

New Hampshire To Do

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The Currier Museum of Art is internationally renowned and features European and American paintings, decorative arts, photographs, and sculpture, including works by some Masters. The Currier recently completed a marvelous expansion and also offers studio workshops and classes for children and adults. See page 12.

Courtesy of the Currier Museum of Art/José Martinez Photo

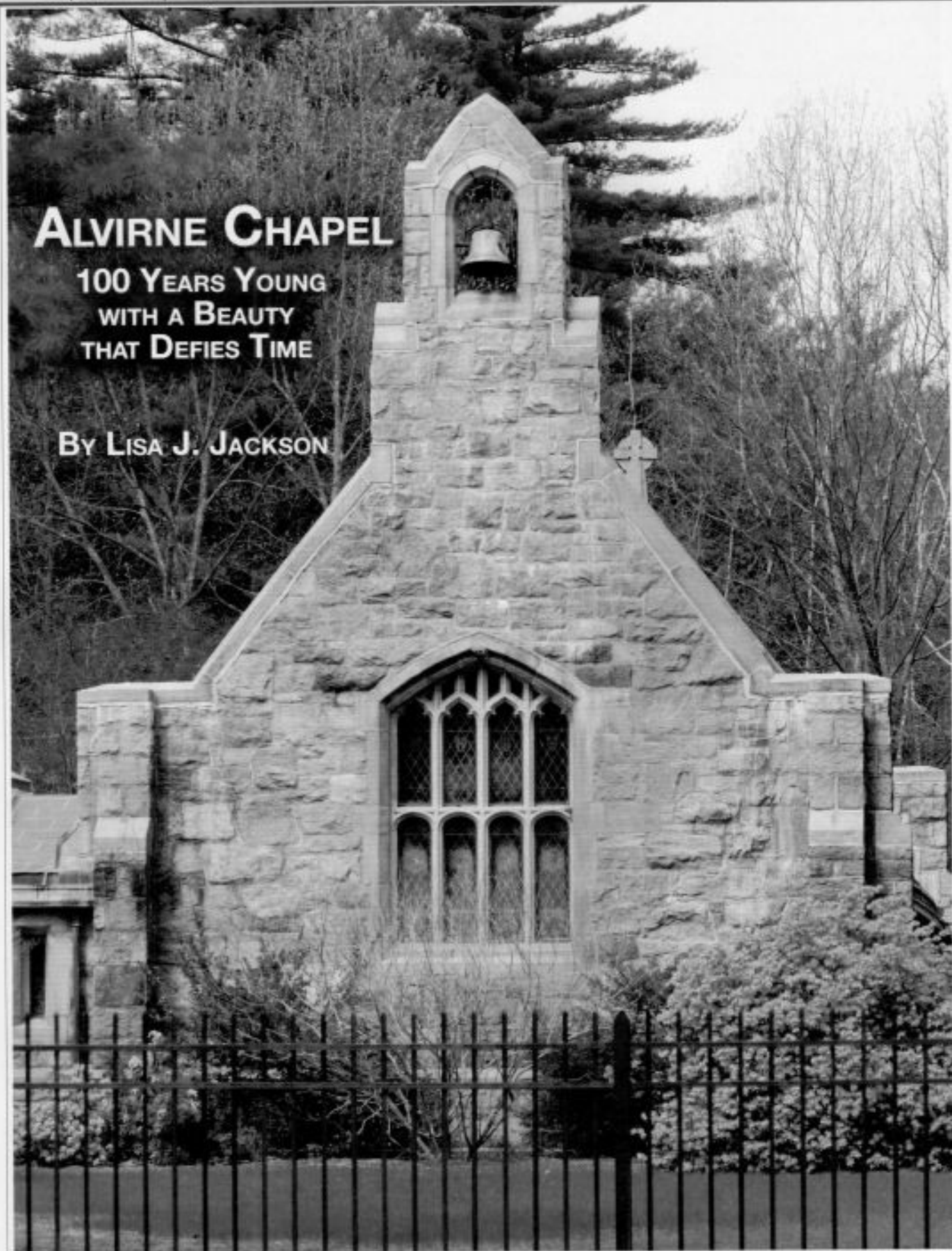
EVERY NOW & THEN

New Hampshire's unique character is found in her history, heritage, and culture. Linking times past with time-honored traditions grounds us in a modern world. And like the unseen wind that shifts its shape, contemporary culture blends seamlessly into history ... what's your story?

