



The | FALL /WINTER 2013 |

arpenter

NEW YORK CITY DISTRICT
COUNCIL of CARPENTERS

Restoring the STAIRWAY to HEAVEN

*“It doesn’t take a miracle,
it takes a carpenter.”*

CARPENTERS REHAB
FAMED ST. PAT’S
CATHEDRAL

Organizing Pace U | Children’s Hospital | The Long Line | Softball Picnic |

CARPENTERS RESTORE Stairway to Heaven

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Local Union 1556
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Cathedral.*



Carpenter scaffolding inside
St. Patrick's Cathedral (right).



Rehabbing perhaps one of the most iconic and religious institutions in the world would be considered a celestial task of the highest order for some. But for the carpenters, it's just another day at the office.

More than forty Local Union 1556 carpenters have been part of an unprecedented refurbishing job at the Cathedral of St. Patrick better known as St. Patrick's Cathedral in New York City.

Named after the patron saint of Ireland, and located in midtown Manhattan, work on St. Patrick's Cathedral on Fifth Avenue has been underway since March 2012. Cardinal Timothy Dolan announced the project on March 17, St. Patrick's Day.

Construction could continue throughout 2015 according to LU 1556 member and job foreman David McAllister.

The first ever mobile catwalk system was installed in the church's attic to help carpenters work the entire roof without interruption.

"This is more than a facelift," he said. "They are really going in depth with the cleaning, repairs and the interior work. The last major cleanup like this was about 25 years ago."

From 1984 to 2000, extensive renovations were made to maintain the structural integrity of the building, including replacement of much of the roof, resetting the exterior steps, repainting the transept walls and refinishing the transept doors. The Cathedral's organs were rebuilt and television monitors were added so that all congregants at services might be able to participate fully in the liturgy. The bells were restored and a new lighting system was installed.

Due to the uniqueness of the church and its stone walls, cathedral ceilings, massive wooden attic and skeleton and its age, the carpenters are utilizing some new and exciting tools on the job.



"It's a very intricate assignment on a very delicate structure," McAllister said. "We needed to be creative in the way we went about it this."

The first ever mobile catwalk system was installed in the church's attic to help carpenters work the entire roof without interruption. Instead of a continuous catwalk, which would put a lot of extra weight on the 135 year old building, the mobile system has a hanging or suspended platform that rests on rail lines that span the length of the area. It's mechanically operated and allows access to preexisting systems such as the sprinkler system.

It was placed there specifically for the carpenters' work during the rehab, but since it's such an efficient tool, the church will be keeping it as a permanent fixture. Also new to the job is the Rolling Navigating Platform.

"We call it 'the roller,'" McAllister said.

This rolling work platform is again on a rail system that spans the length of the inside of the cathedral and has about 40 feet of scaffolding on top of it. It allows workers to work in sections instead of having the weight of an entire stationary platform inside the church. Again, a stationary platform of this magnitude would put several tons of extra weight on the inside of the church. The moving work platform, however, lightens the load and by not obstructing the entire church, allows the church to remain open for visitors and ceremonies.

This is vital as work and manpower is kept at a minimum during the church's peak seasons, like wedding season and high Catholic holidays.

"We have about 26 guys here consistently, but we double that right after Labor Day," he added.

St. Pats has come a long way since its corner-

stone was laid in 1858 and the doors opened in 1879. Work on the church began in 1858 but was halted during the Civil War and resumed in 1865. The cathedral was completed in 1878 and dedicated on May 25, 1879.

Mainly due to aging, its marble and granite facade is pitted, cracked and dirty. In addition, the plaster ceiling has cracks and the cathedral's stained glass windows need re-leading. Therefore, the cathedral is undergoing perhaps its most extensive restoration since its inception. Work will last a planned 3 years at a cost of \$177 million.

The facade of the Fifth Avenue neo-Gothic Roman Catholic cathedral is currently shrouded in scaffolding, including its 330-foot-tall twin spires. The caged church image has become sort of another major attraction for the Church from locals, tourists and the media.

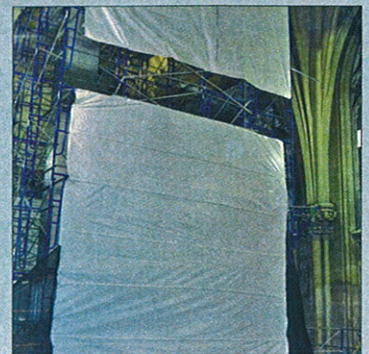
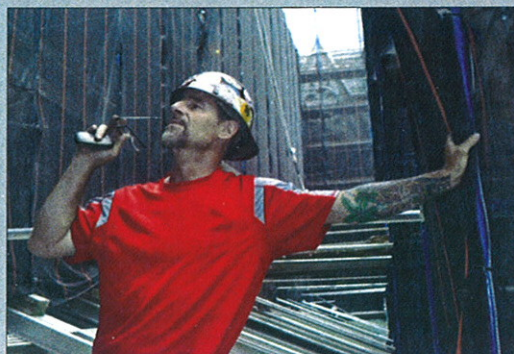
Inside, the choir loft and rose window are also obscured by scaffolding and netting, rising from the west end of the nave near the cathedral's entrance all the way up to the ceiling.

During the restoration the church will remain open with work pausing only during Mass and other major events. One of the three organs will be functional at all times. But some areas of the church are completely closed off to restoration work as there are ancient artifacts and tombs located under the alter.

This work has brought in a lot of hours for the carpenters as well as a host of other Union workers. All told, more than 300 tradespeople will be working on the site. And it's a labor of love according to McAllister who said the members feel blessed to take part in such a huge undertaking at such a sacred and historical location.

"With the amount of experienced and dedicated men and women on this job, we've ensured that this job is going to be done right," said church officials.

The No. 1 Carpenter would be proud.



Below, L-R: Mobile Catwalk System Platform; David McAllister, LU 1556 member and Foreman at St. Patrick's Cathedral; Rolling Navigating Platform