

DEPOT RENOVATION COMPLETE



Michelle McLoughlin/The Middletown Press

Bill Meyers steadies the ladder while Chuck Caswell prepares to put the finishing touches on the renovated train depot in Portland.

Train depot may be info center

From Page A1

deteriorated until it was near collapse. Seeing an important piece of town history about to disappear, officials stepped in several years ago with a proposal to restore the vacant structure for a museum. But plans fell through because of lack of funding.

The state, however, was persuaded to salvage at least half of the aging depot. The other half, believed to be older, was torn down because was too expensive to rehabilitate.

Kalinowski said he is pleased with the restoration, even though only half of the structure could be saved. "I think it's really improved the area," he said. "It's part of our history."

Russell St. John, a consultant for the railroad company, was also happy with the refurbishing. "I think they did a really good job," he said.

The company began operating in the area in April after buying Middletown's Connecticut Central Railroad. The company operates on 543 miles of track in Connecticut, Massachusetts, Rhode Island and New York.

In Portland, the company hauls freight for the Stone Container Co., which manufactures cardboard boxes and displays. To reach the Portland company, the railroad rattles across the rusty old swing bridge over the Connecticut River. Recently, the state allocated \$1 million for minor repairs to steel-truss bridge.

Kalinowski said he hopes railroad freight service can be expanded in Portland and has been pursuing the issue with the company.