

1832-1968

HISTORY OF THE WINDSOR UNITED METHODIST CHURCH
(Originally written by Stuart Nye.
Revised and updated in 1993 by Lillian Hollister,
Historian)

Methodism was introduced into Windsor, New York township in 1799, and the territory was part of the Tioga Circuit. It continued there until the formation of the Broome Circuit in 1812 when it became a part of that circuit. Windsor was an old battleground of Methodism long before there was a Methodist in Binghamton, although this information does not appear in historical records until 1832.

A quarterly meeting was held in Windsor in the spring of 1803. Part of the services were held in the new Presbyterian Church, which was in an unfinished state, and the love feast was held in the barroom of the house of David Hotchkiss, Esq. This was the first Methodist preaching service in the village of Windsor.

In 1810, a class was formed at the house of Roswell Higley, with the following members: Mrs. Molly Andrews; Reuben Stevens and his wife; Frederick Goodell, wife Rhoda and their son, William. Mr. Goodell had been raised a Congregationalist, while his wife was a Baptist from Dutchess County, New York. Reuben Stevens was appointed leader. He and his wife had been Methodists in Connecticut. This class, however, was not in the village.

Horace Agard formed a class in an old schoolhouse in Windsor village in 1814. This was the real beginning of Methodism in the village. The members were Judge Harper (who was converted in 1816), Timothy Rose, and B. Marvin. Meetings were now transferred from Higley's house to the village.

In 1816, Rev. George Peck became a junior preacher on the Broome Circuit. He was nineteen years of age and this was his first appointment. It is of great interest to relate his picturesque account of his experience during his first round of the area.

"When I reached the bounds of the circuit, I found a letter from Mr. Bibbins, containing a plan of the appointments, with instructions in regards to roads and stopping places. I was to visit the lower half of the circuit before I met my colleagues. My first preaching place was Isaac Page's, five miles above Chenango Point. Notice had been given, and I had a large congregation in Mr. Page's barn. Here I found a good society, which seemed to be prospering. My next appointment was in Osborn Hollow on Sabbath afternoon; the third in Stillson Hollow; the fourth at Richard Lewis' on the Susquehanna, (near the present Kirkwood station, on the Erie Railroad.) Here I found a little log cabin, not of the most inviting aspect. The good woman informed me that they were out of meat and that her husband had gone to kill a deer. In due time the old gentleman returned, having succeeded in running a deer into the river, where he shot it. It was now the latter part of July, and we found meat anything but palatable. I preached to about a half dozen poor people, led the class, and then answered sundry questions in regard to the conference. My host and his old lady were from Wales, and when evening came they lighted pine knots, stuck them between the stones of the fireplace and began to sing Welsh hymns. In the morning I rode to Jesse Hale's, some six miles above Great Bend. Father Hale was a mighty hunter, in fact, he came from Vermont and fixed his home in this region for the purpose of pursuing game in the Harmony Woods--the great forest which then stretched from the Susquehanna to the Delaware. He slaughtered about a hundred deer annually, most of which he sent to the Philadelphia market. He often killed bears and elk, as well as a great variety of smaller game, the flesh of

which I often partook at his table. He was a shrewd, witty man. He was the father-in-law of Joseph Smith, the Mormon prophet. In his neighborhood, Smith, at least in one version of his story, professed to find the golden plates from which he said he translated the Book of Mormon. He made love to Emma Hale, and finally married her, in opposition to the wishes of her friends. Hale himself detested Smith, considering him an imposter and a knave.

Mr. Hale gave me a cordial reception, and in the afternoon, I preached in a little log schoolhouse to a small but earnest congregation. When I was in the midst of my subject and perhaps waxing warm therein, a young woman made a leap into the air and uttered an unearthly scream, which startled me, and came near scattering my thoughts and bringing my sermon to a premature end. I found afterward that she was given to this kind of procedure. She was teaching school in this neighborhood, and the next day, when my path lay over the mountain to Windsor, where her residence was, she must needs borrow a saddle horse and insist on accompanying me as a guide. Her father, now deceased, had been a deacon in the Presbyterian Church, and no one was at home when we reached her house but her mother, a genuine old Jezebel, who came hobbling out on her crutch and gave me a blast of wild denunciation, berating the Methodists in good set terms and heaping upon them all manner of angry abuse. The situation was decidedly novel."

