

## METHODIST CHURCH OF SUCCASUNNA

founded July 3, 1850

Back in the days when Lake Hopatcong was known as Brooklyn Pond, when the Morris Canal was both an engineering feat and a main artery of commerce and transportation, when a dirt road boasting the title "Morris Turnpike" linked far-off Elizabeth to colonial Morristown, Newton and Milford, Pennsylvania, our town, a pleasant stopping place, was known as "Old Sucksunny." The Leni-Lenape Indians knew about the "sucky-sunny" as they called the black rock or iron ore which had made this section an important arsenal providing cannon and balls in the War of the Revolution.

The mails were brought by post-riders, and later by fourhorse mail coach. The Morris and Essex Railroad was completed as far as Hackettstown in 1853, and the Chester branch in 1870. After that our town received two mails a day, just like the cities.

Our Church had its beginnings in Ironia. The Rev. Absalom Steelman, eminent local preacher of this locality in those times, writes, "At what is now known as Ironia a house of worship had been erected, mainly through the exertions of John Corwin, Esq., for which the latter retained the deed. This place became a regular appointment and the center of a Methodist community which extended as far as Succasunna."

Later, some of the members of the group disagreed with a minister over the matter of temperance, and the status of infants after death. It is reported that when the minister announced his subject, "Infants in Hell a Span Long," one man arose, declared, "I don't believe it," and walked out followed by others. As a result of this split many of the families moved to the "Sucky-sunny plain" where in 1849, the Rev. T.T. Campbell of the Flanders Circuit organized a class-meeting and preached in the old academy and the homes of the people. The Flanders Circuit included Flanders, Drakesville, Tottens (now Ironia), Alpaugh Schoolhouse, Walnut Grove (now Mt. Freedom), and Succasunna.

On the third day of July, 1850 "the male members of the Methodist Episcopal Church in this place, convened at the house of Bishop Edmund S. Janes, now occupied by Daniel L. Dickerson, according to advertisement as the law directs, for the purpose of electing a Board of Trustees to hold the property of the M. E. Church on Succasunna Plains, styled Janes Chapel, and at the hour appointed met and proceeded to business as follows:

"Thomas Sovereign was elected Chairman at the meeting. William M. Force was elected Secretary of the meeting. We then proceeded to nominate and elect as Trustees of the M.E. Church at Succasunna, in the township of Roxbury, in the County of Morris, State of New Jersey. Elected were William M. Force, A.W. Snyder, Harman R. Wear, Richard Greene, and C.H. Lippincott."

"On August 23, 1850, specifications were issued for frame and enclosing church and Bell tower, also interior finish so far as floors and skirting of body of Church, said specifications were put in the hands of James Searing, John M. Gowin, William Meeker, William Clouse, J. William Shupe, Peter Churchfield."

On February 17, 1852, Janes Chapel, located on 1 1/2 acres of ground donated by the wife of the Presiding Elder (District Superintendent) of the District, the Rev. C.A. Lippincott, and named for Bishop Janes who had given \$500, was dedicated as the Methodist Episcopal Church of Succasunny Plains. At the New Jersey Annual Conference, held that year in Trenton, William Day was appointed pastor of a new circuit, Succasunna and Walnut Grove. The Church was part of the Rahway District of the New Jersey Conference, remained on that district when the Newark Conference was organized in 1850 and has been part of the Morristown (1860) Newton (1877), Elizabeth (1879) and present Paterson (1920) Districts.

At the close of his first year, the Rev. Day reported 69 white members, no colored members, 142 probationers, 1 local preacher, quite probably the Rev. Absalom Steelman, a Sunday School of 140 scholars and 24 officers and teachers with a library of 250 volumes. The financial report showed \$6.05 for Conference Claimants, the retired ministers, widows and orphans; \$2.50 for Equalized Salaries; \$10.00 for Missions; \$4.50 for the American Bible Society; \$1.50 for Education; and \$4.00 for the Sunday School Union. No salary is reported for the pastor; being single, he probably was "boarded around!"

It was not until 1855 that the Rev. John Atkinson reported a salary allowance of \$267 and receipts of \$217, making his report of \$9.11 for the "Worn-Out Preachers" easily understandable. In these effete days of security it is necessary to point out that the above salary was for an entire year. The following year the pastor received an allowance of \$300 which he collected. In 1857, the allowance was raised to \$400 but collections fell short by \$78. For the next decade the pastor's support fluctuated between \$350 and \$425. In 1868, the \$800 mark was reached while in 1875, the Rev. G.H. Winans was granted and received \$1000. During most of this time the Succasunna Church was on a circuit with either Walnut Grove or Port Morris.

Ten years after the organization of the church there were 189 members.

In 1872, three acres were added to the burial ground. In 1887, the Annual Conference heard that "Succasunna has added a new Sunday School room costing \$400."

The church was renovated and a new chapel built in 1891 at a cost of \$3000 which included steam heat. A new basement room was completed for Easter 1950. Good times and bad times followed until 1920 when the Church inherited a small legacy, and with that as a collateral expended \$10,000 and renovated the church.

The third expansion program of the Succasunna Methodist Church was initiated with a ground breaking ceremony in September 1959.

The structure cost \$10,200 and provided additional Sunday School rooms for the church and a kitchen and dining room.

Today five years later, the church has a membership of 600. During the last few years and resulting from the growth of the membership, a student pastor from Drew has been serving the congregation with special emphasis on youth work. As the 1965-1966 church year begins, the local church has engaged the services of a

part-time Director of Christian Education who will be of assistance in leadership training for our Church School staff as well as some youth work responsibilities.

