

# ***Methodism: From England to Penfield, New York***



**Published in Celebration of  
200 Years of Methodism in Penfield  
1806-2006**

## **Preface**

The Penfield United Methodist Church has good reason to celebrate. It was 200 years ago, in 1806, that the Methodist movement was begun in our town. It was a small beginning with a circuit rider meeting with early settlers. We marvel at the growth that has taken place over the span of these 200 years. This document has been prepared to trace the path, not only here in Penfield, but of the history of Methodism from England, to the United States, and finally to our town. It is the hope that in this reading we will better understand our heritage and be able to begin our third century with greater insight. Committee members included in the planning of our celebration are: Pastor Cathy Hall Stengel, Dianne Evans, Doris Coniber, Ned Seachman, and Jay Thompson.

**Published June, 2006 by The Penfield United Methodist Church,  
Committee on Records and History.**

## ***Methodism – From England to Penfield, New York***

### **The Birth of Methodism in England.**

The founder of Methodism, John Wesley, was born at Epworth Rectory (about 160 miles north of London) on June 17, 1703. He was the 15<sup>th</sup> of 19 children (8 died in infancy) born to Church of England clergyman, Samuel Wesley, and his wife, Susanna. The Epworth parish did not support its clergyman in lavish style; in fact it provided for a bare subsistence for the Wesley family. Three events at the parish in the years surrounding John's birth illustrate their challenges.

1702 – Two-thirds of the parsonage was destroyed by fire;

1705 – Father, Samuel, was briefly confined to Lincoln Castle for a small debt;

1709 – The parsonage burnt to the ground and the children narrowly escaped.

Resources were so constrained that 13 years later the parsonage was still only half furnished.

John's mother, Susanna, a daughter, spouse and mother of clergymen, possessed a strong religious conviction and, fortunately for the Wesley family, exceptional energy and managerial skills. She kept the household on a rigid schedule and insisted that the children not only carry out their assigned duties but that they were diligent in pursuit of knowledge and faithful to their religious obligations.

Soon after his 10<sup>th</sup> birthday John Wesley received a scholarship enabling him to enroll at London's Charterhouse School where he pursued Latin, Greek, Hebrew and philosophy. He subsequently qualified for admission at age 17 to Christ Church College at Oxford, where he received a £40 per year allowance as a Charterhouse scholar. Here John demonstrated his passion for knowledge with little concern for creature comforts. This knowledge led him to focus his passion on the souls of men and to rid society of the early 18<sup>th</sup> century ills that hindered their spiritual development.

After several years' residence at Oxford, on September 19, 1725, John was ordained a deacon of the Church of England. At Oxford he gained considerable recognition for his scholarship and was awarded a fellowship at Oxford's Lincoln College. Following his ordination, he frequently preached in churches surrounding Oxford. Shortly afterwards, he took a two-year leave to assist his father at Epworth. During this period, his younger brother, Charles, who was now a student at Oxford, had formed a study club that was cynically labeled the Holy Club. During his absence, John on several occasions visited Charles and attended meetings of this club. When John again resumed residence at Oxford in November, 1729 he quickly became recognized as father of the Holy Club. It met at first on Sunday evenings; but soon every evening was passed in Wesley's room or

that of another member. They read the Greek Testament and the classics; fasted on Wednesday and Friday; received the Lord's Supper every week and brought all their life under review. By 1730 members of the Holy Club began to extend their ministry to prisoners in jail and assisted the sick in any parish where the clergyman was willing to accept their help. The discipline that evolved within this Holy Club soon had fellow students derisively attaching the label "Methodists". Methodism at its inception was thus a movement within the established Church of England, created by a band of young men convinced that life had a purpose and meaning, in which the spiritual essence recognized both man's relation to God and man's relation to man.



**Figure 1. The Holy Club in Session**

During this period John Wesley, a naturally very introspective individual, clearly found something absent from his ministry. He was later quoted, "From the year 1725 to 1729, I preached much but saw no fruit to my labor. Indeed it could not be that I should; for I neither laid the foundation of repentance nor of preaching the Gospel, taking for granted that all to whom I preached were believers, and that many of them needed no repentance."

Following the death of his father in 1735, John and his brother Charles entered into a mission to America. John was sent out to the Georgia colony by the Society for the Propagation of the Gospel, and had hoped to labor on a mission to the Indians. Charles, having just received his ordination in the Church of England, traveled as secretary to Georgia's Governor Oglethorpe. At the time they left Oxford, the Methodist society was still quite small, probably never exceeding twenty-five.

The Wesley mission to Georgia was not a fruitful one. John was still the stiff "High Churchman", insisting that his converts follow all the rigid discipline of the Church of England. His stern preaching against frivolity, added to his denunciation of the uncouth ways and unrestrained indulgences of the frontiersmen were not well received in his



parish. These methods suited neither the Indian nor colonist population. Charles returned to England in 1736 due to ill health. John returned to England in February, 1738, his mission ending in disappointment and much self recrimination. He wrote, "I went to America to convert the Indians, But, oh, who shall convert me!" Perhaps the most positive impact of this mission occurred on his trip to America aboard the ship, *Simmonds*. During a severe storm at sea he became terrified. He longed for the peace of mind and heart demonstrated by a group of Moravian migrants from Germany who calmly sang hymns during the tempest. He recognized that these devout people had a faith and understanding that was still denied him.

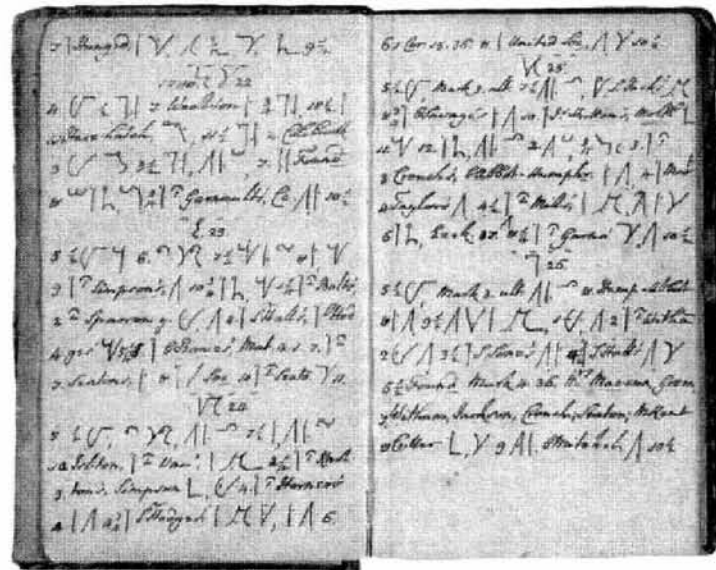


Figure 2. John Wesley's Diary for 1740

A week after his return in frustration from Georgia, a young Moravian named Peter Boehler told him of salvation by faith alone. This seems to have planted the seeds for Wesley's subsequent transformation. On Wednesday, May 24, 1738 John went to a society meeting in Aldersgate Street where Luther's *Preface to the Epistle of Romans* was being read. "About a quarter before nine, while he was describing the change which God works in the heart through faith in Christ, I felt my heart strangely warmed. I felt I did trust in Christ, Christ alone for salvation; and an assurance was given me that he had taken away my sins, even mine, and saved me from the law of sin and death."

This defining moment launched a new and assured John Wesley and his society members on a preaching mission to every venue that was receptive to their message. While many church pulpits were denied them, they took their message to the streets, the prisons and all the religious societies that welcomed them. A year later John wrote, "I could scarcely reconcile myself to the strange way of preaching in the fields . . . having been all my life (until very lately) so tenacious of every point relating to decency and order, that I should have thought the saving of souls almost a sin, if it had not been done in a church."

Although John Wesley was a spiritual and intellectual giant among religious leaders, he was physically only five feet, four inches in height, never weighing more than 120

pounds, frail and rarely in perfect health. His preaching in the streets, on more than one occasion, required rescue from an unruly mob.

Throughout the remainder of his life he considered his Methodist societies as a part of the Church of England. John died on March 2, 1791. He left this definition of a Methodist.

### ***The Marks of a Methodist***

*A Methodist is one who lives according to the method laid down in the Bible.*

*He is one who loves the Lord with all his heart, who prays without ceasing and in everything gives thanks. His heart is full of love to all mankind, and is purified from envy, malice, wrath, and every unkind affection.*

*He keeps all God's commandments from the least unto the greatest. He follows not the customs of the world. He cannot speak evil of his neighbor any more than he can lie. He does good unto all men, neighbors, friends, and enemies.*

*These are the principles and practices of our sect. These are the marks of a true Methodist. By these alone, do Methodists desire to be distinguished from other men.*

- John Wesley



**Figure 3. John Wesley - Oil on canvas, painted 1771, artist unknown**

## Methodism Comes to America.

Early in his mission to Georgia (1736) John Wesley had succeeded in forming a small society in Savannah of 30 to 40 members. He spoke of this as the second rise of Methodism (the first being at Oxford in 1729). This society, however, seems to have had little or no influence in the subsequent expansion of Methodism in America, since it lost its founder and leader with Wesley's return to England in early 1738. It was several decades later when local preacher immigrants, generally without the knowledge of John Wesley, began formation of small American societies.

