions for wayfinding and visitor movement on the campus
- Plan traffic flow through public exhibit spaces at the Trudeau Building and the Saranac Laboratory
- Identify the primary interpretive theme and sub-themes that can guide future exhibit planning
- Recommend potential exhibit elements that could be used to explore these themes

## **Part 2: Thematic Approach**

A number of potential subtopics or storylines came up during the four days of on-site discussion. These have been used to craft the central theme or “big idea” that frames future interpretive efforts. Visitors may never see this statement but if interpretive elements connect well with this theme, visitors should leave the HSL campus with some version of this idea in their minds.

**Central Theme:** The natural environment of the Adirondacks has shaped the lifeways, culture, and economy of residents in the Saranac Lake region.

### **Primary Sub-themes and Accompanying Possible Topics**

*Special note: What follows is a preliminary and incomplete list that is not presented in fully chronological order. Some themes and topics are more developed than others at this point, but this will change with the next level of planning. The amount of space dedicated to each sub-theme and topic, and the manner in which topics will be developed, will be fleshed out in the next phase of exhibit planning.*

- The Adirondacks have been the homeland of Iroquoian and Algonquian peoples for millennia. They have used their traditional knowledge and skills to take advantage of new opportunities for living and working in the region.
  - The Native American residents of the Adirondacks adapted their traditional knowledge and skills, and some become guides and woodsmen for wilderness recreation.
  - Traditional Native crafts offered opportunities for women and their families to participate in the tourist economy and the new industries that extracted resources from the mountains.
  - Place names throughout the region reflect the presence and history of indigenous peoples.
- The mountainous terrain and natural resources of the Adirondacks shaped the lifeways of the region’s indigenous and Euro-American residents. Each of the hamlets and lake

communities of the Saranac Lake region were uniquely shaped by their own particular connection to the natural environment.

- The rich natural resources of the Adirondacks were the basis of an economy based on extraction of resources, such as furs, timber, and — in the greater Adirondack region — minerals.
  - The logging industry's timber harvest altered the landscape by opening areas for farming and settlement, including in Saranac Lake.
  - The railroad's expansion into the region played a significant role in the economic development of the region, making natural resources easier to extract, and making access to the region easier for tourists and health seekers.
  - The mountains, river, and lakes drew settlement to Saranac Lake and shaped the layout of the community.
  - The extreme climate of the Adirondack region shaped the lives of residents and visitors.
  - A challenging environment requires hardy residents. Strong families (some of whom are centennial families) became the backbone of the region's communities.
  - The waterways of the Adirondacks were the early transportation routes. These waterways changed significantly with logging and damming.
  - By the 1840s the excellent hunting and fishing opportunities and beauty of the Adirondacks led to growth in wilderness tourism that would shape communities and the economy of the region.
  - Desire to escape the cities and the beauty and recreational opportunities in the Adirondacks drew tourists to the region. Area hotels sprung up to serve them.
  - Many Adirondack residents in the late 1800s worked in early recreation tourism industries, as wilderness guides and hotel operators.
  - A large number of wealthy summer residents built "great camps." Some became important patrons supporting the cure industry.
  - Many of the great camp owners were members of the families that built industrial America — the Rockefellers, DuPonts, Whitneys, etc.
  - Overt anti-semitism before and after the turn of the century meant that Jews were excluded from many resorts, most notably at the Lake Placid Club. In reaction, a number of Jewish families built Great Camps and cottages on the Saranac Lakes.
  - European immigrant workers and French Canadians came to the Adirondacks for logging jobs, to build the railroad, Great Camps, hotels, and tuberculosis sanatoria.
- Dr. Trudeau's sanatorium and his research laboratory drew thousands of TB patients, enlarged the community of Saranac Lake and stimulated an economy built around the care of invalids in the Saranac Lake region. The tuberculosis industry significantly impacted the built environment of the Saranac Lake region.

- Opportunities for outdoor recreation and the health benefits of this lifestyle drew visitors, including Dr. Edward L. Trudeau, whose improved health would ultimately spark the tuberculosis cure industry in the Saranac Lake region.
- Highly contagious and lacking a known cure, tuberculosis was a significant public health issue in the 19<sup>th</sup> century and remains a threat today. Saranac Lake was a leader in sanitation and public health measures.
- Saranac Lake was a center for patient care. Prominent physicians from around the world set up medical practice in the village and became important leaders in the community.
- Trudeau's sanatorium was established as the first successful sanatorium for TB treatment in the country. It grew and prospered over 70 years, serving as an experimental and evolutionary model of patient care.
- Dr. Trudeau's Saranac Laboratory made Saranac Lake an international center for TB and scientific research that has continued into the 21<sup>st</sup> century at the Trudeau Institute.
- From the 1920s through the 1960s, the laboratory became a center for research into mining-related disease. The first studies to show a connection between asbestos and cancer were performed at the Saranac Laboratory.
- The scientific method and resources used in Dr. Trudeau's research remain relevant for modern medical research. Trudeau's Rabbit Island study serves as a demonstration of the scientific method and his research process.
- The experience of Dr. Trudeau, his daughter, and his family are representative of the experience of many TB patients and their families.
- Saranac Lake's reputation for curing tuberculosis drew an ethnically and economically diverse population of patients from around the world, including famous people from all occupations, whose presence shaped the personality of the community and region.
- Saranac Lake's present reputation as an arts community is rooted in its history as a TB cure community that drew health seekers from many artistic disciplines. These artists taught and supported the artistic pursuits of patients and residents through a vibrant occupational therapy program and the Study and Craft Guild.
- Saranac's cure industry offered opportunities for women entrepreneurs who owned and/or managed cure cottages, worked as nurses, and created related businesses.
- Saranac Lake developed a particularly robust variety of sports and activities, especially the winter carnival and the ice palace. These activities offered entertainment to patients and residents and drew the community together in common endeavors.
- Not just Saranac Lake proper, but the entire region became home to TB sanatoria and to serve TB patients.