"I rode on to Higby Hollow, where I stayed all night at Father Higby's, and the next morning, which was the Sabbath, preached in a small schoolhouse. In the afternoon I preached at Randolph, where was one of the strongest societies on the circuit. My course that week lay in an irregular line through portions of Broome and Chenango counties. The appointments for preaching were at: Merwin's, Wedges', Allise's, Higby's, Elliott's, and

Kimball's, and then on Friday evening my colleagues and I met at Page's on the Chenango, 5 miles above Binghamton, which was then called Chenango Point. I gave Brother Bibbins an account of my escort, and my reception at her mother's. He laughed heartily at this part of my recital, and remarked, "I'll cure that." What he said to the lady I do not know, but on my next round, I crossed the mountain alone."

In 1829 the Binghamton Circuit was formed including Windsor and vicinity. B. Shipman and D. Torrey traveled the circuit preaching the gospel.

Binghamton was made a station, supporting its own preacher, in 1832. The remaining territory took the name of the Windsor Circuit. Windsor, Randolph, Harpursville, New Ohio, Page Brook, Ouaquaga, East Windsor, and South Windsor made up the Windsor Circuit.

If you look at the list of ministers at the end of this history, you will notice that for the first sixteen years the ministers were changed every year and in the earliest years two men were appointed for the year.

When there were two preachers appointed to the circuit, it was customary to divide the charge in half. Each pastor would serve his half for six months and then switch to serve the other half.

John Wesley (1703-1791) was worried about God's Word being sidetracked by preachers staying too long in one place. He thought that "stay-put" preachers, in addition to boring people by saying the same thing too often, might also begin to tailor their sermons to fit the prejudices of their congregation, thus side-tracking the gospel.

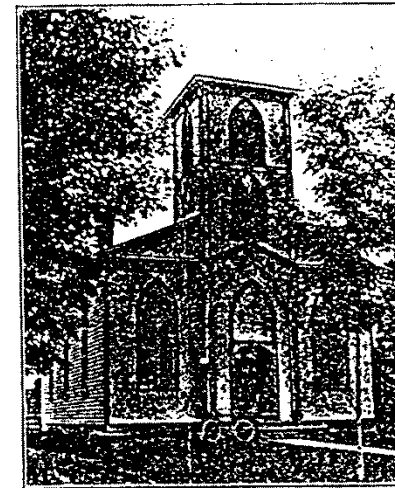
The following are noted as members of the First Quarterly Conference in the recording steward's book:

Timothy Rose, recording steward; Edwin Walter, circuit steward; Daniel Blatchley, exhorter; William Conklin, L. Dyer, Ely Osborne, John Whitham, Frederick Judd, S.S. Stevenson, Chester Hicox, J. Cornish and a Mr. Way.

In a letter to us (the Windsor Episcopal Church), some years ago, Rev. C.V. Arnold gave us a list of the preaching places on the circuit when he served in 1848. They were Windsor Village Church, Higley Hollow, Stilson Hollow (in a Baptist Church), Osborne Hollow Church, State Road, Port Crane, Kirkwood, Bound, Trowbridge, Loderville (now Great Bend), Dutch Hill, Locust Hill, Conklin Church (now Riverside), Hazzard, Randolph, South Hollow, Andrews' Hill, Youngs, Coles' Hill, Ouaquaga, Andrus, Sherwood's, Pickering's Corners, all being schoolhouse appointments except where otherwise stated. It was a four-week circuit, the preacher preaching every day or evening for three weeks and then resting the fourth week.

