

A Short History of Pratt Hall



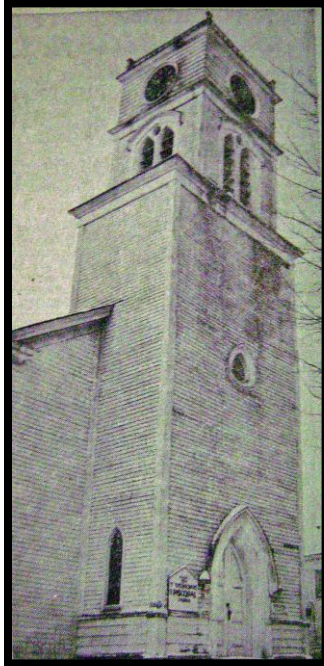
The Episcopalians were some of Montgomery's earliest settlers. They were the second congregation to organize but the first to erect a church. The original building was completed in 1835 and called the **Union Church**. It probably looked different than what is here now, being smaller and plainer. The Union Church was consecrated in 1835 by the first Episcopal Bishop for Vermont, John Henry Hopkins, a prominent proponent of gothic church design.

Major renovations, taking the better part of two years, were made to the Union Church beginning after the Civil War, and that is when it probably took its present form with stained glass windows, a tower retrofitted with a clock and bell, the gothic arched door, and crenellated tower top. It was re-consecrated as Union Church in 1874 after the renovations.



Union Church circa 1872. Tower being retrofitted with clock & bell.
Note the lancet window and the absence of crenellation.

By 1890 the congregation had begun a “noted decline” according to diocese records. The church was re-consecrated in 1897 as **St. Bartholomew’s Church**, but continued to be used less and less. Services were reduced to once a year “Old Home Sundays” in 1927 but ended completely in the early 1960s.



In 1972, after many years of neglect, the church was condemned. It was saved from demolition by the formation of the Montgomery Historical Society (MHS) in 1973. The Society purchased this community landmark from the Episcopal Diocese of VT for \$1.00 the next year. The building was re-named **Pratt Hall** in 1977 after an early founder and enthusiastic tour guide of the Society, Larry Pratt. The Hall was placed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1988.

All repairs and restorations over the next 35 years were funded by private donations, including major efforts removing, then rebuilding the top two stages of the clock tower, including the clock and bell; installing a new standing seam roof; and restoring the stained glass windows; all at a cost of approximately \$75,000.



1985 reconstruction of the top two sections of the tower. One clock face and the bell have been set in place. Also note new standing seam roof.

In 2010 the Society partnered with the Preservation Trust of VT and the VT Div. for Historic Preservation for structural and architectural restoration of the bottom stage of the tower and the entryway vestibule. Those grants were combined with grants from the Eastman



Charitable Trust, and TD Bank. The project took 3 years and over \$80,000 in direct costs and donations of services, volunteer labor, and generous member support.

In 2013, after several years of saving, the Society embarked on the West Wall Capital Campaign to raise the funds needed for the structural restoration of the nave's west wall, foundation, and ceiling truss section. The project started in the summer of 2014. This required the removal of its three large stained glass windows for safekeeping and re-installation after the structural work was finished. The Society raised over \$165,000 for this work, again partnering with the Vermont Division for Historic Preservation, TD Bank, and the Eastman Charitable Trust. It also received great volunteer and business support.



The building is home to a modest collection of artifacts, documents and ephemera, and houses periodic exhibits. It is also a “living artifact” serving as a venue for weddings, funerals, concerts, speakers, art shows, holiday caroling, school visits, and other community events.

How Can You Help?

- Become a member. Annual dues start at \$25 and beside the satisfaction of contributing to a great, local cause, include newsletters, discounts, and more. Members with TD Bank accounts can designate the MHS as their Affinity charity and the Bank will donate annually at no cost to the member. The Society is also a participant in the Amazon Smile program.
- Volunteer time, services or materials, or donate cash.
- Donate artifacts from Montgomery's history.
- Tell us your story.
- Designate the MHS as a beneficiary in your will.

More information about the Society, our programs, and membership can be found on our award winning web site. Thank you.