- Trudeau’s Saranac Laboratory, designed by Aspinwall was the first purpose-built TB research facility in the United States and its design reflects the late 19<sup>th</sup> century understanding of scientific knowledge, hygiene, fire-proof construction, and medical research within the confines of the era’s available technology.
- Dr. Trudeau’s “fresh air cure” led to the development of the cure cottage and the concept of a cure porch, shaping the architectural landscape of Saranac Lake and its environs.
- The Trudeau building features two different types of cure porches that are representative of those incorporated in many other Saranac Lake homes.
- Architectural features in the Trudeau Building are representative of late 19<sup>th</sup> century domestic architecture for well-to-do families.
- The built environment of downtown Saranac Lake reflects the booming TB industry. Many local businesses prospered by catering to TB patients. Many locals worked in the industry, such as tray boys and girls.

### **Additional Topics**

As a local history institution, HSL may want to link the local experience to some of the larger events of American history. A number of these topics came up during community meetings in July. So that these ideas are not lost, a few of the more fruitful ones are listed here. These topics may be suitable for programs or for temporary exhibits.

- World Wars, Vietnam, and immigration are just a few of the other historical events that touched residents in the Saranac Lake region. All of these and more could be suitable topics for special exhibits that connect with local residents.
- The Saranac Lake region consists of numerous hamlets and lake communities, each with their own identity and history. A priority is to make a prominent place in the museum for these narratives. They can be worked into some of the above topics, and presented more in-depth through the large interactive map.
- A temporary exhibit about schoolhouses in the community would be appropriate and a source for community connections throughout the area. The Fresh Air School should be included here.
- Childhood is a common experience that could be used to connect past and present in an exhibit that could be rich with artifacts.
- Churches were a key part of the local community. Other institutions such as fire departments and other civic groups played key roles in community life, and their influence continues today.

## **Part 3: Visitor Experience and the HSL Campus**

On-site conversations in July 2019 fairly uniformly described a new museum campus that would be engaging, thought-provoking, and fun while remaining respectful of the historic buildings. A priority, as articulated through early discussions with the State Historic Preservation Office, is to make sure that exhibits do not overwhelm the historic spaces of either building. Balancing the requirements of 21<sup>st</sup> century media elements and visitor flow with the architectural integrity of the spaces will likely be an ongoing challenge. Changes will need to conform to the Department of the Interior's standards for the treatment of historic properties. All of the recommendations below are suggestions that may need to be adjusted once more information is available about the building as architectural design proceeds.

### **Finding the Entrance**

The first significant change visitors will find at the new campus is that the museum's entry will be moved to the Trudeau Building. At present, visitors arrive via an entrance sidewalk off of Church Street that leads to the Laboratory Museum's front door. The visual cues offered by that entrance and the habits of current visitors may be tough to break initially. One way to manage the arrival experience would be to expand the fence along Church and Main Streets, chaining off and effectively blocking the Lab Museum entrance and the middle driveway. This fence would visually tie the two buildings together, creating the feel of a campus.

Careful site planning will be critical for solving problems of pedestrian, bicycle, and handicap accessibility, parking, landscaping, and wayfinding. In fall of 2019, HSL secured a \$37,000 NY State DEC Smartgrowth grant to support site planning, and the process will be informed by this interpretive plan.

The April 2019 preliminary site plan supports entering the campus by vehicle off of Main Street, a quieter street than Church Street. The middle Church Street driveway could be eliminated and the fence extended across it or gated. It would be ideal if school buses could pull into the Main Street entrance, unload, and then exit onto Church Street. This option provides a safe place for children to exit the bus near the Trudeau Building entrance.

Currently, the primary parking spaces are behind and beside the buildings and these may be accessed by pulling in off of Main or Church Streets. Visitors may also park in the neighborhood. Regardless of where they park, visitors are going to need guidance in finding their way to the museum's new entrance on Main Street.

Outdoor reading rail signage placed along the fence could serve two purposes: directing visitors to the correct entrance on Main Street and providing interpretation about the significance of the site and its buildings. The HSL campus is part of the Church Street historic district. It sits directly across from the Church of St. Luke the Beloved Physician on Church Street and across from the Saranac Lake Free Library on Main Street. The homes of Dr. Brown, Dr. Baldwin and Dr.

Lea are also in the historic district. These buildings have associations with Dr. Trudeau that could be referenced in outdoor signage. This signage could identify the campus buildings and explore the significance of the site, particularly for visitors who happen by when the buildings are not open. Note that below signage examples are problematic in our climate due to the snowy season.

