



The History of the Ripley United Methodist Church

Only twenty seven short years after the founding of the Methodist Episcopal Church in America was the Methodist Episcopal Church of Quincy founded. It was started about 1811, by some deeply religious families from New England. These families included: Farley, Basil Burgess, Andrew Spear, Oliver Hitchcork, Asahel Peck, James Truesdale and their wives. On May 20, 1847 this group of people got together and wrote their Certificate of Incorporation and it was officially recorded, in Mayville, as "The first Methodist Society (Church) in Quincy, on June 25, 1847. This certificate stated that no one person in the church could be sued, but the church, as a whole, could be. When the church in Ripley was formed it was in the Baltimore Conference and in the Erie District. Later Erie formed its own conference and the Ripley Church was part of it. The first minister to the Ripley Church is unknown, but some think it was James Watts and James Ewing, others say it was Jacob Gorwell and James Watts, and still others say it was Elder Watts and James Gorwell, whoever it was, it was a circuit rider(s) from the Erie District. When the church was first founded they met in homes of the members and later, as the membership grew, they met in the school.

As the Methodist Church in Ripley kept growing a they not only wanted to but had to build a church building. August 20, 1835 the trustees purchased some land from Nathar Wisner. This land was on Ellicott St now known as Main Street. Now, if you were looking for this land you would go to the corner of West Main Street and Maple Avenue and it would be on the left side of Maple Avenue. In 1839 the building was built. It was a wooden structure with an organ and a gallery for each the boys' choir and the girls' choir. The congregation sat on four rows of seats (most likely wooden one, with no cushion). In the south was the pulpit, where two unusual chairs that were called the Amen Corner. This was the corner where two people sat and every once and a while would shout out an Amen for a brother or a sister in the congregation. The church building was dedicated in 1842 by Rev. J.E. Chapin. This wooden structure was used by the Ripley Methodist for about 30 Years.

As the congregation grew more and more the need for a bigger and better building became a necessity. So, in 1873 the Trustees purchased some land from J. Smallwood and B.F. Baird. This land was just east of the old wooden building, standing at the corner of West Main and Maple Avenue. The new church building was built at a cost of \$13,000. This church building was made of brick and had tall spires on each side which were later removed. This building was much bigger than the first one. The church building also had bells to call the people to church on Sunday morning. In 1874 the church building was dedicated by Rev J.E. Chapin, the same one that had dedicated the first little church building and by Rev. B.I. Ives of D.D. of Auburn. Also in 1874 they sold the old church building and land to Joel Coluin, who built a barn on it as the money they got from it helped to pay for the new building. The name of the church was also changed to the Methodist Episcopal Church of Ripley as the town had changed its name from Quincy to Ripley. This building that the church built in 1874 is still used today and is located on 84 West Main Street.

The Parsonage was built by the church in 1891 located at 74 West Main Street, just a few houses from the church building. This structure is still used today by the minister and his family. At the same time the South Ripley Methodist Church was built.

The Ripley church building has had many repairs done to it during its over 101+ years of serving the town of Ripley. The first repair that could be found was when the spires were removed from the church building. The reason for the removal of the spires was that they were leaking. So they removed the spires in 1906 and lowered them to their present height. Rev Farr was the minister at this time. Rev Crouch, a former minister in the Ripley Church, is said to have been greatly disturbed by the removal of the spires from the building. Also in 1906 the beautiful windows were put in and some in which were in memory of different people of the church. Excavations were made in 1910 for putting in a full basement under the church building, which proved recreation and Sunday School rooms. Also at this time electric lights were put in the church building. On March 29, 1944 there was a very severe windstorm which did a great deal of damage to the town of Ripley. This storm did a great deal of damage to the Methodist. The southwest part of the church roof was blown off and almost demolished the church. At this time Rev. Delbert Jolly was the minister of the Ripley Church. The insurance covered most of the damage so they rebuilt and redecorated the repaired church. There have been many other repairs. The church has been repainted many times. In 1975 paneling was installed on both ends of the church along with new cushions.

