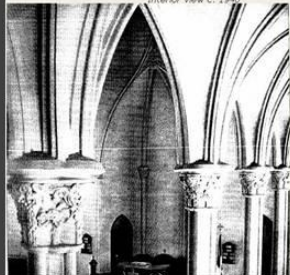


ASBURY IN THE COLONIES

According to his journal, Asbury finally preached in current day Westchester County at New Rochelle on December 10th 1771. Passing through on the way to Rye, it was on the 11th of December

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Mamaroneck United Methodist Church – An Historical Overview

Establishing a Church in Mamaroneck

(1812 – 1909)

Although we claim our beginning date to be **December 17th, 1771**, Asbury's writings at the time claim little about conversion or acceptance of his message in Mamaroneck. However, he returns on **January 10th, 1772**, a Friday, and writes in his journal:

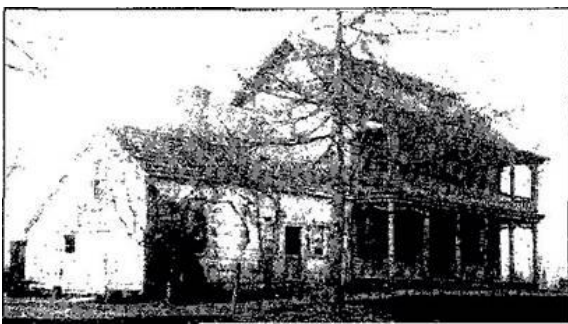
"I went to Mamaroneck had a large congregation, and felt the divine presence.

Many of the people also felt the power of truth, and sunk under the word---it was laid home to the hearts of the people; but some contradicted and blasphemed.

I believe God has a work to do among the people in this place. Lord, keep me faithful, watchful, humble, holy, and diligent to the end. Let me sooner choose to die than sin against thee, in thought, word, or deed."

His third time to preach in Mamaroneck occurred on Wednesday, **January 15th, 1772**. He writes:

"I preached at two in the afternoon at Mamaroneck with some power, and in the evening returned, preached at Rye, to a large company, and felt my Master near."



Griffen Homestead

There is no doubt that something happened in Mamaroneck that original December day.

Legend has it that Asbury preached on a blustery, cold, and rainy **December 17th**, in front of a tavern where the sewage treatment plant is today. Although there is no written notice of converts, we discover in our church archives that a **John Griffen**, a Quaker, approached Asbury when he had finished and invited him home for food and shelter. That evening, **Mr. Griffen** gathered a group of friends to hear this dynamic and passionate preacher of Methodist doctrine who carried not only the Gospel, but news of the rest of the world as well. It has been said that the Methodist preachers brought a purpose for living to the doorstep of many a home, not only because of the message of salvation, but *because of the news and hope brought from the distant world of England and the cities of the colonies.*

The American Revolution brought crisis to the Methodist societies. But the preachers who remained and became leaders of the revolution were fiercely devoted to Methodist principles. Through the war, the class meetings or societies continued. They were early versions of faith support groups, encouraging each other in discipleship and faithfulness. One confessed one's sins before the group. Prayer and devotion to scriptures were the core of the classes. A penny was donated every time the class met, for the work among the poor and disenfranchised. Methodists have had a social consciousness from the very beginning.

According to historical documents in our archives, the work of the Methodist Society in Mamaroneck continued under the leadership of **Mr. Griffen** and others who became class leaders. Little is known of this post-revolutionary period until 1784, when **John Dickens** and **John Haggerty**, preachers assigned to New York, journey to Westchester to administer the sacraments of Baptism and Holy Communion and to bury the dead.

In **1787**, we find a note in the History of Rye by Charles Baird, that all the Methodist Societies north of New York City were organized into the New Rochelle circuit with **thirty-three** classes and **525** members. They all continued to grow, so a division was necessary in **1803**, and the southeastern part of Westchester County became the reformatted New Rochelle circuit, having a membership of **473**. The preachers assigned this new circuit were **W. Thatcher** and **A. Hunt**. They were succeeded by **J. Coleman** and **J. Sawyer** in **1805**. And by **Joseph Crawford** and **H. Bedstone** in **1806**.