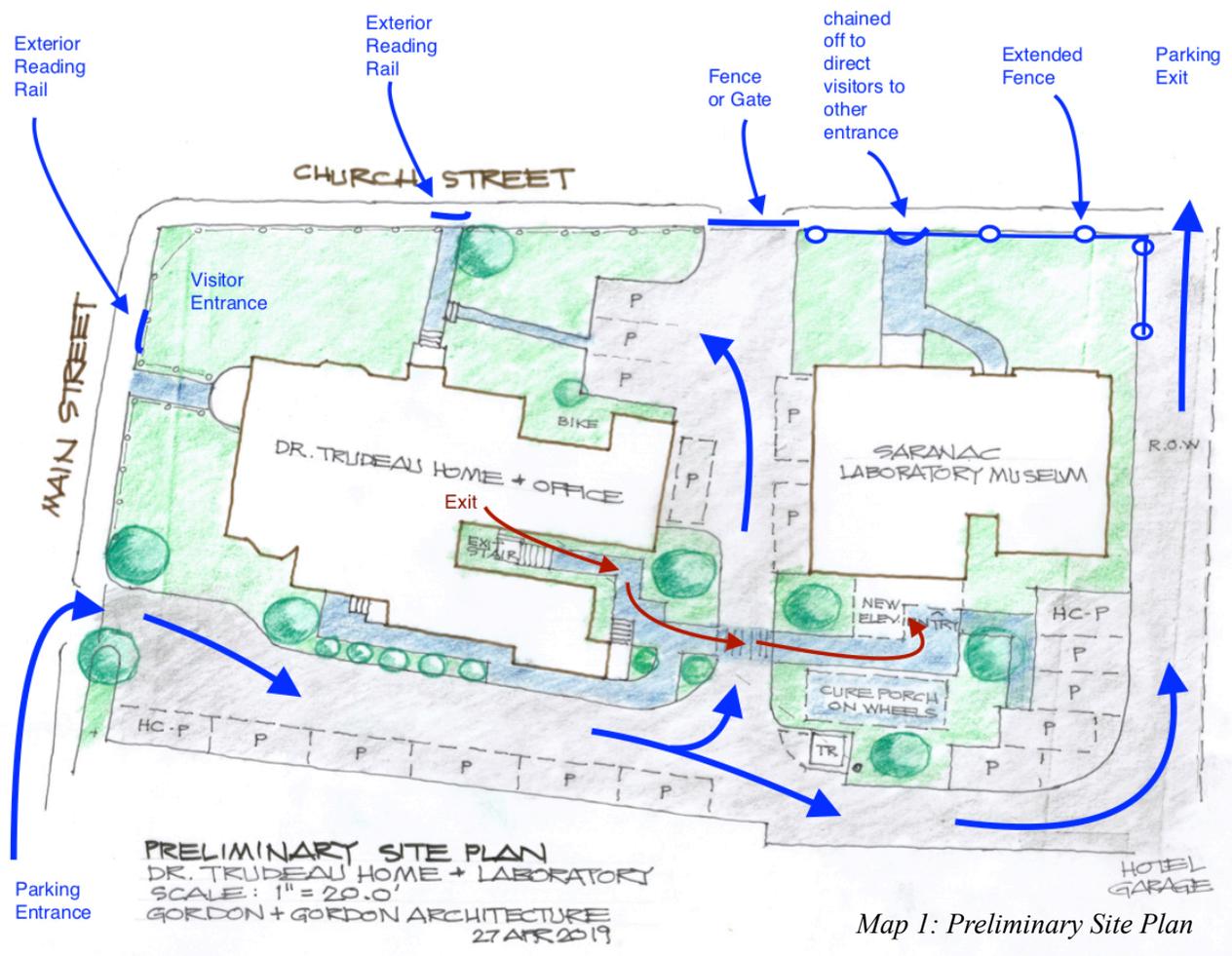
Given the campus layout, additional signage for wayfinding will be essential to guide visitors along the sidewalk to the museum entrance, from the parking areas to the entrance, and between the buildings. A simple solution would be to incorporate the HSL logo into small signposts with directional arrows.



*Outdoor reading rail. These are typically phenolic resin for durability. The mounting system can be ordered off-the-shelf for cost savings.*

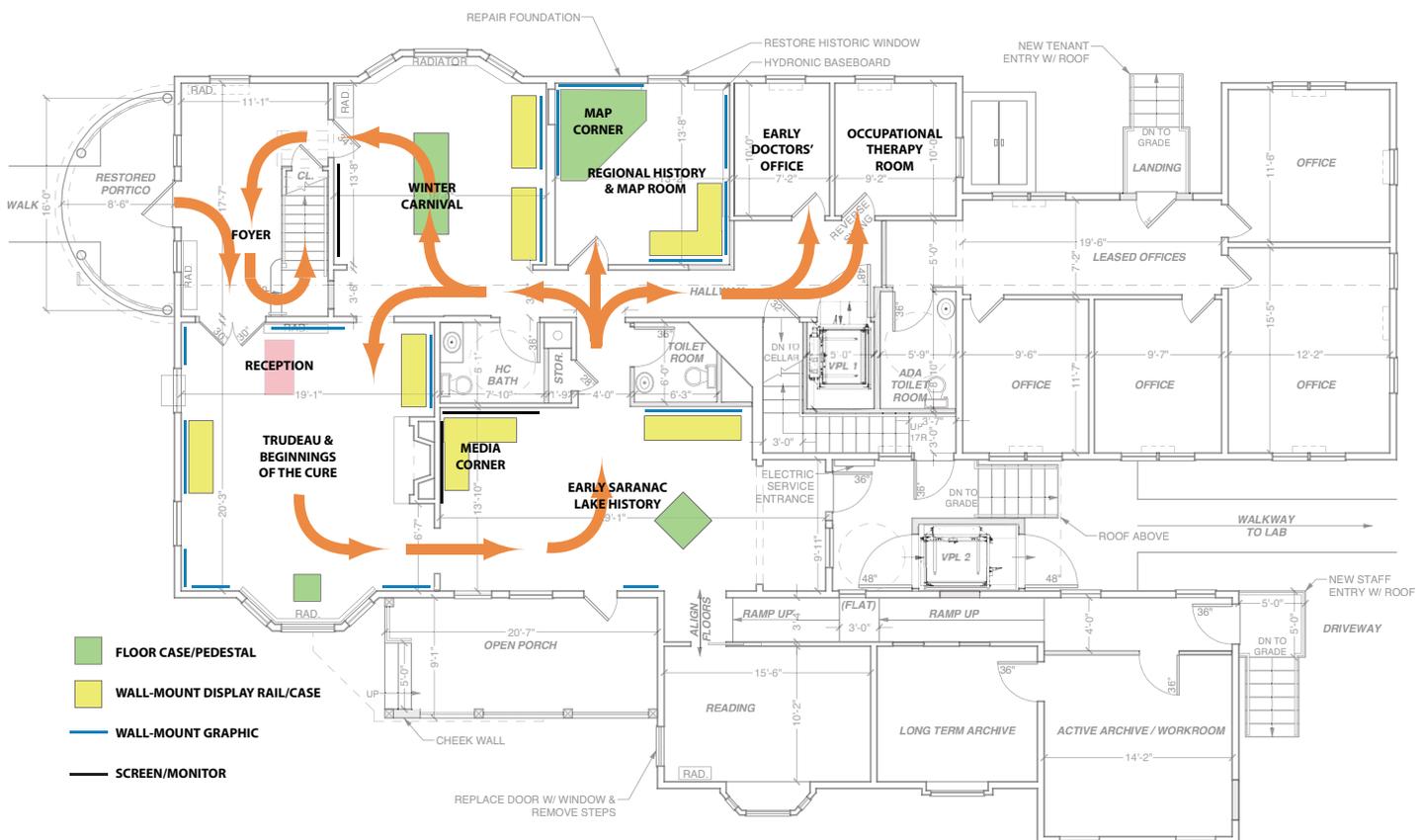
*Custom-designed exterior reading rail.*

