

The Renovation News

The First Presbyterian Church
Bergen, New York

Issue Number 1
June, 1996

Welcome: to the First Edition of *The Renovation News*, published monthly by your Session and The Facilities Task Force. We hope to give you all the information you need to follow the progress of this ambitious and exciting project as the work moves forward the next several months. In this issue we will provide some background information (why this project is being undertaken), what has been accomplished to date, and an estimate of the work schedule for the next few months.

Background: Over two years ago in the fall of 1993, the Session of the church entered upon a project to assess the structural soundness of our buildings (sanctuary and Fellowship Hall being over 150 years old) and to determine how we could increase the usable space available to us. Several of our programs had run out of good space, particularly Sunday School and the youth programs. We were also aware that the kitchen was not a very useful or productive facility and probably was in violation of a number of existing fire and safety codes. We engaged an engineering firm to provide us with input, and they studied the Fellowship Hall wing of the church for several months. Their final recommendation, however, was that there were so many areas of serious concern in the structural integrity in the floor and roof areas of the Fellowship Hall that the best alternative was to demolish the entire wing and build a brand new building. This, needless to say, was a very unappetizing choice for us as it was expected that the cost of a new building would be much more than we could afford, and might create significant problems with complying with the local zoning ordinance. (See note on costs and zoning issues on next page.)

A second engineering opinion was sought and we hired Donald Jensen & Asso. who were recommended as being more experienced in working with older buildings. Their studies, conducted in the fall of 1994 and winter of 1994/95 indicated that there were several areas of real structural and safety concern in the Fellowship Hall, but they believed that the building was and should be retained and renovated. (At the same time the engineers looked at the sanctuary and determined that, although, there were some concerns, no immediate work was needed.)



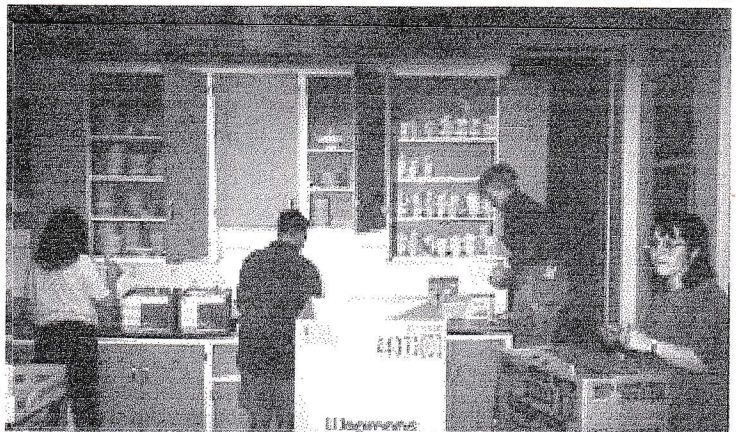
Fellowship Hall - May, 1996

With these results in hand, and more input from the people involved in the church's programs, the architectural firm of Doran Yarrington was hired late in 1995 to develop plans and specifications for a significant renovation. In the period from early December through April a great deal of work was accomplished by the architects of D-Y (particularly partner Michael Doran and his associate, Erin Maloney), and we now have a full set of floor plans and construction specifications for a Fellowship Hall wing of the church. One set of floor plans (not the most recent) are mounted on boards in entryway outside the side sanctuary entrance; the most recent plans can be seen in the church office.

Costs: The total cost of the project is expected to be below \$500,000, with much of this cost covered by volunteer labor of our church members and friends. It is hoped that we will need to use no more than \$250,000 of our resources in our endowment funds, this amount being the approximate current value of the Richards Fund which has been designated for the support of church facilities. In discussions with the congregation about these cost issues, it is often asked why we have decided not to demolish the current wing and build new. There are two significant reasons:

- 1) **Cost:** Doran Yarrington has calculated that a new building with the same total square foot area as our goal for the renovated building (15,900 square feet) would cost over \$1.6 million using goal materials and volumes similar to the existing building. Deviating significantly from the character of the existing building, costs could be reduced to about \$70 per square foot; a total cost still in excess of \$1 million.
- 2) **Zoning Issues:** If the current structure were demolished to make way for a new building, any new construction would be directly impacted by the current zoning ordinance for the Village of Bergen. Since the church building was pre-existing when zoning went into effect, the church is "grandfathered" and does not need to meet lot set-back regulations as long as it remains standing. The Fellowship Hall now stands directly on the lot line to our south, and it is only 38 feet from the road right-of-way in the front and 83 feet from the back lot line. Bob Lichtenthal, the Zoning Officer for the Village, tells us that the church is in the R-3 residential district, and, as a non-residential structure, would need to meet a 20-foot side set-back regulation, and 50-foot front and rear set-back regulations. Therefore, if we were to demolish the current Fellowship Hall wing, any new building would need to meet these criteria unless we could obtain some significant variances from the Zoning Board of Appeals. Without such variances, trying to design the space we need into a building that would be pulled 20 feet back on the south and 12 feet from Lake Avenue would be totally impractical. In such a situation the Zoning Board could logically direct us to build on the north side of the church, thus eliminating a large portion of our parking and area for future expansion.

