

History of the Waldron Wesleyan Church

The Waldron Wesleyan Methodist Church of Waldron had its beginning on the 11th day of March 1855. It was organized in the schoolhouse in District No. 4. The persons participating in the organization were Hiram N. and Matilda Barstow, Philo H. Stroud, J.N. Wilcox, Joseph L. Farnham, Rev. J.B. and Rebecca Hart, Rev. C.M. and Eliza Preston, Stephen W. and Amelia Coman.

At this time the portion of the town was almost a wilderness. There was but nine acres cleared within sight of the schoolhouse where the meetings were held. This schoolhouse stood on the northwest corner of Section 26 across the road from the Leslie Graham property, or about where the present school ground starts at the southern most part. This schoolhouse was built in 1850; it was made of logs of split basswood hewed on one side and the seats of the same material. There were no backs on seats, nor desk. There was a small desk in one corner, so when a scholar's turn came to write he used the desk. There was a fireplace with a stick and clay chimney. Parents drawing the logs to the schoolhouse furnished the wood, and the boys were supposed to cut the wood. The teacher was paid by rate bill. That was if a family had 2 or 3 children, they boarded the teacher two or three weeks. The teacher was paid \$1.50 to \$2.00 a week.

The schoolhouse was used for school, church, and political speeches. The pink schoolhouse {so called because it was painted pink} was built in 1856. This was a frame building 30 by 44 feet in size with spire, and a cost \$1,200. The meetings were held in that building until the church was built in 1878. Because of the Fremont Rebellion they were not allowed to use the schoolhouse as a church. The church stood near the southeast corner of Section 23 on a lot of one-half acre donated by O.W. Gleason. This society was incorporated in 1878 and was to be known in later years as East Wright but at that time was called the second Wesleyan Methodist Church of Wright.

At one time there were four churches on the Wright Circuit: The First Wesleyan Methodist Church, Second Wesleyan Methodist Church, Medina Church, and the Church of Prattville. This Prattville Church under the leadership of John Emens numbered about 20 members. Their meetings were held once in two weeks at the schoolhouse.

A second Wesleyan Methodist class was formed in this town located at South Wright and bore the name "The First Wesleyan Methodist Church of Wright". It was organized by C.M. Preston, Mr. & Mrs. Gideon, L. Emerson, Mr. & Mrs. J.N. Wilcox, Mr. & Mrs. James Forrester, Mrs. Volney Reynolds, Mrs. F.B. Smith, Mrs. J.L. Cady, Mrs. A.S. Wilson. This number was increased to about 20 by a revival the succeeding winter. Frequent revivals followed the preaching of the word, and the membership grew steadily until it numbered 130. During the first four years of existence the church held its meetings in the brick schoolhouse. The Rev. C.M. Preston was the first pastor followed by Rev. R.H. Ross, Daniel T. Beckwith, Joel Martin, William Wing, H.C. Hurlburt, and Isaiah Martin. They were the preachers stationed on Wright Circuit, which was organized when this church was formed. The society was incorporated on December 5, 1870 at a meeting held at the home of A.S. Wilson, James Forrester, G.L. Emerson, and A.S. Wilson was the trusted chosen.

In the spring of 1871, Rev. C.M. Preston gave the society one acre of ground on the southeast corner of the north east quarter of Section 33 for a church site, and work was immediately begun on the church which was completed during the summer, and dedicated in the early fall by Adams Crooks, the editor of the American Wesleyan, Syracuse, New York.

It was a frame church, which comfortably seated 250 persons, furnished with a bell and cost a total of \$3,000. During the same season a house with a lot of six acres was purchased of William Boyd for \$1,000 for a ministerial residence.

At this time the officers of the church were; Stewards, J.L. Cady and Peter Musser; Conference Steward, F.B. Smith; Trustee, James Forrester; Treasurer, Volney Reynolds; Secretary, A.F. McFarland.

All money was paid by soliciting different families, so raising money to build the church and parsonage were all different funds. Some families were only able to pay 42, others paid \$10, a very few \$25. For many years money for the pastor's salary was also raised by soliciting. In 1875 Rev. H.C. Hurlburt was paid the sum of \$400, use of parsonage, and moving expenses paid. At the quarterly meetings held of the Wright Circuit the money was raised in the following manner; South Wright, \$37.10; Pink Class {East Wright}, \$21.00; Prattville Class, \$16.00. The Medina Church was discontinued in 1874 for lack of interest shown. In 1878 the church was

running behind in the payment of preacher salary so they appointed a committee to make assessments as follows: Wright Class, \$1.80 per member; Pink Class {East Wright}, \$.70; and Prattville Class, \$.50.