On Monday evening, December 27, 1830, the Methodist Episcopal Society was organized in Windsor, meeting in a log cabin schoolhouse on the village green. Rev. M.R. Cushman and Gideon Hotchkiss were judges of election, and Isaac G. Higley, George Harper, Esq., Elmore Russell, Jr., Timothy Rose, Gideon Hotchkiss, Philo Woodruff, and Barzillai Marvin were elected Trustees.

After meeting there for two years, they bought the present site on Chapel Street for the sum of \$60.00 (sixty dollars). The property was purchased from Frederick Hotchkiss. He bought the property from his brother, David Hotchkiss, who came to Windsor from Waterbury, Connecticut in 1789 and bought 2,000 acres, most of which were on the west bank of the Susquehanna River. The original deed, which is in the church archives, also names one Asenith Russel as a partial owner.



WINDSOR CHURCH

Reference is made to a "chapel" on the property when it was purchased, but its origin is obscure. At any rate, the Society built the original edifice and started services there in 1833. The first two pastors in 1832 are listed as M. Rugar and Robert Fox, with R. Fox serving again in 1833.

On November 22, 1845, Benjamin H. Russell and Jeremiah Hull were judges of election and B.H. Russell, William Pardee, James C. Chapel, Isaac G. Hogley, Jeremiah Hull and Chauncey Garney were elected trustees of "The Windsor Methodist Episcopal Church."

In 1860, the charge in Windsor was one of seven churches. The pastor at that time was D.C. Olmstead. He was paid \$450 a year with Windsor paying \$165; Higley, \$75; Tuscarora, \$25; East Windsor, \$79; Doraville, \$50; Ouaquaga, \$50; Stevens, \$35. In 1878 the charge was changed to include Windsor, South Windsor, Ouaquaga, East Windsor, and Doraville. Also, in 1878 Pastor Wild is reported to have said, "The prospect of the Millennium never looked so bright as today; we believe it is near at hand."

On February 10, 1875, after extensive repairs which included an alcove at the rear of the sanctuary for the choir, the church was reopened. The minister from 1874 to 1876 was Rev. A.M. Colegrove. However, a Rev. John G. Eckman, described as stately, strong as a preacher, great as an administrator, and a representative of which this conference is proud, was the speaker of the morning. As a scripture reading he used Hag. ii,9. After his sermon he asked for \$1,000, receiving \$1,128. In the evening Rev. L.C. Floyd, a former pastor (1865-66) preached from Timothy iii 15, and at the close of the sermon \$40 was raised with which to fix up the grounds. A.W. Colburn, owner of the local whip factory, gave cushions which cost \$270; and the Ladies Aid Society carpeted the church at a cost of \$230.

Stone walks were added in 1882 at the cost of \$32.33. A furnace was added in 1890, although collections ran from a low of \$3.59 to a high of \$53.

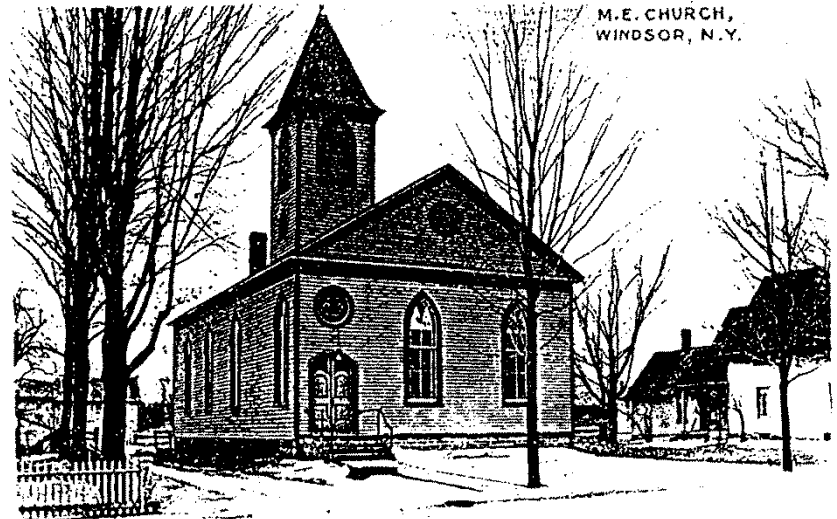
Apparently the church sheds to house the teams of horses of the worshipping parishioners on Sundays were built by individuals. Church records include receipts from Mrs. Lucy Stilwell, Frank Foster and Joseph Barnes, among others, who gave money for those sheds in 1888-1890. The minister at that time was B.P. Ripley (1887-1890). The prices for the sheds were \$20 for an enclosed shed and \$10 for an open one. They stood on the west side of the lot, but the original deed included about twice as much land as its eventual size, although no record is evident concerning the sale of any of the original purchase.