Robert Strawbridge, an Irish local preacher, settled in Maryland about 1760 and Philip Embury, also a local preacher from Ireland, appeared in New York with a number of Methodist relatives in 1760. Both began preaching, Strawbridge probably in 1764 and Embury in 1766, and both forming early Methodist societies. Captain Thomas Webb, a British soldier and lay preacher, was sent to Albany, New York as a barracks officer in 1766 and immediately became active in helping to form Methodist societies. When Barbara Heck established a society in New York City, Webb preached there, alternating with Philip Embury, always wearing his full regimental uniform, including sword. After retiring from the military, Webb traveled as a missionary to several of the colonial cities, including Philadelphia, where he founded the first Methodist society. By 1768, Methodists were meeting in New York, New Jersey, Pennsylvania and Maryland, generally following the pattern of Wesley's societies in England. The American society leaders, all of whom were unordained, soon recognized the need for a more formal attachment to the British leadership for organization and pastoral assistance.



**Figure 4. Captain Thomas Webb**

When John Wesley became aware of these American developments, he appointed two missionaries to the colonies: Richard Boardman and Joseph Pilmore. They reached Philadelphia in late October, 1769 and began the task of organizing Methodism in America. These two were soon followed by several other preachers, the most prominent of whom was Francis Asbury, who arrived in Philadelphia in October, 1771. The nature of these new American societies was clearly explained by Joseph Pilmore who stated that they were not organizing something separate from the Church of England. They were, however, forming societies for persons of all denominations who “earnestly desire to flee from the wrath to come” and who desire to “walk according to the Oracles of God.”

He concluded, “This is our one point, that Christ died for us, to live in us and reign over us in all things.” By 1773, there were 1,160 Methodists served by ten preachers in Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania and Virginia.



The advent of the Revolutionary War in 1776 presented a serious dilemma to both Anglican ministers and English born Methodist preachers serving in America. Nearly all remained loyal to the British Crown and the Church of England and, with the exception of Francis Asbury, returned to England. American Methodism was thus left in the hands of a very able group of native-born preachers under the leadership of Francis Asbury. John Wesley, himself, had little sympathy for these American revolutionists at the time of the Declaration of Independence. He expressed the opinion that the revolution was an unjustifiable rebellion made by hypocrites—"wherever these brawlers for liberty govern, there is the vilest slavery." Only later in 1784 was he able to speak of it as "a very uncommon train of providences" that led to the independence of Britain's North American colonies.

With the return of the Anglican ministers to England during the war, the American Methodist societies faced a crisis—there were now no ministers remaining who were properly ordained by the Church of England to provide them with the sacraments, as required by John Wesley. In spite of this difficulty, when the war ended with the Treaty of Paris in 1783, the American societies had grown to 15,000 Methodists served by 83 traveling preachers.

John Wesley had studied this issue of ordination for several years. In 1780 he wrote his brother saying, "I verily believe I have as good a right to ordain as to administer the Lord's Supper." Thus in 1784 he ordained two lay preachers, Richard Whatcoat and Thomas Vasey for ministry in America. At the same time he "set apart" Thomas Coke to be a joint superintendent with Francis Asbury of the American work. With these men, Wesley sent several items to America: a letter explaining his ordination, his explanation of the selection of Coke and Asbury to be joint superintendents, a hymn book and a prayer book that included Wesley's modifications of the Church of England's doctrinal guidelines. This entourage arrived in New York City in November, 1784. Coke and Whatcoat proceeded to Barratt's Chapel in Delaware to inform Asbury of his new appointment to jointly superintend the Methodist work in America. Asbury, however, made a decision that was clearly not in the plans of Coke or Wesley—he refused to accept this office unless elected by his American brethren.

American Methodist preachers had been assembling annually in conference since 1773, when they met at St. George's Church in Philadelphia. Here they reaffirmed their obedience to John Wesley, his doctrines and disciplines, and agreed not to allow lay preachers to administer the sacraments. The annual conference that gathered at the Lovely Lane Chapel in Baltimore on December 24, 1784, however, took on a much more profound significance. It was here that Francis Asbury was elected to supervising responsibilities and ordained to a newly established church, the Methodist Episcopal Church. A new Discipline was prepared based on Wesley's ideas, including a provision obligating all Methodist slave-owners to free their slaves, to ordain a number of persons, and to establish a college. When the preachers, about a dozen newly ordained, left Baltimore on January 2, 1785, they emerged as representatives of a new church. They had declared their independence from John Wesley, although they were still committed to following his counsel.





**Figure 5. Ordination of Francis Asbury, December 27, 1784**

The impact of Bishop Francis Asbury on American Methodism is difficult to overstate. From the first he understood the religious needs of the colonists in a rapidly expanding new land in a manner that had eluded John Wesley. He understood that the American church could not be a replica of the Church of England, with its harsh and unyielding disciplines. An overriding principle motivating Asbury throughout his career was the establishment of Methodist itinerancy. The concept that bishops and preachers could be frequently moved from place to place at the direction of a strong Church episcopacy rather than at the discretion of the preacher or the local church was a new concept to Protestantism. He wrote, "Our grand plan in all its parts leads to an itinerant ministry. Our bishops are traveling bishops . . . everything is kept moving as far as possible; and we will be bold to say that next to the grace of God, there is nothing like this for keeping the whole body alive from the center to the circumference, and for the continual extension of that circumference on every hand."

Bishop Asbury set a challenging example for his clergy. It is estimated that, during his 45 years of ministry in this country, he preached at least 16,425 sermons, traveled some 270,000 miles, mostly on the worst roads on horseback, participated in at least 224 annual conferences, and ordained more than 4,000 ministers. At his death in 1816 he left a flourishing church in all parts of the land with more than 200,000 communicants and served over 700 traveling preachers and a great number of local preachers.

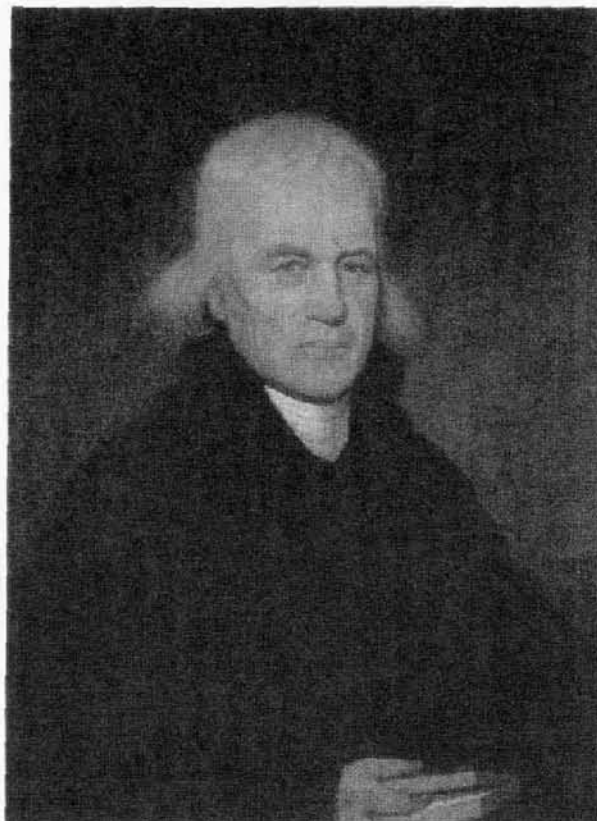


Figure 6. Francis Asbury, Oil on wood by John Paradise, ca. 1812

### **Methodism Reaches Western New York.**

From the time of the first “Conference of Methodist Preachers in America” in 1773 until 1784, the General Minutes were simply titled “Minutes of Some Conversations between the Preachers in connection with the Rev. Mr. John Wesley.” Following the seminal conference of 1785 which saw the birth of a new American church, the minutes were entitled “Minutes taken at the several Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church.”

For the next decade the conferences were held in different states without regard for political boundaries. By 1796, however, the Church’s expansion led the General Conference to establish six well-defined Annual Conferences—New England, Philadelphia, Baltimore, Virginia, South Carolina and the Western Conference. In 1800 the New York Conference was added.

In 1810 Bishops Asbury and McKendree used their discretionary authority to increase the number of conferences to eight with the organization of the Genesee Conference. The Genesee Annual Conference was formed from the Susquehanna District of the Philadelphia Conference and the Cayuga and Upper Canada Districts of the New York Conference.

Rev. Henry Boehm, a traveling companion of Bishop Asbury for a number of years, provided in his *Historical Reminiscences* insight into the formation of this new conference. "In 1809, while the Bishop and I were passing through the Genesee country, as we were riding along he said to me, 'Henry, things do not go right here. There must be a Genesee Conference;' and then he went on to assign his reasons. With almost a prophet's eye he foresaw the growth and prosperity of Western New York; that it would be the garden of the Empire State, and the garden of Methodism."

