



Historic church will rise again on Village Green

By Mary Divine

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Ten years after getting a historic one-room schoolhouse, the Boutwells Landing senior living community in Oak Park Heights will get a replica of a pioneer Minnesota missionary's church, too.

Named for the Rev. William T. Boutwell, who helped explore the headwaters of the Mississippi River, the community plans to build a slightly smaller version of the Stillwater church he helped organize in 1849.

The church and a gazebo will be constructed this summer on Boutwells Landing's Village Green.

Campus administrator Wendy Kingbay said plans for the two have been in the works for years.

"Small towns in the Midwest were part of Boutwell residents, where they were raised," Kingbay said. "Just the sight of a town square, a oneroom schoolhouse, a gazebo, a small church can evoke in their minds a warm remembrance of their childhood and the values in which they were raised."

The one-room McKean School is a popular destination for Boutwells Landing's residents and visitors, Kingbay said.

The school, which was originally in West Lakeland Township, was closed in 1940 and sat on a farm in Baytown Township for years until it was brought to Boutwells Landing in 2006. Volunteers from the senior housing complex spent two years restoring the schoolhouse, building a bell tower and finding furnishings and decorations.

Kingbay said new Boutwells Landing residents often say the school and plans for the church and gazebo are among the reasons they picked the senior living community over other locations.

"They really liked the concept," she said.

The 1,500-square-foot replica church will have a vestibule, restrooms and a gathering space. Kingbay said it could be used for meetings, book clubs, lectures and weddings.

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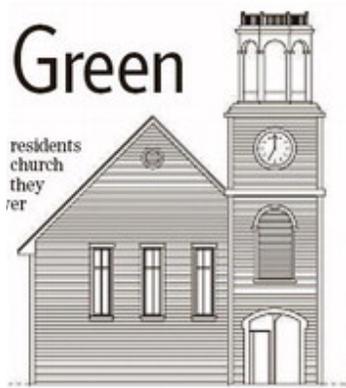


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Dawn Wieczorek, president of InSite Architects in St. Paul, said the \$750,000 church will be 10 percent smaller than

HISTORIC CHURCH, 6A >



Historic church

the original.

"We didn't want it to look out of scale for the Village Green area," she said.

Ray Hunder, a 14-year resident of Boutwells Landing who helped restore the McKean School, said he looks forward to the construction of the church and gazebo.

The Village Green "will operate as a kind of town center," he said. "I think it will evoke memories of those times long ago — and yet we can take and enjoy it today." Brent Peterson, executive director of the Washington County Historical Society, said the replica church will help keep Boutwell's legacy alive.

The missionary's name was in the news last year when his 19th-century house, slated for demolition, was saved by Nicole Curtis of HGTV's "Rehab Addict."

The historical society bought the house on Boutwell Road and is restoring it, Peterson said.

Boutwell, who arrived in the area in the 1840s, helped organize the First Presbyterian Church in Stillwater and named Lake Itasca, the headwaters of the Mississippi River.