In 1879 Rev. Isaiah Martin agreed to preach for the salary of \$300. Prattville desired a change in their time of meetings, changing from afternoon to morning preaching. A committee was appointed to decide the matter. Rev. J.E. Jessup came as pastor in 1880 for the salary of \$250, however the classes voted to raise it to \$300 the next year.

In 1882 a committee was appointed to solicit subscriptions for building a new parsonage. Isaiah Martin, William Boyd, and Peter Musser were elected for the building committee. After receiving only \$350 there followed a couple of years of discouragement in trying to sell the old parsonage. In 1885 a new committee was appointed consisting of Rev. William Wing, W.F. Preston, and George Hursh. In April of 1886 the parsonage was completed at the cost of \$790. After work and contributions and sale of the former parsonage for \$35, the total amount left of indebtedness was \$179.

The beginning of a Missionary Society in Waldron is noted in the business minutes of 1885. A committee was appointed to solicit funds for missionary work. Mrs. Wing was appointed for Waldron Church and Allie Gallup for East Wright Church. In 1886 a committee on missions was appointed consisting of John Emens, Ralph Perry, Volney Reynolds, Alvin Wilson, and W.F. Preston. Collectors for this fund were Allie Gallup, Mrs. Emens, Mrs. W.F. Preston, Mrs. V. Reynolds, and Mrs. Wilson. The first Missionary Society was reported by Brother Leisenring to have been organized in 1901. The date 1905 is first listed in the 1920 Journal. All reports of earlier years seem to have been lost. One of Waldron's faithful members, Mrs. Anna Wilson was named first treasurer of the Michigan Conference Missionary Society in 1890.

In 1896 the church was moved to the middle of town behind the brick building on the northwest corner of Waldron. This was taken from the Waldron recorder.

Dedication of the Wesleyan Methodist Church

“The quarterly meeting and dedicatory services of the W.M. Church were held August 1st and 2nd. Ministerial brethren present were H.D. Cheney who preached the Dedicatory sermon; Rev. A.W. Mumford, who read the 84th Psalm, Rev. Leisenring who made the opening prayer; Rev. C.L. Preston who read a poem he had written and the 48th Psalm. Rev. Isaiah Martin read a short history of the church and offered the dedicatory prayer. Rev. Preston pronounced the benediction.

Rev. Hagaman of the U.B. Church and Rev. Edgery Coman of East Wright were present. The choir rendered good service for the occasion. In the social meeting Sabbath Morning over one hundred testified to the saving power of religion.”

From the Wright Circuit three men were recommended to the annual conference for licenses to preach and their characters were approved as persons suitable to travel under its directions. They were W.F. Preston, Edgar Coman, and Charles Brooks.

The parsonage built a barn in 1896 at the cost of \$18.86 and the amount paid the pastor, Rev. Isaiah Martin, for the year of 1896 was raised from \$300 to \$325. In 1897 the church voted to entertain the Michigan Conference at Waldron. There was not a campground at this time. A committee was appointed to solicit members to entertain the delegates in their homes.

One interesting fact in the minutes of 1906 was that the circuits voted to pay the extra expense for a telephone. In 1907 the annual conference was requested to change the name of the circuit from Wright to Waldron. In October the church was closed because of scarlet fever.

In 1913 the pulpit supply committee voted to pay Rev. D.T. Perrine \$400 for the year. Also Rev. Perrine's statistical report for conference seems to be the first one we have in our possession. One of the ministers that will long be remembered was Rev. D.T. Perrine. He served as Pastor from 1910-1919. He was also President of the Michigan Conference of the Wesleyan Methodist Churches from 1922-1957. His comment of Waldron was that he belonged to all our families because he performed so many marriages and funerals etc. in this community.

Another minister, Rev. A.D. Wright, served the Waldron Church a long period from 1925-1937. Then he came back for a second pastorate in 1952-1954. It was during his ministry in 1926 that East Wright Church was discontinued. Then in the year the church voted to sell the Waldron Church for \$450 to Leroy Wilson. Then the Wesleyan Church purchased the former M.E. Church of Waldron. This church was organized in 1894 with 14

members and built in the center of town in 1895. The half-acre of ground was purchased for \$100. The Junior League with 42 members paid the first \$100 on buildings. The church didn't have to many regular pastors, about 6 ministers, and then they had students from Albion College preach. Finally in 1918 the church was abandoned.

The Wesleyan Methodist Church at that time, with about 127 members, remodeled the church adding a balcony, which is now the front of the church, and built a large classroom to the east and a basement for the children's Sunday school classes.

