

TURNPIKE TALES

by Jim Ford

"TURNPIKE TALES" #38 Part 4

(Historical items from the "Madison Bouckville Antique Week" region)

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The Madison-Bouckville area has been rich in history from the arrival of the first settlers to the present day. As an addition to the newsletter, we have decided to share some of that history in order that the patrons who travel to the Madison-Bouckville Show will have a better understanding of our truly unique region.

THE MADISON METHODIST CHURCH

Concerning the Madison Methodist Church, we have to go back to the efforts of Solomon Root in establishing a Methodist congregation in the Bouckville area. From the Society of Root's Chapel, the Society of Madison Village was formed. The class in Madison was formed in the winter of 1832-1833.

The class consisted of nine members, seven of which were transferred from the Society at Root's Chapel. The names were: Henry Lewis, Susan A. Lewis, Nancy Curtis, Grace Eaton, Rufus Holbrook, Sarah A. House, Kortwright Blakeslee, Sarah Ann Blakeslee, and Julia Spencer.

The first regular circuit preaching was held in upper hall of the school house on East Main Street, every other Sabbath at 5:00 p.m. On the other Sabbath, a prayer meeting was held at the same place and hour.

The salary the early preachers received was very small, being about \$100.00 a year for single men and about \$250.00 a year for a man with a family. The present church building, then called Wesleyan Chapel, was proposed and built in 1840, largely through the encouragement of Solomon Root.

The church was dedicated in January of 1841. We should tell of an incident at the dedication. An organ was placed in the new church. Some members of the Methodist faith objected to an organ in a church. Dr. Elias Brown had been invited to preach the dedication service. This he refused to do if the organ was left in the church. But finding that his refusal to dedicate the church would not prevent it from being done, he concluded to do it himself. After his sermon and music by the choir, he proceeded to dedicate the church with all its "necessary appurtenances and appendages." In his opinion this did not include the organ. The organ was however dedicated by another minister later in the day.

In 1857 the galleries were removed from the sides of the church and the doors to the pews were removed, and the seats remodeled. A still greater improvement was made in 1872. Previous to this time there had been two front entrances to the church. These were removed and double doors put in the center of the front. New seats of black ash with black walnut trimmings were installed. A handsome chandelier with twelve lamps was hung in the center of the church.

In addition, stained-glass windows were installed; new pulpit furniture was purchased and a handsome moquette carpet was added. An article from the Oneida Democratic Union of March 7, 1872 added that "The congregation intended to spend about \$6,000. A large tower was to be added to the church and the present bell exchanged for a new and much larger one." In 1880 there were 100 members of the church. (A parsonage had been purchased in 1870 on East Main Street in Madison by Mrs. Harriet E. Lewis, for \$1,750 and given to the church trustees.)

While the church was being repaired, services were held in the town hall, and part of the time in the Congregational Church by the kind invitation of their Trustees. In 1888 the name of the church was changed to the Methodist-Episcopal Church of Madison.

For a time previous to 1893 the general feeling was that the church needed better accommodations for church work. Changes in the structure and the addition of a church parlor were desired. The work was soon begun and completed in the summer of the same year.

Twenty feet were added to the rear of the church, church parlors, a kitchen, the removal of the organ to the right side of the pulpit and the re-frescoing of the church were among the improvements affected at that time.

The church has been the site for revival meetings, one of which was in 1899. It has also been a leader in religious education and missionary work. Several members of the church have become ministers themselves. The church continues the traditions of the past. It has a strong congregation. Their pancake breakfasts are a fundraising specialty and a delight for all citizens of the area.