Rev. Boehm also indicated that this event was not without controversy. He wrote that Bishop Asbury was severely censured for organizing the Genesee Conference; not that the Genesee was dissatisfied, but at other Conferences some leading men considered it an "unauthorized assumption of power," and some saying "it was cruel setting off those preachers to starve." "I justified him", wrote Boehm. "I thought it one of the best official acts of the Bishop, and that in a few years the Genesee Conference would be one of the richest in the Union. It certainly was one of the best things that could have been done for the Methodists in Western New York."

The first session of the Genesee Conference was held in a barn, or storehouse, belonging to Captain Dorsey in Lyons, then in Ontario County, New York, beginning on July 20, 1810. The proceedings are well-documented in the conference journal. They include one peculiar action concerning the case of an itinerant preacher, Benoni Harris. The journal states that he was "charged with improprieties relative to dress, and a singular method of preaching." The conference withheld from him an itinerant assignment and restricted him to local preaching activity.

The story of Rev. Harris provides an entertaining insight into the range of preaching styles one might encounter from a circuit rider of this period. It is quoted in detail below, as recorded in *Early Methodism within the Bounds of the Genesee Conference*, written by Dr. George Peck and published in 1860. Dr. Peck describes Harris as "a man of small talents, and yet of great piety and marked character." But he "was shabbily dressed, and was too simple to meet the taste even of those times of comparative simplicity. His exceedingly plain manners and his eccentricities mortified the preachers, and sometimes offended the people, and at the Conference of 1810 a concerted effort was made to get rid of the poor little fellow, which proved successful. Thus closed six years in the itinerancy of one of the best, and yet one of the most singular, men who ever entered it. He was a very short man, not more, we should think, than five feet. He traveled the Otsego Circuit in 1805 and 1806, and we recollect him well. Short as he was, he was *loud*. When fairly under way he would put his hands to his ears, and then dash them down, and stamp with his feet till he made things jar.

"His stamping propensities once resulted in a most ludicrous scene. He was preaching in a sap bush, and, having no stage provided, he took his position upon the head of a hogshhead. He preached and stamped until his foundation gave way, and down went the little man into the hogshhead! The people laughed, but supposed the scene would soon be changed, when the eccentric little preacher should take another position. But how was



their amusement increased when he went on with his sermon without the interruption of a sentence, his bald head just in sight, and his hands just flung up above his head, and then taking hold of the chine of the hogshead! When his sermon was concluded he was assisted out of his awkward pulpit, and, after a powerful prayer, he dismissed the people.

“We were often deeply impressed under his earnest sermons, but were prodigiously mortified at his slovenly appearance, the rack of bones he rode, and his saddle and bridle, which in sundry places were tied up with tow-strings. He was as happy as a king, amid all the horrors, poverty, dirt and rags. He was a good man, without economy. He died in peace, and now needs no sympathy.”



**Figure 7. Methodist Circuit Rider**

The real hardships faced by the itinerant minister in the early 1800's were illustrated by Dr. Peck in his description of the old Canaan Circuit of the Susquehanna District. Each of the two preachers received an annual allowance of \$49.98 plus traveling expenses. “Let the present race of preachers survey the territory, think of the roads as they then were, and of the accommodations, and look at the scanty pittance which the preachers received, and ask themselves if the contrast presents no occasion for gratitude and contentment.” “The roads cannot be conceived of now. We know what they were ten years later; and then . . . mud, rocks,

stumps, and roots, pole bridges and no bridges! To travel these roads in hunger, cold, nakedness, and weariness, and often to lodge in open cabins among dirt and insects, and receive almost fifty dollars in the course of the year: this was the itinerancy in 1810 in the Genesee Conference.”

He further illustrated the hardships and rewards of the itinerant ministry with reference to the early career of Rev. Loring Grant, an early appointee to the Tioga Circuit. A few brief episodes are extracted below. Grant began moving around the circuit in 1807, at age eighteen. “Brothers Burch and Benedict Burgess were the circuit preachers; and in the fall of 1808, Brother Best and Brother Kimberlin being the preachers at the house of Brother Stevens, in Randolph, I was licensed to preach, the presiding elder opposing it on the grounds, first, that no one had ever heard me, and next, I was fashionably dressed. I was called in and informed by his reverence that the vote was unanimous for granting a license, but for his part he was at a loss for reasons for such action, and wanted to know how I would feel before a congregation with my two-breasted coat, short vest, and high pantaloons. At the next quarterly meeting, held on Sugar Creek in the winter of 1808-09, at which time, as a matter of course, being rather more diffident than now, I was afraid of the presiding elder as I should have been of a bear, he dragged me to his side in a rude pulpit, and made me exhort. The Lord helped me, and the old bachelor became my friend. At that Quarterly Conference I was recommended to the Philadelphia Conference to travel, and being asked if I was ready to take a circuit, I said I had not yet clothed



myself like a Methodist preacher. That, he said, would make no difference; it was a small matter, and could be arranged at my own convenience."

A subsequent episode related by Dr. Peck about Loring Grant's experiences begins, "I went near Owego, where I met my colleague, and in a little canoe that might have been carried on a man's shoulder, Palmer Roberts and myself started down the river to an appointment, the wind blowing like a tornado, threatening to engulf us; but Brother Roberts sung the familiar lines,

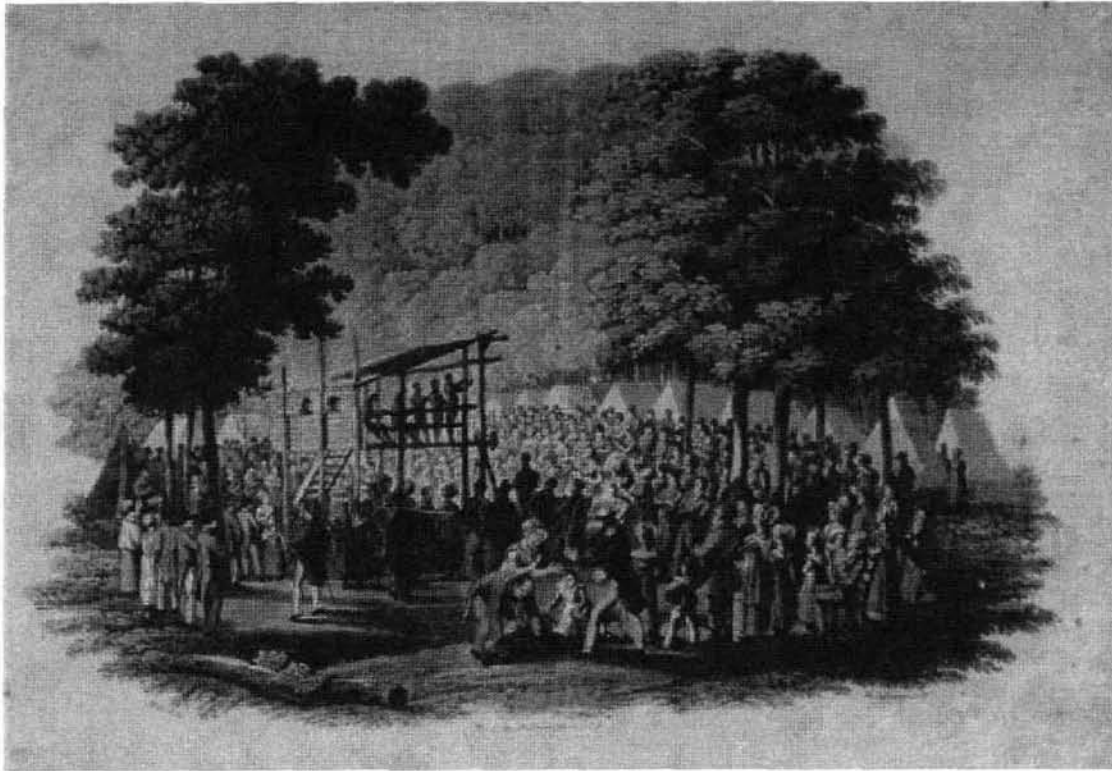
*'Sometimes temptation blows  
A dreadful hurricane,' etc.,*

And at length sung out, 'Brother Grant, you paddle and I'll pray.' We finally succeeded in making land, which we had little expected. Our circuit led us over the mountains on to the waters of the Wyalusing Creek, and at Brother Canfield's we found a most hearty welcome. One night I recollect being in company with a young Methodist preacher, Mrs. Grant with her little babe being with us, the night dark, so much so as to be able to almost feel it. The roads never having been leveled, or the old logs removed, we worked our way on, lifting our wagon over stumps and logs, and sometimes in the greatest danger; one going before and leading the forward horse, the other jumping from side to side to keep if possible the wagon right side up, Mrs. Grant in the meanwhile in the back end on a side-saddle. So we kept on until we broke our thills, when each took a horse, one carrying the babe, and the other Mrs. Grant, till some time before day we met a hearty welcome from one of the Brothers Canfield. Although he was awakened a little earlier than usual, yet he received us gladly.