### Navigating Between the Buildings



One of the changes that will occur in both buildings is that elevators or lifts need to be added for accessibility. In both cases these elevators are being planned at the back of the buildings with a short walk between these entrances. For the visitor, this means entering through the front door of the Trudeau Building, exploring the exhibit spaces there, exiting through the back of the building, and walking to the new entrance behind the Saranac Laboratory Building. Entering through the rear of the laboratory building is not ideal in terms of the building's presentation to the public, however, avoiding the steep front stone steps is a safety priority, and using the rear entrance allows for one handicap accessible route for all visitors. If it is possible to cover the walkway between the two buildings, that would reinforce the appropriate route and add visual presence to that walkway. Guideposts should also be placed here and along the routes from the parking areas to the front. The concrete slab and wall fragments behind the laboratory (where the animal house used to be) should be preserved to interpret the history of animal research at the laboratory. (See Map 1: Preliminary Site Plan)

### Traffic Flow inside the Buildings: Trudeau Building, First Floor



Map 2: First Floor Plan

Having recently acquired the Trudeau Building, HSL and its architect are still investigating the building to determine the original floor plan, location of doors, windows, and hallways, etc. Over the years, the building was significantly expanded and altered. If this were a modern building, it would be easier to make the decision to place doorways where they will work best for visitor traffic flow. The historic nature of the Trudeau Building means that compromises to maintain the integrity of the structure are necessary. So for now, the traffic patterns proposed in this document are best case scenarios until better information becomes available.

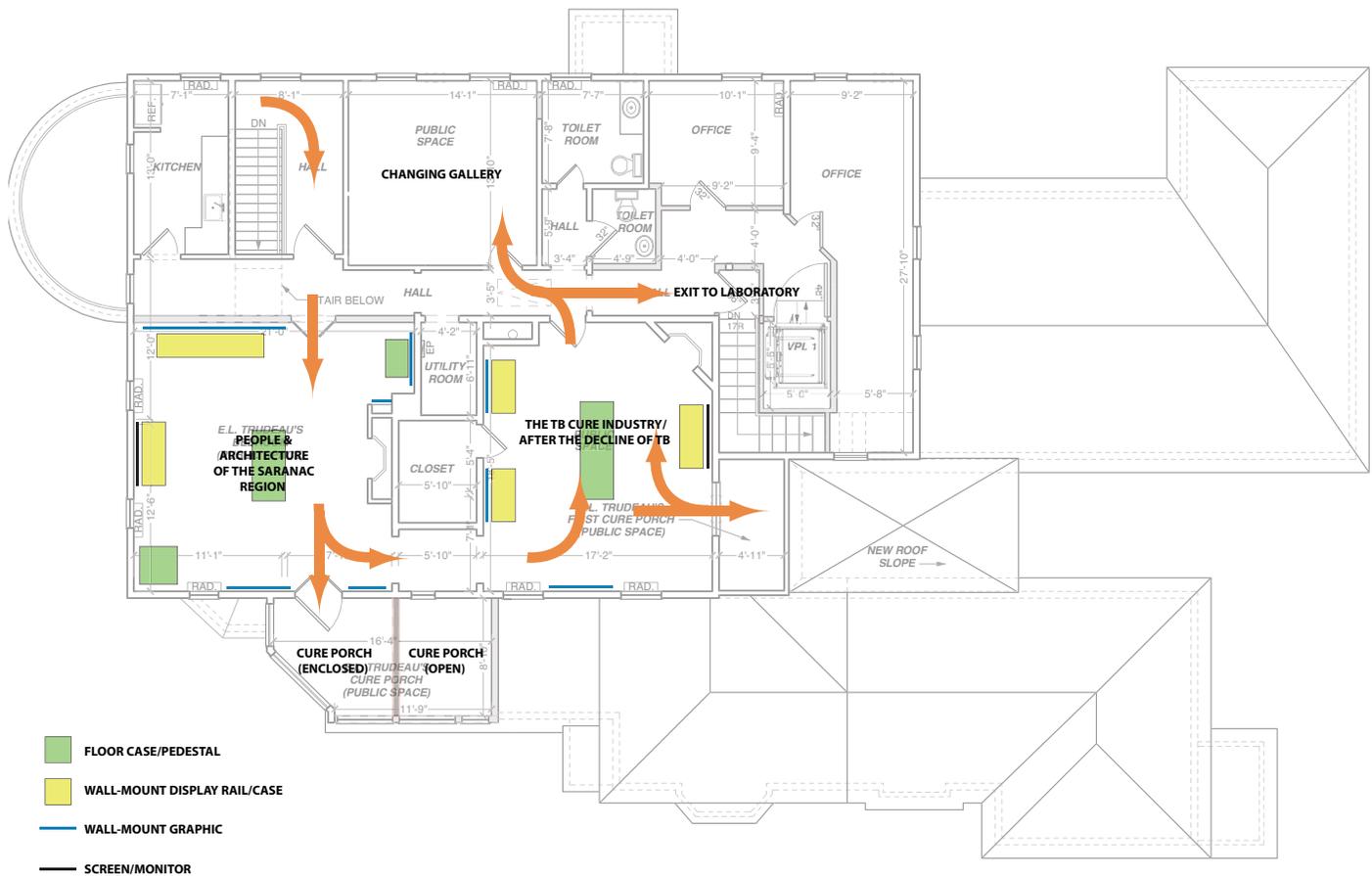
Visitors entering the front door of the Trudeau Building will step into the home's foyer. While not a large space, there is room for a welcoming message, site brochures, guest book, and a staff person. From the foyer, the preferred visitor path is through a doorway to the left of the staircase and into the space that may have been the family's dining room. To encourage visitors in this direction, the French doors into what was the living room should be closed (but not locked) to remove that visual distraction.

