

Volunteers have been working every weekend to complete restoration of the Terra Cotta Community Hall, which they began April 2011. Among the volunteers who have been working tirelessly are (from left) Pete Coe, Ted Webb, Donna Cragg (with Scruffy), Knud Jespersen, Verna Jespersen, Ron Budenas, Sylvie Budenas, and Art Rice.



Photo by Ted Brown

Hall's restoration a team effort

By **TED BROWN**
Staff Writer

Nestled in the background of Terra Cotta on High Street is a building which has seen many changes over the decades.

Originally built in 1862 as a Wesleyan Methodist Church, the church served the Methodists in the area until the union of the Methodist and Presbyterian churches into the United Church of Canada in 1925. At that time, the building ceased to be used for regular Sunday services.

It saw activities, and gradually evolved into use as a community hall maintained by Terra Cotta residents. In 1992, the United Church of Canada transferred ownership to a group of trustees.

And at that time, the questions started to flow for the residents—now that we own it, what do we do to restore this building?

Restoration wouldn't become a reality until 2007, when the board received a \$100,000 grant from the Ontario Trillium Foundation, to start restoration of the 19th century building.

"It had become quite tired by that time," said Ron Budenas, one of the many volunteers. "The existing foundation was crumbling to nothing."

In April of 2011, the group started preparations, and by August, the main body of the structure was lifted off the existing foundation by a crane, and set to one side while the basement was excavated and a proper foundation was built.

Once the foundation was completed, the structure was moved back to its new foundation—and that's when the volunteers took over.

"Every weekend, since last October (2011) there has been a group of volunteers

here, working on various aspects to the hall," said Budenas, "It's been amazing, because not only have we had people here to work as construction workers or labourers, there have been others volunteering in other ways, like those who have cooked meals to feed us as we work."

Budenas said they have been overwhelmed with the support from local businesses. He said many of the trades who worked on the project donated their service or gave discounts, and a number of local businesses gave great support.

Budenas said they received exceptional donations from Georgetown United Lumber, Dufferin Aggregates, Brampton Brick, and R&B Construction Services (which dug the basement).

In addition, Dimpflmeier Bakery stepped up to the plate with a \$10,000 donation which started the ball rolling for others to donate to the cause.

The original main body of the structure is intact, but the front entrance was replaced with a handicapped accessible entrance, and they kept the building historically accurate. The building is fully accessible and the kitchen has all the amenities.

Heated with a natural gas furnace, and air conditioned, the hall will be used for a plethora of different events, from wedding receptions to community events.

The 'grand hall', as it is called by the volunteers, has lighting fixtures reminiscent of church fixtures, as a reminder of the building's roots and original purpose.

As the project nears completion, the group is taking inventory of their costs, hoping to finish before winter. Budenas is hopeful to have the hall open in the fall.

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