"On the Creek lived a Brother Ezekiel Brown, one of the firmest friends of the itinerant. Those were days when, if we had greater toils than now, we had *warmer friends*. Near this, in the winter of 1810-11, in crossing the creek, or river, from our friend Luckey's, (cousin of Dr. Samuel) the water was running over the ice like water from . . . a mill. Suddenly my horse fell through the ice without a moment's warning, yet I was enabled to leap from my horse to the ice, portmanteau in hand, holding to my bridle. My horse was several times carried under the ice, the water running swiftly, about ten feet deep; but speaking quick to him, and at the same time pulling with the bridle, he would breast the current. At length he seemed to swell up, and threw his forefeet upon the ice, and with the blessing of God upon the efforts employed, out he came. The call for help brought the neighbors some time after the horse was safe on *terra firma*, and my portmanteau well filled with water. Of course my effects were well drenched and my books spoiled."

One final story of the Rev. Loring Grant's circuit riding experience, as later documented by Dr. Peck illustrates that his hardships were well appreciated. "This circuit extended down the Wyalusing to its mouth, then up to the Wysox, and from the mouth to the head waters of the Towanda, and on to the waters of the Lycoming Creek, being thirty miles between appointments. At this appointment among the hills we used to see a good old lady, who uniformly attended meeting, coming ten miles to preaching on a week day, living only twenty miles above Williamsport, on the West Branch of the Susquehanna. One day, having rode thirty miles in the rain on horseback (that being the only mode of traveling in those days) without food or shelter, I concluded the good old sister would disappoint us, but on arriving at the house, lo! the faithful Christian was ready to alight

from her horse at the time that I did. 'So, sister, the rain did not keep you from the house of worship?' 'No,' was the reply; 'if our ministers can come thirty miles in the rain without refreshment, I think I can afford to ride ten to hear them.' "



**Figure 8. Camp Meeting of Methodists in North America**

It is certain that Bishop Asbury, as he attended this founding meeting of the Genesee Conference in 1810, fully appreciated the hardships of his itinerant ministers, for he traveled the same paths. In his Journal, the Bishop noted, in his usual condensed style: "*Wednesday*. I arrived this evening at Daniel Dorsey's. *Friday*. Conference began to-day. *Sabbath*, 22. Preached at the encampment. *Wednesday*. Conference ended; great order and dispatch in business; stationed sixty-three preachers." Afterward the bishop made the following record: "If the cry of 'want of order' came from God, the appointment of the Genesee Conference was one of the most judicious acts of the episcopacy. We stationed sixty-three preachers, and cured some, till then, incurable cases."

With this newly-organized Conference, "the preachers were no longer obliged to go to New York, Philadelphia or Baltimore to attend the sessions of the Conference in the spring when the roads were usually bad, going the whole distance on horseback. The people were no more to be deprived of their pastors for so long a time every year. The young men born in the country, who were rapidly entering the ranks, were soon to take a leading part in the Conference business, and to exercise a controlling influence in molding the Church, and giving character to her local institutions. There would soon be Genesee preachers, Genesee Methodists, and, in a sense, Genesee Methodism, all things of home growth," concluded Dr. Peck.

## **Methodism Finds a Home in Penfield.**

Until 1600, the land surrounding Irondequoit Bay provided rich hunting and fishing grounds for the Seneca Indians. Within a few years French trappers and fur traders found passage to the region following the St. Lawrence River and Lake Ontario water routes. The next two centuries saw the Senecas, French and English moving through this area, and the resulting conflicts are well documented. None of these peoples, however, established permanent settlements within the boundaries of what is now Penfield. Only after the American Revolutionary War did this region begin to attract settlers with the intention to permanently develop the land and its resources.

Both Massachusetts and New York claimed the territory that constitutes most of Western New York. The Treaty of Hartford resolved this conflict in 1786 by giving New York governmental jurisdiction and Massachusetts pre-emption rights to a large portion of this land. These rights provided Massachusetts the privilege or first chance to purchase the rights to the land from the Indians. This opportunity to procure from the Indians the entire six million acre tract was sold by Massachusetts to a company of Massachusetts investors, headed by Oliver Phelps and Nathaniel Gorham, in April, 1788, for one million dollars. Oliver Phelps quickly came to this purchase and, by July 8, 1788, with the Treaty of Buffalo, he obtained ownership of 2,600,000 acres from the Iroquois. The Phelps-Gorham Purchase was soon surveyed into seven Ranges, designated I-VII, from the Pennsylvania border north to Lake Ontario, each Range being further subdivided into townships, typically fourteen. The next decade saw numerous sales and re-sales of parcels of the land to various syndicates, land speculators as well as some individuals with the intention to relocate and begin development of permanent communities. Daniel Penfield, a highly successful New York City merchant, was among those who began acquiring various portions of this land in 1795. Between 1795 and 1800, the land that is now Penfield saw little development, primarily because it took Daniel Penfield until December of 1803 to resolve all his title issues.

Just prior to 1800 the town of Northfield came into existence in Ontario County. (Monroe County had not yet been spawned from the large county now to its east.) This town was formed from Townships 12, 13 and 14 of Ranges IV and VII, and Township 12 of Range V of the Phelps-Gorham Purchase. Today's towns of Irondequoit, Webster, Brighton, Penfield, Henrietta, Pittsford and Perinton all trace their origin to the early town of Northfield. Upon discovery that another town in New York had a like name, the name was changed to the town of Boyle on August 1, 1808. Further political division occurred, first in 1810 when Boyle was divided into Boyle and Penfield, in 1814 when Brighton was formed from lots on the southwestern corner of Penfield, and then in 1840 when further division produced the two present towns of Webster and Penfield.

The first permanent settlers of what is now Penfield arrived in 1800. Calvin Clark is generally identified as the first, followed within the year by the families of John Strowger, John Scott, Daniel Stillwell and Libbeus Ross. By 1805 approximately sixty families had taken residence in what is now Penfield.



It is at this time that the history of Methodism in Penfield begins. (Of course it was actually the town of Northfield until 1808, and the town of Boyle until 1810.) On June 9, 1804, John Hipp of Lebanon, Hunterdon County, New Jersey bought a 200 acre tract for \$600 that was located at what is now the intersection of Five Mile Line Road and Whalen Road. This tract featured an Indian trail along its southern extreme, a spring, and a stream since named Hipp Brook. In 1805 he brought his wife and six children to settle in the log cabin he had quickly erected on the site. The several histories of Penfield record that it was in this home that the first class of Methodists met in 1806. Recollections of early Penfield pioneers claim that "they had more Indians than white people for neighbors." The John Hipp family may have been among the most hospitable, for it was reported that the Indians would frequently warm themselves at his hearth.



**Figure 9. John Hipp Home, Corner Five Mile Line and Whalen Roads As It Now Appears**

Much of the early history of Penfield's Methodists is derived from the two pages of historical notes found in the Methodist pulpit Bible of 1843, now held in our Church's History Room. These notes were entered on February 17, 1870 by recording secretary, A. Raymond, following the renovation and re-dedication of the Five Mile Line Road church building. He began the history as follows.

*"Sometime during the first decade of the present century a society of Methodists was organised about one mile north from the present location of this church (the precise time is not known) in what was then known as the "Town of Northfield" embracing territory that now constitutes the Towns of Penfield, Webster and part of Perinton.*

*"About the year 1806 our now venerable father Rev. S. S. Graves moved in from Lima and was appointed Leader of this Class and their place of meeting moved to what is now known as Penfield Center."*

This first Methodist leader, Stephen Selden Graves, was born February 14, 1786 in Herkimer County, New York, the son of Benjamin F. and Abigail Graves. He was the oldest of nine children—four boys and five girls. Family tradition claims that he had read the Bible through by age four. His uncle, also a Rev. S. S. Graves, entertained many circuit riders, and this may have inspired young Stephen to his mission. At age nineteen he married Ruth Hard of Arlington, Vermont. A biography of Bradley Crippen, who was



married to Ruth's sister, Esther, indicates that Stephen Graves was a Methodist "exhorter" living in Lima, New York. It appears that Graves moved to Lima about the time of his marriage in 1805, and that he began to include the class at the Hipp home in Penfield in his circuit riding ministry during the years 1806-1808.

In the latter part of 1808, the Stephen Graves family moved to what is now called Graves Corners (Route 250 and Penfield Center Road) in Penfield, and the Methodist class moved to the new home of its teacher. While Rev. Stephen S. Graves was a highly respected preacher and leader of the early Penfield Methodists, it does not appear that he held an official appointment from either the Philadelphia or Genesee Annual Conferences of the Methodist Episcopal Church. Nevertheless, he remained very active in the evolving Methodist Church in Penfield with many religious duties, including making personal calls and preaching in the Methodist pulpit as needed. This continued until his death on February 12, 1875.

