

Brief Historical Sketch of St. John United Methodist Church 1841-2014

St. John United Methodist Church is located on Fordville Road in the Community of Gouldtown Township of Fairfield and partly in the town of Bridgeton in the state of New Jersey. Because of its "locality" it is quite often referred to as simply "FORDVILLE".

The area of Gouldtown was once divided into two sections, known as Gouldtown and Piercetown after the two dominating families in this area, the Goulds and the Pierces. The communities were merged together in the early 1950's and became on district, "Gouldtown".

These original families first worshipped at "The Old Stone Church" in Fairton, NJ. When the Rev. Michael Swing, the pioneer of "Methodism" came to this in 1799, from Fairfield, Conn, he built what became known as "Swings Meeting House". Rev. Swing made quite the impression the "Pierces" and the "Goulds", so many left "The Old Stone Church" to worship with him.

In 1816 Rev. Reuben Cuff from Salem, New Jersey became a Methodist Minister. He married into the "Gould" family and began to hold Church meetings here in "Gouldtown". This was the same Rev. Reuben Cuff who in that same year, helped to found the A.M.E. conference in Philadelphia, PA. These meetings were held in the barn of Benjamin Gould 2nd.

In the year 1823 the "Wescott Schoolhouse" in Deerfield Twp. was purchased and moved into the neighborhood and used as both schoolhouse and meeting house. In 1834 the Lummis Schoolhouse in Fairton was purchased and moved to Gouldtown. Rev. Peter D.W. Schureman dedicated this Schoolhouse as a church, and the name given to it was "EBENEZER". It served as Schoolhouse and church until the present "Trinity A.M.E." Church on the Bridgeton-Millville Pike was built in the year 1831.

However in the year 1841 a split in the church "Ebenezer" occurred. Some members left "Ebenezer" and started a "Methodist Episcopal" Church in Piercetown. Those people named in the lawsuit that occurred due to the split were: Jacob Pierce, Adrian Pierce, Freeman Pierce, Hosea Pierce, and their families and followers. If you take notice of our Stained glass windows, you will find these same names on them listed as founders of this Church.

Once they lost their case in court they proceeded to build a one-room log cabin style schoolhouse and meetinghouse in the woodland owned by Adrian Perce. They named it "The Piercetown School and Meetinghouse".

In 1861 when Gouldtown built their present day edifice "Trinity A.M.E." of Gouldtown; not to be outdone by their family, friends and neighbors plans were made to build this present day edifice, St. John's UMC. They started clearing woodland across the road from where they were currently located. It was also owned by Adrian Pierce and Jacob his brother.

In the year 1863 they became incorporated as "The Methodist Episcopal Church of Fordville". The names on the incorporation papers read as follows: Jacob Pierce, Freeman Pierce, Josiah Pierce, Israel Pierce and Cornelius Pierce.

In the year 1865, after many hardships and much labor the first part of this present edifice was completed and dedicated.

Brief Historical Sketch of St. John United Methodist Church 1841-2014

Major Structural Changes:

In the year 1909 the first extensive remodeling took place under the pastorate of Rev. J.W. Cox. In the year 1925 under the leadership of Rev. Blackiston the pulpit area was recessed, a new heating system put in, electric lights were added, new pews, new pulpit furniture, and a new carpet.

In the year 1941 still under the pastorate of Rev. Blackiston, the first addition was made to the church. The pulpit area was again enlarged adding a choir loft, a new floor was installed, and stained glass window were added throughout the interior.

In the year 1951 under the pastorate of Rev. Wm M. Tasco adding to the existing edifice made a new modern building. This included a new modern heating system, semi-air conditioning, indirect lighting, sound proof nursery, Pastors Study/office, new pews, modern divided chancel, rest rooms, Sunday School rooms in the basement. A lighted cross was added to the tower as a symbol of a "Warm Welcome" to the community.

In the year 1986 was connected the Parish hall to the main body of the church under the direction of Rev. Nyada Clarke. Through this connection we were able to add two more restrooms upstairs, new front doors and a handicap accessible ramp. With her leadership we added aluminum siding to the church, underpinning to the parish hall, a back porch on the rear of the Parish Hall and painting of the Parsonage.

Rev. Roy E. Bundy came to us in June of 2000. In January of 2001 we had a small fire take place within our Parish hall. Due to the outbreak of the fire however, major structural damage was unveiled due to heavy termite infestation. Between the combination of factors, fire and termites our community building was condemned from future habitation. With God's grace and direction, we rebuilt a new "All-purpose building". With God's grace we will see the fruits of these labors, and enjoy our new facility, dedicated in May 2013. Our new hall allows us to offer vital social functions as well as necessary program and fund raising activities within our church family and community. May God's Grace and Favor Reign at St. John U.M.C. (Fordville) for many, many, many, more year.

Submitted by: Patricia Rossello Church Secretary, & Historian