Adjustments to the foyer will be necessary for visitor comfort and to accommodate school groups. Coat racks or hooks should be added in the foyer. School groups often travel with lunches or backpacks that need to be stowed. Storing bins underneath the stairway would be a convenient location for these items.

The former dining room space could serve as an exhibit orientation and introductory space to define the primary narratives covered by exhibits on the HSL's campus. From this room, visitors could move into the media room for an introductory film or across the hall into an exhibit space in the home's former living room. This living room exhibit space could hold a map of the Adirondack region that visitors could explore as they discover connections between the area's environmental history and cultural and economic outcomes. Careful planning will be necessary to create and install this exhibit element without overwhelming the historic character and feeling of the space. It may be necessary to move this element to another more appropriate space in the building. The two exhibit spaces behind the fireplace wall of the living room would also be available to explore local history topics.

From this side of the building visitors can also access the research library or they can return to the hallway and take the stairs or elevator (to be planned) up to the second floor exhibit spaces. Bathrooms are also available off of the hallway. Visitors also have the option of exiting out the back of the building and over to the Saranac Laboratory Museum.

## Traffic Flow inside the Buildings: Trudeau Building, Second Floor



Map 3: Second Floor Plan

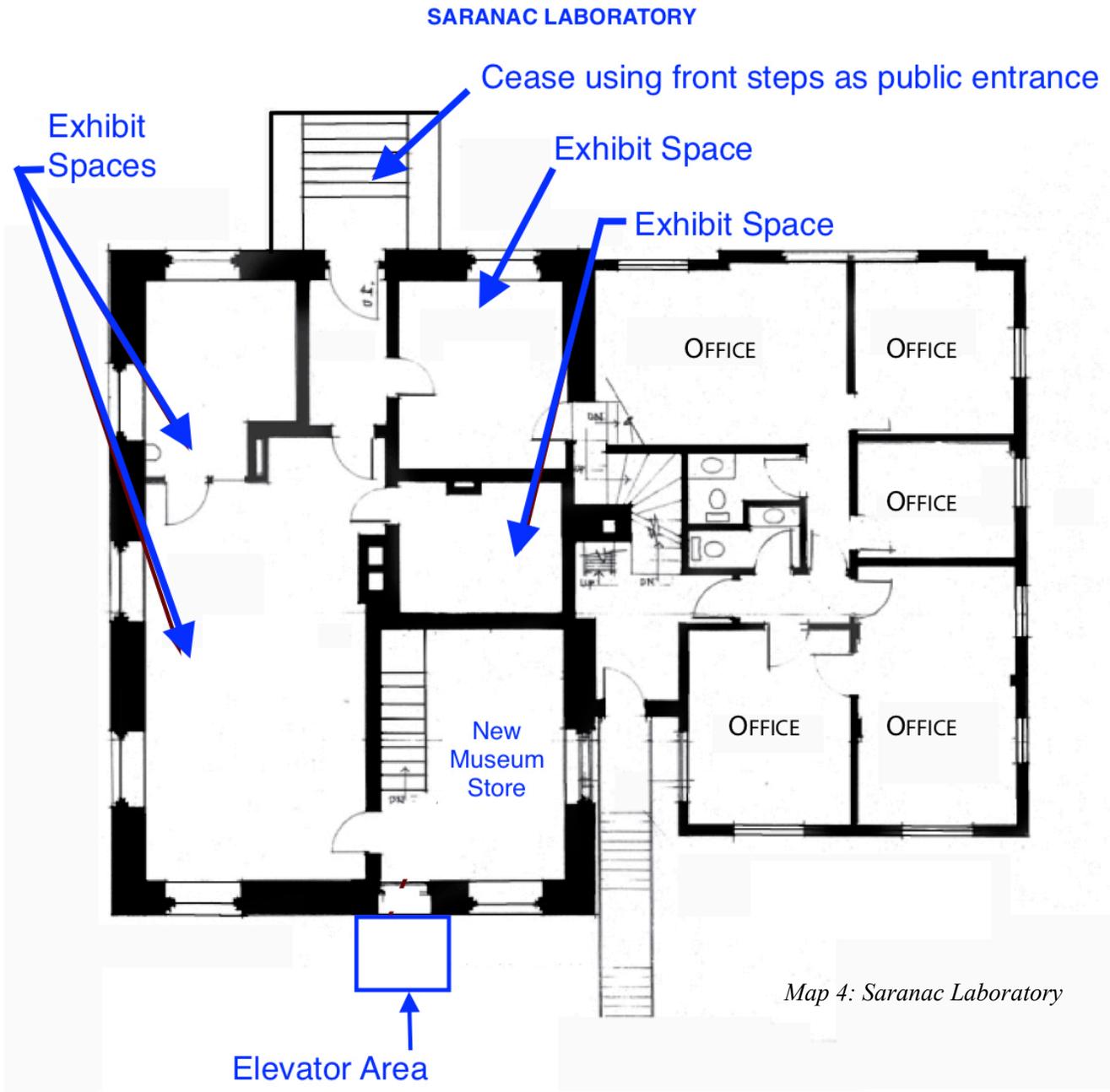
If visitors use the stairway/elevator, they will emerge onto the upstairs landing. At this point they could enter an exhibit space that explores how the cure industry shaped the Village of Saranac Lake and the larger region. They could then cross the hall into one of the original Trudeau family bedrooms to learn more about the Trudeau family's history and experience in the region. A window in this room looks onto Dr. Trudeau's first cure porch, which should be furnished and interpreted.