This class of Methodists under the leadership of Rev. Graves formed the nucleus of the First Society of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Penfield about 1829. A. Raymond, in his notes in the 1843 Bible, continued his history:

*"In the summer of 1829 or 30 a society of Methodists was organized by Rev. Philo Woodworth then of Victor Circuit. at the house of James Chase, the house is now standing on the hill a little south from the Penfield Mills. This society at its organisation consisted of the following named persons—John Tillottson, Leader, Mrs. Lucy Owen, Mrs. Phebe Chase, Mrs. Phebe Hull, Mrs. Sarah Barrett, Mrs. Lucy Williams and Mrs. Lois Mann. These, all except the last named who is still living, died in peace—they rest from their labors and their works follow them.*

*Soon after its organisation this society was turned over to the care of Rev. Jonathan Heustis of blessed memory then Pastor in charge of Penfield Circuit and the place for meeting was changed to this village at the house of Jonathan Barrett after being driven from one private house to another for a length of time the society by the blessing of the Lord slowly increasing in numbers and we believe in graces too found a stopping place for worship for about two years in what was denominated the "Old Penfield Store". Then the charge during the pastoral labors of Rev. Jonathan Benson purchased a portion of the "Globe building", since burned, which stood opposite the Brick Church where for several years it continued to worship."*

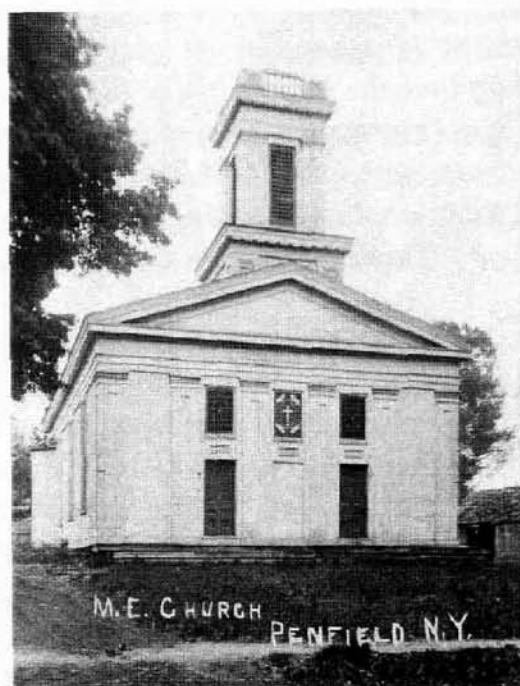
On June 24, 1829, the 20<sup>th</sup> Session of the Genesee Conference met at Perry, NY. The history of this meeting records the following comments by Rev. Seth Mattison, who was a minister on the Ontario-Palmyra Circuit of the Ontario District. "This year there was a good reformation in Penfield, Monroe County." He then added, "There were conversions in Penfield numbering more than two hundred, some sixty connecting themselves with the Methodist Episcopal Church."

At this Conference, Rev. Philo Woodworth was actually assigned to the Rochester Circuit of the Genesee District, and his Presiding Elder was the same Rev. Loring Grant, whose

experiences as a young circuit rider were described in the previous section. The following year, Rev. Woodworth was assigned to the Victor-Mendon Circuit. In the Conference history for 1830, Bishop Elijah Hedding, while conducting the meetings at Rochester, NY, lavished considerable praise on the work of Rev. Philo Woodworth, and the significant growth in his territory, which now included Penfield.

With the organization around 1829 as the First Methodist Episcopal Church of Penfield a more formal relationship was established with the Genesee Conference. The organizer, Rev. Philo Woodworth of the Victor Circuit and his successor, about a year later, Rev. Jonathan Heustis, were experienced ministers within this Conference, and would have included Penfield in their circuit under conference appointment. Around 1830, this Society of Methodists moved from the home of James Chase into the village, and next held its meetings in the home of Jonathan Barrett. By 1832, part of the old Penfield Store (later the site of the Advent Church) was fixed up for services. With the growth of membership, the Society, now under the leadership of Rev. Jonathan Benson, purchased two-thirds of the Globe building on the northwest corner of Penfield and Five Mile Line roads in 1834. Here, the first Sunday School was organized in 1839. It included six teachers and forty pupils with Samuel Strowger serving as superintendent. Also, during this era, the trustees of the church became organized as a corporate body.

It was in 1843 that construction was completed on the church building at 2106 Five Mile Line Road. "With plenty of lumber surrounding this village, the men set forth preparing lumber for a new building that was to be dedicated to God. With axes chopping and saws buzzing it was not long before enough lumber was ready for a stately new church in this wilderness village," according to Calvin Owen, Methodist trustee and early Penfield historian. In fact, it is very likely that Mr. Owen supervised the construction of this Greek-revival style building with a seating capacity of 400 persons. The total cost, including lot, was \$9,000.



**Figure 10. Early View of Penfield Methodist Episcopal Church, Five Mile Line Road. (Note horse barns, bottom, right.)**

The first entry recorded in the 1843 pulpit Bible describes the dedication of this new facility.

*“The Church of the first Methodist Episcopal Society of the Town of Penfield in the County of Monroe. Erected by William Wood, Joseph B. Roe, Henry Paddock, Calvin W. Owen & John Ballard, Trustees, was dedicated on the 29 day of June AD 1843 by the Rev. Samuel Luckey, D.D., Rev. H. N. Seaver Pr in Charge. The following is a Record of the Several Ministers of the Gospel, Stationed to preach in said Church from and after the dedication thereof, together with the dates of the commencement of their pastoral charges respectively.”*

Rev. Samuel Luckey was the Presiding Elder of the Rochester District of the Genesee Conference on several occasions. The list of pastors following the above quotation begins with Rev. H. N. Seaver, Penfield Pastor in Charge at the time of the dedication. It was then updated with the arrival of each new minister through the year 1907.

This move to a dedicated house of worship appears to have been well-timed. The Globe building, erected in 1825, had served Penfield village first as a private girl's school, then a place of worship for the Methodist Society as well as public lectures and entertainment. Later, when owned by Calvin Owen, it housed a blacksmith shop and Dr. Campbell's drug store. The building was destroyed by fire in April, 1846, less than three years after the Methodists made their transition from this building to their nearby church.

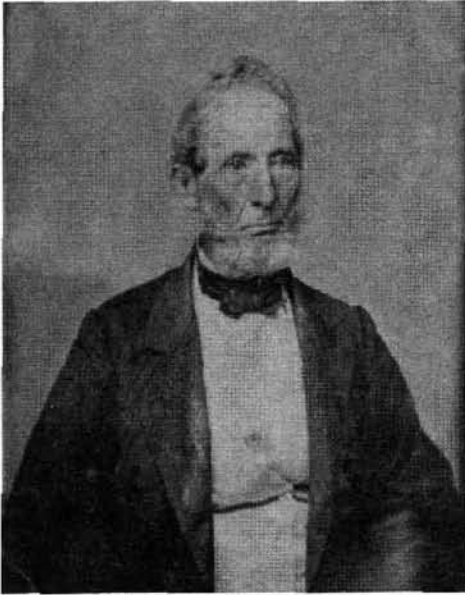
The religious sentiments and devotion of the early attendees of this Methodist Church are well-expressed in a story told about Ruth Graves, wife of Rev. Selden Graves. Her son, Dennison, with a newly-acquired, high-stepping team of horses came one Sunday to take his mother to the new Methodist Church. When she arrived, she dropped to her knees and asked the Lord's forgiveness for having come in such “unseemly haste.” Her usual method of transportation from Penfield Center to Five Mile Line Road was behind slow plodding oxen.

### **Methodism Grows in its New House of Worship in Penfield.**

Several historical documents portray the growth of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Penfield during the remainder of the 19<sup>th</sup> century. Excerpts are transcribed below from two of these—the book of Quarterly Conference Reports, 1856-1904, and the personal diary of Calvin W. Owen, prominent Penfield citizen and very active member of the Methodist Church.

In the mid-19<sup>th</sup> century Methodists (particularly in the North) were deeply involved in the anti-slavery and temperance movements. Calvin Owen was particularly outspoken on these subjects. His entry for January 1, 1854 reads:





**Figure 11. Calvin Owen.  
Prominent Penfield Resident and  
Methodist Trustee.**

*"Attended the Methodist Church all day. Listened to good sermons by the pastor C. S. Bown, whom I think is the best sermonizer that has been stationed in a length of time. This theme today was on the Brevity of Human Life, founded on a text in Job where it says that 'when a few years has come, I shall pass away and never return.' The subject was well and faithfully applied to his hearers.*

*"In the evening I attended the anti-slavery lecture of the Rev. Grovenor at the Baptist Church. There were present fair congregation. Grovenor is a Baptist preacher somewhat aged. He is a good sound speaker and I understand that he will give more lectures here and also at Fairport and Webster."*

Based on his entry for the following day, however, he seemed less impressed with the local Baptist minister.

*"The day has been very cold and good slaying. I have been this evening to hear Grovenor's 2<sup>nd</sup> lecture. The Baptist preacher, Mr. S. Ainsworth, has not been in to hear Grovenor yet and I think him a sort of a time-serving, moral coward on the great reform issues of the day. He ascertained that a majority of this Baptist church were pro-slavery and so had adapted himself to that part of his church, and about a year ago undertook in a course of lectures, to support slavery from the Bible. On the temperance questions, he takes up the Rumsellers argument, that people are not prepared to sustain a prohibitory law. Well I hope that he is honest, but I greatly fear; it does seem to me that he is trying to secure his bread and butter more than he is the good of man and the glory of God."*

Included in his comments for February 19, 1854 is the note: *"Our Preacher Mr. Bown announced from the desk to his congregation today that the church debt of the Methodist Society is fully paid and all cancelled. This debt had been standing 10 or 11 years and since the erection of the church in '43"*

In June of this same year he described the state of the church building.

