

# Chapel may have a prayer of going back home

**Veterans want to move it near the Vancouver site it occupied during WWII**

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Jeff Davis, left, and Jim Wulf sit in front of a World War II Army chapel, now part of the Memorial Lutheran Church campus. First lady Eleanor Roosevelt wanted chapels — not theaters or assembly halls — for religious services on U.S. military bases, and the plans were adjusted in early 1941 to include that requirement.

A lot of people sitting in that chapel in 1943 had a compelling reason to pray. They were going to war.

Almost 70 years later, the building hosts Sunday school classes and other activities at Vancouver's Memorial Lutheran Church.

Now some local military veterans are looking to buy the chapel. They'd like to move it back to a site near its former location at what once was Camp Hatheway, now the campus of Clark College.

"One of the Camp Hatheway buildings was used by Clark College into the 1980s," said Jeff Davis.

The historian, author and veteran will discuss the chapel's past and prospects for its future in a noon open house Saturday, Sept. 22, at Memorial Lutheran, 2700 E. 28th St.

"It will be a chance to introduce the public to our plans," said Davis, a member of the nonprofit heritage group the Vancouver Barracks Military Association.

The purchase price? One dollar.

"That's the price we acquired it for," said Jim Wulf, church custodian and lifelong member.

The chapel was part of America's mobilization plans at Camp Hatheway, back when Vancouver Barracks stretched from the Columbia River to Fourth Plain Boulevard. And those plans literally were drawn up before the U.S. entered the war.

The construction plans for what officially is "Mobilization Buildings/Regimental Chapel/Type CH-1" are dated Jan. 23, 1941. That's more than 10 months before Pearl Harbor, Davis pointed out.

The U.S. military wanted standardized plans for any buildings that might be required when the U.S. entered the war. And the first lady made sure those plans included chapels.

"Religious services for soldiers were to be held in theaters and recreation halls," according to a historic registry application filed for a similar chapel built at an airfield in Nebraska. Eleanor Roosevelt felt soldiers would gain a boost in morale if they could attend religious services in a military chapel. In 1941, under pressure from Eleanor Roosevelt, standardized architectural drawings for Army chapels were developed by the U.S. Army Corps of Engineers. ... The architecture resembled Colonial Revival style churches found in New England."

"We demobilized quickly" when the war ended, Davis said.

A memorial

A June 23, 1947, story in The Columbian reported that 194 buildings at Camp Hatheway were to be sold -- including 84 barracks, 12 officers quarters, 11 mess halls and 31 "miscellaneous" buildings.

A nearby church congregation -- Calvary Lutheran -- bought the chapel for \$1 and moved the building to its present location.

As part of the deal, Davis added, the congregation had to change its name to Memorial Lutheran, honoring the troops who died in the war.

The congregation held services in the former Army chapel until 1964, said Jim Wulf, church custodian. That's when the current Memorial Lutheran church was built, relegating the old chapel to a supporting role.

While the price is right, moving the 90-foot-long chapel in one piece would not be easy, Wulf said. Big laminated beams that run up the walls and curve into supports for the roof are a weak point. A 37-foot-long brace would have to run at floor level from each beam to its counterpart on the opposite wall to keep the trusses from collapsing, Wulf said.

Davis said moving the chapel would cost from \$200,000 to \$250,000 -- including set-up and some infrastructure work.

Davis, co-author of "Weird Washington," is tentatively planning a Halloween-themed fundraising event in the chapel on Oct. 27, with some Clark County ghost stories.

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Jeff Davis shows plans for the former Camp Hatheway Chapel, which now is part of the Memorial Lutheran Church campus.



Historian Jeff Davis, left, and Memorial Lutheran Church custodian Jim Wulf examine one of the beams that would have to be braced if the former World War II Army chapel were relocated. A group of military veterans wants to buy the chapel and move it from the church campus to a

site near its original location at what was once Camp Hatheway, now the campus of Clark College.