

the Depot , taking part in ceremonies held at the post and serving Reserve Units encamped at the installation from time to time.

In 1963, under the leadership of COL. R.B. Graeves, Commanding Officer, it was decided to reopen the Chapel. Considerable refurbishing and painting was necessary. A new altar, pulpit, and lectern were secured; a new altar rail was built by the Post Engineers; a large cross was built and erected behind the altar and a new organ was obtained.

The services of a retired US Army Chaplain were obtained. Chaplain Gomer S. Rees became the Auxiliary Chaplain on 28 April 1963. The first service of the reopened Chapel was held on Sunday, 28 April 1963, and the Sunday School began the next Sunday. In 1966, "Women of the Chapel" was established.

Chaplain Rees' ministry to the Depot covered fourteen distinguished years. Although Chaplain Rees was only employed on a "part-time" basis, he was an active and concerned pastor for the worshipping community. Additionally, he would visit and counsel in the work force areas. Chaplain Rees was known for giving to employees his lapel carnation "to brighten their day."

On 9 July 1977, Chaplain MAJ. James H. Robnolt was assigned to the Depot as the first active duty military chaplain. Other chaplains who served at Letterkenny and dates of service include:

April 63-May 77	Chaplain COL. Gomer S. Rees
July 77-Jun 80	Chaplain MAJ. James H. Robnolt
June 80-Jan 82	Chaplain CAPT. Joe R. Colley
Jan 82- Jan 85	Chaplain CAPT. Patrick L. Holder
Jan 85- May 87	Chaplain CAPT. Henry A. Haynes
May 87-Aug 92	Chaplain MAJ. Barton D Berry, Jr.
Aug 92-July 94	Chaplain MAJ. Ira King
July 94-Oct 96	Chaplain MAJ. Gerald L. Truman

During MAJ. Joe Colley's tour of duty he arranged to have the Chapel insulated and air conditioned. Also, at this time, a carillon, which plays inspirational music through the tower at scheduled intervals, was installed.

The stained glass enclosure of the Chapel narthex was finalized in 1982.

In 1995 the Depot was one of the bases facing downsizing by the BRAC Commission. In 1996 a Task Force was appointed by the United Churches of Chambersburg to pursue the possibility of preserving and using the Chapel for local ecumenical services. After many years of evaluation, planning and consultation with local and federal government officials, the goal was finally realized. On January 1, 2003, for \$1.00, the deed to the Letterkenny Chapel was transferred to the United Churches of the Chambersburg Area.

A "Service of Dedication" was held on May 17, 2003.

During the planning stages from 1996-2003, the Rev. Dr. Jeffrey Roth of St. John's United Church of Christ skillfully led the committee through several very challenging years. The Rev. Dr. William Harter of Falling Spring Presbyterian Church has served as the committee chair since July, 2003.

The Chapel Committee is responsible for maintaining the Chapel and providing services which promote and reflect community and national interests.

The Chapel is also available for rent for weddings, funerals and events of a religious nature. For further information or to schedule an event, contact 717-264-3828 or 717-267-3336

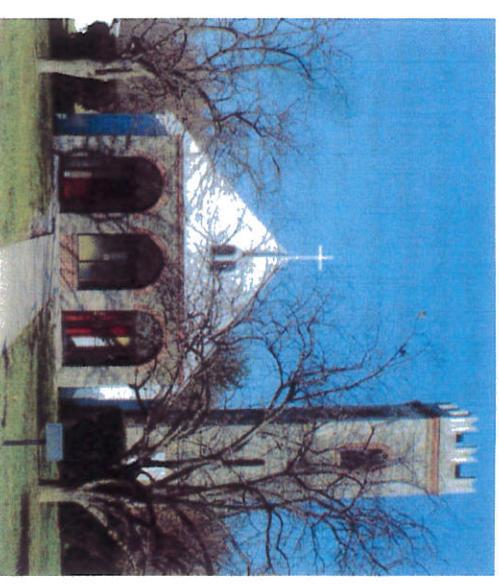
Donations are always welcomed and encouraged. Please remit donations to The United Churches of the Chambersburg Area with memo "Letterkenny Chapel Fund." They may be sent to:

United Churches of the Chambersburg Area
PO Box 1052
Chambersburg, PA. 17201

Revised July 2011

The Letterkenny Chapel

AN ECUMENICAL MINISTRY
of
THE UNITED CHURCHES OF THE
CHAMBERSBURG AREA
located at 2171 Carbaugh Avenue
Letterkenny Army Depot



Dedicated: May, 1945

**"In Behalf of Those Who Fought
With Military Honor For Their Country,
We Have This Memorial of Stone For All Times"**

-Translated from the Bell Tower Plaque

HISTORY OF THE CHAPEL

One of the most heart-warming remembrances of the World War II years, and the years afterwards at Letterkenny is its Chapel. The human interest story behind its conception and the recounting of the religious charity of the men of the Italian Service Units who built it leave indelible impressions on all who hear of these events.