ALVIRNE CHAPEL

100 YEARS YOUNG
WITH A BEAUTY
THAT DEFIES TIME

BY LISA J. JACKSON



Tracy Lee Carroll Photo

ONE OF HUDSON, NEW HAMPSHIRE'S most beautiful preserved historical landmarks accessible to the public is the Tudor-style Alvirne Memorial Chapel, also called simply, the Alvirne Chapel, on Route 102. The chapel was commissioned by Dr. Alfred Hills in memory of his late wife, Virginia, in 1908. The "Alvirne" moniker is created from the two names "Alfred" and "Virginia."

Caretaker of the property, Maryellen Reed, is quite familiar with the history of the chapel, and enjoys sharing trivia tidbits. "What many people don't realize," Maryellen said, "is that the chapel is a mausoleum for the bodies of Alfred, Virginia, and their two infant daughters."

As a longtime Hudson resident, I'm quite familiar with the chapel. It exudes an open and welcoming atmosphere due to its natural beauty and the attention to detail spent in the design and construction of the building. Its construction consists of solid materials including weathered granite for the walls and oak for the beams. The vestry has a fireplace and the entry to the main chapel is through large, thick oak doors with wrought iron hinges. The gray Tennessee marble flooring works well with the red Grueby tiles crafted especially for this building. The stained and leaded glass windows at each end of the building hold church symbols set in the stone mullions.



The chapel is near the Hills Farms Cemetery. A tall iron fence surrounds the entire parcel of land. Everything related to the construction of the chapel focused on minimizing repairs and upkeep throughout the years.

The chapel's ground was consecrated in 1909. At the time, the chapel was a convenient five minute walk from an electric trolley stop on Webster Street.

The town is now celebrating the 100-year anniversary of this landmark designed to last permanently.

A 1938 hurricane passed through the area and damaged a lot of trees surrounding the chapel. Starting in the late 1950s, the Alvirne Trustees took advantage of the necessary tree removal to create a parking area and lawn to make the chapel more visible and friendly to the public.

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New Hampshire ToDo

Since that time, the chapel has been available for rented events. The chapel has served as an interdenominational church in the past, and is available to host weddings, funerals, and other events. It is available year-round, but is most popular for weddings in the warmer months when flowers are in bloom.

When fairly new to the area and in search of a location for their August, 1996 wedding, Tracy Lee Carroll and her (now) husband, Brion, discovered the Alvirne Chapel. "When I found out about the chapel and that we could get married there, I was thrilled," Tracy Lee said. "The building is a gorgeous stone structure and reminded me of the chapel where my parents were married in Silver Bay on Lake George, NY." It also fit in with their theme of a knight marrying a princess.

By utilizing natural materials, such as granite for the walls coming from a wall in a nearby field, the builder felt the structure would fit in and look natural with the landscape. To this day, it's easy to glance over the chapel as you drive by because it does blend in naturally with the landscape.

In 1989, the bell tower of the chapel had to be removed in order to replace the deteriorated mortar. One of the most time consuming parts of the process was taking pictures of each stone and its place in the tower. Each stone was also numbered as it

was removed so the bell tower could be reconstructed to its original stature. It is quite important to the trustees to keep the chapel in as close to its original form as possible.

The Alvirne Chapel has a comforting allure and is quite popular for small weddings. The 64- by 36-foot facility can accommodate about 100 people.

"The chapel is small, but so was our wedding," Tracy Lee said. "The size was perfect for an intimate setting with our