In 1897, when Rev. M.S. Godshall (1897-1898) was pastor, the church added to its property by acquiring land and a home on the corner of Academy and Pine Streets. This property was originally given to the (Methodist) society by Father Higley on the condition that the society pay him \$20.00 (twenty dollars)

annually during his lifetime. This house was used as a parsonage. Ten years later the house was declared unfit for habitation and the minister was forced to live elsewhere.

On October 2, 1897, one half of the original lot with the parsonage on it was sold for \$575, and the present parsonage was built on the north end of the property at a cost of between \$1174 and \$2000. Figures vary.

In 1899 the original church building was "remolded, enlarged and improved." An extension of 21' X 26' was built on the church with a tower over the entrance. This addition included a hall with an open stairway and an Epworth League room on the first floor, and a parlor and kitchen above. The auditorium was recarpeted and new windows were installed. In one account the auditorium was reseatd also at this time for a total of \$1650, while in another it is recorded that in 1905 new seats were purchased for \$600. The church was reopened on Friday, April 13, 1900 with Rev. A.W. Hayes, D.D., preaching in the afternoon. He was the minister at the Tabernacle Church in Binghamton. In the evening a Rev. T.F. Hall, the Presiding Elder of the Oneonta District spoke. The minister of the Windsor Church was D.L. McDonald (1899-1901). During the day \$754 was raised for the improvements.



During this period many revivals blessed the congregation, with one in the fall of 1900 being particularly noteworthy.

In 1911, a hole was cut in the floor of the sanctuary measuring three feet square over the furnace to make use of the heat arising therefrom. In the early days of the church, the building was not heated during the week and officials of the church held meetings in the stores of W.C. Chase and J.B. Bennett. Records of elections during those years indicate that "male members" participated in the voting.

Gas lights were installed in the church in 1905, at a cost of \$83.46. Stained glass windows were installed in 1933 as a part of the celebration of the church centennial. The window with figure of Christ at the back of the choir loft was given by Mrs. Nettie Kent Stratton. Others were given by Dr. and Mrs. Merrill, H.H. Sherwood, the Epworth League, Mrs. Cora Philley, Charles and Agnes Roberts, the Sunday School, the Sunshine Circle, Cora and Bertram Bevier, Mr. and Mrs. Robert Hayes, Walter Roberts and Mr. and Mrs. Floyd Bell. A large circular window was installed in front over the door, but its donor is not a matter of record. The first organ of which there is a record was purchased with funds from the estate of Florence Sherwood in 1937. It was a pipe organ originally used in a theater in Syracuse. Miss Clare Lovell played this instrument, and was followed by Mrs. Evelyn Wurzler. Stuart Nye became the organist about 1946 and served until 1985. When electronic organs became available, the church bought a Connsonata in 1954. This was one of the first in the Triple Cities area.

The church again added to its property in 1957 when they bought the house between the church and the corner of Academy Street. It was named the Fletcher House in honor of Rev. Robert Fletcher, who served as pastor from

1950 to 1958, the church's longest serving pastor. Half of the house was first used for Sunday School, and half was rented, until the Sunday School needed the entire house.

