

A Brief History

Our history begins on August 16, 1827, when the First Congregational Society, a religious corporation, was formed and six trustees elected. On March 19, 1828, a church was established with eight members. Some came from the Congregational Church in Sweden (1816, dissolved in 1935). The first installed pastor was Rev. Joseph Meyers, who served from 1830 to 1832. Meyers was involved in Charles G. Finney's great Rochester Revival of 1830-1831, including bringing him to Brockport. After years of discussion, the church resolved in 1841 to be "strictly Presbyterian" and, except for the period 1857-1865, has remained so.

In 1830 James and Mira Seymour transferred the land on which the original church was built, variously reported as 40 x 50 or 46 x 62 feet. Seymour was the first sheriff of Monroe County and a major landowner in Brockport.

By 1852 the church had outgrown its building, which was demolished. The cornerstone of the current structure was laid July 19, "with appropriate ceremonies," by the pastor, Rev. Augustus Cowles. Cowles subsequently became the first president of what is now Elmira College. Construction proceeded so that meetings of the session could be held in March. The only record of the completion of the building is an August, 1853, notice in a Rochester newspaper that "the new Church in Brockport . . . is so far completed that they contemplate its dedication about the middle of September next. It is a substantial and tasteful structure. . . . It is built of brick, and its internal appearance is quite similar to that of the First Baptist Church of this city." The sanctuary retains its gallery, coffered ceiling, and neo-classical detailing on the side and rear walls and ceiling.

With an original seating capacity of 700, the church was the largest place for public assembly. Many community events have been held here, including Civil War rallies, lectures, concerts, temperance meetings, celebrations of Washington's birthday, and the like.

In 1891 the organ enclosure on the north side was added to accommodate a Roosevelt organ, and the pulpit and choir rearranged. This area was rearranged and redecorated in 1988 when a restored 1905 Moeller organ was installed. The present sanctuary windows were installed in 1942, replacing late nineteenth-century stained glass. In 1901 the present entrance and narthex replaced a massive set of steps leading to the sanctuary. Education wings on the north side were built in 1947 and 1959.

Over the years the church has owned several manses. A 1823 building became uninhabitable and was demolished in 1965, creating the side yard.

The church was listed on the National Register of Historic Places in 1999.

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