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Campaign will focus on funding for structural repairs

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KENNEBUNK — On the verge of celebrating its 70th anniversary, the Brick Store Museum recently accepted the initial donation toward a major renovation campaign.

The \$100,000 gift from Kennebunk Savings Bank is the first donation in a \$1.5 million capital campaign, the museum's first such undertaking in more than a decade.

On the outside, the four Main Street buildings, built

between 1810 and 1860 and located in Kennebunk's National Register Historic District, look to be in excellent shape for their age. In the museum's exhibit space, fresh coats of paint and past repairs mask the structure's slow deterioration occurring behind walls and under the wooden floors.

Slanting floors, leaking ceilings and damp basements are prevalent, the result of age taking its toll.

The Brick Store Museum

was founded in 1936 by Edith Cleaves Barry, the granddaughter of William Lord, a Kennebunk icon. Using the second floor of her grandfather's old dry goods store as the initial location for the museum, Barry expanded over time, buying adjacent buildings down the Main Street block.

When the museum's current executive director, Tracy Baetz, was hired two and half years ago, the museum com-

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Brick Store Museum capital campaign



JOHN SWINCOECK/Journal Tribune

A painting stares from out of storage on the second story of the Brick Store Museum in Kennebunk Thursday. The museum is starting a \$1.5 million fund-raising effort to make structural repairs to its 200-year-old building.

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munity had already realized the imminence of a capital campaign, she said. One necessary preamble was the first comprehensive study ever completed of the buildings.

Over several months in 2004, the museum was thoroughly examined and a long list of problems, ranging from foundation and roof repairs, brick work, and support beam replacement, was drawn up.

Some of that structural work could not wait until capital campaign fund-raising had begun; a roof-beam in the main building was replaced around Thanksgiving 2005.

Baetz anticipates the major construction work, which is to be completed in phases, will begin in January 2007 and last a year to 18 months.

Logistically, Baetz said, it makes the most sense to start at one end of the line of buildings and work up Main Street. She said researchers who use the museum will see some disruptions when the archive building undergoes repair work but she does not anticipate any major

or lengthy closures of the museum throughout the process.

"The goal is to keep the museum as functional as possible," she said.

In the time since the 2004 study, Baetz and other museum officials have been ramping up to 2006 and the public kick-off to the campaign.

The public phase is set to begin during the summer at the 66th annual member's meeting, a gala typically held at the museum. This year, however, with the campaign and anniversary closely coinciding, Baetz said the meeting has been moved to the Colony Hotel in Kennebunkport in order to accommodate the expected guests.

Museum officials have prepared a full slate of activities in anticipation of the campaign, attempting to focus as much as possible on the museum's campus.

"All of the activities this year are geared towards raising awareness of the museum, bringing as many people in as possible and having a wide variety of events to build upon everything that has gone

on before," Baetz said.

Museum staff are currently preparing for the opening of two exhibitions: One featuring the history of the museum and another showcasing a collection of rustic furniture and accessories, called Camp Maine.

Baetz said the museum will open up its rarely seen spaces on May Days, the annual festival held in downtown Kennebunk, to give people the opportunity to fully appreciate the need for repairs.

The goal is to have \$1.5 million in pledges collected by the fall, said Baetz, though the campaign and money collection is to last three years.

She noted that approximately half of the \$1.5 million will go towards the museum's endowment fund, integral to sustaining the operations of the museum and eventually leading to the hiring of another full-time staff person.

"The goal is to fortify the building in every which way," she said.

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