

Millers River Educational Cooperative (MREC)

Camp Caravan

Building renovation accomplishments to date

April 2015

The Camp Caravan property began as an inn and family home over 100 years ago in Royalston, Massachusetts. It operated as a school for girls from 1915 to 1936. Founded in 1945, Camp Caravan for Children served as a much-loved summer program for children with disabilities and poor children, continuing operations through 1984.

In 1998, when the Village School was almost ten years old, the Camp Caravan organization conveyed the property to the MREC, hoping it would continue as a haven for children, utilizing the many useful buildings, gardens, orchards, and forest on its fifty acres. With demand high for a Village School education and the need for inter-generational learning opportunities, the MREC embarked on a long-term plan to develop the property to function as an educational campus for practical living.

The acquisition of Camp Caravan presented the MREC with exciting opportunities and a daunting task: When a powerful vision of a future home for the Village School as part of a Center for Continuous Education emerged, so did the recognition of the enormous work required to stabilize a property, unused and unmaintained for fourteen years.

All original sixteen buildings on the old Camp Caravan property required an immediate influx of money and labor to insure their viability, until their future use could be realized. The structures had deferred maintenance issues, including roof leaks and major foundation problems.

During the first seven years of ownership, the primary work focused on correcting problems resulting from the lack of maintenance. After that, renovation projects began in 2005. The MREC refurbished the kitchen and finished three of the five existing cabins. In the same year, the MREC began



Camp Caravan is located along Route 68 halfway between South Royalston and Royalston Common.



The Main House is structurally sound, with a new dining room and kitchen, but needs lots more work.



The Dormitory is almost completely renovated and awaits a heating system and a new septic system.



New Village School building site (view of school's retention pond/vernal pool in the background). In 2008 the building was designed, site work completed, and architectural plans approved.



Third Floor of the Dormitory. The building has all new windows, floors, walls, ceilings, and electricals.

a ten-year project to restructure and renovate the three-story Dormitory building to bring it up to code, scheduled for completion this year, including a new septic system. In 2010, the MREC restructured the Auditorium and completely replaced the foundation. That year also saw the re-roofing of the Auditorium and the dance/yoga Studio.

Volunteers provided most of the labor needed for renovations. The purchase of building materials represented the primary outlay of funds. Whenever possible, the MREC uses local materials, including lumber cut from the site of the new Village School building. The resulting planks were planed and cut into interior trim for the Dormitory and the new Village School building.

There is still plenty of work ahead. We've already winterized the Dormitory, Studio, and Cabins, and next we need to winterize the rest of the buildings. Once we've added a new roof to the Arts & Crafts building we can use it as a woodworking shop and as a place for safe storage.

Join us in taking a moment to appreciate and celebrate the work accomplished here at Camp Caravan over many years. We look ahead to Camp Caravan's continuing development as an educational campus for practical living. We thank you and the many volunteers who brought us to this point. Now we ask for your help paying for specialty projects such as the septic system and roofing that will allow us to enter the next phase.



The Auditorium has a new foundation and has been restructured and reroofed. It needs winterizing, heat, plumbing and continued work on the exterior.



The Auditorium Interior features a stage and a new hardwood floor. The greater Royalston community will have access to this large handicap-accessible gathering space.



Studio Building newly renovated for yoga, dance, and small groups.



Most **Cabins on the Campus** are now fully renovated, with two more to go, including the one on the right.



Milling trees from the property for lumber for interior building trim.



MREC volunteers enjoy a respite from their labors.