

Suburban Life

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Historic church renovation recalls its past

By Loraine McClellan

CONSTRUCTION CONTINUES on the Universalist Unitarian Church of Farmington, surrounded by some icy slopes, some muddy ditches and sometimes drifting snow, but target date for completion is past and the congregation will remain crowded in their too-small sanctuary for Christmas services.

Groundbreaking for the expansion of the 132-year-old meeting house that has been used for church services by Universalists since 1853 was held in August with a hoped-for Dec. 15 completion date.

But holding close to plans that called for a strict retaining of the New England-style building's appearance and in keeping with its historical landmark status has put a completion date in limbo.

"It'll take as long as it takes," is the way Art Morrill, who is a co-chair of the church's expansion committee, put it. "Our congregation is very proud of their heritage and the historic status of the building. As much as it is costing, they've chosen to purchase custom-made pews that will match exactly the old ones we have now, for continuity."

"We're working with an architect who has done a lot of work in Plymouth where they are very concerned about new buildings that fit into that community's mode, as well as restoration in that city. And we've followed through on every concern and suggestion the Farmington Hills Historical Commission has given us to retain the original appearance," he said.

TOTAL COST for the expansion,

'Our congregation is very proud of their heritage and the historic status of the building.'

Art Morrill

which is about half-again the length of the original building, is \$250,000. The architect is Erik Carne of Carne Associates in Plymouth. The builder is Guaranteed Construction of Farmington Hills.

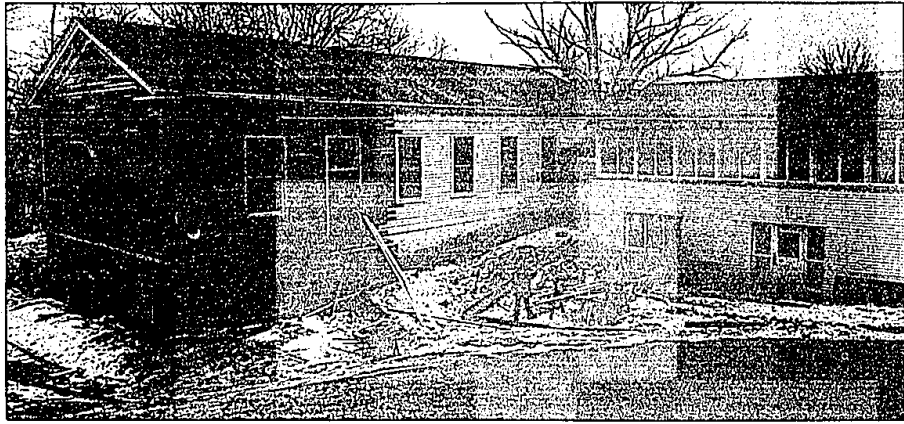
"One of the most difficult jobs was the merging of wood slates between the old building and the new extension," said Gary Darke, a member of the congregation. "They had to be joined so there was no distinct line between the old and the new."

Another facet to be worked out was the new roof shingles which had to be perfectly matched with the weathered ones on the original building, so even from afar, there was no distinct line marking the old from the new. An emergency door on the extension, required by city ordinances, was moved around several times on the drawing boards, according to Morrill. "To get the door in a perfect window-wall, window-wall sequence."

The installation of new sewerage lines and drainage added in both time and cost for the project.

"When the construction is completed, a lower level will hold new kitchen facilities and the congregation will have a new and expanded parking lot," Darke said.

The new and expanded sanctuary will retain the traditional simplicity



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Old wooden slates are merged with the new to make one continuous line from the historic New England meeting house onto its new extension. Likewise old and weathered shingles on the build-

ing's roof were perfectly color-matched with the new to retain its original appearance.

of the Universalists, which carried over when that group merged with the Unitarians to make up what is generally known as the U-U Church.

"Most U-U churches are named Unitarian-Universalist. Our formal name is Universalist-Unitarian Church of Farmington because the Universalists have been here since 1840," Morrill said. "When you realize what that means, you can realize how important it is for us to keep our building looking just as it did when it was built and keep our roots."

THE BUILDING, located on seven acres of land on Halsted Road north of Grand River, is the oldest U-U church in Michigan.

It was built on Warner Street, in downtown Farmington, and in 1967 not long after the merger with the Unitarian denomination, was moved

to where it stands today, on property formerly called the Gibson Centennial Farm. A subsequent addition houses offices, meeting rooms, Farmington Co-op Nursery, and a religious education area.

The Rev. Kathleen Korb, acting as interim minister for the church, says the sanctuary "fits 60 comfortably and there has never been a Sunday since I've been here that chairs didn't have to be brought up for services."

The church membership stands at 144.

Of that number, Morrill said a good percentage were out in number this fall laying 1,000 square rods of sod, sculpting the land to improve the drainage around the historical site as well as to retain the natural beauty that surrounds the slight hill where the 132-year old building stands.



RANDY BORST/staff photographer

Gary Darke and the Rev. Kathleen Korb are in the last pew of the sanctuary which seats about 60. New pews are being custom-made to be matched exactly with the ones that are in the church now.

Retired minister takes Rotary Award



Dr. Paul Gillis

Dr. Paul McBride Gillis received the Paul Harris Fellow Award at a special luncheon of the Farmington Rotary early this month. The Farmington Rotary Club was able to honor Gillis with the award by contributing \$1,000 to the International Rotary Foundation.

Gillis, a Farmington resident for 24 years, has been very active in charitable and community activities. At the age of 86 and now retired, he has served as Presbyterian minister for eight years at the Westminster Church at Hubble and Outer Drive in Detroit and more recently for 4½ years at the Woodward Avenue Church in Detroit.