In 1963 the entire sanctuary was redecorated with light cream walls and pews, with a red velvet background for the cross and altar. The pulpit, which was said to have been one of the oldest in Broome County, was painted the same color with gold highlights, and a red carpet was installed. It was a bright and warm center for religious services.

During the years 1963-1965 Rev. Jack Tucker was the pastor. It was during these years that the Civil Rights Movement became the foremost social concern in the United States. It began with Rosa Parks, a black, refusing to ride in the back of a bus. Martin Luther King became the most outstanding black leader, organizing the black community and leading them in demonstrations, sit-ins, and marches of peaceful protest. Rev. Tucker was greatly moved by all of this and many in the congregation were sympathizers. At the height of the marches in Selma, Alabama, Rev. Tucker went to show his support for the movement by marching with them. When he returned, after a Sunday Church service, a large group of people from the congregation met him at the airport and greeted him by singing lustily, "We Shall Overcome."

In the summer of 1967 plans were made to establish a Scholarship Fund for the youth of our church. Alice Schrader and Venetta Way were appointed to work on this project. The purpose was to give a scholarship to boys wishing to enter the ministry and girls wishing to take nurses training in our Methodist Hospital for two years.

Our Sunday School was bursting at the seams. We needed more rooms. So in the fall of 1967 there were

discussions about a building program. Questionnaires were sent out concerning our needs, but before actual plans were made catastrophe befell our church.

The night of January 1, 1968, was one of the coldest nights of that winter, and the 134 year old church burned. The oil tanks erupted, and a new roof held the heat inside, so that when the sun rose on January 2, 1968, only the shell remained. Although the fire consumed nearly everything, some things were saved miraculously, including the altar Bible, the communion table and communion set, the gold cross and the candlesticks.

The night the church burned found many church women in the Fletcher House on the corner striving to help the men fighting the fire. The men stopped in with frozen gloves and faces covered with ice due to water being poured on fire. An attempt to keep gloves dry was made, which was an almost impossible task. Coffee and donuts were available.

Thus the history of our first Windsor United Methodist Church came to a tragic and heartbreaking end.

For nearly two years services were held in the Masonic Temple on College Avenue while a drive was made for funds to build a new church. In October of 1969 the first services were held in the new church. The pastor in this trying time was Rev. Jose' Valencia, who served from 1966 to 1971.

PASTORS FROM 1832

1832	M. Ruger, Robert Fox	1 year
1833	R. Fox	1 year
1834	Adam Yawger, R. Ingalls	1 year
1835	A. Johnson, W. Wyatt	1 year
1836	S. Stocking, L. Salisbury	1 year
1837	A. Calder, E.G. Bush	1 year
1838	A. Calder, J.R. Boswell	1 year
1839	Selah Stocking, L.S. Bennett, L. Pitts	1 year
1840	A. Burlingame, W. Crandall	1 year
1841	Ira Wilcox, W. Crandall	1 year
1842	George Evans, L.C. Woodford	1 year
1843	George Evans, Asa Brooks	1 year
1844	Asa Brooks, Wesley H. Miller	1 year
1845	R.S. Rose, H. Pilbeam	1 year
1846	D. Davis, Alpheus Hamilton	1 year
1847	D. Davis, T.R. Tuck	1 year
1848	H. Ereanbrack, C.V. Arnold	1 year
1849-50	L.D. Tryon	2 years
1851-52	William Rounds	2 years
1853-54	*William Roberts	2 years
1855	J.A. Wood	1 year
1856-57	A.F. Harding	2 years
1858-59	G.R. Hair	2 years
1860	D.C. Olmstead	1 year
1865	Lyman C. Floyd	1 year
1867	William Round	1 year
1868-69	W.B. Thomas	2 years
1870-71	W.W. Andrews	2 years
1872-73	C.D. Shepard	2 years
1874-76	A.M. Colegrove	3 years
1877	I.P. Towner, E.B. Aldrich	1 year
1878-79	L.A. Wild	1 year
1880-81	W.G. Queal	1 year
1882-83	S. Homan	1 year
1884-86	G.A. Severson	2 years
1887-90	B.P. Ripley	3 years

