

Heritage Award 2018

## Hillside Chapel honoured for heritage preservation



The 1895 Hillside Chapel is the recipient of the Morin Heights Historical Association Heritage 2018 Award for preservation of local buildings.



The simple, white-painted wooden clapboard building at the corner of chemin du Village and rue Hillside has remained virtually unchanged—inside and out—for almost 125 years, an amazing achievement. It has been beautifully maintained, painted, straightened, had new doors installed and other minor improvements, but otherwise it's the most authentic old building still standing in Morin Heights. Tucked onto a tiny corner lot, the old structure still lacks plumbing facilities. The chapel was built by Abraham Watchorn and his nephews in 1895 on land donated by the Watchorn family.

Hillside Chapel is a non-denominational, Bible-based church open to the public. Originally one of several Standard Churches in the Ottawa valley, it was often referred to as the Hornerite

Church because Rev. Horner preached there regularly in the old days. It had a fundamentalist evangelical nature, and services were of a temperance revival style. Oldtimers sometimes used the term “holy rollers” to describe the faithful in moments of feeling possessed by the Holy Spirit.

The building remained vacant for much of the 1940s and 50s, but was renovated in 1959 and Sunday evening services were popular through the 1960s, led by George and Jenny Conley. Their son, Rev. Earl Conley (who died in 2011) and his wife, Rev. Doris Conley, began offering Sunday evening services and gospel music again in 1987 and that tradition has continued every summer to this day.

Earl and Doris ministered in Ottawa and taught at a Bible College in eastern Ontario, but spent most weekends and summers at their cottage near Lake Lawken in Morin Heights. They deserve everyone’s thanks for their dedication to preserving the building as is. The building is now cared for by Suzanne Sheahan, carrying on the volunteer work of her late husband, Terry Sheahan.

While all of the remaining Churches in Morin Heights are architecturally beautiful and noteworthy as local heritage landmarks, none of these religious buildings are as authentic as Hillside Chapel. The United Church (built in 1930) has been enlarged and modernized many times. Trinity Anglican Church, while probably the oldest building in town, dating from 1861, has also been beautifully modernized with additions and new cladding that masks the original square logs underneath. The Catholic Church, recently closed, was built as a school in 1953. And the elegant Jehovah’s Witnesses Kingdom Hall was built only in the 1990s.

