



THE POST STAR

Est. 1904

Monday, January 12, 2015

poststar.com

PAGE ONE

In need of a revival

Group aims to turn old Union Church into museum annex

By **AMANDA MAY METZGER**
ametzger@poststar.com

HORICON ♦ Travel north along East Shore Drive, a winding roadway that hugs the east side of Schroon Lake, and at the end you'll find Church Street, home of a 19th century house of worship that needs a revival.

So far, about 300 people over 2 1/2 years have padded the collection plate with roughly \$40,000 toward saving the church building in Adirondack.

Adirondack communities — such as the hamlet of Adirondack — are found off the beaten path, but their focus on heritage tourism as a way to be born again is becoming a well-trodden route as communities look inward to attract adventurers from the outside.

In this particular effort, the Town of Horicon Historical Society is raising money to rehabilitate the 1881 Union Church in the hamlet of Adirondack, within the town, and transform it into an an-



Objects hang Tuesday on a wall of the Union Church, which was built in 1881, on Church Street in Adirondack.

nex for the Horicon Historical Museum, which is located in Brant Lake, another Horicon hamlet. South Horicon is the third hamlet in the town.

“Reusing this church as a museum facility — and we need (another) facility because we have so many historical artifacts and no space to display them — that’s important. In addition, this hamlet of Adirondack needs a critical mass of tourism. There are cultural and tourism aspects. We’re right on the lake. You have a little beach, and a general store that goes back to 1855 and is open year-round. And this is a gem that can add to that

economic development aspect,” said John Donovan, a member of the 1881 Museum Committee of the Town of Horicon Historical Society.

Donovan said it goes hand in hand with a digitization project to get the collection of about 4,000 artifacts that go back to American Indian pieces from the 1600s online to draw tourists and researchers to the area to see the collection. That digitization effort is underwritten by a grant from the Community Fund for the Gore Mountain Region.

Historical Society President Thomas Johansen said the group still has the orig-

HOW TO HELP

Tax-deductible contributions for the 1881 Museum Project may be made to the Town of Horicon Historical Society, P.O. Box 51, Brant Lake, NY 12815.

inal pulpit and a pew from the building. Many lifelong residents, such as Town Board member Frank Hill, remember attending in their youth.

“In and of itself, it (the church) is a really special project, but it’s more than that,” Donovan said, adding that it brings people not only to Adirondack and Horicon, but to the region.

Warren County took over the property for non-payment of taxes, and in 2010, the town acquired it. After it stopped being used for a church, the property became taxable. Donovan said the building sat unused since the 1990s. The Town Board unanimously agreed the historical society could take charge of the effort to restore the building

See **GROUP**, Back Page

THE POST STAR

Est. 1904

Monday, January 12, 2015

poststar.com

PAGE ONE



MEGAN FARMER PHOTOS—MFARMER@POSTSTAR.COM

John G. Donovan, left, and the president of the Town of Horicon Historical Society, Thomas Johansen, stand Tuesday in the Union Church, which was built in 1881, on Church Street in Adirondack. The Town of Horicon Historical Society is raising funds to repair the building and turn it into a historical museum.

Group needs \$95K for repairs

◆ **GROUP**

Continued from A1

and use it as a museum annex.

When they first opened the heavy wooden door, which still has the original decorative hinges and doorknob, the space was full of debris and the basement flooded with groundwater. Donovan said a pastor lived in the small church and built a lowered ceiling, which the group wants to remove to reveal the original rafters.

Donovan said the original flat stone foundation stood the test of time because it was supported by earth, but the dirt was dug away from it to make more room in the basement, which led to its partial collapse. The town has since reconnected drain lines so the water drained out of the basement, and the debris was cleaned out of the building, allowing it to be used for garage sales to raise money toward fixing the building.

The group also raised funds by sending out direct mailers and hosting, with the town's approval, the Adirondack Shindig in August, closing off Church Street for an old-fashioned block party that raised more than \$2,000.

"It's been identified that we need to work on our hamlets to create what was here long ago," said Town Supervisor Matt Simpson, who is in the second year of his first term. "We need to focus on all of our centers within our town."

With winter approaching, the Town of Horicon Historical Society was able to take pivotal action with emergency foundation repair for a little more than \$3,000.