One should remember that these preachers rode on horseback and probably reached each Methodist society at least once a quarter for preaching, Baptism, Holy Communion, and burial of the dead. In **1808**, a dispute arose among the Methodists and Quakers. **Rev. Billy Hibbard**, the assigned Methodist preacher wrote a pamphlet entitled, "Some Errors of the Quakers laid open by a plain man and a lover

of Honesty." As you could imagine, some of the Quakers were a bit offended and a division between the societies was never healed.

A Mamaroneck class attendance record from **1810** records that a group of thirty-three men and women, including both white and "coloured" (term used on this historic document) met weekly leadership of **Benjamin Griffen** for prayer, testimony and advice. Converts were required to be on probation for a period before being admitted to membership. Also, some were expelled, probably for lack of attendance or perhaps for immoral behavior.

Establishing a Church

(1812 - 1909)

The Mamaroneck society soon felt the need for a permanent place of worship. On **April 8th, 1813** the Society became an institution, as the male members of the Society met at the home of Hester Sands to incorporate the church. In the **1913** Centennial commemoration, **Charles Holden** described the day:

*"The **eighth day of April, 1813** was the natal day of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Mamaroneck. The winter of **1812-1813** had been long and severe, yet the labors of the Circuit Riders had been blessed and so many were added to the little group of members, that it was determined to found a church. The 8th of April dawned bright and clear; the harbingers of spring were filling the morning air with their glad songs; the clear green meadow and field told the husbandmen that the time for planting was upon them. In short the conditions were most favorable for men and women to band themselves together to found a church where they enjoy the benefits of public worship. Thus it was on that happy morning that well-filled democrat wagons could be seen coming from Weaver Street and Scarsdale, from Harrison and Skunk's Hollow, to the house of Hester Sands in Mamaroneck."*

Attendance Register

The resolution adopted under the New York State law at the time reads:

"Be it known that on the eighth day of April, one thousand eight hundred and thirteen, agreeable to the public notice, the male members of the Methodist Society, of said

Month	Day	Name	Sex	Attendance				Total
				1	2	3	4	
1810								
Meeting days								
		B. Benjamin Griffen	ad.					
		B. George Pine	m.					
		B. Ann Pice	m.					
Sept		B. Lither David	w.					
	5	B. Amos Gale	m.					
		B. Harriah Gale	m.					
		B. Mary Ann Bratt	m.					
Oct		B. Henry D. D. D.	m.					
Coloured!								
April		B. Thomas Hart	m.					
		B. Anna Hart	m.					
		B. Cate Underhill	s.					
		B. Mary Bull	s.					
Apr	5	B. Michael Delaney	s.					

*town, met at the house of **Hester Sands**, their Church not yet built Elected officers as trustees at which time **Ransom Burtis, John Bonnett, Absalom Tompkins, Elisha Budd, William Mead, and William Allee** were so chosen, which said persons so elected and their successors in office shall forever be styled and denominated Trustees for the corporation of the Methodist Episcopal Church in Mamaroneck."*

All the trustees signed the document and then on April 19th elected **Elisha Budd** as President, and **William Allee**, Clerk. The reason for this incorporation was simple. A Methodist could not build a church building under New York State law. Only an incorporated church was able to build. The first step toward a permanent church building had now been taken. By law at the time, all the trustees had to be men. However, it must be pointed out that the meeting of incorporation was held at the home of **Hester Sands**, a women of great energy in the Methodist movement. The church's history at the beginning and to this current day, must continuously acknowledge the work of the women of the congregation and their organizations that fully supported the work of the congregation.

The First Building

The first church building was erected during **1814**. "A chaste edifice of wood located upon the highest summit of Good Success Ridge facing the Post Road and Bay. "This was later known as High Street and is now Prospect Avenue. Services were held at 10 o'clock each Sunday. The congregation was served by two circuit riders who were assigned to the congregations of Port Chester, Rye, and upper New Rochelle. While awaiting the arrival of the preacher from other communities, the folks would gather and enjoy a beautiful view of the harbor.

The first building was heated by two iron stoves, with pipes running the length of the building. In the very coldest weather, the members brought their foot stoves from home filled with hickory coals or a heated brick, to help keep themselves warm. Candle light served as the only means of conducting services at night. The building has been described in previous historic works as of simple architecture and plain design. The night of **February 12, 1845**, tragedy struck the congregation, as this building burned to the ground. But the congregation took quick action and built a new church as soon as spring arrived.