Rev. William Foster came to the church in 1938. He was married during the first year of his pastorate in Waldron. Rev. Alvin Barker followed; he related that he remembered papering the ceiling and walls of the sanctuary with the help of Hugh Coman. That of course was before the extensive remodeling of the church, when the pulpit was to the north, backed by a small alcove he pastored the church from 1941-1944.

Rev. C.D. La Preese followed during the years 1944-1946, then for the year our church didn't have any pastor. Rev. D.T. Perrine, Conference President, supplied for one month, as did Rev. Vissar, Rev. Shank, and Rev. Slough. Finally Rev. Clair Day came in 1947 and served the church for about 5 years.

In 1858 a rededication was held after Sunday school rooms were added to the back of the church. The pulpit was turned around, and a new entrance was added to the west side of the building. The following pastors were present: Rev. D.T. Perrine, Rev. A.D. Wright, Rev. E.L. Crocker, Rev. Glen Miller, Rev. Lloyd Christler, Rev. G.L. Densmore, and Rev. Paul Dekker. Presentation of the building to be dedicated was made by Arnold Coman, Chairman of the Board of Trustees. Mrs. Ansel Fellows gave a History of the church from 1870. B.S. McFate and Mrs. Lloyd Christler presented special Music.

Rev. Paul Dekker served our church as pastor from 1957-1959, he and his wife Donnie left to become missionaries to Bafodia Sierra Leona, West Africa.

In 1969 during the pastorate of Rev. D. Arthur O'Dell the church purchased the property behind the church known as Alpha Martin Feed. The mill was torn down and a parking lot made. In 1970 a committee was appointed to look into a new church building program. With the help of Rev. Art O'Dell and his brother, a new east wing was added to the sanctuary. A new complex known as the Fellowship Hall, completed with kitchen and many Sunday school rooms, was also added at the same time. This new addition was dedicated in 1972. Rev. G.A. Huff, the district superintendent gave the dedicatory address.

During Rev. O'Dell's pastorate in 1975, Doris Scott left as a short-term missionary to Sierra Leone, West Africa, to work at the Kamakwie Hospital for 1 year. She returned in 1977-1979 to Gbendembu, Sierra Leone at a clinic, and then served again at the hospital in Kamakwie.

A new parsonage was built in 1975 at 410 Bruce Court. It was dedicated in April of 1976. Present for the dedication were Rev. Vaughn Drummonds, District Superintendent, Rev. O'Dell, and Rev. Robert Ferris.

We are not trying to live in the past with this history. It is rather our aim that lives of faithful, prayerful men and women might challenge you. Pray that the mantel of the founders might fall upon you! Consider that the church didn't happen. There were men of prayer, not afraid of trials, and men of great sacrifice and effort.

Pastors Serving the Waldron Wesleyan Church

1854-1855	C.M. Preston & J.B. Hart	1919-1921	C.D. Chamberlain
1856	C.M. Preston	1921-1922	Floyd G. Barker
1857	T.W. Davis	1922-1923	R.C. Crossman
1858		1923-1925	J.F. Slough {Supply Pastor}
1859	C.M. Preston	1925-1937	A.D. Wright
1860	T.W. Davis	1937-1941	William E. Foster
1861-1867	C.M. Preston	1941-1944	Alvin C. Barker
1868	R.H. Ross	1944-1946	C.D. LaPreese
1869	D.T. Beckwith	1947-1952	Supply- J.F. Slough, Rev. Shank, D.T. Perrine, and Rev. Visser
1870-1871	Joel Martin	1952-1954	A.D. Wright
1872-1874	William Wing	1954-1957	Lloyd Christler
1875-1876	H.C. Hurlbut	1957-1958	Paul Dekker
1877-1879	Isaiah Martin	1958-1964	E.R. Scott

1880-1881	J.F. Jessup	1964-1966	Orin Daniels
1882	Isaiah Martin	1966-1968	Keith Coffey
1883-1885	William Wing	1968-1975	Arthur O'Dell
1886	Joel Martin	1975-1976	Robert Ferris
1886-1889	W.F. Preston	1976-1977	Ralph Bramble
1890-1891	A.L. Alverson	1977-1979	Donald Hosier
1892	J.F. Danner	1979-1981	Gerry G. Wyma
1893	F.W. Crowell / Prentiss Bunnell	1982-1986	Douglas Swan
	{Mid-year replacement}		
1894	A.W. Crowell	1986-1995	Duaine R. Snyder
1895	Isaiah Martin	1996	Larry Theiss
1900	Elmer Leisenring	1996-?	Tom Brodbeck
1905-1906	S.J. Young		
1906-1910	M.J. Badder		
1910-1919	D.T. Perrine		