Heading back toward the front of the house, visitors would be able to enter a much larger cure porch. Exhibits here and in the adjacent space could explore the rise of the cure porch design and cure cottages, the experience of TB patients, and the role of women entrepreneurs in operating cure businesses. A small room at the front corner of the house (currently a kitchen) could be used for exhibit storage. The larger room on the Church Street side of the building could function as a changing exhibit space featuring local stories from around the Saranac Lake region. Exhibits of this type, along with opening exhibit receptions, could draw in new local audiences and remind

everyone that HSL's reach extends beyond the town's boundaries. This changing exhibit space would have the added advantage of offering all visitors a reason to return regularly to the museum campus. (See Map 2: First Floor Plan and Map 3: Second Floor Plan)

### Traffic Flow and Exhibits at the Saranac Laboratory

Church Street



Map 4: Saranac Laboratory

To get to the Saranac Laboratory Museum visitors will return to the first floor and exit out the rear of the Trudeau Building and enter the Laboratory through a new accessible entrance area. Exactly how this entry will connect with the exhibit spaces on the upper floor is not yet clear. One possibility would have the elevator opening near a new gift shop space created by moving the current shop from the front to the rear of the building. Another option would be to locate the gift shop in the ground floor enclosure that will contain the new elevator and rear entrance to the Saranac Laboratory.

Exhibits in the Saranac Laboratory Museum will focus on the scientific study of TB; other research (industrial diseases) conducted at the site; modern issues in TB including antibiotic resistance; the people who staffed the laboratory; and the history of the Trudeau School of tuberculosis. From the gift shop visitors would enter Trudeau's laboratory. This leaves the former media room and the former gift shop/office as new exhibit spaces. HSL knows of a local collection of pharmacy artifacts that could be interpreted in one of the rooms, depending on how much space is needed. Hands-on science or interactive exhibit elements associated with the search for a cure and the scientific method would be another possibility. And finally, the ongoing fight against TB in the 21<sup>st</sup> century is a topic that deserves interpretive space.

The John Black Room will remain available as a meeting space on the lower level beside the laboratory. It has been used as a temporary exhibit space and could continue to fulfill that role, but the final decision on that space is pending. Another option would return the bookshelves to the cabinets and furnish the space as a reading room again while retaining a small number of interpretive cases. (See Map 4: Saranac Laboratory) A natural use of the exhibit cases would be to present the stories of some of the people who worked as scientists in the building. As a beautifully designed, historic space that is the largest room in the two facilities, the John Black Room is an important space that deserves careful planning and consideration in the next phase of planning.

## **Part 4: Possible Interpretive Experiences**

Within approximately one year, HSL will embark on a full exhibit planning process. By that time, any architectural questions about the Trudeau Building are likely to be resolved and plans for the elevator and rear exit should be complete. Below are a few suggestions for exhibit elements or approaches that might be integrated into the final exhibit plan. This is by no means a complete list; it reflects the various conversations that took place in July and this planner's background as an exhibit developer.

### **Introductory Film**

HSL currently has an introductory film that was commissioned more than 20 years ago and is showing its age. If the budget can support a refreshed film written for a multi-generational audi-

ence, it would be money well spent. The current film utilizes historic photos, memories, and voices from the past in a very effective way that should not be lost. A new media production could incorporate narratives acquired through the oral history project and would need to incorporate a wider view of the region's history, including the Native American experience.

### **TB and Medical Science**

One of the elements missing in the current Laboratory Museum, and one that was mentioned several times in July, is the lack of science-based interactive opportunities. These will be essential for the new exhibit installation. A quick and easy place to begin would be to purchase a child-friendly microscope placed at a height appropriate for children. Opportunities to compare the tuberculosis bacillus with other common germs could occur using this microscope. Another interactive option might be a simple flip or slider interactive allowing visitors to compare the germs from the common cold, chicken pox, measles, strep throat, etc.



*Child-friendly microscope with a viewing area large enough for several visitors to see at once.*

### **The Architectural Story**

Interpretation in the Saranac Laboratory Museum currently includes simple but informative signage calling the visitor's attention to specific architectural design and building materials appropriate for a research lab of that era, for example the extra-large windows for an era when artificial lighting was not yet available indoors in the village.

