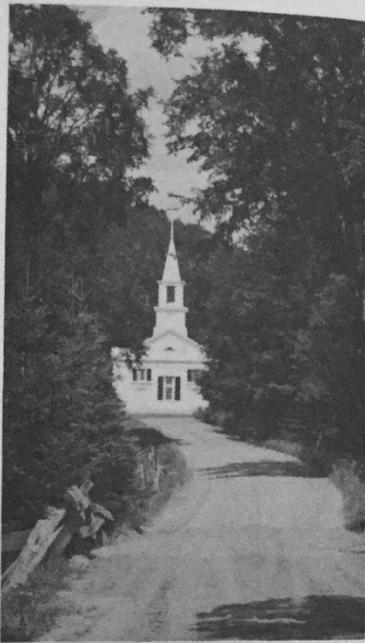


The 1972-73 Steeple and Foundation Restoration

By the spring of 1972, it became very clear that the steeple and foundation were in very bad shape. \$20,000 would be needed to be raised for the restoration. For its 12-14 members, it was a massive undertaking. The first meeting was held on June 6th where a small group of members (Alice Adams, Dobbie Jarackie, Marjorie Graves, Rick Eaton, Dot Cook and Dwight Beebe) started the gigantic process of raising the money to keep the steeple from falling. Alice Adams volunteer to be the Finance Chair. She kept a notebook which she titled "West Fairlee Ctr. Church, 1972-1973, Restoration and Progress Report" by Alice Adams. In it, she kept meticulous records of each and all donations, meeting minutes, correspondence, and newspaper articles. The following newspaper articles and accounts are from her progress report.

It was quickly realized they needed to get the word out far and wide. A letter was to be composed by Rick Eaton and Henry Graves and Rick was put in charge of keeping the newspapers informed. Everyone was to bring in names to compile a mailing list. By July 5, over 500 letters had been mailed.



THE WEST FAIRLEE CENTER

CONGREGATIONAL CHURCH

This historic and picturesque West Fairlee Center Church, known to many of you, must have extensive repairs if it is to survive. It has been, of necessity, neglected too long. Although, externally and internally, the building has been kept attractive in appearance, the very limited membership finds it now impossible to finance major repairs--which are now imperative.

Recent examination has shown the foundation to be seriously weakened; additionally, the steeple is unsafe to the point of imminent collapse. We feel it would be unthinkable to permit disintegration of this building which has served the community since 1855.

The West Fairlee Center Church is of particular historical significance. In its graveyard lies Nathaniel Niles, one of the two first representatives from Vermont to the Congress at Washington in 1791. Representative Niles, over a subsequent period of twelve years, ministered to the congregation.

It has been ascertained that \$20,000 (\$11,000 for the steeple, \$9,000 for the foundation) must be raised to make the church structurally sound. Thus, we are turning to friends and neighbors, near and far, for help in this massive undertaking.

Would you be willing to help us to the best of your ability? Checks (tax deductible) should be drawn to: West Fairlee Center Congregational Church and sent to Mrs. Raymond Adams, Finance Chairman, at Middle Brook Road, Ely, Vermont, 05044.

We shall be deeply grateful for your assistance and prayers.

P.S. If you'd like, we'd be glad to send you a progress report.

Dorothy J. Cook (Mrs. Cook)

CLERK

Leonard Russ

TREASURER

Our Summer Sale: July 26th 10 A.M. - 3 P.M. 1972

Sunday night services at 8 P.M.:

July 16, 7 30th

August 13 & 27

Steeple has been temporarily reinforced

Alice described a working "party" that was organized for Saturday, September 23, 1972, to work on the church foundation, cemetery fence, and some sprucing up the clubhouse. Those working on the church foundation were Maurice Eaton, Bob Adams, Ken Southworth, Buster Bates, Leonard Russ, Gary Paper, Earl Adams, and Carl Cook. Those painting the fence of the cemetery were Ginny Southworth, Alice Adams, Edith Eastman, Doris Honig, Dot Cook, Serena Young, Toni Pape, Marjorie Graves, Kay Schlichting, and Henry Graves. The sprucing up the clubhouse was done by Marjorie Graves, Henry Graves, Dot Cook, Phyllis Russ, Kay Schlichting, and Edith Eastman. Those providing food were Marion Godfrey, Norma Young, Marjorie Graves, Dobbie Jareckie, and Edith Eastman.

Journal-Opinion – September 28, 1972

Restoration Work Begins On Historic Old Church

WEST FAIRLEE CENTER— They built well, those West Fairlee Center folks of 150 years ago who put together the sturdy timbers for the Congregational Church here.

But time and water can bring down mountains—and churches. In 1972, the huge long timbers were rotting and the granite blocks that formed the

foundation were tilting dangerously.

They were.

Now, thanks to a community fund-raising project and some volunteer helpers, the old church building is well on its way to being restored.

Last week workmen began the restoration by starting at the bottom. Over the years,

leaking water had damaged the original timbers to the point where the entire building and steeple could collapse. And to make matters worse the massive granite blocks under the outside walls were shifting and tilting in the ground.

