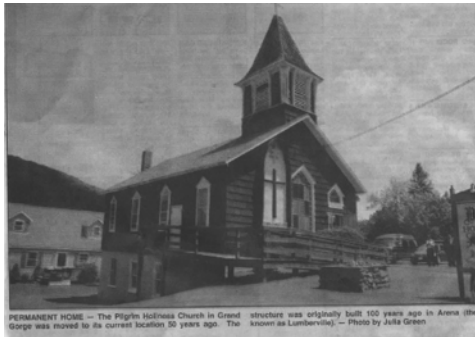
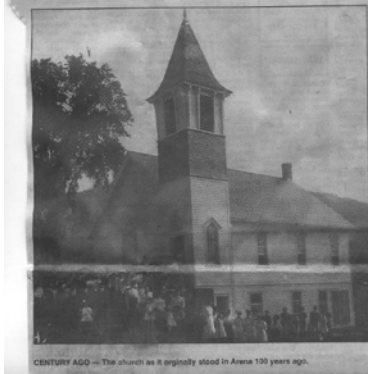


Historic church was built in 1908 and reconstructed in Grand Gorge 50 years ago

By Julia Green, Catskill Mountain News, Week of June 11 to June 17, 2008



PERMANENT HOME — The Pilgrim Holiness Church in Grand Gorge was moved to its current location 50 years ago. The structure was originally built 100 years ago in Arena (then known as Lumberville). — Photo by Julia Green



CENTURY AGO — The church as it originally stood in Arena 100 years ago.

The Pilgrim Holiness Church in Grand Gorge commemorated the 50th anniversary of the reconstruction of its sanctuary building on Saturday with a day of celebratory activities, including a 10 a.m. service followed by lunch at the Grand Gorge Civic Center. This year also marks the 100th anniversary of the original construction of the building in June 1908, which first served an Advent Christian congregation.

Those on hand to honor the anniversary were John Sherman, who served as pastor at the church from 1974 to 1989, Larry Major, who spent 13 years as pastor at the church, Conference President Donald Myers, and Maurice Hobart, the pastor from 1969 to 1974, was responsible for reconstructing the church at its current location.

The Pilgrim Holiness Church building was originally located in Arena, originally known as Lumberville, one of three communities along the East Branch of the Delaware River that was razed in the building of the Pepacton Reservoir. Rev. Hobart, who was seeking a new building for the church for which he was the pastor, saw the structure in the area he knew was to be flooded and began the work of relocating the building to Grand Gorge. Without hiring a contractor or borrowing any money, Hobart and a handful of volunteers gradually, piece by piece, relocated the church building to its current site on Route 23.

Hobart and two other volunteers poured the cement by hand, laid blocks for the foundation, cut wood for the steeple, and used a chain hoist to lift a three-quarter-ton bell into the bell tower. Hobart also fashioned a makeshift crane using the rear end of a car to hoist the walls into place.

Hobart acknowledged that the process was not without its obstacles, citing the time he was blown off the 30-foot roof by a strong wind as well as the number of times that the project ran out of funds.

“As I look back, the devil fought long and hard against this building,” he said. “Some difficulties we have, the Lord lets us get through them so we can better serve him — that’s been my life.”

“That type of thing takes a vision, and brain and brawn,” said Myers. “This generation, they’d look at the building and run a bulldozer through it. God had a vision and placed it on Brother Hobart. Through his efforts and vision, this church is here today.”

Myers also read a passage from the book of Haggai, which stated, “The glory of this latter house shall be greater than of the former.”

Margaretville resident Berna VanBenschoten, whose father played a large part in the construction of the church in Arena, also spoke, offering a history of the church in its original form. She also gave churchgoers the opportunity to view the ledgers that were kept during construction, which document hours the men worked, wages, cost of materials and other data.

At the closing of the morning’s service, Sherman presented Hobart with a plaque on behalf of the Grand Gorge Pilgrim Holiness

Church, "as a token of their undying appreciation of what [he] did to make these facilities possible."

Everyone was invited to the buffet at the Civic Center, which was prepared by the ladies of the church.

Rev. Sherman continued as moderator for the 2:30 afternoon service.

Rev. Andrew Whitney, conference president emeritus, spoke words of encouragement to the congregation.

Letters were read from the families of previous pastors Roy Dorsett, A.M. Eads and Emmet Wakefield. A letter from Robert and Verna Delamarter of Florida and longtime members was also presented.

The youth group sang a song.

Rev. Larry Major spoke of some of the achievements during his ministry here; which included the installation of the ramp. He mentioned that the Sunday school attendance record was broken twice with 105 and 106.

Rev. Sherman gave some remembrances during his pastorate. He mentioned that the cross and star mounted on the front of the church was donated and placed there by George Flower. He said that three of his sons grew up here and the fourth son partly grew up here and that all four are in the ministry.

Daniel and Tanya Waterman sang a duet.

David Case was asked to read the poem he wrote about the church.

Rev. Daniel Waterman, who was born here and was a regular attendee of this church, is now in his first year pastoring the Pilgrim Holiness Church in Sayre, PA. He was thankful for what the church had meant to him and gave a challenge to the church to continue to spread the gospel of Jesus Christ.

A presentation was made to Rev. Hobart, Rev. Major and for Rev. Sherman, the former pastors in attendance, which was a picture of the church.