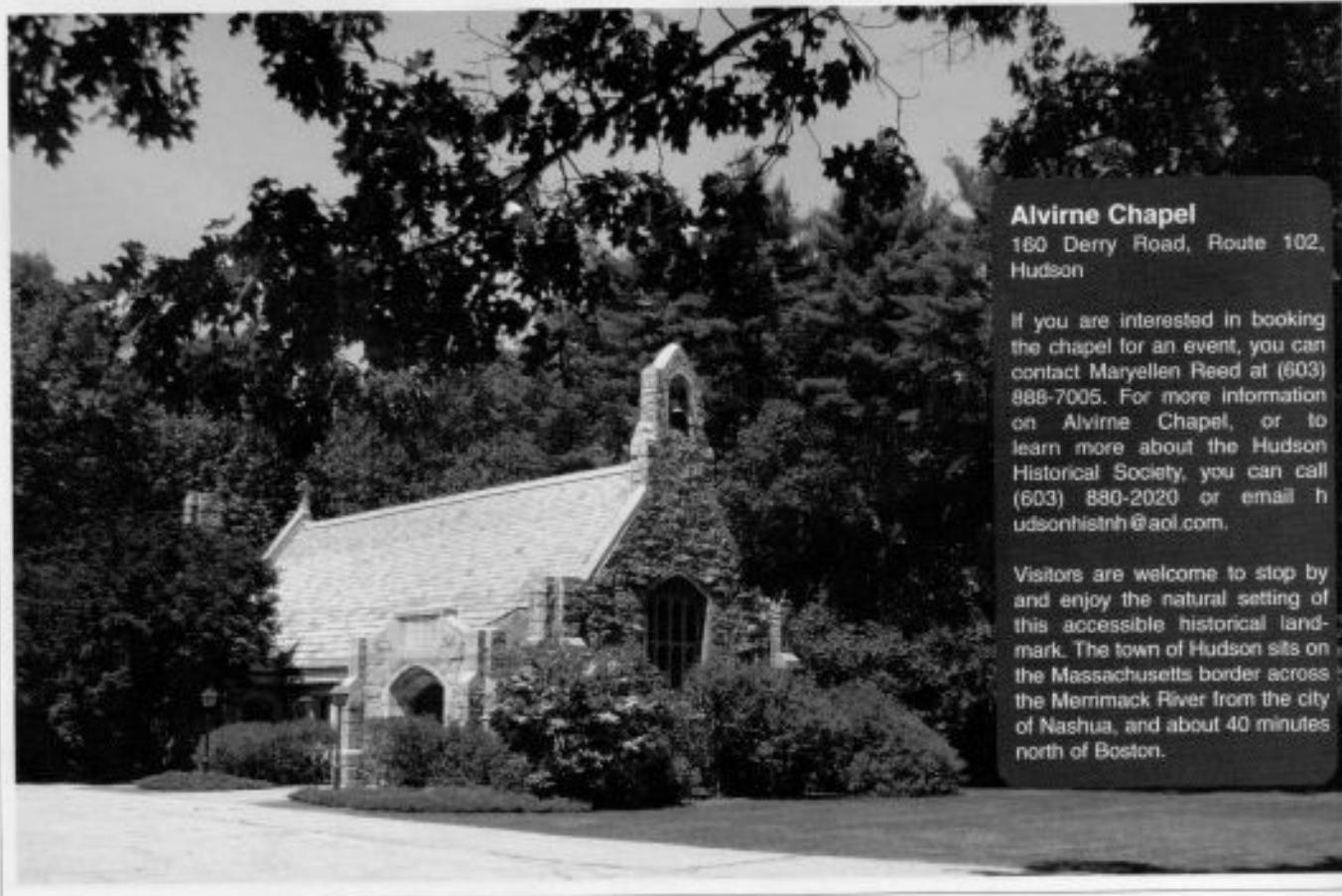
closest family and friends. We had a harp player that filled the air with sweet music."

The chapel is cared for by the Alvirne Trustees. Alvirne High School students assist with grounds maintenance and landscaping. Maryellen's husband enjoys playing the chapel's pump organ and keeping it in working condition. The chapel remains a gorgeous historical building doing what it was meant to do—providing a special gathering spot that withstands time.

ToDo



James Webb Photo / nh-jp.com



Alvirne Chapel

160 Derry Road, Route 102,
Hudson

If you are interested in booking the chapel for an event, you can contact Maryellen Reed at (603) 888-7005. For more information on Alvirne Chapel, or to learn more about the Hudson Historical Society, you can call (603) 880-2020 or email hudsonhistnh@aol.com.

Visitors are welcome to stop by and enjoy the natural setting of this accessible historical landmark. The town of Hudson sits on the Massachusetts border across the Merrimack River from the city of Nashua, and about 40 minutes north of Boston.