



# St. Johnsbury Athenaeum

*A National Historic Landmark Public Library and Art Gallery*

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**ENERGY SAVINGS AND COLLECTIONS PRESERVATION ARE KEY BENEFITS  
WITH NEW SKYLIGHTS AT ST. JOHNSBURY ATHENAEUM**

ST. JOHNSBURY, VT, August 17, 2011 -- For almost 140 years, the original metal and glass Victorian-style skylights above the Art Gallery at St. Johnsbury Athenaeum protected one of the most prized art collections in the country from the unpredictable weather of northern New England.

The Art Gallery at the Athenaeum features over 120 paintings, sculptures, and other fine works highlighting the American landscape, classical studies, and reproductions of Renaissance and Baroque masterworks. Many paintings by the Hudson River School artists are on display including Jasper Cropsey, Asher B. Durand, Sanford Gifford, and Worthington Whittredge. The most prominent painting in the Gallery is Albert Bierstadt's mammoth 10 x 15 foot masterpiece *Domes of the Yosemite*, one of the most famous paintings in America.

An in-depth analysis of the condition of the skylights revealed that they were severely deteriorated to a point requiring wholesale replacement. For the past three years, the Athenaeum has been

working to recreate new skylight frameworks that are carefully designed to replicate as closely as possible the dimensions and look of the original while accommodating the weight of a new glazing system. The project includes the restoration of the main 18 x 12 foot skylight, two smaller 4 foot square skylights that flank the main skylight, and the replacement of the Hyphen skylight, a 7 foot square skylight, originally located in the Art Gallery's entrance hall.

A triple-glazed window glass system from SAGE Electrochromics, Inc. will incorporate electronically tintable insulated glass units and a layer of textured glass that will match the existing historic glass in the skylights. This system will control light levels in the Art Gallery and eliminate the need for the installation of a mechanical blackout shade. The triple-glazing will also improve the thermal efficiency of the skylight and address concerns about condensation on the glass and humidity levels in the gallery.

“We were struggling to find a solution to block the UV rays without using a retractable screen that would have seriously compromised the esthetic appeal of the Victorian-style gallery,” states Werner Heidemann, Skylights Project Manager and member of the Athenaeum’s Board of Trustees. “We were introduced to the SAGE system by our architect, John Mesick which led to a trip to Minnesota to visit the SAGE plant. We were encouraged to find a window glass system that could be used in such a historic building.”

As a National Historic Landmark, the Athenaeum worked with the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation to evaluate the new glass system and it was determined that the electronically tintable glass (EC) would have no adverse effect on historic resources. The Vermont Division for Historic

Preservation also provided funding for the restoration project.

“We found the proposal to use the SageGlass® EC glass system very interesting as we needed to consider how it could effect the Athenaeum visually and the collection within,” said Judith Williams Ehrlich, Director of Operations for the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation. “To find energy-efficient solutions while maintaining historic preservation standards is challenging so we are pleased that by installing the new glass system both the energy efficiency at the Athenaeum will be improved and its treasured collection protected from the damaging effects of solar radiation.”

The electronically tintable glass (EC) can be switched from clear to darkly tinted (and from darkly tinted to clear) at the push of a button. EC glass can be operated manually or integrated into an automated building management system. SageGlass EC glass modulates visible light transmission and solar heat gain, and, in the tinted condition, blocks 98% of the total solar radiation that causes fading.

“We are pleased to offer the Athenaeum an energy-efficient solution that protects their treasured collection,” says John Van Dine, CEO and founder of SAGE Electrochromics. “Our goal at SAGE is to provide window glass solutions that optimize daylight, improve the human experience and reduce energy consumption. This is also the first application in a National Historic Landmark building.”

Founded in 1871 and designated as a National Historic Landmark in 1998, St. Johnsbury

Athenaeum is a private, non-profit public library and art gallery that serves to promote life-long

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learning through art, literature, and information services.

“This project has been a collaboration of some of the finest preservation professionals in the country,” states Matthew Powers, the Athenaeum’s Executive Director. “It is rewarding to be involved with a project that will protect this magnificent building and historic collections for generations to come.”

Completion of the project is planned for November 2011 in time for the 140<sup>th</sup> Anniversary of the Athenaeum. Additional information for the skylights project can be found at [www.stjathenaeum.org](http://www.stjathenaeum.org).

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