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## Museum annex project awarded a saving grace



DECEMBER 01, 2015 6:00 AM • AMANDA MAY METZGER AMETZGER@POSTSTAR.COM

**HORICON** □ A community trying to transform a nearly 135-year-old church building into a museum annex is closer to receiving a six-figure saving grace.

The town was given the grant award notice this fall for \$100,000 through the state Dormitory Authority's

Municipal Facilities Capital Program with the help of the office of state Sen. Elizabeth Little, R-Queensbury.

The award notice is the first in a multi-step process that has to be carried through.

The Horicon Historical Society worked with town Supervisor Matt Simpson to submit the required written response to the notice. The next steps include discussion with state representatives before a "grant disbursement agreement" — which would allow contracts to be awarded for the work — can be issued.

"We're excited about that. We're going to keep moving forward," Simpson said.

The Dormitory Authority is a public benefit corporation authorized to finance and build higher education, health care, court and other public purpose facilities.

The Horicon Historical Society hopes to use the church on Church Street to display the overflow of centuries-old artifacts as an annex to the historical society's museum — a former 19th-century farmhouse — in Brant Lake, but the building needs foundation repairs and other work before that can happen.

Though the grant isn't final, the notice was an exciting step forward in the effort that has been ongoing for four years.

“We’ve been working on this since 2011. All the hard work that everybody on the committee, the society and the town has done for this — it’s so fulfilling now,” said Historical Society President Thomas Johansen, who also cautioned that it is not final.

Through the summer festival Adirondack Shindig and other fundraising and material donations, the historical society has raised about \$50,000 to save the structure, which stands in the hamlet of Adirondack.

Local officials had hoped work on the collapsing foundation could take place before October, but the low bid on that work came in at \$65,891, more than they had on hand. Donovan said the contractor agreed to honor that price in the spring.

“We’re reasonably optimistic that the emergency repairs already made and the winterization already done to the foundation will carry us through this winter,” said John Donovan, a member of the 1881 Museum Committee of the historical society.

“We’re deeply grateful,” Donovan said of the efforts of the Town Board, Little and Warren County EDC President Ed Bartholomew. “At the appropriate time we will find a way to express that gratitude.”

A current online campaign on the crowdsourcing website AdirondackGives.org has raised \$524 from seven backers, with a goal of raising \$2,000 by Dec. 10.

The second annual Adirondack Shindig raised about \$3,200 for the project this year and drew a couple hundred people. Last year, the daylong event in Horicon raised about \$2,000.

Donovan said they are hoping the work can be done in the spring. Replacing the foundation is the first priority, then the roof work. If all goes as planned, the annex may be open in 2016.

Donovan said they have about \$38,000 in the bank now and \$5,000 in building materials donations. What’s needed for all the construction work, including the foundation, is about \$147,000, he said.



## Historical society still in need of funds to save Horicon Church building

SEPTEMBER 07, 2015 3:45 PM • AMANDA MAY METZGER AMETZGER@POSTSTAR.COM

HORICON □ An effort to save a 134-year-old church building in the hamlet of Adirondack has raised about \$50,000 in contributions and material donations toward work on the project.

But it's getting precariously close to judgment day for the former place of worship, as its collapsing foundation may not weather another winter.

The Town of Horicon Historical Society is still \$28,053 short of what it needs for an emergency foundation project, which experts say should start by Oct. 1 to get the work done before the cold sets in. The low bid on that was \$65,891.

An online campaign was started on the crowdsourcing website AdirondackGives.org that has raised \$250 from six backers, with a goal of \$2,000 and only days left to reach it.

The second annual Adirondack Shindig raised about \$3,200 for the project last month and drew a couple hundred people. Last year, the daylong event in Horicon raised about \$2,000.

"The Shindig was a really, really nice event," said John Donovan, a member of the 1881 Museum Committee of the Town of Horicon Historical Society. The event featured a live band, raffles, Adirondack Shakespeare Company, food, exhibits and trained pigs, and the street was blocked off for dancing. Also, there is now a permanent bocce ball court in town from this year's event.

"That's getting good use," Donovan said.

The Town of Horicon Historical Society hopes to use the church on Church Street to display the overflow of centuries-old artifacts as a museum annex to the historical society's museum in Brant Lake.

It is also working on getting grant money through Sen. Elizabeth Little, R-Queenbury's office, but that request is still pending.

The project has raised \$42,838 in contributions and building materials from businesses, with a net \$37,838 available for the foundation after expenses.

"We are hopeful, but patiently waiting," Donovan said of state grant money. "Time is getting very short in order to award the contract and have the contractor mobilize and have that done before winter."

If they don't get the funding, he said the church's foundation has been temporary winterized with emergency columns that would hopefully withstand the season.

So far, the whole church project has been supported by 350 individual donors, Donovan said.



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## In need of a revival

Group aims to turn old Union Church into museum annex

By **AMANDA MAY METZGER**  
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**HORICON** ♦ Travel north along East Shore Drive, a winding roadway that hugs the east side of Schrono 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

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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**

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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](http://www.poststar.com).*

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# VIEWPOINTS

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## 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.



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