

SHERMAN'S ADIRONDACK ARTS CENTER
AT CAROGA LAKE
An Arts and Letters Center

George and Ruth Abdella have given Caroga Lake a legacy from its past with the gift of Sherman's to the town. What a generous gift to our little community and huge responsibility for us to carry forward. I am sure the Caroga Chamber of Commerce will give great thought into what the highest and best use will be for the Sherman's facility as great stewards of the Abdella's incredible gift. However, we as citizens and taxpayers of Caroga Lake have a responsibility to share our vision for this important gift. Here is one suggestion for its use.

The Berkshires have Tanglewood, Cooperstown has Glimmerglass, Saratoga has Yaddo and now it's time for Caroga Lake to have Sherman's Adirondack Arts Center to serve as a vacation destination for those interested in pursuing their interests in music and writing and other areas of fine arts.

The summer residents of Caroga Lake are teeming with talent that could be shared with the local residents as well as those from the nearby surrounding communities of Gloversville, Johnstown, and Canajoharie, not to mention the larger metropolitan areas of Saratoga Springs, Albany and New York City. Under the umbrella of the Sherman's Adirondack Arts Center the possibilities of what can happen there are endless. Here are some suggestions to consider:

Project: Sherman's Adirondack Music Camp

Caroga Lake serves as the summer residence of award-winning Lydia Simon Feazell who has more than 35 years of teaching orchestra to middle and high school students. For the last several summers years she has served as the co-director of the Coda Mountain Music Camp in Fayetteville, West Virginia. The Sherman's Adirondack Music Camp could be modeled after this highly successful program of the Coda Mountain Academy of Music. The goal would be to provide a high caliber musical opportunity and training for students through a multi-leveled summer music program. This program would be a multi-track day camp option for young musicians ages 5-18. Half-day classes and group activities culminate with a concert at the end of the week. Students who have never played a musical instrument have an opportunity to study ukulele, guitar, singing or rhythm instruments. Those who play stringed instruments learn to "fiddle" Suzuki pieces. More advanced string players experience small chamber groups with coaching. Music theory games, Eurhythmics and mini-concerts would be exciting components of the program.

Sherman's Adirondack Music Camp has fairly simple needs and could be implemented without great modification to the Sherman's facilities.

Faculty can be made up of local music teachers with guest musicians from the New England area and Glimmerglass as well.

Project: Writing Retreat Center

Caroga Lake also serves as the summer residence of at least one award-winning author. With proper leadership, Sherman's could offer first time writers and experienced practitioners retreats in the practice of writing. Great American writers like Ralph Waldo Emerson and Henry David Thoreau got much of their inspiration from the Adirondack lakes. Sherman's offers a beautiful setting for writers young and old to convene and provide a structure to hold each writer accountable and to write and practice without judgment. The peacefulness of Caroga Lake and the grounds of Sherman's are sure to help each writer excavate his/her mind and to write without distraction.

Due to the proximity to Albany, Saratoga and New York City, guest authors and instructors could be brought in to lead sessions and for readings of their works.

Project: Craft Center

When music camps and writing retreats are not going on, the large wide-open spaces of Sherman's main building offers an excellent venue for quilting fairs and workshops. Quilters have a zealous passion for what they do and asking them to get together, show their works to each other, sell their works to the community and bringing in local suppliers to the quilting community to show their wares would generate business to the Caroga Lake community. Many quilters and quilting vendors are scattered throughout the New York area. Making a trip to Sherman's Adirondack Quilting Bee and Show would allow for this group of people to share their craft without having to travel to large and crowded cities. This would be an excellent opportunity to partner with the Adirondack Museum and its clientele.

Similar events could be held for painters and photographers.

Project: Adirondack Store

Caroga Lake also lacks shopping that carries Adirondack furniture and accessories to make the camps the most authentic to the region that they can be. There are many artisans in the region and having a venue to display and sell these products would bring at least a seasonal income to the town of Caroga Lake. Lake Placid has many of these type stores, but none exist in the southern Adirondack Park. Perhaps a seasonal partnership with at least one of these vendors would help to make Caroga Lake a tourist destination as they travel through the Adirondack Park.

Project: Caroga Lake Coffee and Ice Cream Bar

With all of the activity at the Sherman's Adirondack Arts Center people are going to be hungry and thirsty, providing an excellent opportunity for a fun food facility. Revitalizing the old ice cream stand into a coffee and ice cream bar and adding artistically painted picnic tables are sure to become the center gathering spot for the Caroga Lake community. Add free WiFi and the hub of activity is complete. This facility could remain available in the winter as a warming house for ice fishermen, car racers and snowmobilers, thus offering more job opportunities to local full-time residents. Plus, it could add the feature of waterside service, where pulling up to the dock could afford you the pleasure of an ice cream cart or soda cart vendor to greet your needs. It might be possible to bring in a brand name vendor as a partner i.e. Starbucks to lend credibility to the endeavor. (The closest Starbucks is in Amsterdam.)

Project: Sherman's Adirondack Art of Food Eatery

Many restaurants have come and gone at Caroga Lake in recent years largely due to the fact that they cater only to the locals and are not really destination locations. However, people are willing to travel to eat better than average food. We have traveled to Lanzi's on the Lake, the Beardslee Castle in Little Falls, and the Blue Fish Grill in Cooperstown to name a few. Having a summer only restaurant for a different dining experience would draw more people to the area and boost its economic outlook. It may be difficult to find someone who wanted to open a summer only restaurant, but that person may be out there with a little advertising. However, another idea would be to make it a summer restaurant internship program for students in restaurant management and schools of cooking. Reaching out to colleges with majors in the programs may garner a professor who would love to spend the summer in the Adirondacks with students who apply to his internship program. Proceeds from the restaurant would strictly go to this program and the town of Caroga Lake and it would operate under the non-profit status of the university partner and Caroga Lake. This type of

co-op program would lead to all kinds of publicity a feature stories in newspapers and magazines across the country.

Project: Miniature Golf Course

A wonderful outdoor activity for kids and families. The closest one to Caroga Lake is at Pine Lake. Pine Lake has shown how durable the golf courses can be and easy to revitalize the next summer season.

Summary:

There are a couple of reasons to pursue Sherman's as an art center over an amusement park, although I do think the carousel is one feature that should be reopened as part of the arts center. It is a huge part of the heritage of Caroga Lake. These reasons are as follows:

1. Amusement parks only serve a small sector of the community and do not create many jobs or educational opportunities. An arts center will offer something for everyone either to observe or participate in. Events would change constantly, thus drawing in different groups of people with a constant flow of vacationers. It could be a venue for groups to rent out to provide their own events or performances too.
2. An arts center creates the opportunity for Caroga Lake to become a destination rather than a pass through as it has been in recent years. It would bring back the viability and vitality that Caroga Lake once had.

A center as described above would touch many lives in many different ways. Also, it gives it a great opportunity to run many of these programs as nonprofit entities that would qualify them for grants from foundations, corporations or individuals who want to see the glory of Sherman's return as an important destination in the Adirondack park. It also offers the opportunity to partner with other non-profit entities like the Adirondack Museum and state and national universities. If there are programs that draw visitors to the community, then people will need places to stay. This would make vacation home rentals more viable and bring more business to the ones that already exist like Vrooman's and the Nick Stoner Inn. This gift from the Abdellas allows Caroga Lake an exciting opportunity to revitalize our town and to think bigger. Let us put our heads together and bring back Sherman's, not necessarily as the amusement park it once was, but as a combination of honoring its past and being relevant to the future.

Judy Simon