

PHOTO JOURNAL

THE PORTAGEVILLE CHAPEL RESTORATION PROJECT



The Portageville Chapel Restoration Project



When The Portageville Chapel organization first acquired the property, the front of the building was all but obscured by overgrown trees.



What was visible, was an eyesore.

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Next to the church, behind the south entrance, there was a dilapidated shack.



Next to the shack, was a long-abandoned trailer that had rotted into the ground. Collectively, the trailer, shack and church building were a blight on the surrounding area. And, because of the property's proximity to Letchworth State Park, the property was seen by millions of tourists.

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The tower was home to hundreds of pigeons.



And there was a large accumulation of junk inside and out. For twenty years the building had been used as a shop for secondhand furniture, but the business had been abandoned.

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On the west side of the building there was a bluestone and wrought iron fence. Perceiving its value, the sellers tore it down and hauled it away before transferring the title.



Leaks in the roof had caused damage to the ceiling under the tower area.

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And there were cracks in the foundation.



However the building was square and structurally sound, as evidenced by these two photographs taken in February 2007, just after the overgrown trees in the front were cut down.

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The original clapboards were in good condition, although they had not been painted since 1951.



The original bell was intact but needed new ropes and mechanics.

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The original pews had been taken apart and stored. An inventory revealed that all of the pews and pew doors were present.



Work began in February, 2007 with the addition of a new roof and the demolition of a chimney that had been poorly installed during the 1950's.

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The bell tower was cleaned and secured.



The first three windows were removed and restored by preservation carpenter David Lewis of Holden, Massachusetts. He transported the windows to and from his shop in Holden and used 19th century glass to fill missing panes so that they would match the original glass.

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In August, 2007, the exterior of the building was primed and the first three windows were reinstalled in the chapel



The trailer was hauled away and the shack was demolished. The lot was seeded and mowed.

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The three windows on the front of the building had been covered with plaster. They were hidden from the interior for over 100 years.



David Lewis uncovered the windows and restored them in Holden, creating new interior frames to match the other six windows.

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The exterior of the building was painted.



The porch was removed and David Lewis recreated the bases of the pilasters which had rotted away.

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While repairing water damage to the interior walls, it was discovered that the makeshift chimney installed during the 50s had allowed water to rot a support post. The clapboards were removed to expose the damage.



A new support post was installed and the clapboards were painstakingly replaced.

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The foundation was repaired and grading was added to prevent water from entering the basement. The basement was cleaned and wired for shop lighting. The area could now be used as a shop for pew restoration.



In May, 2008, interior painting began. The ceiling was repaired, and the ceiling and cove were primed and painted.

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A 1982 two-manual Schantz organ was purchased for the Chapel. The organ arrived in May, 2008.



The organ was installed under the direction of Timothy Smith and Jack Muller of Muller Pipe Organ, Croton, Ohio.

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Pew restoration began simultaneously. Pews and pew doors were sanded, primed and painted white. The mahogany trim was refinished.



The pews were reinstalled in the chapel.

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The last three windows were restored and installed along the east wall.



With the exception of the organ and grand piano, the room now looked much as it had in 1841.

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View from West back corner



A dedication concert, free and open to the community was held September 27, 2008. The room was filled to capacity. Others sat outside on lawn chairs to listen through open windows.

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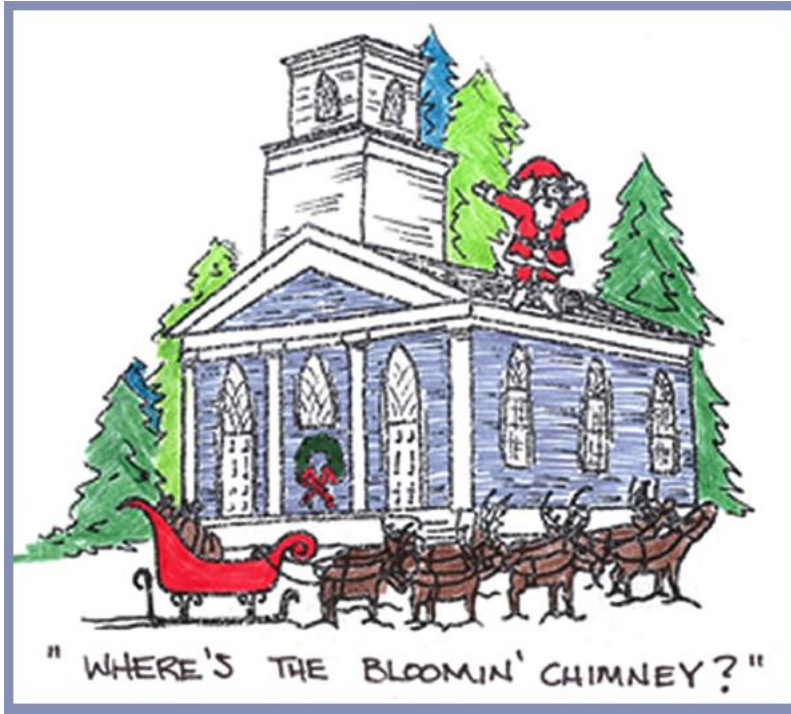
This shows the location of the chapel at the entrance to the town of Portageville, where three roads intersect. The intersection is $\frac{1}{4}$ mile from the south entrance to Letchworth State Park.

As often happens, the renewal of this intersection has sparked other renovation projects in the area.



Our Christmas Card in 2008.

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David Lewis's Christmas Card in 2008.



Since 2008, restoration has been ongoing, with the addition of new steps front and back, shutters to protect the windows, a library in the back room of the building, restoration of the bell, and the recreation of the 1841 lettering on the front of the building. The bluestone posts and wrought-iron fence were returned and will soon be installed along the west lawn of the property.

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This is the earliest known photograph of the building, taken in 1931. It shows the spire, which was allowed to deteriorate despite efforts of township officials to save it. The top section of the tower and the spire were lost in a wind storm in the summer of 1951. It is the goal of The Portageville Chapel organization to restore the spire in the future.

All donations to the ongoing restoration and maintenance of this wonderful building are tax-deductible. Please send your contributions to:
The Portageville Chapel
P.O.Box 378, Portageville,
NY 14536.