Workmen replaced the damaged framework, added concrete blocks and columns. The foundation is being reinforced so that only the original granite blocks will be visible from the outside.

Church members in a meeting Monday night decided to continue the restoration right up to the steeple—although this work may not be done this year. The steeple, which had been in danger of toppling, has been temporarily reinforced and workers are confident that it can weather at least one more Vermont winter.

Church goers began the restoration effort last spring with a fund drive. Richard Eaton, publicity chairman for the drive, said one half of the \$20,000 goal has been reached. This enabled the group to hire contractor Raymond Adams of West Fairlee to do the heavy reconstruction work.

Volunteers from the community are also helping. Recently about 30 people turned out to help on the church project. They also spruced up the nearby Community Clubhouse, cleared away brush and debris from the old cemetery nearby and painted the fence which rings the cemetery.

"Community people built this church in 1854," Eaton said. "I guess that community people can fix it."

The church has only about 15 members left, Eaton said, but it is used—only during the summer—by many area residents who are not official members.

Funds are still being sought to aid in the project. Donations may be mailed to Mrs. Raymond Adams, RFD Ely.

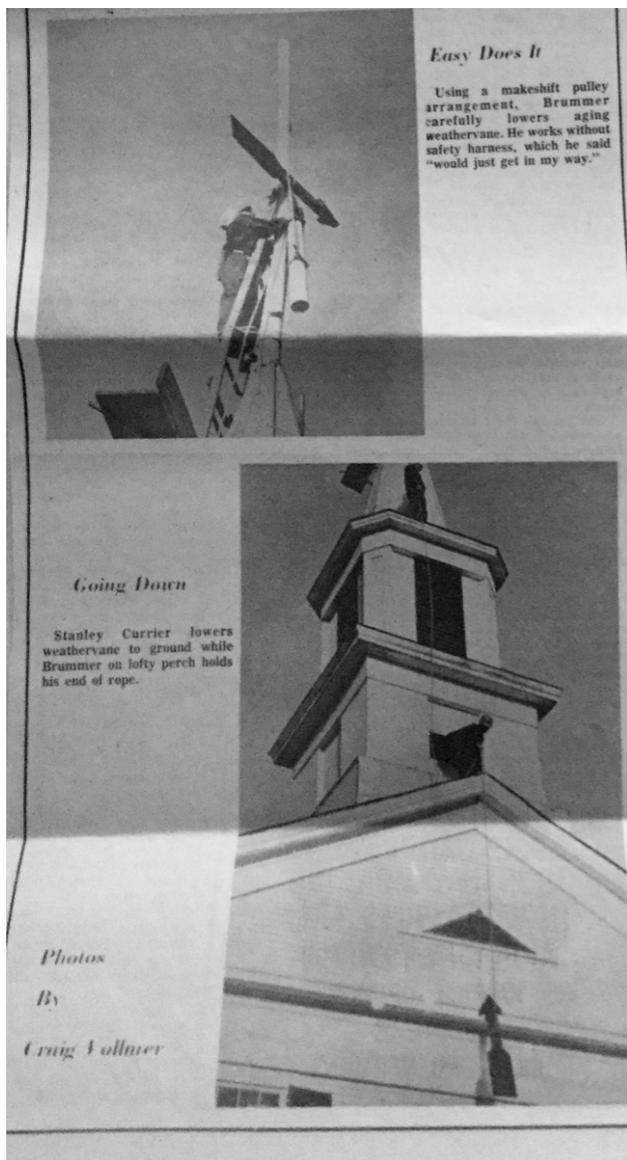


From The Ground Up

Richard Eaton examines reconstruction work underneath old West Fairlee Center Congregational Church. Timbers that had supported the building for 150 years were replaced.

Alice reported, "There was help all around the place. Putting timbers in place, digging around the church, and knocking and breaking out the cement steps and landing. There was great excitement when the children found snake eggs and watched them hatch right then and there."

Journal-Opinion – November 12, 1972



By the beginning of 1973, they had the money needed to complete the restoration. In January, they received the sad news that the steeple contractor had fallen 40 feet off a church he had been working on in Franconia, NY, and died. It certainly made everyone aware of the dangers involved. Raymond Morse of Littleton, NH was selected to finish the steeple and roof job.

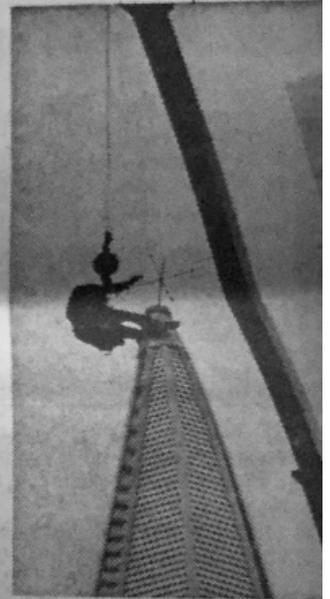
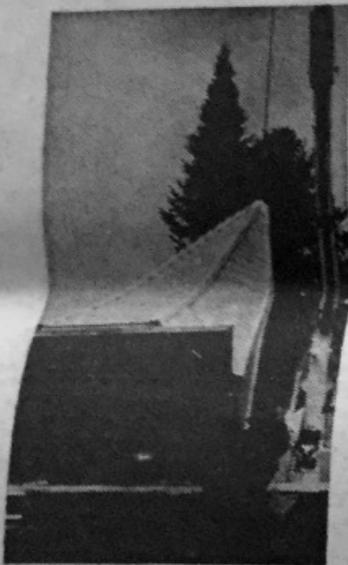
Reroofing of the Church was completed by May 20, 1973. On October 2, 1973, the great day arrived when the new steeple was transported from Littleton, NH on a flatbed truck and the crane lifted it into place. The new steeple was installed completing the restoration work.

