

Volunteers restore church

By GREG WILKERSON
Staff Writer

SEVIERVILLE — An old church started to get a new look this weekend.

A group of restorationists began work on New Salem Baptist Church at 601 Eastgate Road Saturday. The 116 year old church has recently been nominated for the National Register of Historic Places and will be up for review in January 2003.

One of the people restoring the church was Robert Birden, whose relatives were involved in the building's construction.

"They made the brick and they built the church," Birden said. A plaque outside the church credits Birden's great grandfather, Isaac Dockery.

The church has stood for more than a century despite its propensity for flooding because of a nearby creek.

"It's flooded in here ever since the church has been erected," Birden said. "It's amaz-

ing that the church is still standing."

Along the bottom of the building, the brick shows visible signs of the constant flooding, having turned lighter. Birden and the rest of the crew worked on removing debris and paint Saturday and will return Nov. 2 for work on the roof, trim, glass, and further brick repairs.

"There's probably two or three more days" of work to be done, said Courtney Dollar, who organized the event with Bill Murrah of Legal Aid of East Tennessee. "It's got a very rich history and it deserves to be restored."

The group invites anyone who would like to help to join them on Nov. 2. This fall the restoration efforts will focus on the outside, and in the spring work will begin on the interior.

For more information contact Dollar at 521-9869 or 251-4947.

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Photo by Greg Wilkerson

Robert Birden repairs one of the vents at the base of the New Salem Baptist Church.



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