*"The Methodist Meeting House is now undergoing a repainting, it has been 12 years this season. The front, facing the west, had become much weather-worn. Three coats of Zinc paint will be put on the front and steeple and two on side. The whole outside painting contains (including the lecture room adjoining) eight hundred and five yards. . . total cost \$81.50."*



Perhaps Owen felt a sense of reconciliation when he recorded that on Thanksgiving, November 31, 1854, the Methodist minister was invited to speak at the Baptist Church on two of his favorite topics.

*"Religious service was held in the Baptist Church today, and Rev. C. S. Bown (Methodist) was the speaker and he gave an excellent discourse touching on several items of topic, Slavery and Intemperance in particular.*

The Quarterly Conference minutes for this period concentrated more on administrative and financial issues. The report of pastor, Rev. N. A. DePew, for August, 1860, provides a snapshot of the church statistics for that year.

*Members, 198; deaths past year, 2; probationers, 33; local preachers, 1; probable value of church, \$4,000; No. of Sunday Schools, 3; officers and teachers, 35; Sunday School scholars, 145; volumes in library, 362; Bible classes, 3; scholars in Infant Class, 11; total expenses of the School this year, \$21.15.*

The October 25, 1862 minutes describe the action on the pastor's salary: *"The estimating committee reported to pay to Br. McKinstry (Pastor) \$450, whereupon motion was made and prevailed that we will try to raise for him \$500.*

Pastor McKinstry's Sunday School report on October 17, 1863 illustrated this significant part of the Methodist ministry: *"Three schools on the charge; one at the Grove School House, Supt. L. R. Moore, and one at the Graves School House, Supt. Jason Spears, both of which are to close for the winter, as has been customary since their organization, and also one held at the church and continues the year round. All showing a fair amount of prosperity."* Obviously "separation of church and state" was viewed very differently in 1863 than it now is.

It was noted in the minutes of June 25, 1864 that Stephen S. Graves was absent, as he was *"sick for more than a year but an old faithful father in the Lord."* Until this time Rev. Graves had been continuously involved as Local Preacher and Deacon. He was again present at the Conference of 1868, but his active role in the Methodist Church diminished considerably from this time.

Occasionally the personal behavior of church members met with the scrutiny of the church officers. The February 18, 1867 Special Meeting of the Official Board included the following from Rev. Levi Chase concerning *"a matter of grievance between A. Chappell and G. Davenport on account of alleged remarks made by Davenport of Chappell. And also some unfriendly feeling between Davenport and Mrs. A. Becker. A Committee was chosen to invite a meeting of the parties, for the purpose of affecting a harmony."*

Another Special Meeting of the Official Board on August 1, 1868 reported that *"Rev. W. Holt charged that Benjamin Crippen was guilty of selling Liquor on Sunday and other days and also of drinking to excess while keeping tavern in Pennsylvania oil regions in*

1865. And further, he charged L. B. Crippen of making false reports or lying. D. Graves, A. Raymond and A. C. Hogoboom was chosen a committee to see B. Crippen and confer with him on the subject charged, to see what action or course to take in the matter." It was not unusual for such committees to visit members who were found "working in the field" on Sundays or violated the Church's stance on alcoholic beverages. The conflict with Benjamin Crippen seems to have been quickly resolved. On August 21, 1868 the list of contributors to Rev. Holt's salary included the line item, "B. Crippen and Son to Holt - \$10.00, being in full and more." The reformed Benjamin Crippen was appointed a steward two years later.

By 1869 some of the Church members expressed interest in major renovations to the building. Item 3 of the September 6, 1869 Quarterly Conference Minutes (Rev. A. S. Baker presiding) read:

*"The matter of repairing the church called out a long and somewhat desultory conversation—it was voted that we paint the Church and put Blinds upon the windows. A proposition was carried to send out the Pastor with a subscription to raise \$500 to make the repairs on the Church and that no subscription be binding until \$500 be raised. The repairs finally settled upon are Paint the house two coats outside and inside, put blinds upon the windows, modernize the pulpit, change the Gallery somewhat, cut down the walk in front of the house, and take out the slip doors. Voted that Brothers A. S. Baker, the Pastor, A. Becker, E. Williams and H. Wilson be a committee to take an account of the work proposed to be done and ascertain at what figures the work can be done."*

The work was completed in early 1870 and entailed considerably more changes than first proposed. Calvin Owen, perhaps hinting that he questioned the necessity of this effort, entered a description of the results in his personal diary on Thursday, February 17, 1870.

*"Today the M. E. Church of Penfield has been re-dedicated. The sermon by the Rev. F. G. Hibbard, D. D. The weather was fine and the house was crowded with hearers. This church was built in 1842 & 3, is good stile & finish, but at this time our circulating Preachers who are as much for keeping in the fashion & changes of the times, moved for remodeling and enlarging the house; set to work to have it done & our preacher in charge Rev. A. S. Baker commenced & got some \$4,000, subscribed about the last of September, and made contracts for the work about the first of October. Bought an addition to the old lot of John Weaver and had the house moved some more that its width to be central & had a new Lecture Room built connected in the Rear. Put in Steam boiler for warming the house, that cost \$750. The audience Room made 12 feet longer, old gallery taken out & an orchestra made in its place, repainted outside and in—seats all cushioned & all quite nice & pleasant."*

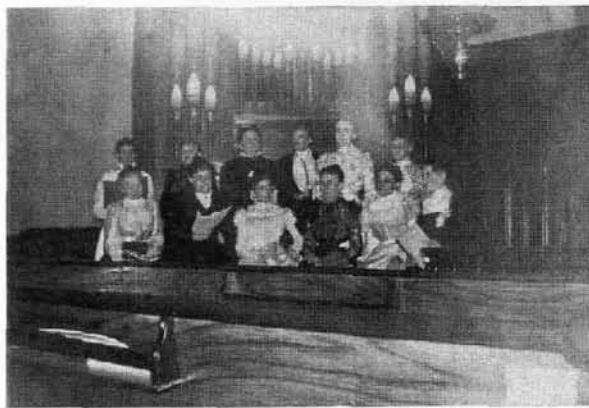
On September 25, 1886, the Trustees report summarized the state of the property as follows.

*"We have in charge our church worth \$7000 and our parsonage worth \$2000, both insured in responsible companies. During the year we have purchased a pipe organ at a*

*cost of \$775 and expended \$1250 in repairs on the church. About \$30 has been expended for furniture for the parsonage. The expenses of the church for sexton, fuel, lights, etc. for the year have been about \$200. The church, nearly all of the parsonage and the parsonage barn need shingling, and the church must be shingled very soon or receive serious damage. We recommend that immediate steps be taken in this direction. We have arranged to build seven new sheds to be occupied by responsible persons."*

As an example of the significant service provided by the young members, a final January 10, 1891 Conference Journal entry is cited.

*"We have a Young People's Society or Epworth League which we think will do us much good. The Sunday evening Prayer meeting is entirely under their jurisdiction and I think is of great use to them."*



**Figure 12. Early Adult and Youth Choirs at the Penfield Methodist Episcopal Church**

When Rev. Forrest P. Reynolds prepared a history for the 1943 centennial celebration of the Five Mile Line Road Church building, he recorded some stories of the ministers that brought our Methodist Church into the 20<sup>th</sup> century. The following paragraphs are taken from his recollections.

*"Under the leadership of such men as T. F. Parker, who served as pastor in 1885 and received a total amount for all causes of \$700 per year, and Rev. J. T. Humphrey, who served from 1888 to 1893, the Church became alive with the Living Word of Christ being preached in weekly revival services which stimulated the people and brought them face to face with their responsibility to God and their Church.*

*... "It is said that Rev. Joseph Morrow, serving from 1908 to 1913, was playing croquet one evening at the home of Miss Warner and being so interested in the game he forgot prayer meeting until 9 o'clock, at which time he boarded his bicycle and raced for the church only to find everyone gone.*

*"Rev. James Moss (1913-1914) was so enthused in having his members at church that if they were absent he would go to their home immediately following church service, with a big red bandana in his hand, would rush into the dinner table seeking the lost ones.*



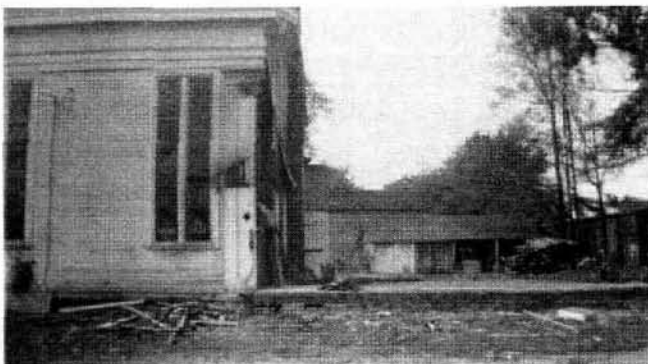
*"One of the more prominent and better remembered pastors was E. M. Kelley, who served so faithfully from 1916 to 1921. In his years of service there was a new ceiling put on the church, and the interior redecorated. After leaving the church he became the Conference Treasurer, making his home here in Penfield, where he was elected as Justice of the Peace.*

*"Many people of Penfield still hold vivid memories of some of the past ministers. Rev. R. T. Wormley is to be remembered for his chickens. J. Allatte is to be remembered both as a fine preacher and singer. A. E. Attwod as the first who lived in the present parsonage and who painted the church in 1925. One of the more recent men to be remembered is E. F. Scott who was a fine worker with young people and first to have the choir wear robes.*

*"In the year 1930, R. E. Ridsen became pastor of Penfield. Because of the depression years while he and R. A. Draffin were here there was a great struggle and hardship to keep the church financially above board. To these two men, Ridsen and Draffin, there is to be given words of praise for guiding the ship through the storm.*

*"In 1935, R. A. Delorme came to Penfield Church. The members being united in Christian brotherhood with the purpose of spreading the word of God, there soon began a forward move to a living Church. The church was redecorated, the oil heater purchased for the Sunday School room and the kitchen improved. Along with this Mrs. Ranney presented the church with a new furnace."*

In the 1950's considerably more work was done on the Church building. On March 14, 1954, Rev. John A. Redmon, D. D., Superintendent of the Rochester District, preached the Consecration Sermon, assisted by Penfield minister, Rev. Edward Cross, in celebration of the improvements achieved in 1952-53. A new two-story addition provided six new classrooms, folding doors were installed to accommodate large gatherings or closed for classroom division and the kitchen was modernized. This \$36,000 activity also replaced the front double entrance with a single central entrance.



