

## HISTORY OF WILLSEYVILLE AND THE BAPTIST CHURCH

Willseyville was first known as the Big Flat and also as the Cantine Location. Ezra Smith was one of the pioneers who founded a settlement by building a tavern near where D. L. & W. crosses the highway and kept it open to the public until it burned in 1812.

Willseyville was named in honor of Judge Jacob Willsey who came from Fairfield in Herkimer County. The date of his settling here has not been learned but the figures 1819 found on a brick in the chimney of the house he built might mean that was the time of his settling here. The property still remains in the family at the present time and is owned by his great-great grandchildren Archibald, Bernice and Helen Benedict.

Judge Willsey was identified with the important events of local history. His house was used and conducted by him for many years as a tavern.

As early as 1823 the first Masonic Lodge Mount Olive was formed with Jacob Willsey as Worshipful Master. Evidently meetings of the lodge were held in his home as the walls of two rooms of his are found to be painted and decorated with Masonic emblems.

Then came the stage and mail service with all the hustle and bustle. Miles Mix and William Willsey were among the drivers, often four horses were being used if the load was heavy. As they were always driven at a fast pace, an exchange of horses was necessary. The horses being kept at the old half-way house.

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FRAGMENTS FROM THE HISTORY OF  
THE WILLSEYVILLE COMMUNITY BAPTIST CHURCH

The Honorable Jacob Willsey alludes to church in his journal, 1831 - 1860.

DECEMBER 1838 - Started subscription for Meeting House opposed by Methodists, 300 signed first day.

JANUARY 1, 1839 - Formed a Baptist Society in this place.

JANUARY 23, 1839 - Methodists opposing Meeting House.

MARCH 1839 - Elder Kimball and I made calculations of Meeting House, commenced selling slips.

JUNE 1839 - Framing the Meeting House.

Began underpinnings of the Meeting House - Mr. Kimball overseer of the work. Finished underpinnings, put on sills, raising the Meeting House.

JULY 28, 1839 - Meeting House goes slow, nobody but Clark to work on it.

AUGUST 1839 - Clark making shingles for Meeting House.

NOVEMBER 1839 - William D. Clark got stove for Meeting House and trying to plaster the Meeting House. Cold weather for such business.

DECEMBER 6, 1839 - Finishing plastering the Meeting House.

JANUARY 20, 1840 - Meeting House goes on slow

FEBRUARY 26, 1840 - Dedicated our Meeting House, a large collection. Disappointed of the preacher. Expected Elder Jackson from Fairport. Elder Spaulding preached introductory discourse. Mr. Riggs preached the dedicatory sermon.

FEBRUARY 29, 1840 - The Building Committee met and looked over our subscription list which amounted to \$915.00 which it has to collect.

APRIL 27, 1840 - Mr. Bullard preached here yesterday; quite a fuss with the Methodists, 5 sermons, 3 by the Universalists and 2 by the Methodists.

JULY 1841 - Settled with William D. Clark for building Meeting House.

MARCH 16, 1842 - Elder Swan preached against the \*Swedenborgs.  
Mr. Powell was quite sad. Some of the boys sheared the horses tails of Elders Swan and Peck and our two. Oh God, iniquity abounds in our land, and we know not when the deluge will stop.

MAY 1842 - Doolittle moved out of the House to Danby and I hope he will take all the Swedenborhisen with him, as they are much agitated which distrubs the mind of Captain Phelps so much that he and Mr. Preston have resigned their offices of Trustees of the Society.

DECEMBER 12, 1842 - Methodists holding a protracted meeting up old road - gave permission to go into Meeting House.\*\*

JANUARY 8, 1843 - Dr. Belding preached in the Meeting House this evening.

JANUARY 12, 1843 - Potter got the sulks and won't open the Meeting House for Prayer Meeting because Dr. Belding preached in it.

JUNE 8, 1843 - The church at this place was organized by a counsel consisting of Owego, Owego Creek, Caroline, Danby, Spencer and Candor Churches.