1891-94	E. Kilpatrick	3 years
1895-96	F.N. Smith	1 year
1897-98	M.S. Godshall	1 year
1899-1901	D.I. McDonald	2 years
1902-03	R.W. Lowry	1 year
1904-07	D.L. Meeker	3 years
1908-10	Ira L. Bronson	2 years
(Entered the ministry 1909, served 51 years, died age 86, 4/22/51, buried-Orwell, PA)		
1911-14	J.M. Coleman	3 years
1915-16	E.B. Singer	1 year
(Entered ministry 1897, served 41 years, died age 72, 12/5/38, buried-Sidney Center, NY)		
1917-6/1917	W.H. Heidson	6 months
7/1917-1918	Harry Brooks	1 1/2 yr
1919-8/1922	G. Summerson	3 years
(Entered ministry 1914, served 48 years, died age 71, 4/22/62, buried-Gilbertsville)		
8/1922-12/1923	A.D. Rines	1 1/3 yr
12/1923-4/1925	D.H. Henshaw	1 yr. 5mo
4/1925-4/1927	Horace Weavers	2 years
(Entered ministry 1925, served 26 years, died age 62, 11/4/51, buried-Montrose)		
4/1927-4/1929	Robert E. Austin	2 years
(Entered ministry 1909, served 52 years, died age 84, 8/6/61, buried-Milford, NY)		
4/1929-4/1932	George B. Graves	3 years
(Entered ministry 1926, served 40 years, died age 64, 2/18/66, buried-unknown)		
4/1932-4/1933	Clayton Luce	1 year
4/1933-4/1936	Frank B. Dodd	3 years
1936-4/1939	Charles Adams	3 years
(Entered ministry 1909, served 67 years, died age 92, 1/30/78, buried-Afton, NY)		
4/1939-10/1943	Wesley Brong	4 1/2 yr
10/1943-4/1946	Arthur Estlow	2 1/2 yr
4/1946-4/1950	Arthur Weber	4 years

4/1950-4/1958	Robert Fletcher	8 years
(Entered ministry in 1911, served 56 years, died age 78, 10/31/67, buried-Johnson City, NY)		
4/1958-5/1962	William B. Gritman	4 years
5/1962-11/3/62	Charles Dempsey	6 months
(Entered ministry 1933, served 29 years, died age 65, 11/3/62)		
11/3/62-5/63	Substitutes	
1963-5/1966	Jack Tucker	3 years
5/1966-5/1971	Jose' Valencia	5 years
5/1971-6/1974	Bradley Havens	3 years
6/1974-6/1978	Kenneth Wood	4 years
7/1978-6/1981	Donald Washburn	3 years
7/1982-6/1986	W. Charles Naugle	5 years
7/1986-10/1987	Richard Schaffer	1 yr. 3mo
10/1987-6/1988	Edgar Singer (Interim)	8 months
7/1988-5/1989	Pegg Ainslie-Richards	1 year
7/1989-6/1990	Ann Stanton Blair	1 year
7/1990-present	Maxwell Tow	

*From the "History of Zion Church in Windsor, N.Y."

A stained glass window to the memory of the Rev. William and Mary Louise Roberts can be found in the Zion Episcopal Church. He came from England, a Methodist minister, who was assigned to serve in the Methodist Church in Windsor in 1853. He then served in Harpursville, returning to Windsor in 1858 as an Episcopal missionary to Windsor, Tuscarora and Ouaquaga. He served Zion for 22 years.

According to an account from the Echo in 1896 he was highly esteemed as a Christian gentleman and preacher. "What a little man he was! He sought to increase his size by wearing boots much larger than he needed, and a very tall hat!"

He returned to England where he died.