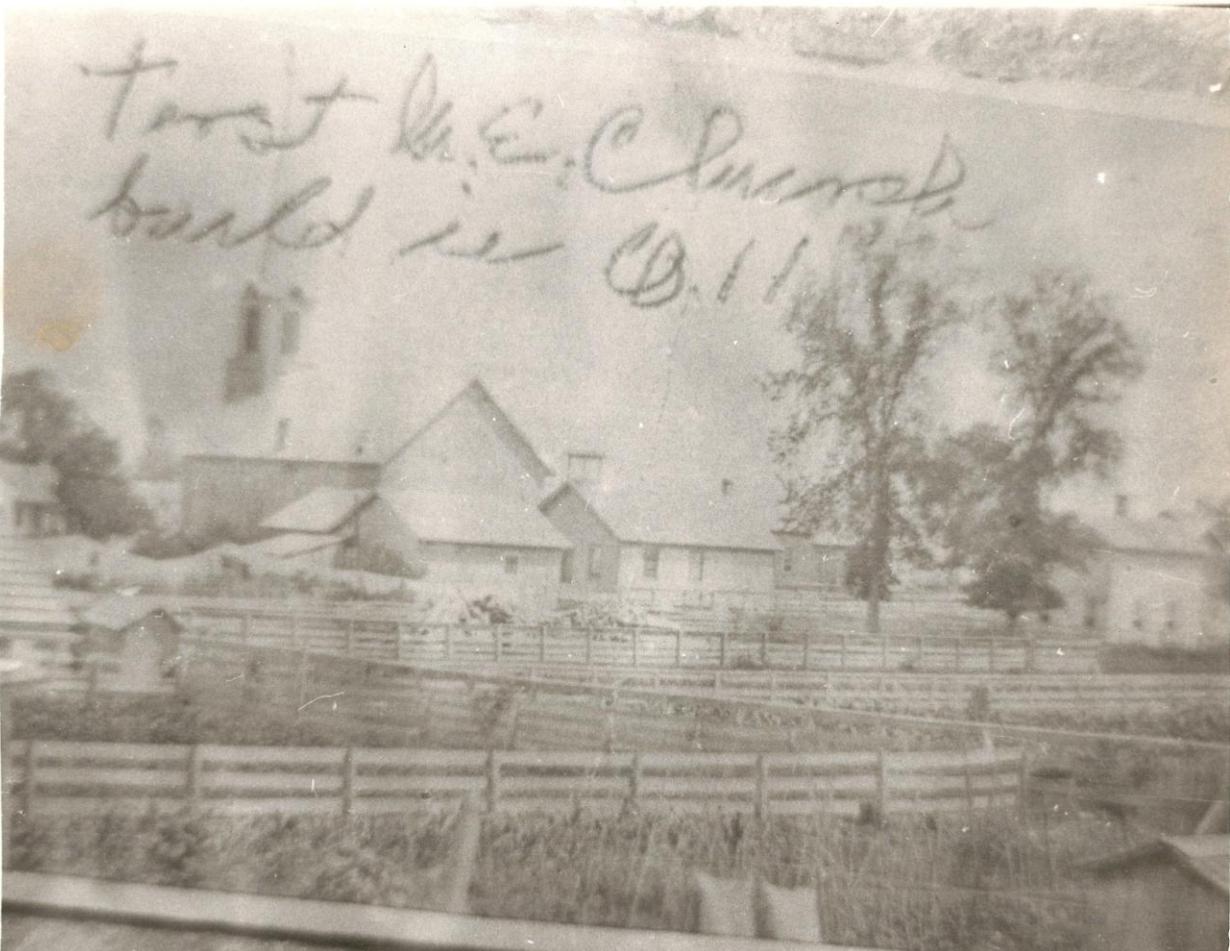


"OLD METHODIST CHURCH" (Southwest Corner of Church & Ottawa Streets)

The Methodist Episcopal congregation that built this church traces its roots back to 1869 when it was listed as a "society", one of seven of the Port Clinton Circuit, in the Defiance District of the Central Ohio Conference. The Rev. John Sites, supply minister, helped organize the congregation that first met in the homes of its members.

On September 11, 1875, under the Rev. G.P. Graham, the congregation purchased Block 90, Lots 6, 7, 8 from Adolphus Kraemer for \$200.00 (Deed recorded July 27, 1878.) Cornerstone was laid May 18, 1875. A bell, \$287.00, was purchased from the Vanduzen & Taft Company of Cincinnati on August 12, 1875. Cost of building was approximately \$5,000.00 and appears to have been completed by 1876. Construction was under the management of Amos Fought. The brick may have come from his brick yard which was located on the south side of the Portage River along present day Route 19.