JUNE 14, 1843 - Went to Binghamton and joined the Broome and Tioga Association.

NOVEMBER 1843 - Elder William Dye looking for a place to preach.

JULY 1844 - Celebration of Independence Day at Meeting House.

DECEMBER 25, 1844 - Went to Owego Creek Church to attend semi-quarterly association meeting.

\* \*Started by Emanuel Swendenborg. He worte books and set forth his "heavenly doctrines," claimed they were based on Bible teachings. His followers began to form churches founded on his views known as the Church of New Jerusalem. First Church of New Jerusalem founded in United States in 1792. The Swendenborgians left Willseyville and went to Danby in 1842.

A State highway marker on the corner of 96B and Curtis Road near Danby is inscribed with the following: "New Jerusalem Church Site, Organized 1816 - Built 1824. Founded by Dr. Lewis Beers, Physician, Pastor, Justice and pioneer settler - 1797."

\*\*Methodists in Willseyville: According to the History of the Wyoming Conference, published 1903, "The Willseyville Class worships in the Baptist Church" there. A further note indicates that "On March 6, 1876 the society became incorporate as the First Methodist Church of Willseyville."

APRIL 1847 - Elder Burdick preached with us, half the time for six months.

FEBRUARY 1851 - Prayer Meeting by the Methodists held about a week and closed without much success.

FEBRUARY 26, 1851 - It is now 36 years since I came to this place, with only a log house and 8 or 10 acres of land cleared. Now with all my boys settled around me, I think I have sufficient to carry me through the remaining days of my life. I hope I may be enabled to use it, to the Honor and Glory of God.

MARCH 1854 - The Ministerial Conference commenced, but three ministers attended, Elder Emery, Jones and Webster.

OCTOBER 1854 - At the age of 80 years, The Honorable Jacob Willsey wrote: "Robert E. Joslyn died age 36. They were active business men and are much missed in the community, so the active men are taken from their spheres of usefulness, while the aged and infirm are permitted to linger out a life of uselessness without much satisfaction to themselves, or their prosperity. But we hope all things is ordered for the best by Him who has brought us into existence."

JANUARY 1856 - Donation for Elder Wilcoxen. He got about \$43.00.

JANUARY 1857 - Attended the dedication of Candor Meeting House.

SEPTEMBER 9, 1857 - Camp meeting commenced at Woodfords, held a week, 200 teams passed here on Sabbath.

NOVEMBER 25, 1857 - Mr. Charles Clapp came a-begging for the Meeting House.

MARCH 1858 - Quarterly meeting commenced, Elder King preached in evening.

SEPTEMBER 1858 - On the 8th camp meeting commenced in Candor. On the 12th, 300 wagons passed.

JANUARY 1859 - Elder Wilcoxen left to go to Lisle - leaves us destitute of preaching, been 11 years here, church has run down, few members and they are engaged after things of the world more than their soul salvation. I feel that my days are few and my labour is about done. I have nothing but the promise of a crucified Saviour to rest upon and in Him I put my trust, believing that He will not afflict us willingly more than we are able to bear.

MAY 1859 - Painting the Meeting House. Sent to New York got 40 ½ gallons oil. 200 pounds white lead, cost \$45.00. N. Ferris agreed to paint outside 2 coats for \$10.00.

JUNE 1859 - Committee thought best to tear down pulpit and build new one, contrary to my feelings, but I submit to majority.

SEPTEMBER 1859 - Camp meeting commenced. 400 wagons passed here on the 11th.

OCTOBER 1859 - Elder Phelps commenced evening meetings and they were well attended for 2 weeks and then a storm commenced.

MARCH 1860 - Elder Phelps preached last time.

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FROM THE CHURCH CLERK'S BOOK

1912 - Pastor W. H. Stevens.

MARCH 1913 - Pulpit furniture given by Mr. Myron Barber of Springfield, Massachusetts, and Mr. and Mrs. Horace Lane. This furniture is in use in the Willseyville church at present time.