Journal-Opinion – October 4, 1973



...unambiguously rejected the proposal. view, is too dear a price to pay so efficiently."

27th Anniversary



UP, UP AND AWAY — A group of West Fairlee Center residents spent much of Tuesday craning their necks as a new steeple was hoisted into position on their church. It took awhile and the job encountered a few hitches, but then Rome wasn't built in a day. The effort caps a long restoration program. (News photos — Tom Ahern)

W. Fairlee Center Church Gets New Spire

By TOM AHERN

WEST FAIRLEE CENTER — A group of people who were determined to preserve the West Fairlee Center Church saw more than a year's work capped off Tuesday afternoon.

With a small crowd of on-lookers exclaiming by the minute, "Isn't it beautiful," a new steeple was hoisted into place atop the church's belfry by a 30-ton crane.

The church, built in 1855, needed roofing and foundation work along with a new spire. More than a year ago, members of the tiny village which seemingly is at the end of a country road launched a drive to collect about \$19,000 for all the necessary repairs.

Aided by grants and private contributions, as well as civic fund-raising events, the goal which at one time seemed unattainable was reached.

New Weathervane

The moment everyone waited for Tuesday afternoon was when

Raymond Moore, who made the steeple, slipped into a makeshift bosun's chair, was handed the steeple weathervane and was lifted more than 80 feet into the air by the crane to set the vane into place.

The weathervane, church publicity director Richard Eaton admitted, was not original. When the old one was taken down, it was full of bullet holes it could not be reused. Eaton said a local craftsman made the new weathervane and a beautiful arrow ball and set of compass directions, all in gold leaf, attested to the man's ability.

It can't be said the "liftoff" went without a hitch. The 24-foot steeple, hauled in from Moore's Bethlehem, N.H., shop, arrived a good two hours after the crane made its way from Windsor. But when the steeple arrived on a trailer behind Moore's truck, most of West Fairlee Center was right in back of it, in a procession of sorts.

Getting the steeple in position for the crane and off its trailer was probably the trickiest part of the day. But a couple of sidewalk foremen, who obviously enjoyed the chance to slip out of the West Fairlee woods with their hardhats on, got a chance to show some of the younger men a thing or two about construction.

Easy Part

The easiest part turned out to be setting the steeple on its belfry. With a flip of the lever, the boom of the crane telescoped up and cable was wound in. Moore, who is one of few men who earns his living building new steeples (as well as repairing old ones), was ready up above and declared the steeple in perfect position minutes after it was raised.

It was all Moore when it came time to sit in the bosun's chair and be pulled aloft. While a number of people said, "You'd never get me up there in one of those things," Moore seemed

perfectly calm and at ease — even sitting astride the tip of the steeple.

With Eaton and his father, Maurice standing by with a compass, Moore was ready to align the giant golden "N" with magnetic north.

As can be imagined, Moore's job is dangerous, no matter the precautions. Until a year ago, Moore worked with another man but took over the while business when his partner fell from a church roof in Franconia and died several days later.

Second Steeple

This is the second new steeple Moore, who works with his wife, has made this year. Their first was in Hopkinton, made of lead and copper. The steeple for the West Fairlee Church, though, was made of aluminum.

It won't rot or fade, the younger Eaton noted happily. Some work still has to be done to the church but he clearly felt

(Continued on Page 12)

— CHURCH

Church -

(Continued from Page 1)

they were over the hump. When the stone lower side walls were put back in place and the foundation repaired, much of the plaster and wall paper cracked, Eaton said, explaining this project is still ahead.

"All in all it was quite a job. If we hadn't done something it would have faded away, he added, noting the roof was leaking and the old steeple was due to blow off any time.

The church, of course, has its own special history. The congregation was founded by Nathaniel Niles around 1800. Niles, who was elected to the state legislature, served the congregation as pastor and used his home for services. He is now buried next to the church under a huge pyramid-shaped marker.

And it is said that a man, when asked one time why he never went to church, declared it would fall in if he ever entered. Sure enough, the day he was brought inside in his casket the floor gave way.

To Eaton and the rest of West Fairlee Center, the church has meaning. As he said, "I'm 25 and I'm a die-hard Vermonter. I've just about been looking at that church all my life and I want to keep looking at it. It's part of the heritage of the town. The church has a value to the community, to the area."

Alice's final notation in her records: "Hope you enjoy browsing into our endeavors. We enjoyed every minute."