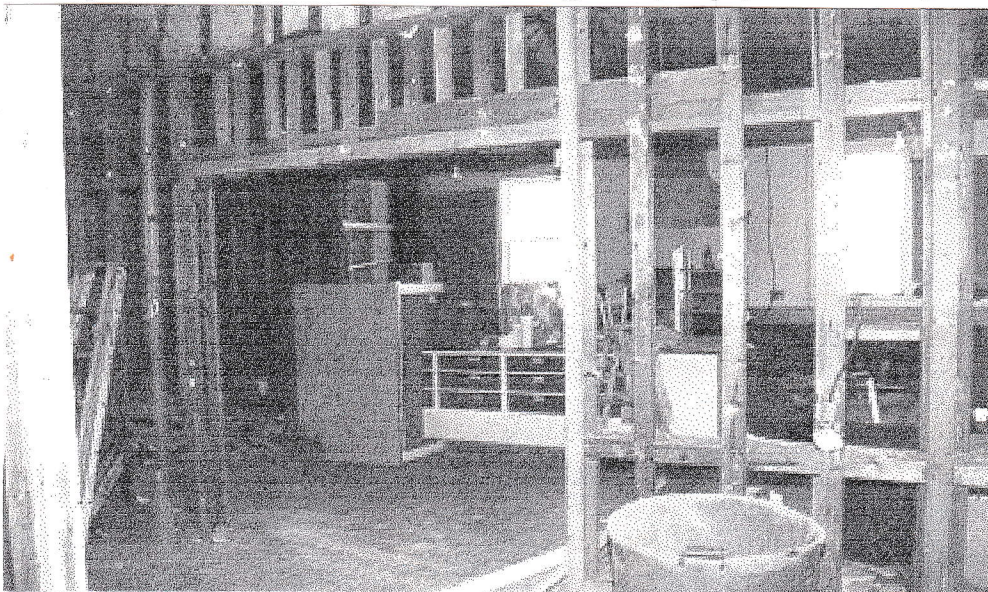
Financing of the Project: Our church is indeed fortunate and has been blessed by the Lord with some generous bequests from past members and with good stewardship of those bequests. Our endowments total over \$550,000, a very large sum for a church such as ours. Of these resources, about \$100,000 is earmarked as a Manse Fund to be used for the purchase of a manse in the future if it is needed by a new pastor. About \$200,000 is in the Gillette Fund for use in support of our mission and program (this is the source of the \$10,000 we have used annually to support our expanded youth program), and over \$250,000 is in the Best and Richards Funds for facilities and building needs. It is the Richards Fund that will pay for most if not all of our renovation project. All money withdrawn will be in the form of interest-free loans that we are committed to repay to the Fund from income from a Capital Fund Drive. Approval to use these funds for our renovation was given at a meeting of the congregation earlier this year, and on May 5th the congregation approved a capital fund drive to raise up to \$300,000. It has been this commitment to repaying money borrowed from our endowments (such as the \$80,000 used in the sanctuary basement work in 1982/83) that has ensured we have the funds today. If expenses run over the amount in the Richards Fund, we have access to a line of credit from the Bank of Castile at prime rate.



Volunteers Packing up the Kitchen

More information on the Capital Fund Drive will be in subsequent issues of *The Renovation News*, but we expect the drive to kick-off this fall.

Progress: The first stages of the project have begun! Some of the walls and stored materials in the basement under the stage area have been removed, and significant demolition has started in the kitchen and Fellowship Hall. A temporary wall has been constructed across the Hall separating the west end of the Hall from the east end where the basement excavation will take place. All of the kitchen items (plates, cups, silverware, utensils, etc.) have been boxed and removed, and the cabinets removed. All of the interior wall surfaces in the kitchen and east end of Fellowship Hall have also been removed. This work has revealed much of the ages old construction of this building, and clearly shows many of the areas of questionable structural integrity that concerned the engineers. Above the ceiling at the west end of the closed off Hall is clear evidence of a chimney that went up through the roof in that area, and some indications of a chimney

