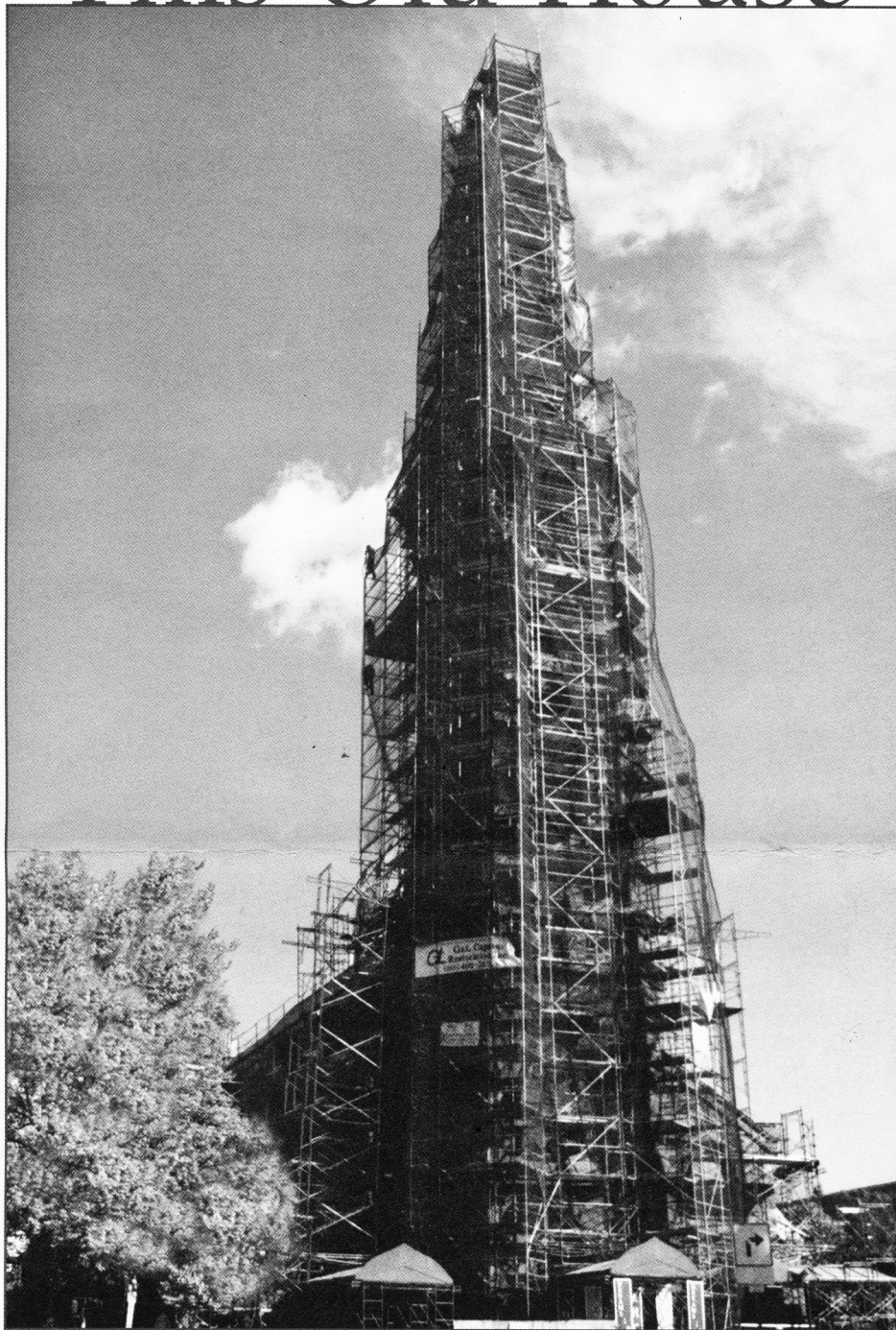


This Old House of God



The first phase of the restoration is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2004.

The brownstone construction of Asylum Hill Congregational Church is in the midst of its first major restoration since 1866, and the tall steeple shrouded in scaffolds and nets is quite a sight.

Workers from G & L Capasso Restoration Inc. of New Haven, climb the scaffolding to grind

out the loose grout between the individual brownstones – the first phase of the restoration that will be finished by the end of 2004. The restoration of the brownstone, replacement of the slate roof and rehabilitation of the clock face are part of the \$4.2 million Dreams to Reality, the campaign for AHCC.

“The (original) brownstone work on this church was excellent,” says Donald Baerman, a North Haven architect in charge of the restoration project. “There’s good stone on the ornamental carvings and the finial at the top of the tower looks like it could have been put up there yesterday.” The brownstone has been patched maybe four or five times, he says, but after the current job, it should be good for another 50 years.

How brownstone forms explains part of the reason for its delicate nature. The rock forms on riverbeds from a buildup of sand, mica and other materials flowing downstream over a long time. The stones, consisting of layers and layers of these materials, are cut from quarries for building construction.

The stones are then placed two ways – either as formed, with the layers becoming the face of the building, or turned so that the horizontal surface becomes the face of the wall. That way is called “face-bedding.” Think of it as the pages of a book, with the book turned on its side so that one page is the surface of the wall.

Baerman has taught architecture at Yale for 33 years, and says the face-bedding way is the easiest, but not the best way, to build with brownstone. He says that one in 15 or 20 stones in the church were placed that way. And 80 percent of the brownstone problems at AHCC are with face-bedding.

Once workers have finished clearing loose grout – they use a grinding wheel as opposed to a