? ? ? - Pastor - B. F. Tobey (no date given)

? ? ? - No Church Clerk's Book seems to be available for the period of 1916 - 1928.

1927 - 1929 - Pastor W. W. Tasker (Paid him \$3.00 a week).

1928 - 1929 - Brother Grover.

1930 - The Reverend Tasker

1931 - 1932 - The Reverend Blackmer.

APRIL 28, 1935 - Voted to call Mr. Austin N. Russell as pastor.

FEBRUARY 1937 - Centennial Celebration - Great success, church filled with people for all day meeting.

MAY 1937 - Annual meeting - Deacons reported no services after January 1, 1937 except the Centennial. Discussion as to whether church should be opened again for services or closed. Several left the meeting. The Reverend Blackmer of Candor suggested that Mr. Russell take the books, money and key to the church and make a full report to the Syracuse Office. The church was locked waiting development.

MAY 16, 23, 30 and through June, 1937 - Mrs. Cummings, Mrs. Lohr, and Mrs. Haines kept Sunday School for the children.

JUNE 27, 1937 - The Reverend Albert Ryans of Port Crane began a Kingdom building revival, Ladies Aid Society endorsing it.

FEBRUARY 6, 1938 - W. H. Stevens conducted morning services. Services were held February 13, 20, 27. Much credit is due Mrs. Cummings, Mrs. Lohr, and Mrs. Haines in keeping a few boys and girls together for Sunday School.

APRIL 1938 - W. H. Stevens made a report on the two months of services; 27 ½ average attendance, \$3.95 offering.

APRIL 10, 1938 - Mrs. McIntire was at the organ Easter Sunday, 12 voices in choir, special music, 76 in congregation.

APRIL 24, 1938 - Ladies Aid Society gave Pastor Stevens a reception at the church, about 80 in attendance.

MAY 19, 1938 - Business Meeting. Resolved that this church be known as the Community Baptist Church of Willseyville.

JULY 1940 - Daily vacation Bible School held.

JANUARY 1941 - Construction of balcony, and dining room.

AUGUST 24, 1941 - The Reverend W. H. Stevens last Sunday with us. He has accepted a pastorate at Waterloo, New York. Voted to try to obtain The Reverend G. MacMichael of Candor to accept the pastorate of our church along with his charge in Candor.

SEPTEMBER 14, 1941 - The Reverend MacMichael called to be our regular pastor.

DECEMBER 5, 1943 - The Reverend Grant MacMichael read his resignation as pastor, to become effective January 2, 1944.

FEBRUARY 27, 1943 - The Congregation voted to extend a call to The Reverend Urban Cline to be our pastor.

1947 - 1948 - Church was painted. Mr. Allie Lane donated part of his time. New furnace was installed.

1949 - 1950 - A new porch built, foundation walls repaired, bell rope repaired. Once more the bell is rung for services.

1954 - 1955 - We had a budget of \$400.00 for missions. This was gradually increased until we now in 1973 we have a Missionary budget of \$1800.00. We have a share in the support of 10 missionaries. The Reverend Floyd Estelle and family being one of them.

1956 - Voted at annual meeting to discontinue sending reports to the Broome - Tioga Association.

1956 - 1957 - Extensive remodeling was done in the church. Acklev and Brentlinger, Builders of Kirkville, New York, contracted to do the basement for Sunday School rooms, a kitchen and dining room. A new ceiling and side wall planking, also two rest rooms, installed upstairs. A new floor was laid and new pews installed in the auditorium. Much of the cost of these improvements were covered by a generous gift from the estate of Sam Hasbrouck.

JANUARY 27, 1957 - Dedication of our newly remodeled sanctuary and other improvements in the church. About 150 people attended. The Reverend W. H. Stevens, a former pastor took part in the services with our own pastor.

JANUARY 1960 - A new piano was purchased - organ fund started.

APRIL 1961 - Voted to sponsor Cub Scouts of Willseyville.

APRIL 1962 - At the annual business meeting we discussed the possibility of having our own pastor.

JUNE 1963 - Pastor Cline tendered his resignation after 19 years of serving our church.

