

OUR LADY OF LIGHT HISTORIC FOUNDATION

Mission Statement

Our Lady of Light Historic Foundation was formed for the purpose of holding title to the historic Our Lady of Light Church in Lamy, New Mexico, to restore and preserve the building as an historic site, and to use the building for the benefit of the members of the Lamy community as a community center in keeping with the dignity and sacred nature of the structure.

Our Lady of Light Historic Foundation Restoration Commitment

In March, 1997 the Foundation made an agreement with the Theron Chapman Trust and the Santa Fe Southern Land Holdings Company Ltd. Co., who held title to the Our Lady of Light Church at that time. The Foundation agreed to form a 501 (c) 3 and to complete a minimum of \$75,000 worth of hard cost structural redemption and restoration work to the church building by July 1, 2000. This commitment may be met by hard cost expenditure as well as the fair market value of in kind contributions of labor and materials incorporated into the structure. If the Foundation does not completely satisfy the Restoration Commitment by July 1, 2000, title to the church property would revert to the Chapman Trust. If the Foundation does meet the commitment, the Trust will give the Foundation a recordable release of its reversionary interest.

On June 26, 2000 a report prepared by Tom Mills of the Potter, Mills and Bateman Law Firm was submitted to the Mr. Theron T. Chapman, Jr., Trustee of the Theron T. Chapman Trust, and Member-Manager of the Santa Fe Southern Land Holdings Ltd. Co. of Galena, Illinois indicating Our Lady of Light Historic Foundation had met it's commitment. The total value of labor and materials was \$78,385.71.

Background Information

Our Lady of Light Mission Chapel

Our Lady of Light mission chapel was built in the late 1920s. According to M. Wallis, the church was in the Cathedral Parish until 1947 when it became part of St. Anthony's On The Pecos Parish, and was classified as a "mission."

Our Lady of Light chapel was built and maintained by members of the parish. Mayordomos were elected or appointed to collect for feast day, clean the church, prepare the altar for Mass, light the wood stoves in winter, and to collect diezmos and primicias.

During feast day festivities, vespers and High Mass were sung, all the parishioners were invited to the home of the mayordomo for the meal prepared with the contributions that were collected. A candlelight procession and the singing of the alabanzas preceded a dance.

Gradually people moved away from Lamy as diesel engines replaced steam engines. This caused the number of parishioners to dwindle. By the 1970s the services in the chapel were infrequent. In the 1980s services decreased to one or two a year, at most. The community used the chapel for meetings during those years. Finally, the building was closed to visitors due to roof safety concerns.

The Theron T. Chapman Trust purchased the land on which the church stands in 1992 from Tom Denton, previous owner of the Legal Tender Restaurant which stands on a portion of the land purchased by the Trust. In 1993 the Chapman Trust brought a quiet title suit against the Archdiocese and many Lamy residents to gain title to lands in question. In Court the Trust prevailed. In November of 1996 the chapel and land with it were put up for sale with an asking price of \$95,000.

The Community expressed its concern and its recollections regarding the chapel and the purchase offer made by Chris Griscom of The Light Institute in Galisteo in a November, 1996 article in the *New Mexican*. (See *New Mexican* 11/17/1996 article by Richard Chang entitled Past Lives) Carmen McGuinnis remembers when Our Lady of Light mission church used to be open every Sunday for Mass. Father Otto Kirsche gave the sermon, and residents came in from the hills and valley and celebrated together. "I used to see everyone there," said McGuinnis, who used to run the local post office out of her home. "It was so pretty inside. It's a beautiful place to worship." Carmen was baptized at the church in 1926, she married there, and funeral masses for both her parents were celebrated there. Her father, Eusebio Muller, used to take care of the church and keep up the surrounding premises.

After reading the *New Mexican* article the Archdiocese of Santa Fe expressed concern regarding the planned sale as it was their intention that the building be used for and by the community. Potter, Mills, Bateman, PA, a local land use law firm came forward and offered their services pro bono. Cornerstones Community Partnership, a Santa Fe preservation organization, offered their services as well.

Community members worked with Cornerstones and Potter, Mills and Bateman firm to establish a restoration agreement with the Theron T. Chapman Trust and SFS Land Holdings Ltd. Company (SFS LH). The community rose to the occasion and worked with SFS LH to take over the building and the land surrounding it. SFS LH and the Archdiocese agreed to release the building and land to the community if, within a three year period, we place \$75,000 in materials and labor into a fund for the chapel renovation.

We worked together to create a foundation that is the designated grantee of the property. Tom Mills guided Leslie Pierpont to convey the Foundation as a qualifying entity under

Section 501 (c) (3) of the Internal Revenue Code. Dedicated community members and those generous souls who have helped who live outside our small town replaced the roof and performed preliminary electrical and plaster tasks. Dale and Joan Riddle of Stained Glass Concepts in Albuquerque and Joe Beyer of Beyer Studios, Inc. in Philadelphia taught us the technology of stained glass restoration. The estimated cost of restoring all 12 windows is \$46,000 and we have completed 6 of the 12 badly damaged stained glass windows. The hard cost expenditures and the fair market value of labor and materials contributed to the restoration project had exceeded \$78,000 within the time required by the agreement. The property and deed were turned over to the Our Lady Of Light Historic Foundation.

