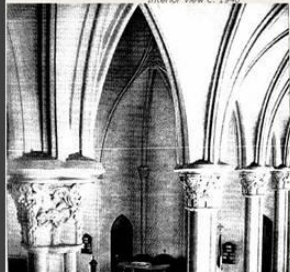


ASBURY IN THE COLONIES

According to his journal, Asbury finally preached in current day Westchester County at New Rochelle on December 10th 1771. Passing through Rye, it was the first time on the coast of New York.

About



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Mamaroneck United Methodist Church – An Historical Overview

The Road to Restoration

(1990 - 2000)

On Sunday of Labor Day weekend 1990, one minute before the ten o'clock Worship Service was to begin, the one-ton bell, which had hung within the steeple for 131 years, suddenly fell. Thunderously it crashed through four floors, splintering wood, plaster and fixtures, missing the man who was climbing to the belfry to see why the bell did not ring the call to worship, and spraying with debris the five people who only seconds before passed beneath it in the Narthex. Through "Amazing Grace" no one was injured. To the surprise of everyone, the bell, which was forged at Meneely's Foundry, Troy, New York and dated 1859, was unscathed – no chips, no cracks, no electronically discernible change in its sound – even though its plunge ended beneath the Narthex floor as it came to rest finally upon stone.

That morning, the bell sounded a new call – a call to action. What could have been a tragedy became a catalyst for change.

Artist's impression of the Narthex after the bell fell



Photo by Grove Handley Pugh

Artist's impression of the Narthex after the bell fell

1991

In March 1991 the Board of Trustees hired Merritt and Harris, engineering consultants, to evaluate the Church property in order to formulate a ten-year plan of repairs and capital improvements. Because the 1859 Church building became the focus of concern, Walter Sedovic A.I.A., a Preservation Architect, was consulted in October and undertook a Condition Survey. In February 1992, Tom Evarts of Yankee Steeplejack rigged boatswain's chairs from the steeple from which Walter and he evaluated steeple leaks and the damage caused by Hurricane Bob. The situation was serious.

More than a century of rain, snow, wind, sleet, hurricanes and aging had taken their toll on the building, notwithstanding periodic general exterior and interior renovations up through the 1950's. Over the years, rotten beams and siding, when discovered, were replaced; cracks were spackled; leaks, when known, were mended; peeled paint scraped and repainted, only to crack and peel once again. Crisis maintenance and cosmetic repair were all this congregation could manage to do for many years. The presence of moisture caused not only the sanctuary walls to crack and peel – a largely aesthetic concern for the congregation – but also was compromising the structural integrity of the building. The dimension of the damage could be surmised through physical probes supplemented with infrared photography (showing heat and moisture distribution). But it was not possible to fully know the extent of the damage until restorers began removing roof shingles and siding to see what was happening beneath them.

1992

In May of 1992 the Board of Trustees was granted authority by the congregation to proceed with a plan for restoration. That plan envisioned a four phase program to be carried out over three to five years at a cost of \$500,000. Phase I was to be the Steeple; Phase II, the Roof; Phase III, The Exterior; and Phase IV, the Interior.

Soon after the Village Board of Architectural Review granted a Certificate of Appropriateness in July of 1992, work began on the steeple. A Parish Development Grant from the New York Annual Conference and two grants from The Sacred Sites Preservation Fund of New York Landmarks Conservancy enabled us to begin. Through the summer and fall 1992, the steeple was scraped, pinnacles removed for storage and shop restoration, and the steeple roof stripped of asbestos shingles and paper, revealing the original roof of tapered pine vertical boards that were joined by tongue and groove and painted at various times in greys, greens and terra cottas. With time, the wood shrank and leaked, necessitating its reshingling 40 years after it was built. In November 1992, the Vermont grey slates arrived, were scalloped on site to emulate the 1895 weathered cedar shingle roof, and were installed on the steeple.

The dynamic of removing the pinnacles



The dynamic of removing the pinnacles

A major decision was tentatively reached in the fall of 1992 when the Board approved a plan to return the Church to its original 1859 colors, as determined by extensive paint sampling and microscopic analysis. Most of the congregation and community had known this church only as the pristine white church (1944-1922) on the rise of the Post Road – the quintessential new England country church. A few remembered a time when parts of the church were painted in grey, as they were from 1907-1944. But no one remembered seeing maroon, tan, burnt sienna, salmon, verdigris, light or dark grey – for such were colors of choice at various times between 1859 and 1907. To test our choice, we had two bays of the steeple painted in their original colors of ivory for the siding; brownish maroon for the louvers and trim; warm grey for the roofs; and verdigris for the finials. Some months later, the congregation affirmed the colors and our

church building moved toward recapturing its original 19th century “look” for all to admire and enjoy.

