

Historic Oxford landmark gets some help from friends

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By Nicole Carter

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OXFORD — The Pigeon Hill Schoolhouse, Oxford's last standing connection to rural education, is bound for a new home. The Oxford Historical Society is executing a campaign to move the dilapidated building to the Kay House Museum grounds, restore it, and make it a permanent living history exhibit.



Furniture from Pigeon Hill Schoolhouse is part of the Oxford Historical Society's artifacts collection. The society plans to reunite the school with its contents and create a living history exhibit on the grounds of the Kay House Museum. *Nicole Carter / Advertiser Democrat*

After the Advertiser Democrat published a story on July 14 about the possibility that the vacant schoolhouse at the corner of Route 26 and Rabbit Valley Road was in danger of being razed, local residents responded with offers of financial assistance, storage and construction services to help save it.

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Pigeon Hill Schoolhouse's plight came to light when Oxford Historical Society President Patricia Larrivee and Oxford Historical Preservation Committee member Kathleen Dillingham [addressed town selectmen during their June 16 meeting](#) about it being donated to the historical society by the family of Evan Thurlow, who attended the school in the 1930s and owned the land it is

located on.

The property is under contract to be sold for development; Thurlow had long hoped to donate the schoolhouse to OHS. The buyers are receptive to having it moved but it needs to be done before they start their construction plans.

Selectmen agreed to allow the schoolhouse be moved to the Kay House, which is owned by the town, but voiced concerns whether OHS could carry out its restoration in a timely and effective fashion.

One reader of the July 14 article pledged \$10,000 anonymously to help with the expense of moving the structure, doubling the amount it had so far raised for the project.

Another, who owns property between Rabbit Valley Road and Roller Rink Road, the route the school house would take to be moved, reached out to Larrivee and offered to temporarily stage the building on their land. That scenario would require moving expenses for a few hundred feet instead of four miles, giving the historical society time to raise funds and apply for restoration construction grants.

And one person who is a builder offered to map and blueprint the schoolhouse frame, if deconstruction and re-erecting it onsite at the Kay House Museum is deemed the most effective way to move it.

Larrivee is in the process of applying for architectural preservation grants through Maine Preservation and the Davis Foundation.

OHS will start its publicity campaign on August 6, when it holds its first annual Kay House Museum Crafts Fair at 73 Pleasant Street.

Fifty crafters from Oxford Hills and beyond will set up on the Kay House lawn from 9 a.m. – 4 p.m., displaying and selling their wares. Proceeds from vendor fees will go towards museum maintenance, repair and painting projects.

“The Kay House will be open for tours during the crafts fair,” Larrivee told the Advertiser Democrat in an email statement.

OHS will also have information available on the Pigeon Hill Schoolhouse for anyone who is interested in learning more about it.

“We need volunteers to support the project,” she said. “And anyone who would like to, may make donations to the schoolhouse as well.

People can email Larrivee at [\[email protected\]](#) for more information about the Kay House Museum and Pigeon Hill Schoolhouse.

Rain date for the Kay House Museum Crafts Fair is August 13.

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Oxford Historical Society is holding its first annual Kay House Museum Crafts Fair on the lawn of the museum, which also serves as historical society headquarters. *Supplied photo*