McBride came to the Detroit area in 1961. He graduated from the University of Pittsburgh in 1934 and served as a minister of churches in that area. He has been a member of the Lions Club during the 1930s, a member of the Kiwanis Club during the 1940s and became first president of the Ingram, Pa. Rotary Club in 1949. He became a member of the Farmington Rotary Club in 1971 after moving to the area and was the club's president in 1979-1980.

THE AWARDS, named after the founder of Rotary, Paul Harris, honor a Rotary member who has demonstrated a commitment to community service.

The Rotary Foundation seeks to promote international understanding, good will and peace in practical, realistic terms.

Special Grants and grants for the Health, Hunger and Humanity (3-H) program are made throughout the year to support international charitable projects sponsored by Rotary clubs or districts.

Scholarships and group study exchanges are awarded annually to gifted men and women both to further their education and to hone their skills as effective "ambassadors of good will" in countries other than their own. Exposure to the life and customs of the study country through the guidance of Rotarian hosts and their families results in camaraderie and lasting friendships that help realize the foundation's goals of furthering international understanding.

One half of this contribution is designated to be used for the Rotary's 2005 Project which is a Rotary International Project to eliminate polio by 2005.

Sarah Fisher sends Wish List

In the past several weeks the Sarah Fisher Center has received many phone calls from persons asking if they could take a child into their homes to share the beauty of the holiday, the Christmas dinner and the holiday spirit.

"Unfortunately, this can do more harm than good for the children," said Myra Luzad, speaking for the home that houses abused and neglected children.

"They often times feel uncomfortable in strange surroundings on this special day," she said.

So in an effort to allow those persons in the community a chance to help underprivileged children, the center has published a Wish List.

"These items are desperately needed by the agency. Sand for the sandboxes, large over-stuffed pillows for the play room, black VHS cassettes, just to name a few," she said.

The St. Vincent Sarah Fisher Center, on the corner of 12 Mile and Inlander Roads in Farmington Hills, is a multi-faceted residential facility for children and adults.

The Sarah Fisher Home is a residential care and treatment facility for abused, neglected and emotionally disturbed youngsters from 5-14 years old. About 60 children reside in five cottages.

Marillac Hall is houses about 25 young inmates pregnant women ranging in age from early teens to early 20s.

Louise Hall is a residential center for teen mothers and their infants.

The staff in Seton Nursery School and Day Care Center cares for children from six weeks to six years for working parents.

CHRISTMAS, birthdays and other special days are celebrated with individual gifts for the residents.

New clothes, popular records, jewelry, make up, cologne, sports equipment, board games, craft kits, dolls and cars are all things on the children's wish lists.

Pregnant teens earn points in an effort to select a baby item from Marillac Hall's store. T-shirts, blankets,

sleepers, bibs and booties will help keep the shelves stocked.

Photo albums and autograph books are treasured "going-away" gifts when the youngsters leave Sarah Fisher.

Sofa pillows are on the wish list because Luzad said "Our couches aren't the most comfortable in the world, especially for our pregnant young ladies."

Footstools are also needed for the expectant mothers "to elevate legs, which prevent swelling."

Contributors can add color to the cottages with gifts of new bedspreads or fire-proof curtains. Each bedroom has three single beds and three windows.

Blank VHS videocassettes help record the children's special events and in-service presentations for the home's video recorder.

"All of the home's three sandboxes have been dug out and need clean, new sand. Cost to fill one of the boxes is \$50.

THE HOME'S camp facility in Brighton needs some new safety equip-

ment, new life jackets and a hand-held megaphone.

All kinds of recreation equipment can be used. Floor hockey sets, a tug of war rope and baseball gloves are on the list because "the children learn to play together as a team," Luzad said.

A campership costs \$200 per child which gives a camp experience that is designed to help build a child's self confidence and appreciation for nature.

A gift of \$100 would send eight teen mothers on a trip to Bob-Lo Island for a day out without responsibilities.

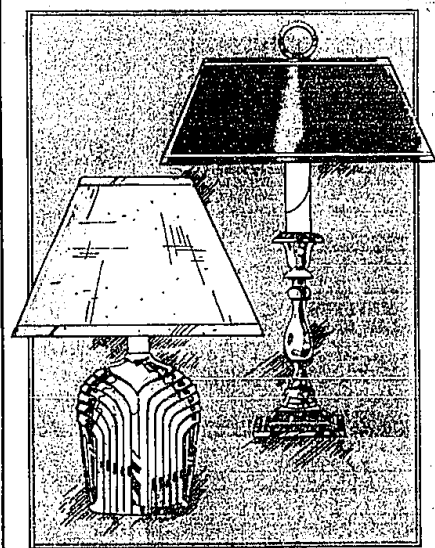
A gift of \$25 will add to Marillac Hall's "Mom's Day Out" fund.

The expectant mothers often arrive in Marillac Hall with neither maternity tops or pants. The hall's current supply is both worn and outdated.

The teen mothers, who are taught menu planning, grocery budgeting, shopping and cooking, need a new set of cookware.

A 19-inch color TV with a VHS adapter plug would be used for parenting and group sessions. The home could also use a portable TV cart.

Luzad will take all calls of inquiry at 626-7527.



LIGHT UP YOUR HOLIDAY GIVING WITH A MINI LAMP
Beautiful bright hints to give... mini-lamps to blend into any decor. Choose from our wide collection for a lovely gift. For someone special or for yourself. Left: 14" H vase-style base, natural linen shade. Right: 16" H lamp with solid brass candleholder-shaped base. Black parchment shade trimmed in gold: \$39.

Jacobson's

CONVENIENT HOLIDAY HOURS:
MONDAY THROUGH FRIDAY UNTIL 9:
Shop Saturday until 6.