

A Tour of Main Street - #3679: Walworth United Methodist Church By Jessie Keymel

Editor's Note: Some information in this story is from Charlie Pembroke's booklet, "Walworth, As I Remember It."



Prior to 1872 the Second Walworth Methodist Church was on the west side of High Street.

In 1888 a new bell was installed. Jake Pembroke, Vaughn's grandfather, often shared a story how it took three teams of horses to pull the bell up to the steeple. In 1889 the kerosene lights in the Sanctuary were replaced by acetylene gas lights. This was possible using a carbide generator built and installed by J. C. Seely and maintained by Shep Hurley, the church's custodian for many years. In 1924, a year after the Walworth Light and Power Company brought electricity to Walworth, electric lights were installed and a pipe organ was purchased.

Sometime prior to 1906 a red brick annex was added to the west wall, providing a large meeting room with a kitchen on the south end. For many years the kitchen also was the cradle room and pre-school class room during Sunday School. The main feature was a small sand table for the children. A few weeks ago a parishioner asked about the large wooden lintel above the door leading to the lower level in the church. The answer was given to him by a parishioner who was a teenager when this project was started: "That was the opening where the men of the church brought out the dirt, by wheel barrow, when excavating the crawl space under the church in the early 1950's." This expansion, which was dedicated in 1964, provided us with a Pastor's office, class room, friendship room and a modern kitchen. In 1967 the memorial gift of a beautiful stained glass, lighted cross was added to the center archway in the altar area of the sanctuary.



In 1969 our congregation became a two-point charge with the Zion United Methodist Church of West Walworth, formerly the Evangelical United Brethren. This is when Methodist Churches added United to their name. This partnership continued until 2003 when we welcomed Rev. Ken Watkins as our pastor.

Since our centennial celebration of the building in 1972 many improvements have been made: new front doors, three renovations to the sanctuary, new roofing and repairs to the steeple with the addition of a new steeple cross, the addition of a ground-level entry to make the building more accessible, and the necessary maintenance updates that a 145-year-old building requires. Some reconstruction and renovation to our basement level was necessary when a burst pipe flooded Friendship Room, hallways, the pastor's office, and restroom area.

As members of the Walworth Council of Churches we host the December Canaltown Chorale Concert, a fund raiser for the annual Daily Vacation Bible School held in both Main Street churches in August. Our building is also used by Cub Scout Pack 113 as the church has been a Charter Organization since 1955. Girl Scouts, 4-H and local nursery school/day care centers also hold meetings and special events in our facility. The Church hosts a monthly Community Ecumenical Women's breakfast and numerous other charitable groups and families utilize the facility for special occasions. In 2017 the building was deemed an historical landmark by the National Historical Landmark Society. The Walworth United Methodist Church building is the first building in Walworth to be recognized as such. Continuing its long history for mission and community outreach, current interfaith endeavors include being one of several host churches to provide hospitality for homeless in the Wayne County area with Family Promise. The church also provides housing, clothing, school supplies, and personal presence to our sisters and brothers in Nicaragua and Guatemala. The Walworth United Methodist Church has also responded to the call for help in New Orleans, LA, by sending families to help others rebuild their homes and their lives. The members strive to be faithful to the call of Christ to love our neighbors with our gifts, our talents, our prayers, and our presence in our local community, our country, and our world.



Times-Union columnist Arch Merrill closed his article about the Walworth United Methodist Church with this comment: “For years the towering spire of the brick Methodist Church, visible for miles around, has been a landmark of the growing community in Wayne County’s fruitful countryside. “

Information for this story was obtained from the writings of J. D. Kipp for the Centennial Celebration of the Congregation, Robert Wignall and Howard Bassage for the Sesquicentennial Anniversary, an interview with Pastor Jacque Ruth, and information presented to the State and National Nomination Application for Historic Register designation – the first building in Walworth to receive this honor.

Next building to be featured:3698 Main Street

Part I – Many owners/occupants, including:
KOTM/Charles Buckley Store/Wick’s Hardware/
Walworth Hardware/NYS Sitepower Corp.

Left: Current photo of Walworth United Methodist Church