The Second Building

*From 1959 Centennial Celebration.
In front of the 1845 Greek Revival Church
on Prospect Avenue*

The second church was raised on **May 8, 1845** and dedicated on the 23rd of October of that year by **Bishop Jones**.

This building stands today. It is the current American Legion Hall. After the congregation built our current structure in **1859**, the Greek Revival building on Prospect Avenue was sold to the Town of Mamaroneck in **1879** for \$1000. From **1859 until 1879**, the building referred to as Richbell Hall, though we are not of its use or purpose. There was a located here as well.



In order to sell certain parcels of land still owned by the congregation on Prospect Avenue (then called High Street), a burial plot was purchased at Greenwood Union Cemetery in Rye on **March 14, 1900** for \$196. A **Mr. Louis Kolter** was contracted to transport the remains of those in the burial ground to Greenwood Union before **May 7, 1900**. The land that then bordered the Town Hall was sold to **Annie D. Hoffman** in **February of 1902** and to the **Free Kindergarten of the Town of Mamaroneck** for the sum of \$2,000. This is the corner-plot of Mt. Pleasant and Prospect Avenue, the site of the current Seventh Day Adventist Church.

The Revivals

The spiritual foundation and growth of the congregation cannot be overlooked, **Mr. Charles Holden** writes in the 1913 Centennial book:

"The early Methodists were much given to revivals. The church in Mamaroneck seemed to grow a good deal by leaps and bounds. The year 1815 saw a large ingathering in the Church. With their church built they could have started public services to which everybody might feel free to come. Church-going, being a new experience, became a popular diversion with a class of people whose ungodliness had long been proverbial in the county. But many of those who came

to scoff and scorn, remained to pray and became strong pillars of that early church. In 1821 a wave of religious awakening spread throughout the entire New Rochelle Circuit. Many were added to this church, to the churches in Rye, at King Street and in New Rochelle. For three or four days in succession the ordinary occupations were suspended and men and women assembled in the churches day and evening where, under the spell of the most powerful preachers of that day, the strongest and most hardened sinners became convicted and were moved to repentance and thorough conversion."

So continued the revival spirit. In 1846, another great series of services led to the church adding 50 new members under the daily and nightly preaching of **W. Gothard** and **Philip L. Hoyt**. This was a time of great religious fervor. Men and women were transported by the Holy Spirit into trance-like states. People would shout and fall to the floor, rolling in uncontrollable fits. Hence the term, "holy rollers". The church during this period was often filled to capacity with people lining the aisles and the balcony.

The Third Building - Our Current Church Building

This continued growth led to the building of our Gothic Revival landmark building, which was dedicated in **1859**.

In the Zion Herald, a Methodist newspaper of the a reporter by the name of Stanton wrote in the **January 18th, 1860** edition:

*"I allude to the new church dedicated a few days ago at . . I must say that the church is a model structure. It is one of the Gothic form, pleasantly situated on the main street of the village, very tastefully finished, and giving one a comfortable sense of appropriateness and substantiality. The architect of this fine church, **Mr. John Correja**, of New York, . . has added very much to an already favorable reputation by this building . . . the cost of the church, including the ground upon which it stands and by which it is surrounded, was a trifle less than twenty thousand dollars. A good deal of money, it would seem to invest in a country church, and yet not one dollar has been thrown away. It is just a church as the society needed . . . and what is better than all, it paid for." (Mr. Stanton continues that) "it will not surprise you to learn that the collections reached the noble sum of seven thousand dollars, all the money that was asked for by the trustees. Just here it is proper to say that so far as I could learn, things are managed in this society, that all the members rich and poor, bear their proportion of the church's burdens. There is nothing like exclusiveness or aristocracy."*

The **Rev. George Hollis** was, pastor during preparations for the building campaign . . . **Solomon Gedney**, a shipwright carpenter, was the foreman of the project.

The Annex

In **1869** an addition was constructed behind the church consisting of an upper and lower parlor to house the growing Sunday School and provide additional space for meetings. This building was built directly over the northern end of the church building. One can crawl through the rafters of the church and see some of the original roof and building nestled between the end of the sanctuary and the "parlor" building.