A second important event of 1992 was our being placed on the New York State Register of Historic Places (May 28, 1992) and the National Register of Historic Places (October 28, 1992), becoming the first and only historic structure so designated in Mamaroneck. This distinction followed closely our 1991 designation by the Village of Mamaroneck as a local landmark.

Detail of the Gothic form and texture of the steeple

As the cold winter weather came upon us, the steeple was winterized while the Trustees sought bids for Phase II – the Roof – and planned to undertake a campaign to finance the restoration and preservation of the building.

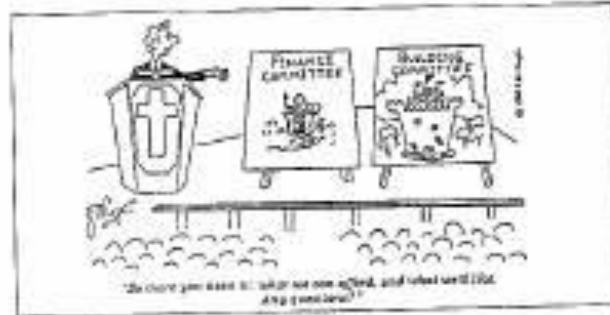


Detail of the Gothic form and texture of the steeple

1993

The Board of Trustees elected itself to be the Fund-raising Committee as well as the Restoration Committee, assuming a kind of double-life, as each Trustee accepted a second role and responsibility in the Campaign. To be sure, we were faced with the same realities pictured in this cartoon. We dreamed and debated among ourselves as we were faced always with the necessity to prioritize the problems that must be addressed and to budget our limited funds consistent with our priorities.

“Renewing, Restoring, Reviving for the 21st Century” was our campaign theme, iterated and reiterated on beautiful banners, created by the Sew’n’Sos, on brochures, letterheads, balloons, mugs, T-shirts. There could have been no more auspicious beginning to our efforts to raise the funds to restore this precious land-marked building than the March 7, 1993 Dedication Service, celebrating our having been placed on the National Register of Historic Places. The church was filled with more than 400 members and friends, community leaders, officials and children. The most special guest was Bishop Forrest C. Stith whose sermon “A Pilgrimage of Renewal” was a high point in the service. Other dignitaries participating in the program were The Honorable Nita M. Lowey, The Honorable Andrew P. O’Rourke, The Honorable Paul Noto, Rev. George Johnson, Metropolitan District Superintendent of the New York Annual Conference, The Honorable George Latimer and Walter Sedovic, our preservation architect.



Sixteen of the forty-four individuals who have been members of the Church since 1943 or earlier attended the March 7 Dedication Service and were recognized with applause and a gift.

Fifty-year members of the church (1st row l-r) Eileen Johnson, Ethel MacEachren, Elida Peer, Virginia Levy (2nd row l-r) Howard P. Barker, Jr., George R. Coffin, Hunter Meighan, Ethel Palmer, Evelyn Fava, Edwina Davis, Ethel LaPolla, Herbert LaRoza, Norma LaRoza, Harvey Harriot. Behind them stands Pastor Bill Shillady.



Fifty-year members of the church (1st row l-r) Eileen Johnson, Ethel MacEachren, Elida Peer, Virginia Levy (2nd row l-r) Howard P. Barker, Jr., George R. Coffin, Hunter Meighan, Ethel Palmer, Evelyn Fava, Edwina Davis, Ethel LaPolla, Herbert LaRoza, Norma LaRoza, Harvey Harriot. Behind them stands Pastor Bill Shillady.

Following a lunch reception, the New York State Historic Marker for our church, placed by the steps near the Parsonage, was unveiled in a brief curbside ceremony by Donald March, President of the Mamaroneck Historical Society and by Gloria Pritts, Village Historian.

As the serious work of meeting our announced goal of \$500,000 began, we were joined in a special partnership by the Mamaroneck Historical Society, which, through its Treasurer, Frank DeVincent, received contributions intended for restoration work, processed matching gift applications, and monitored the church's Restoration Funds. The Society also sponsored joint presentations on the historical and architectural significance of this church building, supported community appeals and tracked the restoration process.

The services of the General Board of Global Ministries were enlisted during the Campaign. A Feasibility Study, preliminary to the campaign, was conducted to determine what might be possible. Mr. Donald Caldwell, Jr. of Lakeland, Florida shared his rich experience and enthusiasm with us as he directed us through the two week "intense phase" of the Restoration Campaign. Ultimately, we not only reached, but exceeded our \$500,000 goal.