This interpretive approach should be extended to the Trudeau Building and offers a way to provide layers of information in each gallery. One option for interpreting the architecture would be to create a repeating element visitors would find in each room. This exhibit element could be as simple as a reading rail with a flipbook of historic



images. Another alternative would be an iPad or tablet. The tablet could interpret the room while also providing historic photos that show how the space appeared during Trudeau's time. This tablet could also incorporate audio recordings or music to further set the stage.

*Simple exhibit pedestal that could hold an iPad or lift flap to interpret the room's architecture.*

## Mapping Our Stories

A map-based exhibit element offers another way to orient visitors to Saranac Lake's regional history and the interplay between the geographic landscape and the people who chose to live and work here. A topographic map of the greater Saranac Lake region would form the base layer for this interactive element. Visitor interaction would identify the location of Native American communities, early Euro-American settlements, logging camps, mines, lumber and flour mills, hotels, TB sanatoriums, Great Camps, etc. Info stations around the perimeter of the room could allow visitors to take a deeper dive into any of these storylines.

There are higher and lower tech ways to build this interactive visitor experience. The higher tech option would be to project locations and features onto a 3-D topographic map. Four touch screens around the map could include captioned or narrated slide shows or short films on major themes, for example, logging in the Saranac Lake region. Extensive content already available on the wiki website could be condensed and re-formatted for the touchscreens, allowing visitors to zoom in on quadrants of the map to explore local stories of interest.



*Projected map on a 3-D surface. (Kluane Park Visitor Centre, Yukon, Canada)*

A lower tech version of this exhibit element would replace the four touchscreens with reading rails and use a printed 3-D topographic map with push-button lights to identify features of interest. Other than budget, one challenge for this exhibit element is where to place it so that this very high tech feature doesn't compete with its historic architectural setting. Projectors would need to be mounted in the ceiling, light control would be necessary, and the placement of the touchscreens could be problematic in a room filled with windows, fireplace, historic trim work, etc. Before moving this element further, it would be wise to bring in a multimedia designer for a discussion to see what space would work best to accomplish these goals.

### **The Business of the Cure**

An exhibit element on the second floor of the Trudeau Building could interpret the business landscape and cure industry. Saranac Lake had all the typical businesses of a small town of its size. However, there were unique features in the town's business landscape because of the large number of patients in town. Many local dairies, laundries, pharmacies, and furriers catered to TB patients. In addition, the tremendous growth in the downtown business landscape occurred in a very short period of time, during the height of the cure industry era. A streetscape interactive would allow visitors to explore the town's architectural landscape (including buildings that have vanished) and discover the town's businesses and their connection to the cure industry.

At the heart of this exhibit element would sit a 3-D streetscape. Imagine streets bordered by rows of what could simply be wooden blocks with printed facades to match historic buildings. Some of these buildings could be picked up and placed on a code reader. The code would activate a screen with historic photos, information about the business, and a re-enacted first-person account, if available. For example, if a visitor picked up the Gibney's Market building and set it on the code reader they would learn that Dr. Trudeau's cure protocol required an ample and healthy diet. Markets like Gibney's provided fresh meat for the cure cottages and Great Camps in the area. Or, picking up the Berkeley House building and placing it on the reader would generate a photo of that building and information about guest houses that served invalids seeking the cure in Saranac Lake. (It should be noted that this exhibit element would be difficult to implement due to the man changes that downtown buildings went through over time architecturally and in terms of use.)



*Store façade for Gibney's that could be printed onto a custom-cut block.*

## **Faces of the Cure**

One suggestion that came up during the community meeting was to assign visitors an identity for the duration of their visit. By assigning visitors identities taken from all aspects of the cure community, for example: a doctor, patients, cure cottage operator, nurse, minister, railroad depot employee, business owners from downtown, or a dairy farmer, visitors would make a personal connection and leave with the understanding that the cure industry touched nearly every aspect of community life and impacted people of all ages, ethnicities, occupations, and income levels.

This exhibit element could function in several different ways depending on budget and space resources. Every visitor would receive a card with a photo, name, age, and place of residence. The low tech version of this element would have staff instruct visitors when they receive their cards that they should look throughout the two buildings to find the person on the card. This version requires the integration of every identity into the exhibit.

Another option would be to create an installation of framed photos grouped together in one of the second floor galleries in the Trudeau Building. Visitors would then scan their cards, the framed photo would be illuminated, and a brief audio clip would identify the person on the card and their role. A lower tech version of this installation could organize all of the identities in a flipbook that visitors could page through to locate their assigned identity.

## **Final Thought on Exhibits**

The best exhibits provoke questions and inspire visitors to look for more information—to attend a museum program, to buy a book, to go to the library, to visit another historic site, or to hit the Web. The best exhibits also meet the needs of a variety of museum goers and use the various interpretive approaches of visual, auditory, and kinetic learners. HSL has a firm foundation in the exhibits and programs it currently offers. When staff begin exhibit planning, this interpretive plan should inform that process.



