

Ballard Mill Center For The Arts

The winter season has moved into the North Country, and from the exterior, Ballard Mill Center for the Arts seems dormant and lonely against the bleak winter sky. But one only has to open the large, double maple doors that lead into the entrance foyer and all appearances of hibernation disappear.

The sounds of hammers, power saws and rock and roll music can be heard throughout the complex. The shouts and laughs and the grunts and groans of the laboring crew gives one the sense of being in the Hesse novel *Steppenwolf*; the only thing lacking is a sign over the entrance-way, "for madmen only."

Ballard Mill Center for the Arts has progressed from a derelict building void of windows and completely ransacked both inside and out to a point where the finishing touches are being applied to an Arts Center that will serve the people of Malone and the North Country by offering plays, dance, music, concerts, movies, arts and crafts education, and crafts production and demonstration.

The third floor of Ballard Mill is leased by North Country Community College, Malone Extension, 101 East Main Street, Malone. The college moved into the Mill in time for its Fall Semester, Crafts Management program. As of now, courses in weaving, wood carving, quilt making and print-making are being taught there. A pottery room is being prepared on the ground floor, but its completion is still off in the future.

The second floor of the Art Center has not found a purpose for the present, but



there are negotiations going on between the Greater Malone Community Council (the owner of the Art Center) and a local state funded agency for the leasing of the second floor to be used as a controlled workshop in craft production.

The scene for the majority of the interior renovation is taking place on the first floor. The entrance-way and lobby are being finished in marble and maple

panels donated by Paul Smiths College. These materials were taken from an old hotel-like structure being torn down at Paul Smiths. The floors in the lobby will be diagonal hard wood which meet up with a brick floor that lies in the entrance to the rest rooms. (The rest rooms could not be completed because toilets could not be afforded, so calls in the local media went out for donations. The results were staggering; there are now more johns than Mr. Crapper probably ever owned.)

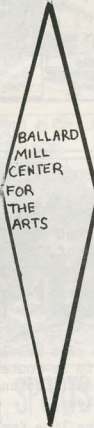
The majority of the theater was completed before the Foothills Fine Arts Festival (see last issue of ROOTDRINKER), but there is a great deal of work to do to get the back stage area functional. The main theater also needs more finish work, but it is being used for a variety of events now—plays, film festivals, contrasances, Arts Committee and College receptions and functions.

One of the most exciting events to take place concerning the Mill is the Greater Malone Community Council's approval of an \$11,000 loan to allow the Malone Mills Commission (a committee of the Community Council) to purchase a Westinghouse generator that will create electricity from waterpower. The system will be used to convert the present oil burning furnaces to a form of electric heat by placing resistor coils, connected to the hydroelectric generator inside the ductwork then blowing hot air to the areas to be heated. This system would cut the cost of the present form of heat in half.

The installation of the hydroelectric generator will be handled by the James Bell Hydropower Inc. from Cooperstown, N.Y. and the Ballard Mill work force. The hydroelectric system initially will produce about \$27,000 work of electric power a year. Tom Keith, the project supervisor, hopes that within two years the Ballard Mill Center for the Arts will be energy self-sufficient.

The list of skeptics grows smaller as the Ballard Mill Center for the Arts has finished its crawling stage and is taking its first walking strides. Please come to Malone; Williams Street is the place. If you happen to arrive at 10:00 a.m. or 2:00 p.m. on a sunny day and you happen to come upon a motley looking crew of whackos who might seem a bit deranged, you're at the right place, and don't worry—they don't bite. They mostly like to smile.

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