The following are the names of ministers who served the Church and the dates they served:

William Day	1852
Ralph S. Arndt	1853
John Stephenson	1854
John Atkinson	1855
John S. Colt	1856-1858
H. Harris	1858-1860
T.S. Dedrick	1860-1862
Cornelius Clark, Jr.	1862-1864
William W. Voorhies	1864-1866
Fletcher Lummis	1866-1867
William N. Searles	1867-1869
J.P. Fort	1869-1872
James Runyon	1872-1875
G.H. Winans	1875-1878
Thomas H. Landon	1878-1881
Isaac Thomas	1881-1884
M.C. Reed	1884-1887
William McCain	1887-1890
Theodore S. Haggerty	1890-1891
S.B.D. Prickitt	1891-1893
Louis F. Bowman	1893-1895
W.J. Hampton	1895-1896
J.H. Piper	1896-1897
John E. Hancock	1897-1900
D.W. Ryder	1900-1903
John Bovenizer	1903-1906
Albert Van Deusen	1906-1909
Albert Cain	1909-1913
Alfred Yeoman	1913-1914
W.C. Kinsey	1913-1914
J.H. Egbert	1914-1915
James Jamison	1915-1918
R.L. Luerich	1918-1919
Fred S. Benson	1919-1920
W.L. Deutsch	1920-1921
C.C. Nelson	1921-1925
A.H. Guyn	1925-1928
Fred S. Benson	1928-1929
R.W. Hawn	1929-1933
William T. McGuire	1933-1936
A.L. DeWire	1936-1938
LeRoy E. Wright	1938-1941
Marvin W. Greene	1941-1945
George F. Jackson, Jr.	1945-1950
William M. Twiddy	1950-1955
J. Edgar Schlueter	1955-1960
J. Paul Griffith	1960-1964
Donald T. Baggs	1964-

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## UNITED METHODIST CHURCH SUCCASUNNA, NEW JERSEY

Since the report was written for Volume I in 1965, the church has been served by Rev. David Bort, 1967-1970 and Rev. Glenn W. Pursel, 1970-.

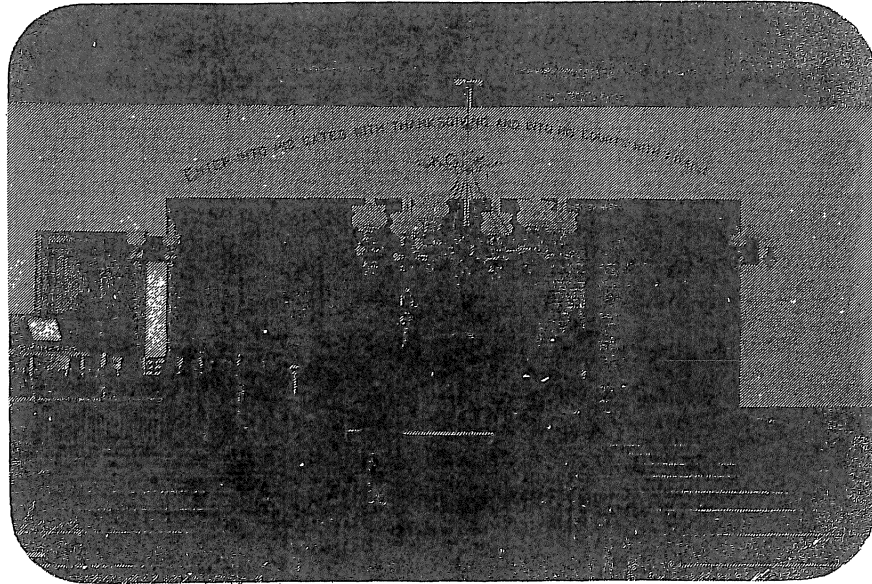
On Heritage Sunday, May 23, 1971, the mortgage on the Educational Building was burned. Ground was broken for this, the third and largest expansion to the church on September 1959 under the pastorate of the late Dr. Edgar Schlueter.

On December 7, 1975, a beautiful bronze cross was dedicated to the memory of Charles and Hattie Strait. Charles had been an active member of this church since boyhood, and Hattie joined the church after their marriage in 1923.

The membership now stands at 450 members and the planned budget for 1976 is \$37,825.00.

The records of the church were microfilmed this year and included the first minute book used in the church.

A picture of the interior of the church as it looked before the renovation in 1920 will be of interest to many.



We are fortunate to have the original pulpit shown in this picture. A few years ago, one of our active members, Kenneth Roedel, refinished and restored this lovely piece to its original charm, and we use it in our Church School.

On March 25, 1885, this article was printed in the Dover Iron Era.

“What might have been a serious problem happened in the Methodist church. Nearly two years ago the church warden purchased a handsome six lamp chandelier. It was suspended from the ceiling by a rod, over the center of the double row of pews. Just before the service began, Mr. John Steelman, the sexton, had removed all the chimneys but one, when the fixture crashed down on the seats below, scattering oil, glass and the chandelier in all directions. Mr. Steelman’s arm was cut but not seriously.”

The rod had worn through and let go at the ceiling. How fortunate that it fell before it was lighted, and before church was in session. There could have been many injuries and perhaps a fire. (No fire company in those days!)

The chandelier was repaired at the cost of forty dollars.

The United Methodist Church of Succasunna was 125 years old on July 3, 1975.

It will be a part of several Bicentennial projects this year, and share its memories with the community, which it has served for all these years.