Now contractor Mike Hill is taking foundation elevation laser readings on a biweekly basis to monitor changes in the church structure elevation at no additional cost.

"We had to put in emergency steel columns. We had



MEGAN FARMER—MFARMER@POSTSTAR.COM

The Union Church, which was built in 1881, is seen Tuesday on Church Street in Adirondack. The Town of Horicon Historical Society is raising funds to repair the building and turn it into a historical museum.

"It's been identified that we need to work on our hamlets to create what was here long ago. We need to focus on all of our centers within our town."

MATT SIMPSON

Horicon town supervisor, talking about revitalizing historical areas to increase tourism

those put in as support. We measure every two weeks make sure everything is intact so we're ready to go in spring with foundation work," Donovan said.

The plan is to start construction in the spring, but they need an estimated \$95,000 so there's a shortfall, which has led the group to seek out a grant with the help of Ed Bartholomew at EDC Warren County.

"We'll be submitting an application within the next two weeks," Simpson said.

Full foundation work will cost an estimated \$40,000. Work on the roof, bell tower and painting will take another \$20,000. They also estimate

an additional \$35,000 will be needed to finish work on the interior of the building, which still has the original windows.

In 1880, Adirondack was called Mill Brook, and its Methodist and Baptist residents began to work together to build a place to worship. Seven families contributed the funds, material and labor to build the church on land donated by Benjamin T. Wells, who owned the tannery and general store. The next year, in 1881, Mill Brook's Union Church opened. In 1887, the congregations raised \$83 to purchase the bell that still tolls in the church.

In about three years, the

historical society also gained the attention of businesses such as Curtis Lumber Co., 84 Lumber Co. and Rucinski Hall Architects — to name a few — which have donated or provided services and materials for the project at deep discounts.

They are now going out to bid in early spring.

Bed and breakfast owners wrote letters of support for the project's grant application, saying "they depend on tourists coming in for their economic vitality — they desperately want to see this church become a museum facility because it will enhance their business. If this were just fixing up this building, it'd be one thing, but it's really part of the comprehensive plan for the town of Horicon," Donovan said.

Tax-deductible contributions for the 1881 Museum Project may be made to the Horicon Historical Society, P.O. Box 51, Brant Lake, NY 12815.

Follow Amanda May Metzger @AmandaWhistle and read her blog at www.poststar.com.

MONDAY
January 19, 2015

PAGE A4

VIEWPOINTS

www.poststar.com/news/opinion

Boos and Bravos



MEGAN FARMER—MFARMER@POSTSTAR.COM

John G. Donovan points to an artifact Jan. 6 at the Union Church built in 1881 on Church Street in Adirondack. The Town of Horicon Historical Society is raising funds to repair the building and turn it into the future site of a historical museum annex.

Horicon community to save church, improve museum



Bravos to those in the Horicon community who have stepped forward with donations — roughly \$40,000 so far — toward saving Union Church, which was built in 1881. The community hopes to use the money to rehabilitate the historic church and transform it into a museum. The plan saves the historic church and allows for it to be used in a practical way to benefit the community.



AARCH *MATTERS*

WINTER NEWSLETTER 2015

VOLUME 24 NUMBER 1

The following brief article is from this winter 2015 issue of the Adirondack Architectural Heritage [AARCH] Newsletter...

HORICON CHURCH REVITALIZATION

Efforts are underway to transform the 1881 Union Church in the town of Horicon into a museum facility, to serve as an annex for the Horicon Historical Museum, located in Brant Lake. The church, which stands in the hamlet of Adirondack along the eastern edge of Schroon Lake, requires a variety of repairs to prepare it for this new use. Emergency stabilization work was completed recently to reinforce the structure and the foundation before the approaching winter, with full foundation work, and work on the bell tower, roof, and interior to begin this coming spring. Inspiration for this project came from the overall need, identified by Museum Committee and community members, to redirect attention to the hamlet, and to small centers off-the-beaten path

throughout the region through promoting heritage tourism and local exploration. Tax-deductible contributions for the 1881 Museum Project may be made to the Horicon Historical Society, P.O. Box 51, Brant Lake, NY 12815.



ADIRONDACK
ARCHITECTURAL
HERITAGE *Celebrating 25 Years*

1745 MAIN STREET, KEESEVILLE, NY 12944

518.834.9328 | WWW.AARCH.ORG