**Figure 13. Remodeling in the 1950's. Left, Preparing for a 2-story Classroom and Kitchen Addition. Right, Insulating and Siding the Exterior of the Sanctuary.**



A further remodeling project was completed in 1957-58, for approximately \$32,000. A renovation and redecoration of the sanctuary included the addition of new pews. Siding was removed from the north and south exterior faces of the building, insulation added and new siding installed. Perhaps the most memorable activity was the excavation of the dirt basement under the sanctuary (with hand shovels) to provide two additional, finished classrooms and a storage area for the scouting activities.



**Figure 14. Five Mile Line Road Sanctuary Interior after Redecoration and Addition of New Pews.**

### **The Penfield Methodists Expand into a New Facility.**

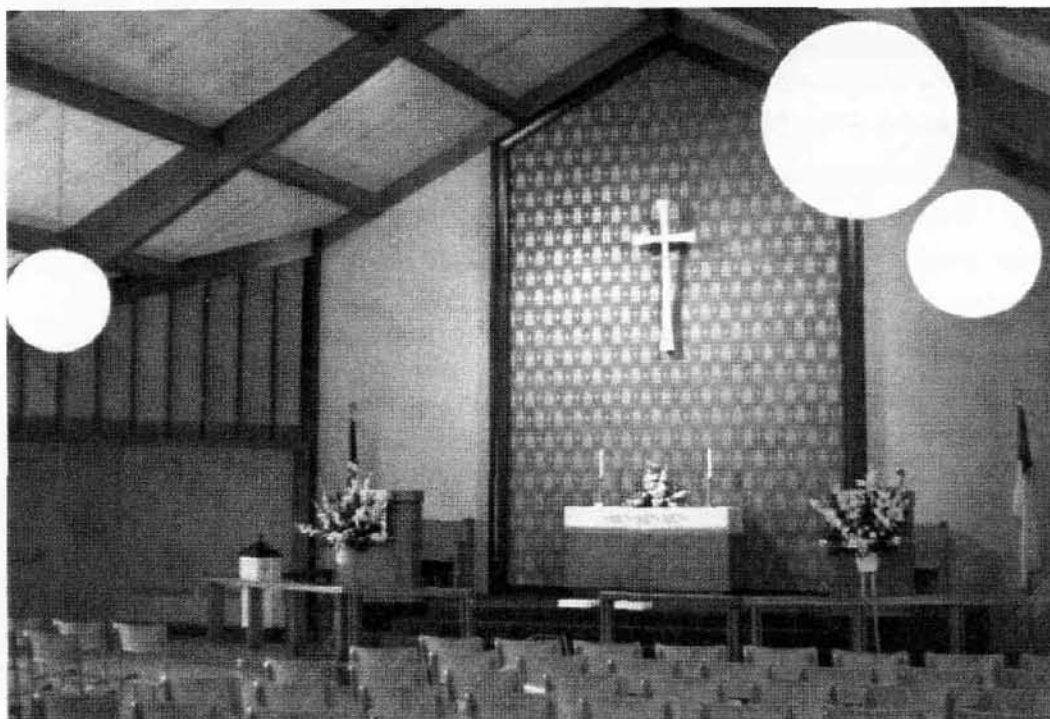
By the early 1960's it became clear to the Penfield Methodists that the classic structure that had housed them for over a century could no longer be effectively expanded to meet the rapid growth in the surrounding population. In January 1962, during the ministry of Rev. Carl VanderBurg, a Planning Committee was created. This committee performed an extensive review of growth patterns in Penfield and determined the facilities necessary to meet those needs. After a study lasting more than a year, the committee recommended that a new building site be purchased and a Building Committee be formed to oversee the design and construction of a new facility. In December, 1964, after eleven sites had been considered, the congregation voted to purchase the 20-acre Rothfus property on Baird Road for \$21,000. Within a month, the architectural firm of Shelgren, Patterson and Marzec was contracted to begin the detailed design of the new structure, and the Wells Organization was hired to conduct a capital funds drive. By early 1967 the congregation

moved into its new place of worship. The Service of Consecration was held on Palm Sunday, March 19, 1967.

It was with considerable regret that many families left the Five Mile Line Methodist church building that had served their parents and grandparents for 124 years. This Penfield landmark was sold to Penfield resident, Clinton Hutto, for \$65,000. For four years a public spirited Hutto leased it to the town for \$1 per year to serve as a youth recreation center. It was then purchased by the Southeast Bible Baptist Church, and has since housed several commercial enterprises.

The new facility on Baird Road has continued its growth to meet the needs of the Penfield Methodists. A library was reorganized in 1972 under the leadership of Thelma Twiss. A pulpit exchange in 1975-76 between Rev. Frederick Savage and Rev. Gordon Simmons of Nelson, England, provided our members with the unique opportunity to experience the style of modern English Methodist worship.

The first significant renovation of the sanctuary occurred beginning in 1989 under the guidance of Rev. Hallock Mohler. New pews, altar, sound system and choir loft were installed. A new Parsons pipe organ was purchased. A stained glass window project was initiated and guided to completion by Nancy Mount, as a select group of members constructed and installed the 16 windows that now beautify our sanctuary. Finally in 1995, a new parsonage was constructed on land owned by the Church at 1785 Baird Road, just in time to welcome pastor, Rev. Jeffrey Crawford, and his family to his ministry at the Penfield United Methodist Church.



**Figure 15. Baird Road United Methodist Church Sanctuary as It Appeared at the 1967 Consecration.**

While the past two centuries of this history have focused on the evolution of Methodism in Penfield, significant changes were also happening throughout the denomination. Two early divisions in American Methodism occurred in the 1800's. The Methodist Protestant Church split from the main body of Methodists in 1830 because they believed there was excessive power in the hands of the bishops. In 1846, The Methodist Episcopal Church, South split over the issue of slavery. It was in the spring of 1939 that the Methodist Episcopal Church (North), the Methodist Episcopal Church, South and the Methodist Protestant Church reunited to form The Methodist Church. Finally, after years of negotiations, on April 23, 1968 in Dallas, Texas, Evangelical United Brethren Bishop Reuben H. Mueller and Methodist Bishop Lloyd C. Wicke joined hands and declared their two peoples to be one in The United Methodist Church.

### **Penfield Methodists Approach the Future: A Message from Pastor Cathy Stengel.**

#### **Standing on the Shoulders.**

It has been an honor and joy to serve here at the Penfield United Methodist Church for the past two years. I am here, as the pastor, standing on the shoulders of history. All that we have and all that we are has come from God, through the hands and feet of the faithful. History has an impact on us, often when we are least aware of it. From the building to the furniture, to the music, robes and bells and books—they all represent those who have been faithful going before us.

#### **Our mission statement reads as follows:**

*We are called...*

*"to provide a nurturing environment where people are equipped to grow and serve others in the Spirit of Jesus Christ."*

This mission statement came out of a multi-generational group of people who wanted to capture the heart of the Penfield United Methodist church. This church is passionate about caring—caring for our members, our community, the city of Rochester, and the world beyond our sight.

The congregation feels that God has called us to be a vehicle of grace in the mission field, which is sometimes located right outside our doors, sometimes in places like the storm-stricken gulf coast, sometimes in the villages of Uganda.



The congregation has spent the last two years working towards a vision—a vision for what our church can look like:

- ❖ A place where everyone has a place to belong—strengthening our small group and fellowship ministry.
- ❖ A place where everyone can grow in their faith, no matter where they start from.
- ❖ A place where everyone is provided with an opportunity to reach out—to make a difference: to a neighbor; to the community; and to the world.