On April 8, 1993, Yankee Steeplejack, our harbinger of Spring, arrived back to complete his work on Phase I – the Steeple. The pinnacles were reset in their original position, the final upper four feet of the steeple was slated while its finial was being gold-leafed. A final coat of paint was applied to the wood and metal of the steeple base. On June 15th, 1993, the gold finial was hoisted to the top of the steeple and guided into its place by Tom Evarts to the cheers of many onlookers. Phase I was complete.

*Phase I culminated with resetting
our newly gold-leafed finial*

The Phase II contract was awarded to Yankee Steeplejack to install a roof of Vermont grey slate, again scalloped to reflect the Church's original (1895) cedar roof, a slightly different shape than the steeple shingles. Robert Silman P.E., consulting engineer to our preservation architect, met with the Board in July to review his recommendations following inspections of all truss work, and his view that the building structurally would support the weight of 20,000 slates. The



*Phase I culminated
with resetting our
newly gold-leafed
finial*

only necessary work in the area was the replacement of some bolts and the renailling of all sheathing. Walter Sedovic also revealed plans to remove the existing gutters and leaders and restore the original box gutters, which, though hidden, remained in their original place. Earlier, the original box gutters were covered with plywood and shingled on top, while aluminum gutters were hung at the new roof edge. The restored gutters were lined with a waterproofing membrane (a protective underlayment) followed by terne-coated stainless steel. With proper maintenance, they were now expected to last 100 years! Authorization was given to extend the steeple lightning protection to the roof. Work scheduled to being in October started the second week of December, due to a snow-related delay at the quarry. The crew worked through zero degree weather nailing on the new roof.

In September, the Community Campaign began at the Emelin Fair where the opportunity to "Sign a Slate for History's Sake!" was first offered. With banners in front of the church and brochures mailed to every household in the Village, everyone knew about signing slates. Attracted by such thoughts as "Your name can reach new heights" or "You don't have to be a millionaire to have your name on a building", signers came to special "slate-signing opportunities" at the church circle Saturday mornings in October, at local participating banks, at Historical Society meetings. They mailed in their requests, knocked on the Church House door, called to the roofers in their eagerness to preserve their message on the roof. Signing a slate, for a minimum contribution of \$10, was a very popular activity, shared by hundreds in the community and produced thousands of dollars toward the Restoration.

"Sign-A-Slate For History's Sake"

Also a great material and psychological importance were the \$50,000 challenge grant from the Park Avenue United Methodist Church Trust Fund and the \$1,000 grant from the National Trust for Historic Preservation.



“What a joy to be a part of the renewal taking place here at Mamaroneck. And what a blessing that, as it says in Ephesians 2:22 – ‘we too are built together

To become a dwelling in which God lives
By his Spirit.”

Richard Merrell, Lay Leader
Mamaroneck United Methodist Church
From his sermon, July 13, 1993

1994

As we entered 1994 and celebrated the first anniversary of our official campaign to Renew, Restore and Revive for the 21st Century, we found ourselves nearly halfway toward the completion of our Restoration. (Phase II was completed July 1, 1994.) A time, it seemed, for reflection as well as forward planning. At a special joint meeting with the Mamaroneck Historical Society, Walter Sedovic, Preservation Architect shared his thoughts regarding the restoration of this historic building.

Throughout each phase of the restoration care was taken to respect the historic and stylistic integrity of the building. When there were choices, we sought to preserve and repair, rather than to remove, historic (original) material. This was evident to all when they saw the pinnacles taken down in Phase I to be rebuilt and reinforced. When it came to reproofing the steeple, the main building and the annex (Phase II), we sought the most permanent roof for the best price which would still emulate the architectural ideals behind Gothic Revival. Although the Board was always offered well-researched alternatives for each issue to be addressed, it generally chose that which was most lasting and consistent with the original intent of the builders, within the constraints of budget.

At this time (1994), invitations to bid Phase III, the exterior restoration and painting, were offered. The original siding was joined by tongue and groove. Over the years original material had been removed and replacement boards installed, many of them in an inferior way and lacking the “tongue” that interlocks with the adjacent siding, thus protecting it against water penetration. This was particularly evident on the east side of the building and around the rose window where non-matching widths of flush boards were installed. These became places where significant amounts of water could enter the building. Below are some observations:

Beneath the layers of asphalt shingles we unveiled “Perfections” – cedar shingles from the 1895 restoration.