The church originally had a 100' tall spire that was centrally located on the front of the building on the Church Street side. The entrance to the church was under the spire. The seating in the small, rectangle shaped building, faced to the west with the altar on the west wall. The picture (above, on first page) was taken prior to 1902, and is of the north and rear sides of the building. The small frame building, behind the church, with the bell tower was, at one time, a school. It was originally on the lot(s) that church now occupies and was moved back to this Ottawa Street location to allow the church to be built. In this picture, it is probably being used by the Methodist congregation for Sunday School as the Village had consolidated all its schools into a building on the corner of Church and Walnut Streets by this time. (This small building may be the home that is still in existence on Ottawa Street directly behind the church?)



The photo of Church Street (above) looks north from a stairway (before it was enclosed) on the west side of the present Oak Harbor Hardware store. It shows the Kuebeler Hotel building on the left and a house (with the wrap-around porch) on the northwest corner of Main and Church Streets. (Both structures are still in existence.) Methodist Church, with the high spire, is in the distance. Photo was taken between 1899 and 1902.

The church spire was damaged in a wind storm in 1902 and had to be removed. The M.E. Church decided to remodel at this time. A new tower (estimated to cost \$1,500.00) was built, with all costs coming in at \$4,500.00. The entrance to the church was now on the northeast corner of the building under the new tower. A building addition on the north side matched the existing roof line. The old spire area, on the front of the building, was re-bricked to include a large 3 panel window. A small bump out area on the south side of the building was also added for a new altar area. The floor was sloped with curved pew seating facing the new altar. The newly remodeled church was re-dedicated on September 22, 1902.

An Exponent ad of March 15, 1902 stated – “Pews of Methodist Church, Oak Harbor, Pews black walnut ends, hardwood back and bottom. – For Sale, Cheap – Inquire at parsonage.”

The brick for the tower and the remodeling apparently came not from Oak Harbor, but from Elmore? In Grace Luebke’s History of Elmore, she refers to a Mr. Mulligan of Elmore who lost a horse (just laid down and died) while hauling brick between Elmore and Oak Harbor for the 1902 Methodist Church.



The photo (above, on prior page) is of the remodeled church. Taken between 1902 and July, 1906 it shows the building as it now looks after the remodeling. Close examination of the photo shows an addition on the rear of the building and a large chimney. On the small frame building at the rear of the church, on Ottawa Street, the bell tower (shown on the first picture in this article) can still be seen. The September 27, 1902 Exponent (available on microfilm at the Oak Harbor Public Library) is said to have pictures of both the old and remodeled building.

The Methodist Episcopal congregation used this building until 1962. Very little had changed on the exterior of the building and it looked very similar to the old photos of the 1902 remodel. A new church was built on East Ottawa Street on property acquired in 1950 with the first service at the new church being March 25, 1962. The old building now sat empty and was not used again until approximately 1974.

Around November of 1974, First Baptist Church moved into the building. They had formed in the 1970's and had been meeting in 2 trailers, owned by the Fremont Baptist Church, that were located on North Locust Street. This congregation stayed in the building until disbanding in early 1985. At some point, they apparently bought the building from the Methodist congregation.

A new congregation, Calvary Baptist Chapel, had a series of revival meetings in the building starting around April, 1985. They would hold services in the building until June of 1986 when they moved their services to the Junior High School. This congregation disbanded late 1986 or early 1987. Some members would return to the old building as part of a new church congregation.

Grace Baptist Church was officially formed October 12, 1986. They had moved into the building on the Church and Ottawa Streets corner in June, 1986. In April, 1988, they bought the building from First Baptist Church. The old bell, bought by the Methodist in 1875, was lowered from the tower in July, 1990 to be taken to the Pastor's house to be cleaned and then sold to raise money to build a new church. (Did this happen and where did it go?) Grace Baptist Church bought property for a new church building on South Toussaint Portage Road in June, 1990. The new church building was finally finished with the first service in the new building on January 9, 1994.

Grace Baptist Church had sold the old building on Church Street May 11, 1993 to H. Walter & Kathleen Schultz for \$20,000.00. (The Schultz's were, at the time, living in the house directly to the south of the church at 159 Church Street.) The building was no longer being used as a church and during the time they owned the building, the plumbing, heating, pews, and woodwork were removed and sold.

The picture (below) was taken in the spring of 1994. It shows a building that was still in fairly good condition and appears very much as it did after the 1902 remodeling. A few less trees, different doors, storm windows are the only apparent exterior changes. Inside the pews were gone, but the sloped floor still remained, as did most of the woodwork, and the stained glass windows. The gutting of the interior had just begun.



The building was sold again on October 30, 1995 for \$23,500.00 to Gene & Suzanne Stone. Transferred to Suzanne Stone on December 20, 2001 and transferred again to GSS Family Limited Partnership on March 19, 2002.

On June 15, 2007, the building was purchased by Stuart Hathaway for \$30,000.00. The building, on the outside, still looks similar to the 1994 picture as well as the 1902-1906 picture. The stained glass windows of the old Methodist congregation remain in place. After 133 years (1876 – 2009) the building appears to be in fairly good condition. It is currently being used for storage.

Researched and written by John Liske – August 4, 2009