

Piece of local history restored

Repaired bell tower put back atop Weller school

By Katelyn Larese

klarese@medianewsgroup.com

An important piece of local history has been restored at the Chesterfield Township Historical Village.

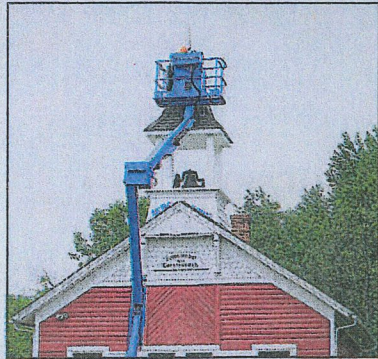
In early June, the Weller one-room schoolhouse saw its bell tower placed back atop the historic building after needed repairs.

The schoolhouse roof began leaking around the bell tower area in 2017. Not only did the entire roof need replacement, but the bell tower also needed work.

The following year, the bell tower was removed, and a temporary roof patch was installed. In 2019, the entire roof was replaced.

This year marks the 25 anniversary of the schoolhouse being moved from its original location at Gratiot Avenue and 22 Mile Road to the historical village.

BELL TOWER » PAGE 2



KATELYN LARESE — MEDIANEWS GROUP

The bell tower has been repaired and placed back atop the historic Weller one-room house at the Chesterfield Township Historical Village.

Bell tower

FROM PAGE 1

“During this 25th anniversary of the schoolhouse being moved to the historical village, we are glad to have this building restored for authenticity sake and also for the enjoyment of the kids,” said historical society President Kathy

Vosburg, who is also a Chesterfield Township trustee. “When they visit they are allowed the opportunity to pull the rope to ring the bell — one of those experiences from the past.”

Roof and gutter repairs were completed in fall 2019 by General Construction Inc. at a cost of about \$10,000. The bell tower work required special car-

pentry, Vosburg said, and was completed by Emerald Coast Building Co. of Clinton Township at a cost of about \$20,000.

“The buildings are property of the township; however, the historical society hosts events and raises funds for programming and building upkeep,” she added. “The historical society paid for the costs through a generous dona-

tion from the Lions Club upon sale of their building on Gratiot, current location of Evident Church, a generous private donation and from the many people who supported our fundraising events over the past few years.”

In 1996, the Odrobina family donated the Weller one-room schoolhouse to the historical society.

The outhouse from the school has been rebuilt and stands alongside the school building. An annex was added to the back of the schoolhouse for a furnace, restroom and storage.

Available records for the school date back to 1862. Classes were taught continuously in the school until 1954.

The late author and historian Alan Naldrett detailed the history and importance of bells in a 2016 column in *The Voice*. It read, in part:

“Bells were usually built to ring by pulling a rope which would allow the bell to move to and fro, causing the clapper to hit the heavy metal sides, causing a loud “pealing” of the bell.

“Every school knew it was really in business as soon as its bell was hung in the belfry. Every school worth its salt had a bell that would be rung to signify that school was about to begin.”

He also shared some history about the Weller schoolhouse bell:

“The Allemon family donated the bell from their family farm to the Chesterfield Township Historical Society. It is now the bell in the belfry of the Weller School in the Chesterfield Historical Village. It can be rung during times when the school is open, for anyone who wants to get the hands-on ‘bell-ringing’ experience.”

The Chesterfield Township Historical Village is located adjacent to the municipal offices on Sugarbush Road. For more information, go to chesterfieldhistoricalsociety.org.

Katelyn Larese is a Local News Editor at The Voice. She can be contacted at 586-273-6196 or klarese@medianewsgroup.com.