According to Article II of the Articles of Incorporation of Our Lady of Light Historic Foundation, Incorporated, filed in the office of the NM State Corporation Commission on August 20, 1997, “The corporation is organized exclusively for the purpose holding title to the historic Our Lady of Light Chapel in Lamy, New Mexico, to restore and preserve the structure as an historic site, and to operate the Chapel exclusively for the benefit of the citizens of Lamy, New Mexico as a community center in keeping with the dignity and sacred nature of the structure.”

The Use Guidelines for the Our Lady of Light property states,

“The Our Lady of Light property and the church which graces it have borne witness to the life of the Lamy community for nearly 100 years. As a consecrated church, Our Lady of Light was a place of christenings, marriages, funerals, burials and other community gatherings—a place where the Lamy community’s traditions, culture and history have been honored.

The restoration of Our Lady of Light, is not only a rebirth of a structure, but also of the spirit of the Lamy community, represented by all its members: traditional residents, more recent arrivals and respectful visitors too. As a symbol of the Lamy community’s past, present and future, Our Lady of Light must be dedicated only to purposes that respect and are in harmony with the history of the structure and with the traditions, values and sensibilities of this community.”

Tom Mills said it well several years ago in correspondence to Mr. Theron Chapman, “A recent recital in the Chapel raised close to \$2000 for the continuing restoration work. I attended the event, and the potential of the Chapel as a wonderful meeting place for community events was palpable. The stained glass windows that have been restored were in full view. It was inspiring to have the setting sun’s rays bathe the interior of the Chapel with light through the restored stained glass!”

Over the years ten to twenty people at a time replaced the roof over the chapel and sacristy. Electricity was restored to the building. Drains have been installed around the building to insure proper run off. Six of the twelve stain glass windows have been restored. Plaster has been removed from the exterior in preparation for new plaster. Channels for electrical lines have been dug into the interior walls. The bell tower has

been closed off from the weather. The foundation restoration has been started. The pews and altarpieces have been returned to the building. And this month the concrete header that was in danger of falling due to the deterioration of the adobe bricks supporting it was replaced with a new frame header by Crocker Ltd an architectural conservation company.

During our restoration work we discovered a brass plaque attached to a wooden base with the following inscription:

“EN MEMORIA DE JOSE D. SENA
E ISABEL G. DE BACA
Y JOSE CLOUTHIER Y JUANITA BEAUBIEN”

and we are interested in further researching these people and their relationship to Lamy. The ‘G’ in Isabel G. de Baca may stand for Gallego. According to a genealogy posted on the Internet by Jacinto Gallego a woman named Isabel Gallego Baca was born “April 12, 1795 in Hospital de Orbigo (Leon) Espana.” Juanita Beaubien was the daughter of Charles Beaubien (b. abt. 1800) and Maria Paula Lavato. Juanita was born sometime after 1839 and died in 1892. She married Louis Joseph Docither Clouthier. On the 8th of January 1841, Charles Beaubien and Guadalupe Miranda, two Mexican citizens living in Taos along with a silent partner, Charles Bent, petitioned the Mexican government for a large grant of land along the foothills of the Sangre de Cristo Mountains neighboring the Santa Fe Trail. The Treaty of Guadalupe Hidalgo was signed in 1848 and the US government formally recognized all legitimate Mexican land grants. Charles Beaubien planned on passing control of this land to his son Narcisco but he was killed during the Taos Revolt in 1847 and control of the land went to Lucien Maxwell who was married to Juanita’s sister, Luz. It is my understanding that Clouthier owned a general store in Cimarron.

All of those participating over the years have grown older and we find we are not able to perform the work ourselves any longer. Lamy is a small community with few resources, especially human resources. The Board of Directors voted in the spring of 2005 to change directions from working together on this ‘hands-on’ do it ourselves project with the help and direction of Cornerstones to a ‘hands-on’ acquire grant money to complete the project.

We estimate the cost of restoring the building and adding a small bathroom wing and the restoration coordination to be in the area of \$365,000. The scope of the work includes the following: Foundation stabilization, stone foundation protection, exterior adobe repair, bond beam repair, concrete header replacement (completed), front egress steps, restroom addition, exterior stucco, existing framing, windows and doors (not including continuing stained glass restoration).

Application has been made to the NM Historic Preservation Division of the Office of Cultural Affairs for nomination of the building as a historic building. Nomination of this building as a historic structure will preserve this important part of New Mexico’s history for future generations. The restored building will be used in many ways to benefit the

community, such as conferences and workshops, local social events, community meetings, weddings, and religious services. Through these activities the building will become a self-supporting center to our community once again.

We also plan to make application to place the building among those listed on the National Historic Register.