

Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church Reclaims its Position on the Skyline



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The tower of the Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church (LAPC), an icon of safe harbor for over 150 years, recently was repaired and preserved through a two-year, meticulous restoration project by Seaboard Weatherproofing and Restoration Company.

Port Chester, NY (PRWEB) July 16, 2009 -- Fleeing slavery and seeking a better life, they came to New York. Many had no family, no friends, just a loose circle of acquaintances whispering the message. Find the way to Brooklyn and look toward the skyline for a tall, brown church tower. Walk toward the tower and find sanctuary. The tower of the Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church (LAPC), an icon of safe harbor for over 150 years, recently was repaired and preserved through a two-year, meticulous restoration project by Seaboard Weatherproofing and Restoration Company.

Each member of the restoration team was taken on a tour of the church to instill in them a sense of purpose and mission. "Seaboard was proud to become part of the LAPC family and add another chapter to its long history," says Michael Y. Ahearn, President of Seaboard Weatherproofing and Restoration Company.

"Our church has a long, significant history," says LAPC Reverend David Dyson. "It was founded in 1857 by abolitionists and was extremely important to the abolitionist movement. The church was extremely progressive for its time, hosting a Quaker woman to preach at the church in the late 1800s, opening its doors to escaped slaves, bringing in the Fifth Jubilee Singers from Nashville to introduce the congregation to Southern gospel classics, and always being a beacon of safety and tolerance. The church continues to break down dividing walls between people with its multi-racial, multi-cultural congregation that is almost an exact microcosm of our Fort Greene/Clinton Hill neighborhood."

Reverend Dyson and LAPC elders commissioned Walter Sedovic Architects and Seaboard to restore the tower as a way to preserve the integrity of the buildings that house the ministries of the church. The church tower was losing pieces of its brownstone blocks and had become both less attractive and a public safety hazard.

"We evaluated the condition of each stone and marked stones that needed to be removed. Our team, headed by Seaboard Weatherproofing and Restoration, dismantled and entirely replaced the four pinnacles and the four gablets on top of the four corner turrets. Four new finials were carved and installed on top of the pinnacles. The corner turrets only required replacement of badly deteriorated stones and the main tower was cleaned and all mortar joints re-pointed," explains Sedovic. "We found a brownstone fabricator in Canada who carved stone replications from English St. Bees sandstone to match the features of the tower's original Connecticut Portland Brownstone."

"The Restoration team preserved as many of the original sandstone blocks as possible to preserve the historic nature of the church," says Ahearn. "Large damaged pinnacle and turret stones were re-carved into Ashlar blocks for replacement of severely damaged stones on the tower's façade. Stones that could not be reused were donated to International Masonry Institute for training of local artisans on brownstone carving and to Cathedral Stone, a manufacturer of masonry repair materials for teaching historic repair methods to craftsmen nationwide."

The LAPC master restoration project began in 1997. "We assessed the condition of our buildings and placed the tower restoration second on the list after a roof replacement," explains Deb Howard, a church elder, chair of the capital campaign, and executive director of the Pratt Area Community Council. "In order to raise money, we sold a vacant lot owned by the church, received a Historic Preservation Program matching grant, took out a loan, and raised funds through our congregation. The restoration is an important priority that enables the stewardship of the church to remain viable for generations to come."

Dyson notes that LAPC is referred to as the town hall of North Brooklyn, a reflection of its importance in the community. "Whenever the community gathers to discuss major issues like development, public safety, or international crises, they gather here. Four non-faith-based community organizations, including Habitat for Humanity and the Pratt Area Community Council call our parish house home. Many start-up groups come first to LAPC as they work for the betterment of our community. We are a symbol of culture, faith, and social activism."

Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church Restoration Project Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=jjl6diqul14>

Lafayette Avenue Presbyterian Church Restoration Project Final Ceremony Video: <http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=BQdBZqYgoNs>

Seaboard Weatherproofing and Restoration is located at 530 Willett Avenue in Port Chester, NY. The Company recently celebrated its 60th anniversary in business.

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About Seaboard Weatherproofing and Restoration Company:

Based in Port Chester, NY, Seaboard Weatherproofing and Restoration Company is one of the leading restoration and alteration construction firms in the New York City metropolitan area. The company has received several prestigious awards and numerous accolades for its work on high-profile projects, including The Elephant House at the Bronx Zoo, The Cloisters museum, and 90 West Street. For more information, please call (800) 347-7464 or visit www.seaboardwpr.com.

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