The Old Rugged Cross Foundation, Inc., D. Layman Construction Company, and the Community of Pokagon Township

The First Methodist Episcopal Church of Pokagon began its life as a hops barn. In 1876 the local Methodist Episcopal congregation purchased the building as a church. Here, in 1913, the hymn the “Old Rugged Cross” was sung in its entirety for the first time. A year later, however, the building was sold and returned to use as a barn.

In 1998 Robert and Molly Shafer purchased the building and formed the Old Rugged Cross Foundation, Inc. By then the building was home to wildlife and was rotting from the bottom upward. The foundation sought and achieved historic designation of the church and raised money to restore it. Although funds came in from grants and from people around the world, the generosity of the Pokagon community was critical to success.

The foundation and the contractor were committed to accurate restoration throughout the project and consulted with the State Historic Preservation Office, resulting in a remarkable transformation.