

YORK COUNTY COAST STAR

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Brick Store gears up for rehab

"We consider the buildings themselves to be part of our collection, and we want to be good stewards."

Tracy Baetz
Brick Store Museum
executive director

By Joshua Bodwell
Staff Writer

KENNEBUNK — Rolling full bore into its septuagenarian year, the Brick Store Museum is gearing up to launch its "Connecting Generations" capital campaign. With President George H. W. Bush and Barbara Bush lending their support as honorary campaign chairpersons, the museum hopes to raise \$1.5 million.

The event marks the local institution's largest fund raising undertaking in over a decade. Executive Director Tracy Baetz explains, while the museum may look attractive from the street, a closer inspection reveals that it's in rough shape. Structural engineering studies from 2004 returned a laundry list of building concerns.

"We consider the buildings themselves to be part of our collection," Baetz says, "and we want to be good stewards."

Edith Cleaves Barry first opened the museum in 1936, on the second floor of the brick, Main Street building.



Brick Store Museum Executive Director Tracy Baetz points out a beam in the second floor that will need replacing under the museum's new capital improvement plan.

Kevin A. Byron

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Constructed by Barry's great-grandfather William Lord in 1825 as a dry goods store, the museum's initial collection came from within the Lord family itself. Lord had been an extremely successful merchant, ship owner and ship builder in his day.

Today, the Brick Store encompasses a total of four attached buildings. In addition to what Baetz calls the museum's "dippy floors and weepy chimneys," there are roofs that need attention, brickwork both in and out that needs re-pointing, and sills that are rotten and need replacing, etc.

"Anyone who owns an old house will understand what we're up against," Baetz says.

The basements, Baetz, will also get some attention. "These buildings weren't built together," she says, "and the basements are a hodgepodge of brick and cement and dirt." By renovation's end, the four basements will be uniform.

Correcting the core structural integrity of the buildings is vital to the undertaking. With the buildings stabilized, Baetz says the museum will finally be able to "use the structures to their full potential."

Due to an undersized header beam in the building that sits at the corner of Main and Dane, the much-needed second floor is currently underused; Baetz and volunteers have to be extremely cautious not to stress that floor.

Baetz says the renovation work, which she hopes will begin as soon as January 2007, will begin at the Dane Street end of the museum, and move toward Town Hall.

Half of the \$1.5 million they aim to raise will be earmarked for building rehab, while the remaining \$750,000 will be used to boost the Brick Store's endowment and "enable the Museum to increase its total endowment for future needs," Baetz says.

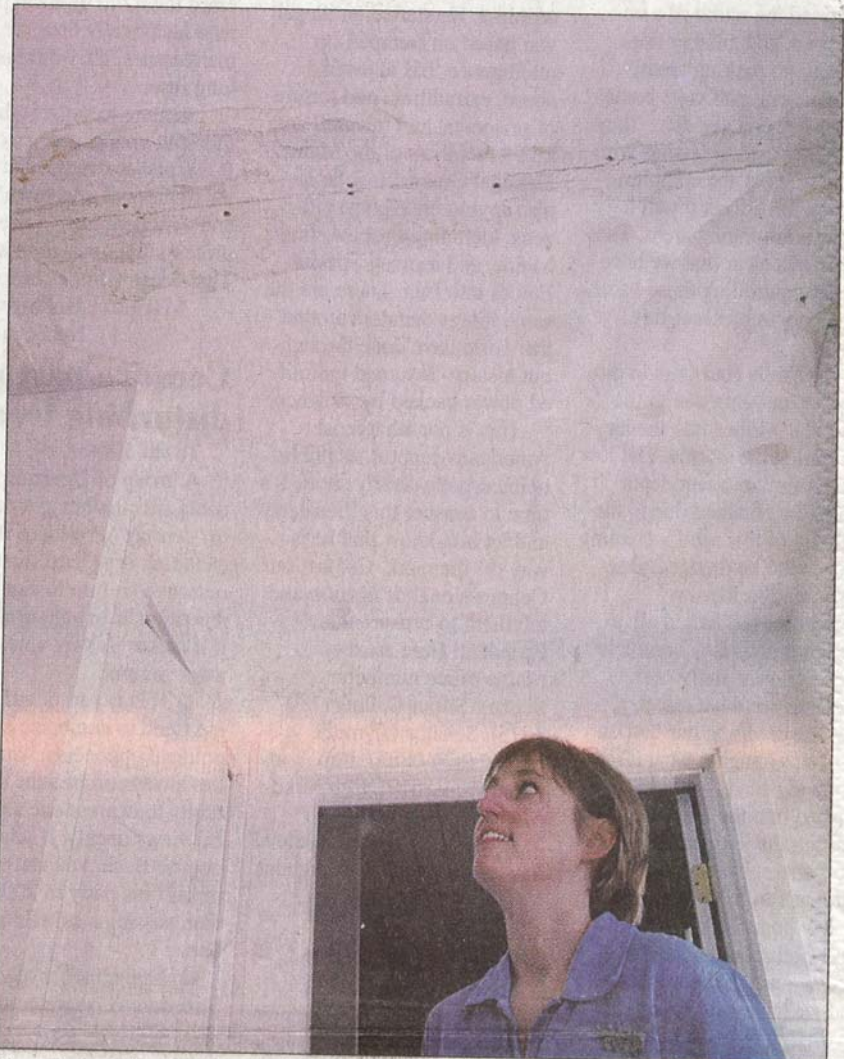
In a generous gesture, Kennebunk Savings Bank has helped the Brick Store's capital campaign's kick-off with the largest single donation it has ever made to a museum: \$100,000.

The Brick Store will officially launch the "Connecting Generations" campaign (which they anticipate to last for three years) at its annual meeting on June 20 at the Colony Hotel. WCSH6 television personality Bill Green will deliver the evening's keynote address.

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Part of the Brick Store Museum's roof has already been braced with new joists.



Tracy Baetz of the Brick Store Museum examines water damage on the museum's ceiling.