Church 1869



During the 1860's one of the most controversial issues involved the renting of pews for \$10 a year, which they tried to implement when the new church was built. Although pew rental was a common practice during this period in other churches to help underwrite the costs of a building, the concept proved both unprofitable and unpopular with our congregation, and was therefore discontinued.

The minutes of the official board of the church from January 9, 1860, show the plan for a revival conducted by **Rev. Remington** who had been invited by the pastor of the time, **Rev. Watkins** to preach at a series of meetings, starting Jan. 22nd. These revival meetings continued...there success was never noted except that in March and extra \$25 was voted for the sexton, Mr. Samuel Wright, for extra services performed, his salary being fixed at the time for \$150 for the year 1860.

Music

The **1870's** could be called the era of music and its controversy. Apparently, since the building of the church in **1859**, there had been rancor and disagreement over singing and music in public worship. At a meeting in the late **1860's**, Brother **E. T. Halstead** moved that a musical instrument be placed in the church for the use of the choir. A voice vote was so close that a standing vote was asked for. Eight were

found to be for the motion, six against it, and two declined to vote. At the same meeting, Brothers **S. Halstead** and **Giles** were appointed a committee to visit the disaffected members and invite them to be present at the dedication and worship with the other brethren in the church. Subsequently these two reported the entire success of their visits and the promise of certain members to contribute to the music program.

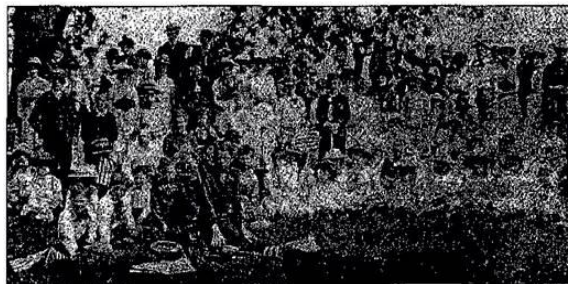
Finally, on **April 13th, 1870**, the first pipe organ was installed. At \$2,100 for the organ, \$5 for transport, and \$40 insurance premium, the entire cost of 82,145 was underwritten by six members, one of whom, **Mr. George I. Seney**, contributed \$1,900. A **Mr. Carrington** served as the organist.

Sunday School

The **1880's** were notable for the growth of for the Sunday School. It was organized in **1858** and **Thomas L. Rushmore** served as the superintendent for thirty-four years. Under his leadership the Sunday School grew from 146 members in 1858, to 443 members in 1892.

Church excursion circa 1900

To many people in Mamaroneck and in the adjacent towns, the annual Sunday School excursion was the main social events of the season. The annual sail on the Sound meant a day's frolic, cooling breezes, and pleasant company. In **1888**, the custom was initiated when the Sunday School went to Idlewild Grove on the Sound by Barge.



The subsequent trips were so popular that in **1891**, a steamer was hired. In all these excursions, refreshments were served on the boat, under the direction of the ladies of the church. There was a band on board to liven the trip. Each member of the committee wore a badge: a blue one indicating the safety and protection team a pink one signifying the refreshments committee: red for ice cream; purple for soda water. The entire day trip could be enjoyed at the small price of fifty cents for adults and 25 cents for children.

*First Music Committee (1913-1915). L to R
A.C. Delanoy, Mildred Thomas (Organist),
Chas R. Ross (Pastor), Alma Harriot,*

Mrs. B.C. Meighan, R.P. Brewer

In **1878**, **Mr. James M. Fuller** organized an outpost Sunday School, erecting a building at the present corner of Weaver Street and Palmer Avenue. This was known as the Weaver Street Chapel. A stone marker dedicated by **Burt Meighan**, remains at that site today honoring the Weaver Street Sunday School Association.



Mr. Fuller contributed \$2,400 for this enterprise. The purpose of the school was to provide Christian instruction to the neighborhood, which was distant from the villages of Mamaroneck and Rye Neck. Most of the people connected with it were Methodists, but it was separately incorporated and it was understood that it was nondenominational. Mr. Fuller served as the superintendent until his death in June of 1885. He was succeeded by **Mr. William H. Stiles**, who was assisted by **Mr. Bradford Rhodes**. Fond memories of this chapel are etched in the of **Mr. Burt Meighan**. There are also still recollections of the strawberry festivals and "ten-cent" socials. The chapel building burned down in **1926** and the land was subsequently sold to the Town of Mamaroneck.