The building in general was found to be very sound structurally with only one minor modification required; strengthening the ridge connection between the main roof and the 1869 addition.

One of the traditional methods employed was “sounding” each slate before it was installed to be sure it contained no incipient cracks. Foreman Bob Piekarski taps a slate with his slater’s hammer.

Each of the 20,000 slates used on the job was conveyed to its ultimate location by hand.

An innovative method was developed for permanently securing holes left from the 1970’s blown-in insulation. Here the first step includes setting up a jig and routing a circular spline that will hold a new wooden plug in place.

All of these poorly replaced boards were removed and tongue and groove boards of clear pine, sized to match the originals, installed in their place. Also the more than 1,000 holes that had been bored through the siding in the 1970’s to blow in insulation were to be restored in such a way as to leave no trace of them. As to the painting, a staged seven-step process, involving careful preparation was to be followed. No chemicals or sanders were to be used. Paint that tightly adhered to the building, was to be left. Respectfully, the building was not to be stripped of its historic record. The colors to be used were the original, consistent with the steeple paint; grey for watershed elements (like roofs); dark maroon for molded detail; verdigris (patinated copper) for metal; and ivory for the siding.

Scaffolding was erected in the winter of 1994 in preparation for painting in the spring. Note the "REPAINT" banner installed as a light-hearted exclamation to passers-by of the work of both this phase and the Church.

Ashwood Restoration, whose work we knew from the Jay Mansion restoration, was the successful bidder for the carpentry and Sterling Construction for the painting.



Scaffolding was erected in the winter of 1994 in preparation for painting in the spring. Note the "REPAINT" banner installed as a light-hearted exclamation to passers-by of the work of both this phase and the Church.

1995

As planned, the exterior siding was removed to inspect the structural elements in areas identified by inspection or testing to be most likely damaged by water penetration. For the first time in the restoration, we confronted extensive and very serious damage to important parts of the building requiring rebuilding that far exceeded our assigned budget, see inset below. The Board chose no halfway measures and determined not to leave uninvestigated or unresolved problems for the next generation.

Extensive rot and deterioration of sills, framing and wind braces were found beneath the areas of non-tongue and groove siding. It is interesting to note the plaster keying through lathe in this photo; the original plaster contained horsehair to strengthen it.

The Rose Window on the Annex (east) side of the building was without support because of rotting structural elements beneath the window. The structural angled timbers (wind-braces) within one wall were rotted at three levels with the worst

rotting at the angle directly beneath the Rose Window. These structural members were selectively replaced where absolutely necessary, or repaired, using compatible new techniques and material – specifically scarp joints and a limited use of resin (epoxy) consolidants.

Four of the eight buttresses required extensive rebuilding and venting. Contributing to the poor condition of these buttresses were the bushes (now removed) which had grown too close to the building. Their enormous root systems had penetrated the masonry foundation and actually forced it up, essentially pressing the entire front face of the buttress into the air and out of alignment. As a consequence the boards that provided roofing on the buttresses opened up and water was allowed to penetrate, leading to severe deterioration of the internal wood and timber framing.

Timber and consolidants repairs also were made to rotted sections of sills found intermittently around the base of the building, and, where there was access between the stone and masonry, a new water-proofing membrane was installed between the masonry foundation and the timber sills so that the possibility of further deterioration would be greatly reduced.

Although the exterior scaffolding was removed in October 1995, the exterior carpentry repair and painting was not completed until 1996. The protective glazing for the windows is due to be installed in late 1996.

Susan Frocheur-Jernejcic fine-tuning a template to be used for patterning the new protective glazing system.

1996

Now that the building's envelope was secure, structurally sound and free of leaks, the final phase, the Interior, was begun in January 1996.

As always, Walter Sedovic, our Preservation Architect, who has informed and guided the Board through the restoration, had thoroughly researched the interior, tracing all the additions and modifications that had occurred over the years to



Susan Frocheur-Jernejcic fine-tuning a template to be used for patterning the new protective glazing system.

determine how it originally appeared. With this information as its base, the Board throughout the year accepted, rejected, modified, sought alternatives to, endlessly discussed and finally decided what of the original should be reproduced and what should be modified.

