



EILEEN M. ADAMS/SUN JOURNAL PHOTOS

Sally Sawyer and Lorraine Tanguay, members of the Albany Improvement Association, were among the organization's members who applied to place the Albany Town House on the National Register of Historic Places. That approval came in early August. With the designation, opportunities become available to acquire grant money to repair the 150-year-old building.

Town hall gets its due

Albany building placed on national historic register

BY EILEEN M. ADAMS
Staff Writer

ALBANY TOWNSHIP — For almost 100 years, the plain, New England-style town hall served the former municipality as meeting and polling place.

Now, 70 years after the town deorganized in 1937, it has been placed on the National Register of Historic Places, an honor that not only documents its place in local history, but also will help acquire grants to restore it.

"It is the only governmental building in the community that represents the time Albany was a town," said Christi Mitchell, architectural historian with Maine Historic Preservation.

The Greek Revival building, she said, doesn't have a lot a style, which is typical of so many 150-year-old New England buildings, but it was meant to mimic the Acropolis and link the town to Greek democracy.

It was built in 1848 by the then bustling farming and logging community, 45 years after the town's incorporation in 1803. The town, now the highest populated unorganized territory in the state with between 400 and 500 people, surrendered its charter to the state in 1937 because of high taxes.

Ten years after deorganization, the Albany Improvement Association bought the building to provide the community with a gathering space. Residents also voted there during every election until this past year when balloting was moved to the former Grange hall up the hill from the town hall because of its handicapped accessibility, said Lorraine Tanguay, one of the applicants and a member of the association.



Sally Sawyer and Lorraine Tanguay were among the people involved in applying to place the Albany Town House on the National Register of Historic Places.

The association languished for several decades after the town's deorganization, but came back to life in 1997 when many in the community organized successfully to keep a casino out.

Now, Tanguay, Sally Sawyer and eight or nine other residents keep the organization going to pay for maintaining the building through an annual summer yard sale and a second fundraiser usually held in March.

Although the money from those events pays for the insurance and other small items, it won't pay to replace the

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roof, or restore the tin ceiling.

Eagle Scout projects by Tanguay's sons have also helped preserve the building.

"We'd really like to revive the building," said Tanguay, who can now go online to search for funding because of the new designation.

In the meantime, many residents have come together to make the old building handicapped-accessible so November's balloting can return to the traditional place.

"We have some nice, local people helping," said Sawyer of the in-progress handicapped parking space, and soon, construction of a ramp. She owns Mountain Greenery Greenhouse in West Bethel. She visited Albany in 1983 and never returned to Colorado.

Eventually, the association hopes to restore the ceiling, remove the old wallpaper and repaint, perhaps replace the two-holer privy and install running water.

They also want to set up a historical display depicting the town through the years, and learn more about what used to take place at the hall. Sawyer is ask-

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ing anyone from the community or area to contact them with anecdotes, photographs and any information about the hall.

The national designation follows on the heels of a similar designation by the state last spring.

"This is wonderful," said Tanguay, a teacher at Mountain Valley Middle School in Mexico. "This community had so much history. We don't want to lose any more."

She's not sure when the celebration honoring the national designation will be, but she said there will be one.

And she and Sawyer also hope to start more community functions such as movie and card nights, and are working to recruit more volunteers for the group.

Mitchell said similar town halls exist on Route 5 in Fryeburg and another in Parsonsfield.