For the first fifty years of the Methodist Episcopal Church of Ripley had no resident minister, but was served by circuit riders from the Erie District. In 1861 the Methodist church got their first resident minister, J. Akers which served Ripley, South Ripley and State Line. From that time the church has had a resident minister in Ripley.

The church has grown quite a bit, starting with just two or three families and now in 2014 has a membership of 165.

The first record of the Sunday School is in the year 1863 with J.W. Morris who became the first superintendent of the Sunday School. In 1881 the membership of the Sunday School was about 100. Currently our Adult Sunday School averages 8. Our children's Sunday school has evolved into our Kid's Konxions which is bringing many young children to a great understanding of our God. They meet for two hours after school on Monday nights which averages about 20 children. The children refer to this time as their church.

The name of the Methodist Church in Ripley has been changed many times for many reasons. The name started out to be the Methodist Episcopal Church of Ripley, which was from 1811 to 1939. Next it was changed to Methodist Church of Ripley in 1939. When the Methodist Church joined with six other similar denominations of which the main one was United Brethren. The name was changed to the United Methodist Church of Ripley as it is still called today. Another important date in the church's history is 1962 when the Ripley Church became part of the Western New York Conference and part of the Jamestown District.

The United Methodist Church of Ripley has had a camping program for a long time. Some believe it started when the Erie District formed. Now the Ripley Church uses Camp Findley. There has almost always been a Youth Group in the church since it's the beginning. In 1973 the Methodist Youth Fellowship was going full steam and is still very active today.

This Church building has been used for much more than just worshipping God on Sunday morning. The building was used in World War I as a place to build nation spirit in the town of Ripley and it has been a place where War Bonds were sold. The church has had many distinguished visitors like Bishop Newell S. Booth, who was head of the Methodist Church in Beluan, Congo (Africa). The church has served the town well by helping the Boy Scouts and Girl Scouts by giving them a place to meet. The Church chartered the Boy Scout Troop that has met here over 50 years and has been said it is the longest continual running group in the Allegheny Highlands Council of the Boy Scouts of America. It is also helping by helping those in need, because they poor or was burned out of their home, cannot work or are sick. The church has had many revivals, which help the town to become more aware of what the church is doing and also the work of God in the Town of Ripley.

Average attendance at Church services has fluctuated over the years: in 1950 it was 70 and increased to 75 in 1968. In 2000 came a decline to 28 in average attendance to our current average of 45.

In closing, the Ripley United Methodist Church, through its growing, preaching and serving is doing one fine job in the town of Ripley.

Our Ministers since the Circuit Riders

1863	John Aker	1935	C.J. Zetler
1864	T.D. Blin	1938	Frank W. Shope
1865	L.E. Beardsley	1940	Delbert E. Jolley
1867	J.W. Davis	1944	L.M. Barnard
1871	J. Taylor	1945	Paul Smith
1872	R. W Bear	1946	Arthur Brett
1872	J.E. Chapin	1953	Paul Smith
1874	A.J. Lindsay	1957	Milton Thomas
1876	H.G. Squires	1959	Virgil Stafford
1878	J.R. Lyons	1960	LaVerne Proctor
1881	G.W. Morse	1965	Ray E. Albaugh
1883	R.W. Scott	1969	H.A. Reighart
1886	L.W. Elkins	1969	Nobel Gray
1887	A.B. Phillips	1971	Ernest W Tracy
1888	Miller Fording	1976	William Bailey
1890	J.M. Crouch	1983	Douglas M. Knopp
1894	L.H. Eddleblute	1986	Ned R. Lindstrom
1897	J.M. Bray	1990	Naomi B. Babcock
1901	Frank S. Neigh	1997	Sue Kaiser
1906	C.G. Farr	2002	Leslie Drayer
1912	O.H. Nickle	2006	James Hankey
1915	L.W. Magee	2010	Irwin Reist
1918	C.J. Baker	2012	Craig Buelow
1919	R.J. Hildred	2018	Rebecca Ward
1922	G.W. Strothard	2023	Carmen Perry/Lay Servant Team
1924	R.J. Hildred		
1924	C.M. Reed		
1928	John R. Rich		
1932	Brute L Middaugh		