

HISTORIC APPRECIATION

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LOREN BENOIT/Press Members of the Museum of North Idaho and Lieutenant George Farragut Chapter, NSDAR present the Fort Sherman Chapel with a plaque Tuesday afternoon in Coeur d'Alene. The plaque wording and placement had to be approved by the Historian General of the Daughters of the American Revolution in Washington, D.C. Front row, left to right: Dorthy Dahlgren, Robert Singletary, Connie McGee. Second row, left to right: Sharon Strobel, Luella Stilley, Catherine McClintick. Back row, left to right, Jane Robertson, Jeanne Venturino and Janet Haakenson.

COEUR d'ALENE — Standing on Fort Sherman Chapel's front lawn near the east edge of the North Idaho College campus, Luella Stilley shared her appreciation for those who work to preserve history.

"The city where I grew up has been decimated by new people, buildings and everything, so there is no recognition for old buildings because if they were too old they were torn down because it was too expensive to keep them," said Stilley, who serves as the regent of the Lieutenant George Farragut Chapter, National Society of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

"I love old things and I appreciate the things that we can preserve, the history for our kids and grandkids so they understand that we did trot this Earth at one time or another."

Stilley and several of her DAR colleagues gathered Tuesday at the "Little Red Chapel" to present a weighty bronze plaque to the Museum of North Idaho for its work maintaining the historic location.

The chapel was built in 1880 by the U.S. Army. The property was sold at public auction in 1905 after the fort was abandoned in 1900. The chapel was donated to the museum by the Coeur d'Alene Athletic Round Table in 1984 to ensure the preservation of the building.

It is recognized as the oldest church, library, meeting hall and school in Coeur d'Alene.

"A lot of people don't know that this was the very first school building in Coeur d'Alene," said Robert Singletary, local historian and director of programs and marketing for the museum. "Kids went to school here when it was first open. It was not only a chapel and a meeting place, a library, it was a school, and we've at the museum got photos of kids standing in front of it."

DAR chapter librarian Connie McGee, whose family has been in the area for generations, has a personal tie to the little chapel.

"My great-grandma went to school here, so it means a lot to my family," she said. "And of course to the Daughters of the American Revolution to notice that the museum has kept the building up. It's just wonderful."

Chapter historian Sharon Strobel also has a family tie — her husband's great-grandfather was sometimes a preacher at the chapel.

"He was a substitute," Strobel said. "They didn't have a regular preacher, so they just brought them in."

Strobel said acquiring the plaque for the chapel was "just the right thing to do."

"It's such a special thing," she said.

McGee completed a lengthy application process in 2016 and was required to get everything approved by the historian general of the DAR before the plaque could be presented to museum staff in 2017. Museum director Dorothy Dahlgren wore a big smile as she accepted the plaque on the chapel steps.

“We’re very pleased that the DAR has recognized the oldest standing church in Coeur d’Alene,” she said. “We’re pleased to have this plaque to add to the public’s knowledge about the history of the building.”

The plaque will soon officially be mounted on the grounds of the chapel or inside the building.

“When you think about it, there would be no Coeur d’Alene were it not for Fort Sherman,” Singletary said. “Fort Sherman is really the beginning of the town. Until there was a town, the fort had an opera house, so they came here for entertainment, they came here to get married, they came here for funerals. It was the beginning of everything before there was a town.”



LOREN BENOIT/Press The Fort Sherman Chapel is recognized as Coeur d’Alene, Idaho’s oldest church, school, library and meeting hall. It was constructed in 1880 by the U.S. Army and was presented with a plaque Tuesday afternoon by members of the Museum of North Idaho and members of the Lieutenant George Farragut Chapter, NSDAR.