*Wall graphic and reading rail integrated into one unit with the addition of a simple lift interactive. Lifting the handle answers a question or exposes information. This type of interactive is relatively simple to build and cost-effective.*

## Part 5: Next Steps

- Decide how much exhibit design, research, writing, and fabrication the staff will take on and how much should be outsourced
- Determine a budget for interior and exterior exhibits and signage
- Form an exhibit committee of relevant staff and stakeholders, including local history experts and educators
- Make a detailed Request for Proposals (RFP) to solicit exhibit bids
- Once a design is chosen, additional RFPs may be necessary for specific exhibit elements, i.e. multimedia; HSL likely will want to compare bids for these as well to keep costs down
- Consider renaming the museum campus

### Scheduling

Until more questions have been answered about the building, the landscape plan, parking, and the elevators, the interpretive plan can sit for a time while fundraising and these other tasks occur. In general, one should expect to spend 12-18 months on the exhibit development and design process, including start-up meetings, concept design, and final design. Depending on the complexity of the design, allow another 6-12 months for graphic design, CAD design, fabrication, and another 4-6 weeks for installation. It's possible to accelerate this schedule, but that typically requires more staff time, more money, and more stress. Exhibits with less interactivity can be completed more quickly.

### Some Thoughts on Budgeting

There can be quite a range in pricing for exhibits. Factors include how much of the work can actually be accomplished in house with staff, how much time staff have to complete these tasks along with their other work, and how complex the exhibit elements will be. Flat, two-dimensional exhibits are the least expensive. Adding interactive elements will increase the costs; adding multimedia interactives, film, or built environments can significantly increase costs.



*Interior reading rail integrated into an exhibit to interpret the dugout canoe artifact and the painted mural backdrop.*

Design, including research and writing, is typically about 20% of an exhibit budget with the remaining 80% for fabrication and installation. When hiring an exhibit company to handle all or the majority of the work, expect to pay around \$225 per sq. ft. for low tech, generally 2-D exhibits. The mid-range price is in the neighborhood of \$350 per sq. ft. and the upper range is \$450 or higher.

The Saranac Laboratory Museum has approximately 1,000 sq. ft. of exhibit space, not including the John Black Room (whose final purpose is undetermined). Working with an exhibit design firm, HSL could expect pricing in the range between \$225,000-450,000 or considerably less if most of the work is done in-house and only the graphic design and fabrication are contracted out. That would be for a 2-D design similar to what currently exists. One option here might be to complete the main lab room and the pharmacy exhibit in-house and contract the interactive science exhibits.

The Trudeau Building has approximately 2,138 sq. ft. of exhibit space. As the new addition to the campus, there is more riding on the exhibits here in terms of generating new interest from visitors. It makes sense to put more of the exhibit budget here, where there is higher potential for the “wow” factor.

Trudeau Building exhibits from an exhibit design and fabrication house could range between \$481,050-962,100. These may seem like huge numbers. There is considerable room here to carve off pieces of the exhibit and contract some out while keeping some in-house. The key element will be having a design firm establish the look and feel, a color palette, and a consistent graphic look across the two buildings. Keep in mind that carving off pieces of the project to other companies also will require significantly more project management by HSL staff.

And finally, a few comments on budgeting for the exhibit element: Mapping Our Stories. Due to staff enthusiasm, this one was used as a test case in budgeting. This element requires more than one contractor to succeed. The software design would typically be one company; the 3-D map another company, plus hardware from another, and then cabinetry to support the exhibit element. The software for the projected images and the four screens is the most expensive aspect of the project. A very preliminary budget would be between \$118,000 and \$180,000 for the finished project. Until the software contractor has a better idea of the content needs and programming required, the numbers have to remain loose. Again, if this idea is under serious consideration, it would be worthwhile to invite a multimedia designer to visit, see the spaces, and offer some suggestions.

### **A New Name and Messaging**

An important issue that will require careful consideration is the name of the expanded museum campus. “Historic Saranac Lake” might be viewed by some as focusing only on the Town of Saranac Lake. On the other hand, it would be wise to include “Historic” in the new name because that would distinguish the new organization and its interpretive center from the other types

of interpretive centers in the area. This is an appropriate time to transition to a new name that implies a local and regional focus. HSL will need to embark on an organizational and museum re-branding initiative led by a professional consultant in the near future.

### **Stakeholder Input**

HSL held a series of meetings with board members, staff, local historians, and stakeholders to review this plan and gather input that informed the final draft. Key questions and comments are recorded below to help guide the next level of planning.

#### Key Questions:

- Which elements will be “permanent” versus changeable?
- Which topics and elements are more likely to be created in collaboration as shared temporary exhibits with neighboring institutions?
- What will be the overall geographical scope of the exhibits?
- How broad and varied will be the topics explored?
- How much of the interpretation will focus on TB history and in which spaces?

#### Key Comments:

- “The architectural integrity of both buildings must be respected. Experiencing the historic spaces should be an essential part of the visitor experience. Exhibits shouldn’t be pushed into spaces in a way that overwhelms the character of the rooms.”
- “HSL’s focus should expand to be more regional. The museum should touch on more history than just that within the school district.”
- “Contextualizing the history of the Saranac Lake area within the larger story of the Adirondack Park will enrich the exhibits in the new museum.”
- “Saranac Lake’s tuberculosis history is of international importance. HSL should utilize the new space to further interpret this story. A balance must be struck between the TB history and the desire to tell a broader regional history, being careful not to dilute the story of Trudeau and TB.”
- “It is essential that the proposed linkage between the house and the lab be a part of the plan. The complex should be one, not two, museums.”
- “Exhibits should be very selective, focusing on specific topics that may have been ignored in other venues, especially those with high interest to people who want to know more about regional history.”
- “The space is too small to be all things to all people so HOW this rich history will be presented will make or break it. Using very specific events or places as a lead-in to the broader topics that could be self-directed on 21st century media could do that.”

## **Conclusion**

These are exciting times for HSL's staff and board members. It can also be a little overwhelming or daunting to think all of the tasks and funding elements that need to line up for the finished product. Fortunately, HSL has an excellent track record, a strong staff, and a supportive community to draw upon. HSL will find this next journey very rewarding and in the end the challenges will be well worth the additional effort.