A letter from BG Ray M. Hare, US Army Retired, Commanding Officer of the Depot from April 1944 to May 1945, tells of the events which initiated the construction of the Chapel.

“The little church was constructed by Italian prisoners of war at no expense to the government. Material was salvaged from abandoned farm houses on the reservation. The project was undertaken under very unusual and nearly tragic circumstances.

“The prisoner -of- war battalion worked efficiently and cheerfully in the General Supply and Transportation Divisions of the depot each day except Sunday. In the evenings, however, when the men were locked in their stockade with nothing to do, some became despondent. I made it a point to personally visit their compound every evening. It was on one of these inspection trips that I discovered one of the elderly prisoners attempting to kill himself.

“Investigation disclosed that this man had just received word that his wife had died in Italy. He felt that he had nothing more to live for. The man was highly religious and had spent his younger days as a master stone mason, building churches and other memorials in his native country. It occurred to me we might help this man if we could get him interested in building something at Letterkenny.

“I invited the man to come to my office the next morning. There I told him that the depot needed a Post Chapel and asked him if he thought he could design one for us. I could see that he was very interested. He said that he couldn't only design the building but could build it. I placed him in complete charge of the undertaking. He selected his own helpers who would work as volunteers after depot hours. His enthusiasm was contagious. The project seemed to boost the morale of the entire prisoner of war battalion. The tower was built first, using native stone from the foundations of the old farm houses. The rest of the building followed swiftly.

“The Catholic community in the city of Chambersburg became interested and arranged for the dedication of the little church

by a bishop from Washington.”

From the May 18, 1945 edition of the Depot newspaper the KENNY LETTER, penned by Judy Kremer, comes this story written at the time of the opening and dedication of the Chapel.

“Letterkenny's new post Chapel stands today as one of the most unique chapels in the Army, an edifice with an entirely original style of architecture that has both grace and distinction in its expression of spiritual welfare for soldiers at the Depot.

“Impressive ceremonies marked the dedication of the Chapel when the most Rev. A. G. Cicognani, Apostolic Delegate to the United States, addressed the first congregation in both English and Italian and expressed gratitude to the military authorities for making possible “This expression of good will and of interest in the men in their charge.”

“The Archbishop blessed the Chapel before solemnizing high Mass, and the Mass was sung by a choir of Italian soldiers. Accompanying him from Washington were his secretaries, the Rev. Edward H. Heston, CSC, and Mgr. John A. Abbo, who were deacon and sub deacon. The Rev. Joseph F. Cjostanzo was master of ceremonies. Fourth Degree Knights of Columbus from the Chambersburg Council served as guard of honor at the Mass and at Solemn Benediction. Letterkenny officers attended the services.

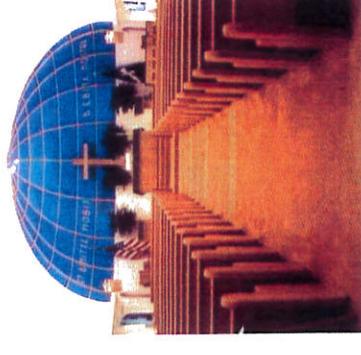
“LTC Stanislaus J. Ryeseck, Chaplain of the 3rd Service Command, spoke to the congregation and said that America has demonstrated that all races and creeds can live together harmoniously and that diversity of culture and nationalities can make a nation strong.”

The dedicatory message on the bell tower reveals those who constructed the Chapel as men of true religious charity. A translation of the Latin inscription reads: “In behalf of those who fought with military honor for their country we have this memorial of stone for all times, and we dedicate this temple to the Noble Heart of Christ in the year of Our Lord, 1945 May 12, Amleto Giovanni Cicognani, Archbishop of Laodicea, Solemnly blessing.”

The 1945 KENNY LETTER article continued, “Work was started at the Chapel in January by members of the Italian Service Unit (ISU) who desired a place of worship. Many of the men had received word that their families and relatives had lost their lives in certain enemy-occupied areas of Italy before VE-Day.

“With no funds available except those of the ISU battalion, great use was made of salvage materials on the depot. ISU money was used for cement, light fixtures, new bricks, linoleum, celotex, and paint. Stained glass windows were purchased from a fund raised by some of the officers on the post.

“The belfry is 65 feet high, about 6 feet square, built of stone blocks, and is of Florentine design. The porch or entrance is of San Francisco design, and the interior design is Roman. All lights are concealed to produce indirect lighting. Sides are wall board and the ceiling is of celotex. There is a balcony in the rear, and the most striking feature of the interior is a semi-domed chancel.



“Of special interest is the structure of the wall behind the altar. In the shape of a quarter of the globe, longitudinal and latitudinal lines stand out in gold against a blue background. In large gold letters are written the words (in Latin) “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us.”

The Chapel was closed shortly after World War II. During this period of time, the Rev. Dr. Rodney T. Taylor, minister of the Falling Spring Presbyterian Church of Chambersburg and a Colonel in the US Army Reserve, served as an Auxiliary Chaplain for