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FORT INDIANTOWN GAP, Pa. - Volunteers from the 201st RED HORSE Squadron Alumni Association, which includes former members of the Pennsylvania Air National Guard's 201st RED HORSE, are renovating the 109th Infantry Regiment's Chapel located at Fort Indiantown Gap as part of an initiative to preserve the installation's and the Pennsylvania National Guard's history, and traditions.

The project began in the fall of 2012, and is spearheaded by the Pennsylvania National Guard Military Museum, a nonprofit organization charged with preserving Fort Indiantown Gap and the Pennsylvania National Guard's history. The museum received support for the project from the award-winning Pennsylvania Department of Military and Veterans Affairs cultural resource team.

Known as the 109th Infantry Regimental Chapel, or Our Lady of Victory Chapel, it began as a one-room school house in Rankstown in what is now Fort Indiantown Gap. A steeple and stained-glass windows were added to the building during the 1940s using donations from the Dioceses of Harrisburg and Scranton and soldiers of the 109th Infantry Regiment.

“The first step in this renovation process was to move the chapel from its location across from Muir Field to our historic area on post,” said Rita Meneses, cultural resource director for the Pennsylvania National Guard. This was done by loading the chapel onto motorized wheeled dollies and moving it across the installation. “Now we have the range house, the museum and the chapel all in one location, our historic district,” explained Meneses.

The next step was to assess what needed to be done to the chapel to preserve the building while maintaining its historic elements. Major repairs needed to be done on the floor and main beams. The volunteer work is currently being done by our 201st RED HORSE Alumni Association.

Additionally, the chapel has several unique stained-glass windows that were donated over the years by various organizations, several which have the 109th Infantry Regiment crest. The 109th Infantry Regiment is still in existence as a unit within the 55th Armor Brigade, Pennsylvania National Guard, and is known as the 1st Battalion, 109th Infantry Regiment. The unit is presently headquartered in Scranton, but used the building as their chapel during their mobilization leading up to World War II. Members of the 109th Alumni Association have agreed to fund the renovation on their stained-glass windows.

“A major project like this is coordinated between many different areas including construction and facilities maintenance office, training site engineers, reservation maintenance crews, the police department, and public affairs. I’m grateful for all of the support,” said Meneses.

“The Chapel is significant to the Pennsylvania National Guard and Fort Indiantown Gap history because it served the local community first as the Rankstown one-room school house,” said Sgt. Damian J. M. Smith, Pennsylvania National Guard command historian. “When the need was there, the school was moved from Area 10 to Area 9 and began to be used as one of the chapels for the 50,000 soldiers here on post during World War II. As it was re-designated as “Our Lady of Victor Chapel,” it served the members of the Catholic faith for decades. Now moved next to the museum as part of historical district, it will continue to provide history and serve visitors to the post for decades to come.”