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ESSEX TOWN CLOCK GETS A FACE LIFT

The Essex Foundation and Town of Essex Fund New Repairs.

Essex, CT – Since last November, time had been at a standstill in Essex Village. The 158-year old town clock, housed in the cupola of the First Baptist Church on Prospect Street, stopped keeping time with the arrival of the cold weather. It had been keeping time and chiming on the hour for the past eight years when it was last repaired. Earlier this summer a proposal for new repair work was presented by Dick Adams, the Baptist Church volunteer whose duties include being the clock caretaker. The Town of Essex, owner of the historic clock, and The Essex Foundation, a nonprofit charitable organization, agreed to co-fund the overhaul of all motion works and transmissions behind the four dials of the clock, and the replacement of 100 feet of strike weight rope. This September, Connecticut Timekeepers, a Stratford-based tower clock specialist, provided the services and returned the clock to full operation. Blast-All, Inc. donated the use of the lift and lift operator.

The clock was a gift to the town from Theodore Dwight Pratt shortly before his death in 1860, with the provision that it be placed in the steeple of the Baptist Church. At that time, the church's steeple was the highest point in Essex and the town hall was located directly across the street. Tending to the clock has proved challenging over the years. Gravity powers the heavy granite weights suspended from the clock that keep the clock hands moving. Three times each week, the weights need to be wound up to a height four stories above the ground, an easy but tedious chore that has been performed by the Mr. Adams and volunteers Dot Burgon and Matt Nuss. The location of the clock four stories above ground level makes it difficult to maintain the four outside faces that are exposed to extreme weather conditions. Repairs on the clock are expensive, and because the clock is located in a private building, town funds are not always available to cover costs.



The Essex Foundation has provided assistance in the past and looks to establish a designated fund for ongoing maintenance and repair. The hope is that the Town will also set up a sinking fund for the clock in its annual budget. Anyone interested in being a volunteer clock winder should contact Mr. Adams. More information can be found at www.theessexfoundation.org or by emailing contact@theessexfoundation.org.

TIME FOR A FACELIFT: Matt Miner of Connecticut Timekeepers replaces the hands on the Essex Town Clock while Jamie Bogan of Blast-All, Inc. operates the lift up to the tower of the First Baptist Church on Prospect Street in Essex.