



## Artist Spotlight: Session Americana



Each newsletter we are featuring an artist, band or performer. This month we are featuring the band Session Americana. This Boston based band has been kicking off our Performing Arts Season for the last 10 years. We thought it would be interesting to interview band leader extraordinaire Ry Cavanaugh.

Q: How many years has Sessions been around?

A: *Session Americana started in the Fall of 2003 as a Sunday night “jam” at a local pub. The group solidified as a band over the years and in 2009, began to play outside of Boston.*

Q: How many folks are currently in the band?

A: *I count the full-time members of the band at 4 or 5, but there are always 6 on the road and not always the same ones. Before Covid, we were playing between 60 and 100 shows/year for the past ten years. Jefferson Hamer, Kimon Kirk, Billy Beard, Jim Fitting, Dinty Child and I did most of those, but Laura Cortese, Adam Moss, Duke Levine, Ali McGuirk, Merrie Amsterberg, Peter Linton, Thomas Juliano, Jason Anick, Dietrich Strause, Zach Hickman, Alec Spiegelman and others have been in the touring band over those years. It's a collective.*

Q: Have you written any new songs since covid-19? How are new songs produced with such a large band?

A: *I personally have been focused on a record I made of my father's songs which was released last Spring and have not been writing. For the band, every record cycle has a writing philosophy - It has worked best when songs are still in an unformed, unfinished state when they come to the group, then we can kind of shove the tune into a group-think. But its handy if there is some narrative and melodic information to work with.*

Q: What has the band been doing since March? Any socially distanced gigs? Outdoor concerts?

A: *I know Dinty has done a few shows. The rest of us have really tried to stay afloat. I'm*

*focused on other things and taking advantage of some time off instead of beating my head against the wall. I'm lucky that I have a stable home and my wife is still working. Session Americana would not be able to perform in any normal way with this disease floating around. Just getting in the van is impossible. We are used to playing in a very tight pattern, close enough to hear each other without monitoring. Most of the people I talk to in the industry are looking at 2022. There are going to be a lot of albums coming out in the spring of 2022!*

Thank you, Ry. You can find out more about Session Americana by visiting [www.sessionamericana.com](http://www.sessionamericana.com)

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## **We Need Your Help**

We continue to be challenged by Covid-19. We are hopeful next year will be better, but in the meantime please consider donating to Haverhill Heritage Inc./Court Street Arts. You can donate easily online with a credit card at <https://courtstreetarts.org/support/> or mail a check to:

Haverhill Heritage Inc  
PO Box 125  
Haverhill, NH 03765

Thank you so much for your continued support. We wish everyone a safe and happy holiday season.

Philip Coutu  
Interim Director, Haverhill Heritage Inc.  
[www.courtstreetarts.org](http://www.courtstreetarts.org)

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## Outdoor Concert: The Fairlanes



Court Street Arts was pleased to put on our first concert since February 2020. The socially distanced, outdoor concert with the Fairlanes was a success. We had about 50 in attendance on the Haverhill Corner North Common. The rain held off and everyone seemed to have enjoyed the beautiful autumn day with original, live music. We hope to have more outdoor concerts/events this coming Spring.



**Photo left:** Emily Marsh and Thomas Chapin. **Photo right:** Jim Musty

# A History of Alumni Hall



Alumni Hall, a classic Greek Revival style building with Doric columns and an octagonal belfry was built as a courthouse in 1846. Haverhill Corner was a bustling business community with several inns and taverns to serve people who were in town to conduct court business. The adjacent library held the court offices.

In 1853, the railroad reached Woodsville, bypassing Haverhill Corner, and the center of business moved to Woodsville. In 1893, the court moved to Woodsville, and the building known as Alumni Hall went unused for the next 29 years.

In 1919, the graduating class from Haverhill Academy bought the building and gave it to the school. It was renovated to become a gymnasium and auditorium and named "Alumni Hall."

In 1992 a new school was built in North Haverhill, and Alumni Hall was closed. By then, Haverhill Corner was listed on the National Register of Historic Places. But the Hall, once a beacon to the community was in sore need of attention. The cupola was leaning. The west wall had bowed and was propped up by steel buttresses and the old waste disposal system was unacceptable so there was no plumbing.

The following year in 1993, not wanting to see this building and two others on the common decay any further, a group of concerned citizens, spearheaded by Edith Celley formed the non-profit Haverhill Heritage, Inc. and negotiated with the School Board to purchase the building. They took title in 1997, after having raised over \$100,000 to make emergency repairs.

In 2000 and 2001, HHI began to seek ways to raise the funds necessary for restoration. A grant from the NH Council on the Arts funded a feasibility study and partnerships were formed with the town to develop a cultural and visitor's center along the Connecticut River Scenic Byway. Architectural plans and drawings were contributed by James Alexander, with the firm of Finegold & Alexander & Associates out of Boston and a board member. Other board members contributed administrative, legal and historical expertise in this all - volunteer endeavor.

More grants were procured, and *Friends of Alumni Hall* was formed to raise further funds. By that August, nearly \$12,000 had been raised and to celebrate, a production of “Snoopy” in collaboration with the Haverhill Recreation Committee (HARTS) consisting of over 20 area youth was performed at the hall.

In 2002, the town voted to match a grant of \$50,000 from the National Scenic Byways Program and work on the cupola began. From 2003-2005 work continued. The west wall was torn down, a new foundation and west wall was rebuilt; the cupola was restored; a new septic system installed, and a new roof was put on. Eventually, an addition was added to the east side. The chandelier was installed from the old Opera Block in Woodsville and the building began being used.

In 2005, an executive director was hired, and a grand opening officially happened. Since 2005, the Hall has increased its programming which offers a variety of performances for all audiences. The hand-painted theater curtain from the old Woodsville Opera Block Building was restored and installed as a backdrop to the stage. A kitchen has been added and many performances now offer dinner and refreshments as well beer and wine for performances. Our events for Court Street Arts continue to grow and offer a broad range of options from musical concerts, plays, comedy acts, classical music, art classes, workshops, summer STEM programs for kids as well as private rentals of the facility. Thanks to the vision of Edith Celley and a concerned group of citizens, Alumni hall is now a wonderful venue for all of the Upper Valley to enjoy.



# Wentworth Brown House Rehabilitation

American Barn & Building based in Orford, NH commenced stabilization work in August on the little house and small carriage barn, the areas identified as the most deteriorated of the extended and connected 5-building structure. The contracted work began with exposing sills in the interior of the little house sufficient to examine damage. In the connecting carriage barn work began with removing, setting aside, and marking floorboards (to be carefully placed back) to examine the condition of the floor joists, sleepers, and sills. The work was placed on hold during the month of September while sills were on backorder. During October work is expected to resume on the carriage barn, repairing or replacing all rotten/damaged members (sill/floor joists) as necessary. Rehabilitation of the buildings is in accordance with the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for the Treatment of Historic Properties and currently funded by a grant from the NH Land and Community Heritage Program (LCHIP), a recently awarded 1772 Foundation Grant administered by the New Hampshire Preservation Alliance, along with required match donor contributions raised.



**Photo left:** Tucker Trapp and Adam Nelson carefully remove, mark and place floorboards off-side to expose floor joists and sleepers. Wentworth Brown Carriage Barn, August 20, 2020.

**Photo right:** Jesse Reed, owner of American Barn & Building, displays floor joist with damage from powder post beetles. Wentworth Brown Carriage Barn, August 19, 2020.

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