The Parsonage

In the 1890's we have glimpses of parsonage life. In 1896, Rev. Holmes threatened to move his family out of the parsonage as winter approached because of the unsuitable and unhealthy living conditions. On September 8, 1896, Mr. and Mrs. Bradford Rhodes offer to pay half of the expense of building a new parsonage on the same site,



The First Parsonage

provided the church would raise the other half, was graciously received by the board.

The Mamaroneck Paragraph of September 12th, 1896 reports"

"the official board (of the Methodist Church) accepted the proposition and granted a vote of thanks to Mr. and Mrs. Rhodes. Rev. Mr. Holmes has already gone to work soliciting subscriptions and headed the list with his name for \$100. "

This gift by the Rhodes family was very generous, but one must also remember that Rev. Holmes' salary was \$1200. His gift was above and beyond his annual tithe. By

December of 1896, the amount of money needed for the project had been raised. The old parsonage building was sold to a **Mr. Thomas Palmer** for \$250 provided that he move the building. A disagreement arose as to whether that price included the furnace. An extra \$10 was charged for the furnace. Mr. Palmer moved that building which today stands on North Barry Avenue. In the summer of 1897, the plans for a new building were completed and the contract was awarded to **Mr. Charles Oakley** for \$6,321. The formal opening of the new parsonage, the current "church house" was held on July 19, 1896

Another project of note in the **1890's** was written up in the Mamaroneck paper in the following manner:

"It is reported that extensive repairs are to be made on and about the Methodist church, including a new roof on the church and new horse sheds. How much more will be attempted depends upon the finances. Already quite a sum of money has been raised by the finance committee, who will be called upon to make their report tomorrow morning. It would certainly be a great improvement if the present horse sheds could be so remodeled as to make them more sightly and less of a nuisance, for they are frequently the rendezvous of peddlers and tramps, and ladies are afraid to pass by them after dark. Property owners in the vicinity of the church ought to be willing to assist in this improvement." (Oct 12, 1895, Mamaroneck Paragraph.)

Financial worries seem to be the focus of the official board minutes from the late **1890's** through the first few years of **1900**. Deficits upwards of \$1200 were looming large. One of the meetings, from **January 10th 1900**, attempts to deal with the utility cost of the gas lamp. An attempt had been made to negotiate a better contract for the lighting and furnishing of the gas for the lamp at the stairs (by the current historic marker). The committee headed by **Mr. R. G. Brewer** negotiated with Suburban Gas for them to light at night and extinguish the lamp in the morning for \$25 an entire year.

A Community Center

The church annex with its upper and lower parlors was the community's entertainment center. Lectures, dramatic readings, and stereoscopic picture shows were the highlight of the community and these events were excellent fundraisers for the church as well. The ladies of the church would serve refreshments and organize these events. A play entitled "Ye Olde Deestrick Skule" was performed on **March 29th and 30th 1906**.

The cast of characters has **Hazel E. Delanoy** (George Coffin's mother) as Miss Dashaway,



The Play. Note the gas lights

Nellie G. Brewer as Miss Sally Simple, and **F. E. Bellows** was Mr. Uriah Perkins, chairman of the school committee. The Melodeon player was **Miss Elsie Lyon**. The program bears advertisements from **Elisha Gedney** (Fire Insurance); **John H. McArdle** (Clean sweep sale); the Charles W. Transportation Line (his steamer, "Mary E. Gordon" leaves Mamaroneck for New Rochelle and New York, Monday, Wednesday, and Friday at 10 o'clock. Departs New York at the foot of Jackson Street, Pier 54, East River at noon); E. S Halstead & Co. (Manufacturers of all kinds of Second-Hand Bags, also handlers of all kinds of Second-Hand Bags); Meighan & Necarsulmer (Attorneys, Money to Loan on Bond and Mortgage); Chew Ngon Wing Chinese laundry. (Bring your laundry.)