

# Spanning the Gap

## Separation of the church from the state ... of decay



U.S. Dept. of the Interior  
National Park Service

*Spanning the Gap*  
The newsletter of  
Delaware Water Gap National  
Recreation Area  
Vol. 18 No. 1 Spring 1996

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Phoenix Antiques and Craft Shop, located along Route 209 in Dingmans Ferry PA, shows by example the diverse potential of historic buildings for reuse. Owned by the National Park Service, this former house of worship with

adjacent carriage house is the recreation area's most successful historic lease property.

Properties listed on the National Register of Historic Places are offered for public lease under a Historic Property Leasing Program as authorized by Section III of the National Historic Preservation Act of 1966. Lease holders are responsible for maintaining the integrity of the building and its setting, following the Secretary of the Interior's Standards for Rehabilitation. In addition, their proposed use must demonstrate compatibility with recreation area activities.

The Greek Revival style Dutch Reform Church was built in 1850. Its wooden colossal temple front with four heavy fluted columns mimics the stone architecture of ancient Greece. It was converted to a residence in 1957 and has been home to antiques dealer Doug Cosh since 1972. He has leased the property since 1986. Earlier, he operated his antiques business out of a structure at the nearby

*(Left, top)* Phoenix Antiques shop, formerly the carriage house. *(Bottom)* The church property in a partying mood.



An old postcard view of the town of Dingmans Ferry shows the Dutch Reformed Church at the right and the roadbed of today's Route 209 at the left.



The same view today. Route 209 is at the left. Most of the village of Dingmans Ferry along Route 209 is gone, removed for the Tocks Island Dam project.

crossroads of Route 209 and Route 739 before losing it to a tragic truck accident and fire. As if rising from those ashes, he named his new business in the slate-roofed carriage house "Phoenix." It features southwestern crafts.



Both church and carriage house were nearing the state of decay, when Mr. Cosh began his lease. Past interior alterations were so extensive that serious consideration was never given to "restoring" these buildings. In the carriage

house, structural repairs were made to arrest spreading of the walls, a heating system was installed, and the slate roof was repaired.

In almost every aspect of his work Mr. Cosh chose to *repair*, rather than replace, as recommended by the Secretary's Standards. In the case of interior finishes, he opted for a decorative color scheme which complements the crafts items on display, creating a true "feast" for the eyes.

Even for those who just drive by, the rehabilitation and continued preservation of these historic buildings provide the public with a considerable amount of visual interest and beauty as they travel the historic roads in the park.



The former Dutch Reformed Church, now a residence and part of the Phoenix Antiques historic leasing property.



The Phoenix Antiques shop.

***Tom Solon, the recreation area's historic architect, heads the Historic Preservation and Design Office.***