JUNE 1963 - At a special meeting we voted to extend a call to Ronald Hawkins as pastor. A parsonage fund was started at this time.

JULY 1963 - Gift received from Candor Daily Vacation Bible School of Allen Memorial Church for our parsonage fund.

SEPTEMBER 8, 1963 - Church voted to buy a used trailer to be used as the parsonage for the present.

1964 - Voted to buy the lot in back of the church for a parsonage site. Half of the purchase price was donated to the church.

NOVEMBER 1964 - A call was extended to Mr. Lee Mead to be pastor.

APRIL 1965 - Incorporation of the Willseyville Community Baptist Church.

JANUARY 1966 - Voted to buy a new furnace.

MARCH 1968 - A Communion Set was given to the church by the John Lohr family and the Elizabeth Grippin family in Memory of their Mother, Lillian Lohr. A Dedication and Communion Service was held on Sunday morning.

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SEPTEMBER 1968 - Church voted to build a parsonage on the land purchased in 1964. Mr. Dwight Anderson and Son were engaged to build it. The trailer was sold and the amount received was applied to parsonage expense. Mr. Homer VanScoy spent much time and effort in finishing the inside of the parsonage.

OCTOBER 12, 1968 - Ordination Service of Mr. Lee Mead at 11 a.m. The Reverend Urban Cline, The Reverend Robert Gravely, The Reverend Eugene Kellogg, Dr. M. L. Lowe, The Reverend Jerome Travis and The Reverend George Kyrk had part in the service. About 92 people stayed for a delicious dinner served following the service.

APRIL 13, 1969 - More than 60 people enjoyed a fellowship dinner at the church at 12:45 p.m. At 2:30 p.m. some 84 people attended the dedication service for our new parsonage. The Reverend Urban Cline spoke briefly to us before the keys of the parsonage were presented to The Reverend Lee Mead and Mrs. Mead. Everyone enjoyed a tour of the parsonage.

1969 - An American Flag was given to the church in Memory of Lt. Donald Penney.

1972 - Near the end of 1972 the parsonage was completely paid for and the note was destroyed.

WE ARE ALL THANKING AND PRAISING GOD FOR HIS WONDERFUL GOODNESS TO US AND THE MANY THINGS HE HAS ENABLED US TO DO.

A quotation from W. H. Stevens notes: "THIS IS A REGULAR BAPTIST CHURCH, BUT THERE IS NOTHING TO PROHIBIT IT FROM BEING A COMMUNITY CHURCH, A CHURCH HOME FOR ALL PEOPLE."



Organized 1869: Miss Sarah Willsey one of the members. Nearly every meeting was opened with reading a chapter from the Bible and repeating the Lord's Prayer.

Many fund raising activities were carried on by the society, such as suppers, ice cream socials, box socials, quilts tied and sold, and bazzaars held. Proceeds from these activities were donated to the Baptist and Methodist ministers who served the church in the early 1900's.

January 1906, Ladies Aid Society met at the home of Sarah Willsey.

June 6, 1911, Mr. J. W. Benedict was elected to be secretary to fill the vacancy caused by the death of Sarah Willsey.

January 9, 1909, discussion as to what the Methodists could "hold" in the church, no satisfactory conclusion was reached.

October 1910, Society paid \$41.17 for building the sidewalk from the church to the road. They also bought and gave to the church such items as book-racks, song books for the choir, tea-pot, teakettle, a lamp, a stove, and a desk for the pulpit.

At one time the ladies decided to clean the church and to invite the Janitor to help. They hired Mrs. Howard to paper the church at 50 cents an hour.

1927, the Society donated \$50.00 toward shingling the church.

The Ladies Aid Society shared expenses with the missionary Society in sending boxes of clothing to Hungary and to Bethel Children's Home in Kentucky; Mrs. Alice Guggenheim worked hard at packing and mailing these boxes.

May 1952, the Ladies Aid Society voted to disband their meetings. The money in their treasury was given to the church and the Gertrude Stevens