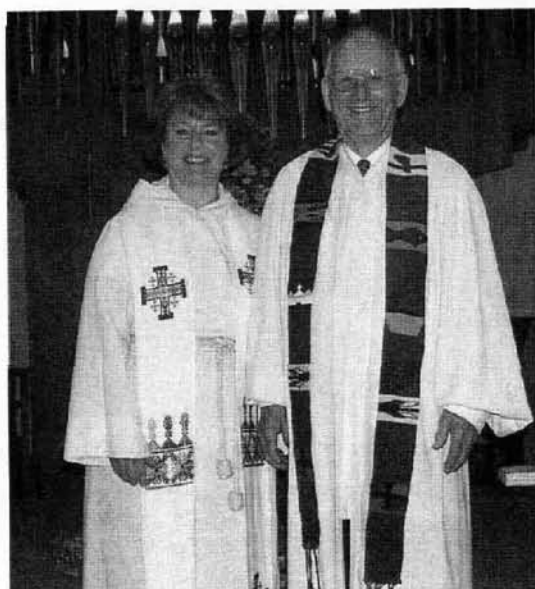
The past speaks to the present and even into the future. From the time that this current building was begun—there was a determination, a hope, that moving and creating the existing building would be a beginning—but not an end.

As we look to the future we feel called to establish our presence as a vital ministry in the community of Penfield—focusing on reaching out, welcoming in, and expanding our vision for ministry in this era of uncertainty and anxiety. God has called us to this place, to be in ministry for such a time as this. We are gifted with leaders and servants. We are gifted with hope and possibility through Jesus Christ who is our source of life and security.

The future is yet to be revealed—but we are prayerful that God will guide us—whether that looks like a building expansion or something as yet unrevealed. With determination, discernment, and discipleship we look to the future with excitement. We stand proudly on the work of those who have gone before us, pastors, preachers, leaders, teachers, and servants. We thank you one and all.

In the peace of Christ,

Rev. Dr. Cathy Hall Stengel



**Figure 16. Pastor Cathy Hall Stengel,  
Pastor Emeritus Fred Savage**

***Pastoral Roll***  
***Penfield United Methodist Church***

1806	Rev. Stephen Selden Graves (Class Leader)
1829	Rev. Philo Woodworth
1830	Rev. Jonathan Heustis
	Rev. James Lent (1 year)
	Rev. Asahel N. Fillmore (1 year)
1834-1835	Rev. Jonathan Benson
	Rev. L. D. Perry (Associate during Benson's 2 <sup>nd</sup> year)
	Rev. James Hall (1 year)
1838	Rev. Gideon Osband
	Rev. Amos Hard (2 years)
	Rev. Leverett Richmond (2 years)
1841-1843	Rev. Horatio N. Seaver
1843-1845	Rev. William P. Davis
1845-1846	Rev. E. Thomas
1846-1847	Rev. Henry Hickok
1847-1848	Rev. Asahel N. Fillmore
1848-1850	Rev. Thomas B. Hudson
1850-1851	Rev. Samuel Luckey
1851-1853	Rev. S. W. Alden
1853-1855	Rev. Charles L. Bown
1855-1857	Rev. Robert Hogoboom
1857-1859	Rev. William Manning
1859-1861	Rev. N. A. DePew
1861-1862	Rev. James L. Edson
1862-1864	Rev. Porter McKinstry
1864-1865	Rev. George G. Markham
1865-1867	Rev. Levi D. Chase
1867-1868	Rev. William B. Holt
1868-1870	Rev. Asa S. Baker
1870-1872	Rev. Charles E. Hermans
1872-1875	Rev. Daniel Clark
1875-1877	Rev. J. L. Forster
1877-1880	Rev. Charles W. Corson
1880-1882	Rev. A. F. Morey
1882-1885	Rev. G. W. Coe
1885-1888	Rev. T. F. Parker
1888-1893	Rev. Jesse T. Humphreys
1893-1895	Rev. Lemuel T. Foote
1896-1899	Rev. E. J. Gwynn
1900-1901	Rev. Charles W. Cushing
1901-1908	Rev. J. B. Countryman
1908-1913	Rev. Joseph Morrow

1913-1914	Rev. James Moss
1914-1916	Rev. W. D. Allen
1916-1921	Rev. Emmett M. Kelley
1921-1922	Rev. R. T. Wormley
1922-1924	Rev. J. W. Allatt
1924-1927	Rev. A. E. Atwood
1927-1930	Rev. Ernest F. Scott
1930-1932	Rev. Raymond Riden
1932-1935	Rev. Raymond A. Draffin
1935-1941	Rev. Robert A. Delorme
1941-1942	Rev. J. D. Partington
1942-1945	Rev. Forrest P. Reynolds
1945-1951	Rev. Clifford Robertson
1951-1954	Rev. Edward W. Cross
1954-1958	Rev. Walter Barwell
1958-1961	Rev. William E. Slocum
1961-1970	Rev. Carl VanderBurg
1970	Rev. Walter Kingsley
1970-1979	Rev. Fred Savage
	(Dean Fleming, Associate, 1 year)
Aug. 1975-Sept. 1976	
	Rev. Gordon Simmons (Exchange Minister from England)
Sept. 1978-Dec. 1978	Rev. John D. Rein (Interim minister)
1979-1980	Rev. Raymond E. Riden (Interim Minister)
1980-1985	Rev. David Peter Lubba
	Rev. Wendy Rhodehamel (Asst. Pastor 1985-1987)
1985-1995	Rev. Hallock Mohler
1995-2004	Rev. Jeffrey Crawford
2004-Present	Rev. Cathy Hall Stengel



**Figure 17. Former Penfield Methodist Pastors**  
**Carl and Mildred VanderBurg      Jeffrey Crawford, Hallock Mohler, David Lubba**



## Illustration Credits.

Figures 1-8 reproduced with permission from the Methodist Collections of Drew University.

### Full titles:

- Figure 1. "The Holy Club in Session", Engraving by S. Bellin after painting by Marshall Claxton, printed in London by Thomas Agnew & Sons, 1861.
- Figure 2. John Wesley's diary for 1740. This small pocket diary in shorthand was a gift to Drew University in 1880 when the Osborn Collection of Wesleyana was purchased by trustee Anderson Fowler.
- Figure 3. John Wesley (1703-1791). Oil on canvas, painted in Tewksbury, England by an unknown artist in 1771. Wesley presented it to John Cole (1750-1808) along with a letter of commendation to the Methodists in America. Cole and his family emigrated to America 1785. Reputed to be the first oil painting of Wesley in the colonies.
- Figure 4. Captain Thomas Webb (d1796). Pastel on paper by Lewis Vaslet, drawn in Webb's native Bristol, England, ca. 1795.
- Figure 5. "The Ordination of Francis Asbury, December 27, 1784." Engraving by A. Gilchrist Campbell after painting by Thomas Coke Ruckle, published by T. C. Ruckle in New York, 1882.
- Figure 6. Francis Asbury (1745-1816). Oil on wood by John Paradise, New York, ca. 1812.
- Figure 7. Methodist Circuit Rider, engraving early 19<sup>th</sup> century.
- Figure 8. "Camp Meeting of the Methodists in North America." Engraving by M. Dubourg, published in London by J. Milbert, 1819.

Figures 9-12 reproduced from *Images of Early Penfield* with permission of the Town of Penfield, Kathy Kanauer, Town Historian.

Figures 13-17 from files of Penfield United Methodist Church, History Room.

## References:

McEllhenney, John G., et al., *200 Years of United Methodism. An Illustrated History*, Drew University, Madison, NJ, 1984.

*Together Magazine. A special issue dedicated to the 225<sup>th</sup> anniversary of John Wesley's heartwarming experience, May 24, 1738*, Vol. III, No. 5, Methodist Publishing House, Park Ridge, IL, May 1963.

*Encyclopedia Britannica*, "Methodism", Vol. 15, p. 357 ff; "Wesley", Vol. 23, p. 515 ff; *Encyclopedia Britannica Inc., USA*, 1963.

Conable, Rev. F. W., *History of the Genesee Annual Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church, from its Organization by the Bishops Asbury and McKendree in 1810 to the year 1872*, Nelson & Phillips, New York, 1876. (Family History Library microfilm no. 92808.)

Hibbard, F. G., D.D., *History of the Late East Genesee Conference of the Methodist Episcopal Church*, Phillips & Hunt, New York, 1887. (Family History Library microfilm no. 1697619.)

MacNab, M. S., Thompson, K. W., Husted, S. C., *Northfield on the Genesee . . . Early Times in Monroe County, N. Y.*, Monroe County Historian's Office, Rochester, NY, 1981.

Thompson, K. W., *Penfield's Past, 1810-1960*, Heart of the Lakes Publishing, Interlaken, NY, 1990.

Frank, M. E., *Images of Early Penfield, A Collection of Photographs and Memorabilia*, Pub. 1985 in observance of the Town of Penfield's 175<sup>th</sup> anniversary year, Penfield, NY, Rev. Ed. 1994.

**Documents from the Historical Files of Penfield United Methodist Church:**

Reynolds, Rev. F. P., *Penfield Methodist Episcopal Church – Centennial Year*, Penfield, 1943.

Transcription of the Diary of Calvin Owen.

Quarterly Conference Minutes, 1856-1904.

Notes prepared by Church Historians: Irma Hess, Ruby Yuan, Jay Thompson.