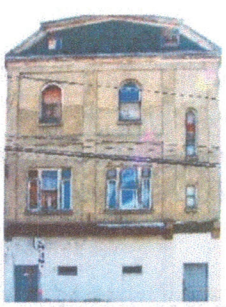
# Au Sable River Valley Business Association - extract MEMBER

## SPOTLIGHT— TAHAWUS CULTURAL CENTER Spring/Summer 2025 Newsletter

**ABOUT THE NAME** *Tahawus Lodge "Our Mohawk friend and arts curator, Margaret Horn, years ago taught us to pronounce the name Tahawus with three syllables, Tahhow'-wuss. Horn's first 2012 stunning group exhibit at Tahawus Gallery featured six artists: "Mohawk of the Adirondacks" and drew big crowds to the small town.*

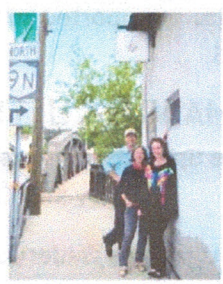



*In Au Sable Forks today, and since 2009, we call ourselves the TA-HA-WUS Center, said to mean "Cloud splitter." As the "tallest" building on Main Street, the beautiful third floor Cloudsplitter Dance Studio has eight large windows, with breathtaking views of big skies and surrounding town, the river confluence, and mountains. We find the Mohawk-derived name inspiring, because in reaching for the sky, there is no limit to creativity and learning." ____*



**How we acquired the Tahawus Center in Au Sable Forks** *"In 2006, we were invited to a special event at the Strand Theatre in Plattsburgh to meet Senator Hillary Clinton, while RKB was in its annual OnStage Performance Program residency at LPCA. Her friendly and surprisingly knowledgeable greeting revealed that she had been well informed about RKB's two decades of upstate work and our Onstage Dance Performance program for youth. She said something like, "You have been coming up here to the North Country for over 20 years! So, what is your legacy going to be?"*





*"By 2007, Craig and I started to think seriously about the "next chapter," always knowing we would not stay in NYC forever. We talked to our Board about the future of our nonprofit, Appleby Foundation. We had seen the old Mason's building in Au Sable Forks. The building needed extensive repairs! But to us, it resembled a NYC loft building, not unlike the one we had "pioneered" into a studio and home, and where we had lived in SoHo/NYC since 1975. We were not daunted, and our non-profit Board gave full support to create an arts center in the Northern Adirondacks. So, we got to work, clearing out, repairing, installing, replacing. It continues to be a huge and long endeavor, only made possible from hard work, grant support, volunteer help, and the interest and encouragement from the community."*



**Since 2011 under the direction of Kelly and Brashear, Tahawus is once again a gathering place** for learning and a catalyst for community growth, offering a range of expressions in the arts and humanities. Tahawus serves as a space where people connect around familiar and unfamiliar topics. Visitors have enjoyed classes, celebrations, exhibits, and events and participations and explorations in art, dance, music, and a cultural film series. Tahawus enabled the Hollywood Theater to Go Digital as a fiscal sponsor for a NYSCA grant. It has hosted workshops on early childhood and women's leadership, community events, and a STEM Lab Tutorial program supported by Casella Waste Systems from 2011-2016.

## TAHAWUS CULTURAL CENTER con't

**The upper two floors are home to Windows Gallery and Cloudsplitter Dance Studio**

**The Windows Gallery** shines a light on talented local and visiting artists and is a gathering place for community events. With up to three exhibits each season since 2011, over 35 shows have been presented introducing 95 local artists in solo and group exhibits. The very first exhibit was Au Sable Forks photographer, Mark Hobson's, 2011 *"The Forks: There's No Place Like Hoe."* The most recent exhibit was *"Double Bill"* featuring artists Bill Dilworth and Bill Evans from Jay. And NEXT UP is an 8-person group show *"Fleurs"* opening May 3-31, offering a vibrant display of ideas and forms, by regional artists.

**Cloudsplitter Studio** hosts weekly dance classes and fitness activities for youth, adults, and seniors, rehearsal space for local productions, Rebecca provides private dance coaching and classes. Various workshops - like the "Learn Ukulele in a Day" are coming right up in early May. The large, light, and airy space is available for hourly rental for all kinds of music, theater, and dance rehearsal activities.





Over the years, Tahawus continues to explore a range of educational activities and always welcomes ideas from the community. Tahawus pioneered its STEM Lab between 2011-2017, introducing young people to "handson" science and physics over six summers. Other innovative programs have been in Film, Music, and forums and workshops.





**2020-2025** After 45 years, in 2020 Rebecca Kelly and Craig Brashear closed the New York City-based Rebecca Kelly Ballet company and moved to the Adirondacks. In 2021 Tahawus Center was added to the National *and* NY State Registry of Historic Buildings. In 2023, Tahawus commissioned an outdoor mural by Georgeanne Gaffney. It's a "hidden gem" on Main Street, viewable from the municipal parking lot.

**WHAT'S AHEAD in 2025?** Three summer art exhibits: First up in May is the 8-person show, "Fleurs. "Pages Between Us" in June-July highlights the multi-media works of 3 young artists. A group of four photographers present their works in August. And there is a series of Hands-on Workshops in Music, Writing and Photography.

**Background - formerly the Tahawus Lodge, built in 1911 by the Masons,** today the Tahawus Cultural Center rises three stories, on Route 9N which leads into the High Peaks region of the Adirondacks from the north. Tahawus flanks the West Branch of the Ausable River, renowned for trout fishing, -- and occasional flooding.

**The building is one of the oldest on Au Sable Forks' Main Street.** The Masons purchased the land and built their three-story building with a full basement. The Masons occupied the upper two floors. The U.S. Post Office occupied the ground floor between 19121963, The Adirondack Record Post occupied the basement until 1975. With its concrete siding, the Masonic Lodge was the only building left standing on its side of the street after a disastrous fire in 1925, destroying 90% of Main Street. But by 2008 the 123-year-old

## TAHAWUS CULTURAL CENTER con't Spring/Summer 2025

the Tahawus Lodge 790 was facing a crisis of dwindling and aging membership. The top two floors had been empty and badly in need of interior repair.



**Craig and Rebecca founded Rebecca Kelly Ballet (RKB) in 1979 in New York City,** from where it taught, toured, and performed. Starting in 1986, the Lake Placid Center for the Arts invited RKB as summer-artists-in-residence, performing and also teaching dance to youth in RK's OnStage program. By 2019, RKB had been coming up to the Adirondacks for 35 summers. During those years, Craig and Rebecca also slowly built a small home in the woods along the Saranac River, and where they stayed for 2 weeks at the end of each residency in Lake Placid. But by late August they always returned to their City loft/studio/ residence, to continue their dance work, performing, choreographing for the Company, and teaching in their SoHo studio.

The not-for-profit cultural organization Appleby Foundation (incorporated in 1979) purchased the building in 2009. Appleby "governed" Rebecca Kelly Ballet, whose principals are Craig Brashear and Rebecca Kelly. AFI's mission is 3-fold: 1) to create, develop, and present works and ideas that connect artists and audiences, children and adults, 2) to

strengthen and enliven communities through diverse exposure, access to quality training and participation in the arts, and 3) to remain ever-inventive and responsive to a changing environment.