

QUEENS NEWS

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Architect Daniel Allen talks to officials, including Borough President Helen Marshall (L.), about \$630,000 rehab of the Chapel of the Sisters (inset). It was built in 1857 by a wealthy merchant to memorialize his daughters.

Answered prayers

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YESTERDAY'S COLD rain could not dampen the enthusiasm surrounding the kickoff of a \$630,000 project to restore an 1857 chapel in Jamaica's historic Prospect Cemetery.

"This is a miracle," said a beaming Cate Ludlam, president of the Prospect Cemetery Association, as she surveyed the score of officials, preservationists and volunteers all crowded into the Chapel of the Sisters.

Nicholas Ludlum, a wealthy merchant, built the chapel as a memorial to his three deceased daughters: Mary Cecelia, who died at the age of a year and

1857 chapel in historic cemetery focus of 630G restoration project

three months in 1828; Cornelia, who died at 13 in 1837, and Mary, who died at 21 in 1855.

The chapel is a symmetrical, one-story Romanesque Revival building, approximately 40 by 40 feet, and 25 feet high.

Founded in 1668, the cemetery is the oldest family burial ground in Queens, with grave markers dating from 1728. Along with its chapel, it is listed in the National Register of Historic Places and is a designated New York City landmark.

In 1999, the Greater Jamaica Development Corp., the New York Landmarks Conservancy

and the cemetery association came together to revitalize the cemetery and chapel, and started a fund-raising campaign.

Funding included a \$300,000 grant from the Environmental Protection Fund of the state Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, \$200,000 from the City Council and \$50,000 from Borough President Helen Marshall.

"This is what public dollars are for," said Marshall at the kickoff.

Architect Daniel Allen said, "Our hope is to save as much as we can. The building is in re-

markably good shape, even if it doesn't look it today."

The restoration work will use "very sensitive cleaning techniques" to restore the original plaster work and the gilded Scriptural language found on the walls of the chapel, said Allen.

A new floor will need to be installed, and will contain heating for the chapel. There will be no air conditioning, but there will be two ceiling fans, he said.

Fragments from two stained-glass windows are being cleaned and will be used in the restoration.

The cemetery, on 159th St. just below Archer Ave. and the Long Island Rail Road tracks, is on the campus of York College but is owned by the Parks Department.

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