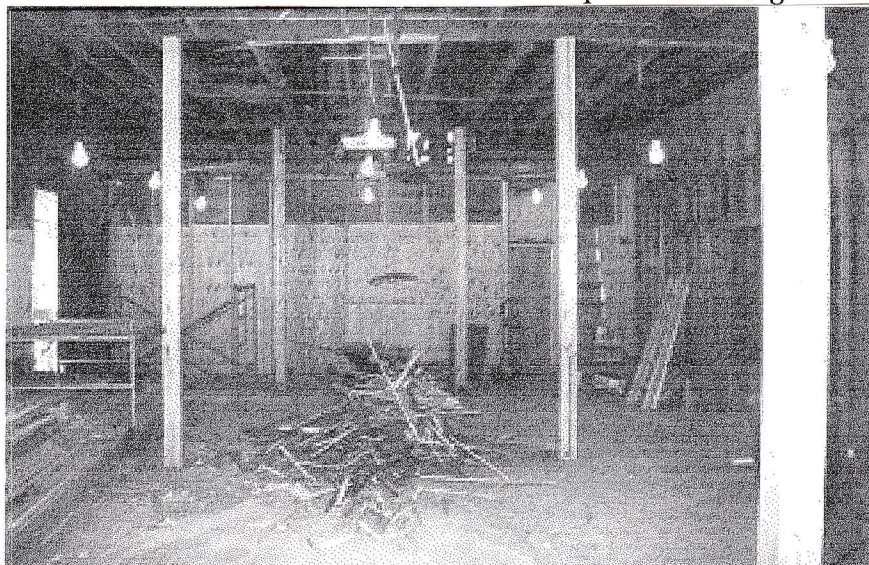


View into Kitchen during Renovation

fire in times gone by. We believe that the eight support posts that were installed as an emergency measure early last year may indeed have averted some serious structural failure.

Schedule:

1) Removal of the floor in the kitchen and east end of the Hall should begin in early June, followed by digging into the earth beneath the kitchen from the area in front of the front kitchen door. The plan is to dig under the existing exterior walls with a compact back hoe and dig out the earth to the intended depth of the new basement. Then the excavation of the earth under the Hall will begin, entering under the existing double door at the front of the Hall. A grain elevator donated by Wendell Call and modified by Fred Ely will be put to good use in this work.



Fellowship Hall, May 1996

2) The foundation masonry work in the newly excavated basement area should begin about June 15th. Ron Spink and Ron Spink Jr., our general contractors, will be doing this work.

3) Work to install the raised floor in the kitchen area should begin by early July, with work on the new, raised floor in the Hall to begin by late July.

4) Vacation Bible School runs the week of August 12, and our plans are to ensure that VBS can proceed unimpeded by any work on the first floor in the area of the stairwells, in the basement beneath, or in the west end of the Hall or on the stage. Some play area

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under the stage and the west end of the Hall may be open for their use.

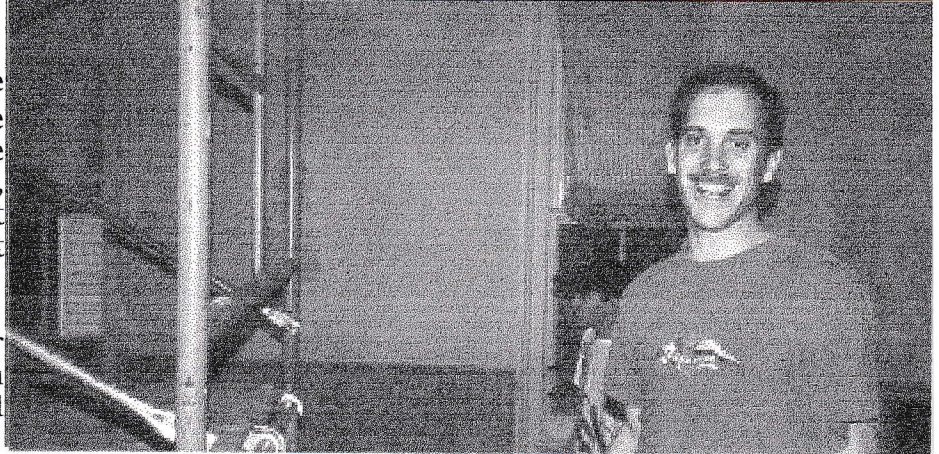
5) The structural work in the roof over the Fellowship Hall will be started by the Spinks as soon as their masonry work in the basement is completed, probably in July.

6) Once VBS is over, some significant work should start in the area of the church offices, the stairs, and in the basement beneath.

Further information on our schedule will become available as the work proceeds, but a lot will depend on how timely the volunteer work is accomplished, and, to some extent, on the weather over the summer.

Volunteer Needs: The following openings need to be filled. If you have the capability and are interested, contact the Church Office at 494-1251 or Dan Sheldon at 494-2442):

1) Lead carpenter for installation of the new wooden floors in Fellowship Hall and kitchen



The "Boss"

2) Installation of insulation in walls

3) Substitute for Dan Sheldon in leading Saturday morning or Thursday evening Work Sessions when Dan cannot make it

Coming Issues: In the next issue we will relate some of the interesting history of our Fellowship Hall - it has not always been a Fellowship Hall and was not always at 36 South Lake Avenue!

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