The first task of the painting contractor, All-Pro, was to chemically and mechanically strip away all the accumulated layers of paint, including a coat of aluminum paint that at one time had been applied in hopes of controlling moisture penetration (it didn't help). The stripping process revealed the original plaster, scored to emulate the appearance of individual stone blocks. The first major decision was that the interior be faux-painted to resemble stone, consistent with its original Gothic Revival style and imitating the original tones of beiges and ochres. The second major set of decisions concerned the color of the wood – pews, wainscoting, balcony balustrade, pulpit, and altar rail, doors and door frames. Originally, these elements were dark and heavy. The 1950's interior refinishing whitened and lightened them. The 1990's decision integrated the two; rich dark historic mahogany for the wainscoting and door frames would contrast with the soft ivory tones of the pews and pulpit, creating a dramatic, warm and light interior...one that satisfied historical precedent as well as modern liturgical needs. The third major decision concerned the apse, where the choice made was to retain the blue (actually the deeper blue of the 1950 Litchfield restoration) and to place within the area a central wooden cross flanked on either side by symbols formed in ceramic of the twelve Apostles. These are the creation of Grace Powers Fraioli, a member of our congregation.

The process of stripping the plaster walls and vaulted ceilings involves the application of a chemical compound that was then covered with plastic sheeting to slow its evaporation. Once it had dissolved the paint layers, it could then be removed by scraping. All residual chemicals and paints were then disposed of using environmentally safe methods.

Some of our most exciting finds were those reminding us of the early builders of this Church. Among those items found included a beautiful bottle of spring water still corked.

Both materials and workmanship of our new work – in this case, a Dutchman repair – matched the quality of the original construction.

To recapture the original feeling of stone, plaster walls and vaulted ceilings were faux painted by master craftsmen using a variety of tones and hues.

Many of the original bosses and plaster elements were heavily damaged or missing entirely. A painstaking process allowed us to create molds from the originals still in place and recast missing elements throughout the Church.

There was water damage to plaster elements, the result of decades of earlier leaks, to contend with. Damaged walls and molded elements were repaired or recast with new plaster. Interestingly, hairline cracks caused by temperature variation, and not by water penetration, were determined “healthy” for the building and so were left and actually incorporated into the faux-tone painting. We also added a neoprene gasket around the perimeter of the rear arches of the nave to accommodate the continued movement of the central tower and steeple and to minimize any related future cracking. There had been considerable damage to many of the bosses and these were recast. While the scaffolding was up all the remaining decorative plaster elements were inspected and repaired as necessary using the combination of consolidants and plaster.

Because we were awarded a \$15,000 State of New York legislative initiative grant through the offices of State Senator Suzi Oppenheimer, (from the Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation) we were able to restore and rewire the original lanterns in the sanctuary, and to replace the worst of the non-conforming non-historic stained glass window panes, of which there were hundreds.

Bruce Barton inspects newly rewired and restored original lanterns in preparation for their reinstallation.



Bruce Barton inspects newly rewired and restored original lanterns in preparation for their reinstallation.

The interior restoration also provided us with the opportunity to make some small modifications in seating configuration, as had also been done in the past. Originally, a small set of pews paralleling the side walls, the “deacon’s benches”, accommodated the “elders” of the congregation – a tradition carried over to this church from the earliest of this congregations’ churches in Mamaroneck. In the 1950’s, when there was a children’s choir of 100, several rows of pews were removed from one side and the “deacon’s benches” extended to accommodate the choir.

Today, the need is for more open and flexible space in the front of the church. One row of pews in the central bank has been removed as well as all those pews

paralleling the interior wall to the right. The four rows of pews, earlier removed, have been replaced.

Removal of the scaffolding, one of the final steps in the process revealed the enormity and drama of the work that had been accomplished.

Board president Christine McCabe leading a lively discussion regarding the design and selection of pew carpeting and per cushions.

The items of carpeting and seat cushion covers were the last addressed. Consistent with its policy to make choices of material that will be lasting, the Trustees have chosen a design created by our architect to be custom made in fine English wool, and seat cushion covers of durable synthetic fabric in a pattern and colors that are coordinated with the carpeting.

Additional funds to permit completion of Phase IV were raised in the brief “Key Campaign” in the Spring of 1996. Because the Board decided to commit \$100,000 of its anticipated funds to the unanticipated but essential structural repairs identified in Phase III, “key” donors were asked to extend their pledges one additional year. The response from 150 “key” donors and new members who had caught the excitement of the restoration assured, even exceeded, our goal.

When all was done, the cost of the exterior and interior restoration of this landmarked building was \$750,000, of which \$595,000 were donated by individuals – church members, friends and community.

Finally – and there had to be a “finally” to this five year effort to preserve and restore this magnificent traditional building – we are assembled this day, December 15, 1996, celebrating the achievement of our goal and the 225th Anniversary of the beginning of this congregation in Mamaroneck.

While this part of our journey ends, a new one begins as we venture together into the 21st Century.

Interior view c. 1940

