

Sunnyside Herald

News for Friends of Ladbury/Sunnyside Church

No. 1 (15 June 2001)

Ladbury Church Needs Friends!

Church Endangered

Ladbury Church, also known as Sunnyside Church, the Union Congregational Church of rural Sibley, North Dakota, has been named on the state's 2001 list of most endangered historic properties. Such listing highlights the need for action by friends of the church to preserve it for future Dakotans.

The list of endangered historic properties in North Dakota was issued during National Preservation Week, May 2001, by Preservation North Dakota, a state-wide association devoted to preservation issues. Joining Ladbury Church on the list were the Rainbow Arch Bridge on East Main, Valley City, and the McLean County Courthouse, Washburn.

The latter two properties face threats from units of local government which contemplate their destruction. Ladbury Church, on the other hand, is endangered by simple forces of nature. Time and the elements have told on the old church.

In mid-May 2001 the east foundation wall of the church collapsed. Other basement walls also appear unstable.

On the other hand, the church itself, a fine piece of workmanship, remains sound. It likely can suffer little more foundation loss, but to this point it has stood straight and sturdy.

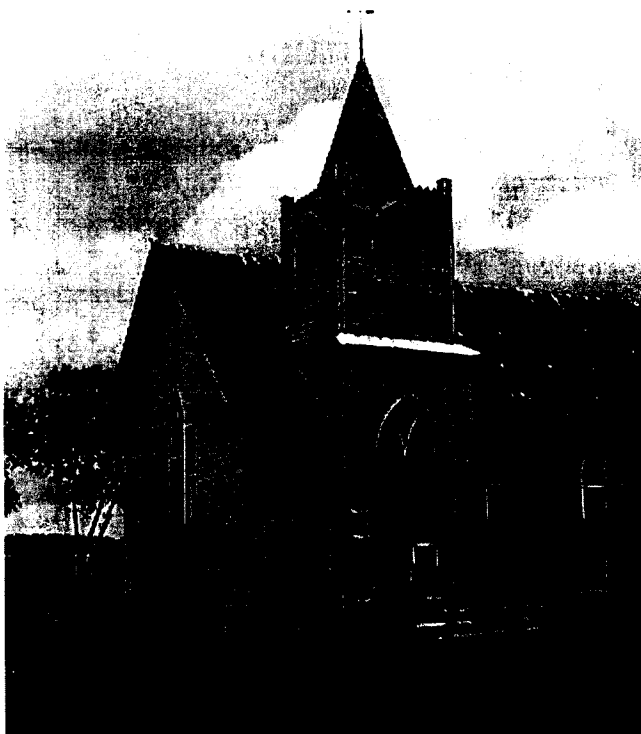
Memorial Weekend visitors to adjacent Sunnyside Cemetery found friends of Ladbury Church and several (volunteer) professional consultants examining the structure and making concrete plans to stabilize and restore it. Friends of Ladbury—stay tuned for details!

Church History

After holding services in a nearby school for twenty-nine years, a congregation member, Edwin Ladbury, donated an acre of land for the Union Congregational Church and cemetery. The church would be located in a rural area, near one of the campsites (Camp Corning) used by General George Sibley on his Dakota Campaign of 1863.

In 1926 the congregation purchased the Congregational church of Kensal, North Dakota, located about twenty-five miles to the northwest, and moved it to the site. The church had been

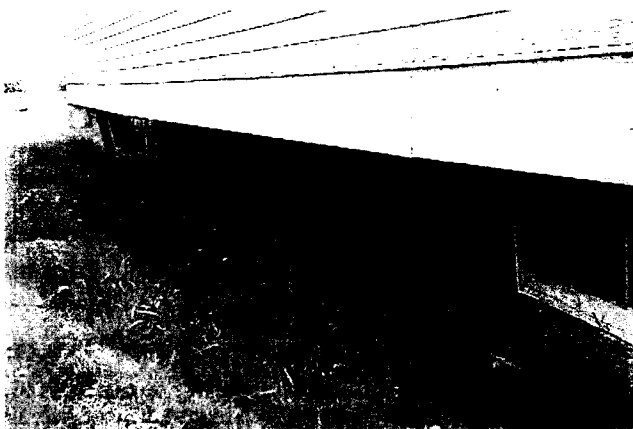
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built in 1900. The small, well crafted, white clapboard church became locally known as the Ladbury Church. The new church was set on a basement that held a coal burning furnace and a small coal cook-stove to serve food for community gatherings. After only ten years of regular services, the church was closed in 1936. The building continued to be used for funerals, weddings, Memorial Day services, and other special occasions for many years.

In recent years the foundation and basement walls began to crumble, and raccoons made frequent visits doing damage to the roof, walls, and ceilings. The foundation has come to a crisis situation and is threatening to endanger the safety of the entire structure. Something must be done as soon as possible to save the building. Much of the furnishings have been removed to provide a safe place to store them until the building could be repaired. The yard and cemetery are beautifully maintained by a small group of dedicated volunteers. These same volunteers would now like to see the church renovated to once again be used as a community center and as a gathering place for the rural residents of the area. An architectural assessment study has been conducted and the group is hoping to accomplish most of its plans with fund-raising and donated labor.—*Becky Heise, Valley City*



The collapsed east basement wall

Plans for Restoration

Consulting architect Rurik Ekstrom, of Fargo, has examined the Ladbury Church twice and outlined a plan for stabilizing the building. The plan—one emphasizing volunteer labor and modest expenditures for materials—involves key points.

1. Preparation for work by clearing collapsed concrete and other debris and bracing the east wall with jacks and timbers.
2. Excavating alongside the east foundation wall.
3. Pouring concrete piers under the east wall and other stress points, such as the center of the church.
4. Filling the basement with gravel, thereby equalizing pressure on its remaining walls and stabilizing the structure.

Further restoration work on the church awaits completion of this important phase of stabilization. This newsletter will carry the details as they emerge.

Contact Information

For information about the Ladbury/Sunnyside Church, contact George Amann, 11610 16th Street SE, Dazey ND 58429 (tel 701-733-2119). For information about this publication, or to be placed on the mailing list, contact Tom Isern, 3803 Willow Road, West Fargo ND 58078 (tel 701-799-2942, e-mail tom@plainsfolk.com).

Helping Hands

This newsletter for Friends of Ladbury/Sunnyside is produced with assistance from the NDSU Department of History and from Preservation North Dakota—our state's state-wide association for historic preservation.